

Spy Case Tops 'em All For Thrills

FOIAb3b

Reviewed by
Curtis Carroll Davis

CPYRIGHT During World War II Mr. Davis was an intelligence officer in the Middle East.

I WAS CICERO. By Elyesa Bazna, with Hans Nogly
Translated by Eric Mosbacher. Harper & Row. 212 pp. \$3.95.

NOT LONG after World War I an intelligence officer for Austria, Col. Seeliger, declared: "Quite 90 per cent of all spy stories belong to the realm of fiction and fantasy. On the other hand the remaining 10 per cent deal with incidents which have won or lost wars."

During the thick of World War II a Seeliger successor, E. C. Moyzisch, an Austrian SS officer at the German Embassy in Ankara, participated in a bit of business falling well within "the remaining 10 per cent." He acted as go-between for his government and the Turkish valet to the British Ambassador, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen.

The valet was secretly photographing official dispatches and selling them to the other side. He was never caught; the Germans paid him £300,000 sterling; and when Moyzisch released his version of the affair, "Operation Cicero," it promptly became one of the first post-war best sellers in the spy-story genre.

NOW THE Turkish valet comes forward with his version, told in the first person with the aid of a Munich journalist. Together they have produced such a cracking good narrative that one's first reaction is, was the true story really that good? Hans Nogly has exercised a newsman's caution in checking what sources he could, especially Moyzisch and Cornelia Kapp, the German Embassy secretary who bird-dogged Allied security agents onto the source of the disastrous gap in their defense. She, it turns out, was an OSS informant. "Cicero" himself speaks a telling piece. He was a complete knave, and depicts himself with a playwright's incisiveness. He is equally incisive about the entire cast of characters and puts them on stage with total-recall dialogue, local color and the necessary program notes.

The result is a dream as expertly turned as Ewen Montagu's "The Man Who Never Was" but considerably more valuable, because the stakes were at least as high while the human intermixture was far more complex.