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STATINTL

RUDE PRAVO REPORTS ON 'STRANGE' CIA CASE

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*new angle*

(Hochman Washington dispatch: "The Strange Affair of the 'Woodsmen'--High-Ranking CIA Official the Victim of a Conspiracy of his Collaborators").

(Text) Washington has taken only modest note of a quite obscure affair concerning a high-ranking CIA official whose apartment was invaded by two "colleagues" who there seized highly secret material and caused great difficulties to the official in his job. Obviously this would not have made the papers at all had there not been the detail that at the same time jewels worth 19,000 dollars were lost from the apartment and that the spouse affected did not hesitate to report this to the police.

Last year, Hans Tofte reported to tax authorities an annual salary of 25,000 dollars, and from this it is safe to conclude that a very highly placed official of the espionage service is concerned. In addition, it is reported that Mr. Tofte allegedly raised objections when President Johnson recently made a change in CIA chiefs and selected professional intelligence man Richard Helms. This was the first time, by the way, that the direction of this omnipotent agency with its 3 billion in annual expenditures had been entrusted to a member of the CIA apparatus.

It seems that Mr. Tofte wanted to sell part of the house in which he lived on 35th street in Washington, and that a certain Mr. Slocum and his wife came to inspect it. The prospective buyers were so active as to inspect not only the lower part of the house but also the second floor, which was not for sale. They found there carefully stored official CIA papers which Mr. Tofte reportedly worked on at home. The next day, two CIA agents penetrated the house and took the papers. Since, strangely enough, they did not consider it necessary to inform Mr. Tofte about this, and since at the same time the 19,000-dollars-worth of jewels were lost, Mrs. Tofte reported the event to the police.

The practice of working on supersecret CIA papers at home is strictly forbidden, it is true. Despite this, it is reportedly a very current practice with leading agency officials. This is asserted by Mr. Tofte, whom they have suspended from duty in the meantime. CIA admits that it seized the papers, but reportedly knows nothing about the theft of the jewels. It is highly unusual for the most secret institution in the United States--which CIA undoubtedly is--to do its washing publicly and to do so in a case, moreover, which implicates such a high-ranking figure of the agency.

Two explanations offer themselves. The first is that personal disputes on a high level have broken out among the "woodsmen," as the CIA staff are called because of the location in the woods of their headquarters in Virginia, and that the finding of the secret papers in his home will serve as a pretext for his "defenestration." The second and highly intriguing possibility is that Mr. Tofte, who has had 25 years of activity in the American espionage service, also cooperated with some other foreign agency, and that he thus secured for himself earnings in addition to his salary of 25,000 annually, which is almost as big a salary as that of a cabinet officer. Mr. Tofte was an officer of OSS--Office of Strategic Services--in Europe during World War II and directed CIA activities in Korea during the war of 1950-1953.

The latter version is near the truth. Tofte's contacts should lead to some West European agency, since even a tiny indication in another direction necessarily would evoke a rapid alarm involving the popular "red intrigues." The situation would be particularly piquant if it emerged that Mr. Tofte, who is of Danish origin, worked on CIA materials at home let us say for West Germany. But it is certain that the matter will not be aired to such an extent.