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STATINT

Proletarian Pelts?

Memo to the CIA, the FBI, the MKVD, and anyone else who may monitor Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin's telephone conversations.

His mysterious calls recently about a mink coat might sound like cloak and dagger business, but they had nothing to do with spying.

The Russian envoy feels that someone has been trying to knife him in the back by spreading stories that his wife has been seen around town cloaked in that capitalist status symbol, mink.

IT ALL STARTED with a New York gossip columnist. Then Time magazine spent a lot of time and money (Time's money) checking out the story.

State Department officials' wives were called, other ambassadorial wives were called, local Washington furriers were called to find out what the coat looked like, how much it probably cost, etc.

Finally Dobrynin himself was pelted with questions about the pelts in question. Bristling because he had been rubbed the wrong way, Dobrynin denied that his wife's fur coat is likely to get him in any trouble back in Moscow.

In the first place, the garment is Moscow mink, bought in the USSR, not the U.S., he said. And there is nothing ostentatious about a Russian husband buying his wife a fur coat. In his homeland's freezing climate, he explained coldly, it takes more than love to keep her warm.

CPYRGHT