

# Tofte Case Blew Covers

## Former CIA Agent's Attack On 'Invisible Government' Left Host of Questions

By Morton Mintz

Washington Post Staff Writer

*"In intelligence, you have to take certain things on faith."*—Allen W. Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, in an interview published March 19, 1954, by U.S. News & World Report.

*"All I ask is for my true friends to trust me all the way to the bitter end."*—Hans V. Tofte in a letter Aug. 8, 1966, to Charles E. Strickland, a friend in Mason City, Iowa.

**H**ANS V. TOFTE is the Central Intelligence Agency operative in whose Georgetown home a mass of secret papers—about a thousand, by CIA's count—was found.

Tofte did what he said was "the one thing no one had expected." He went public. He became the spy who came out from the fold to "fight this stupid, silent, vague 'invisible government.'"

His wife's jewels had disappeared. He linked the loss to the "stupid cloak and dagger raid" in which the papers were seized.

The papers, the jewels, Tofte's challenge of "the entire outfit to a public showdown"—it all added up to a commando performance, to a guerrilla lunge at the CIA fortress at Langley, Va.

Audacious? Unorthodox? Perhaps. But Hans Tofte has always been both.

In World War II, he escaped the Nazi occupation of his native Denmark, made his way to Singapore, joined the British Commandos and fought in Malaya and Burma. Then he joined the American Office of Strategic Services, the CIA's predecessor. He fought behind enemy lines in Italy, Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

He was, many times over, an authentic hero. The King of Denmark knighted him. He was honored by the British, the Yugoslavs, the Americans. In the Korean conflict, he won a citation for using "his specialized knowledge of unconventional warfare" to help devise ways to rescue downed airmen from behind enemy lines.

For the past decade, Tofte has been operating in and out of Langley. His last assignment was training clandestine agents. He was paid \$25,000 a year.

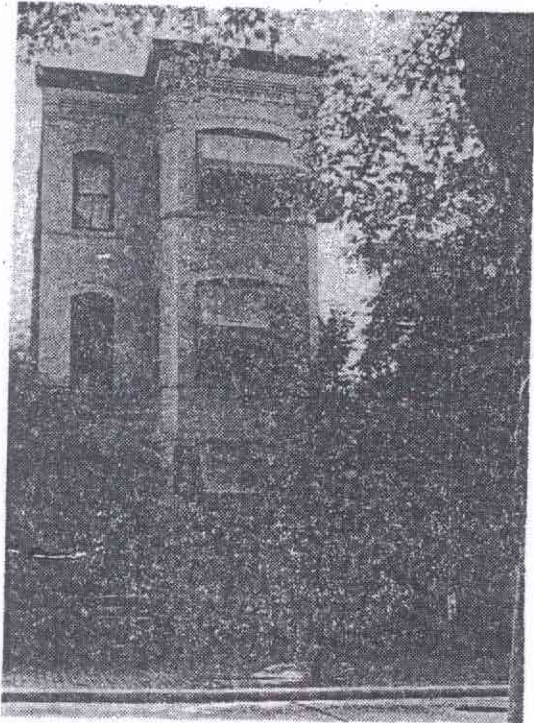
Now, at 55, he is finished. First he was suspended. A month ago he was fired, effective yesterday.

The beginning of the end was a phone call made by Kenneth R. Slocum, 24, an electronics engineer who came here in June from North Hollywood, Calif., to work for the CIA.

Slocum and his wife Judy moved into temporary quarters at 2911 P st. nw. Then they tried to find a permanent one-bedroom apartment. Late Saturday afternoon, July 23, Slocum looked at the listing of real estate agents in the Yellow Pages phone book. He noted that the J. C. Chatel Co. was in Georgetown, where he wanted to live, and phoned to ask what was available.

The call was taken by Melita Molloy, a Chatel employee. She arranged to meet the Slocums at 6 o'clock. They first looked at an apartment at 3141 N st. nw., then went on to 1667 35th st. nw., where a basement apartment was available in a three-story home. The owners had been Hans Tofte and his wife Marlys. In June, they had sold the house to the Chatel firm.

The Toftes had almost completely moved out, to a house at 2362 Massachusetts ave. nw. on Embassy



The former Tofte home at 1667 35th st. nw.

# High and Low

Row. Only Charlotte Leister, Mrs. Tofte's mother, remained behind. She lived in an apartment on the second floor and had a kind of caretaker status.

A crucial question is how Slocum, who went there to see the basement, got to the third floor, where he found the documents.

Mrs. Molloy said in an interview that on her arrival with the Slocums, "Mrs. Leister offered to show the rest of the house." Slocum recalls Mrs. Molloy standing on the walk, looking up at Mrs. Leister, who was leaning out of a second-story window, and asking if the basement apartment could be seen. Mrs. Leister inquired, Slocum remembers, "whether we were interested in the basement or the third floor," and Mrs. Molloy called back that she wasn't aware two apartments were available.

Mrs. Leister came down to admit her visitors. They went to the basement, then to the first floor and then to the second. There, Mrs. Molloy said, she became "vaguely aware" on two occasions that Slocum was missing.

Slocum recalls that while his wife talked to Mrs. Molloy, he talked with Mrs. Leister. She told him the third floor was for rent. He said he went upstairs "very specifically by her direction."

## His Sanctum Santorum

THE FRONT ROOM of the third floor was Tofte's study and "out of bounds," he has said repeatedly. "Everybody knew that"—his family, his friend J. C. Chatel, the real estate man, and the domestic help.

"Everybody" did not, however, include Lelita Molloy, who had never met or talked to the Toftes. "No one suggested the third floor was out of bounds," she says.

Mrs. Leister nodded assent when I asked her generally if accounts of the episode given by her son-in-law were correct. He has said that "Granny suddenly discovered Slocum's disappearance . . . That worried her," he added.

But Mrs. Leister is 86. "It's all been such a dreadful thing for my family," she told me. "And for you?" I asked. "Oh, God," she said. She began to sob.

Close to the south wall of the study was a mechanical desk calculator. To a man with an engineering background, it was an eyecatcher in an otherwise almost empty room. Slocum crouched to look at it. As he did so, he saw a "Secret" stamp on a paper protruding from a nearby stack of documents about 2½ feet high. He examined and replaced a few other classified papers. He said he recognized them as the CIA's.



Photos by Frank Hoy, Staff Photographer

*Hans Tofte points to the corner of his study where the CIA says it found a 2½-foot stack of papers.*

This reported discovery was not the first of its kind. In December, 1964, the new occupants of a house at Sterling, Va., that Tofte had vacated told the FBI they had come across some maps stamped "Secret." The FBI established the maps to be the CIA's. The Agency said that the maps had by then become "overclassified," and it declassified them. Tofte was reportedly reprimanded for an oversight.

Tofte says he designed the maps himself from a popular spy biography and that they were "not stamped anything." He does not recall a reprimand, he says.

At the 35th Street house, Slocum returned to the second floor, told his wife that "somebody here worked for the CIA" and went back upstairs. He removed "maybe four documents" from the stack, which was atop a suitcase on the floor. According to his story, the stack was covered by a hand towel folded to about the size of the top sheet. On the table was a throw pillow. Beside the suitcase were two open briefcases.

"Where were the documents?" Tofte was asked in a recent WTTG television interview.

"There was nothing in the room but a large package wrapped up in a blanket, wrapped up in a tar-

See CIA, Page E2, Column 1

#### CIA, From Page E1

paulin," he said. "So in order to see anything, somebody would have to unpack this and look under it, and really dig to get hold of anything."

Mrs. Molloy also went to the third floor. She found Slocum "gawking around." She cannot recall what, if anything, was in front of the south wall. She was not paying heed to such things.

Mrs. Molloy was "definite" that she had seen no documents "exposed," that is, flat side up. In Government, however, "exposed" means a custody less than that required by security regulations. In that sense, the CIA papers were "exposed." If they had not been, they would have been in an approved combination lock safe.

Slocum slipped the "maybe four documents" into a jacket pocket and returned to the second floor. In talking with Mrs. Leister, he ascertained that the study was her son-in-law's and that his name was Hans Tofte. The name, he said, meant nothing to him.

Slocum said he figured that anyone who came to the house as a prospective tenant or buyer could spot the papers as easily as he had. Besides, CIA requires its employes to report any security violation they observe. At his P Street apartment, Slocum dialed the CIA.

The Slocums were summoned to Langley that night. They turned over the sampling of papers, were questioned and were told they would be phoned the next morning.

The call came about 9 a.m. Sunday. Charles D. Speake, a 41-year-old lawyer who has been a CIA security officer for 15 years, asked Slocum to arrange with Mrs. Leister for a return visit. That was done. He phoned to tell her he would come by about 10 o'clock, "after church," with a man interested in buying the entire property.

Slocum said Mrs. Leister told him she would leave the front door ajar and that she would have the Tofte poodles, Bobby-Old-Boy and Brigitte, inside her second-floor apartment so the visitors would not be bothered.

Underpinning Tofte's case is his contention that the front and rear doors of the house were locked. And, he said in the telecast interview, "It's almost incredible that anyone else could have slipped in without getting into trouble with my dogs," which "always" bark when someone enters.

#### Saw Door Ajar

**S**LOCUM SAID that about 10 o'clock he drove by the house and saw that

the front door was ajar, as Mrs. Leister had said it would be. He went on to Speake's apartment, where Speake briefed him and his wife on how they would proceed. Then they drove back to 35th Street.

About 11 a.m. they entered the house through a front door that was still ajar (Mrs. Tofte says her mother recalls that the door was closed and chained and that she admitted the visitors.) Speake and Mrs. Slocum went to the basement. Slocum walked up to Mrs. Leister's quarters. He knocked. Only then, he said, did the poodles bark.

Shortly, Mrs. Slocum and Speake went to the second floor, where Slocum joined them in the hall. All three then went to the third floor. Slocum and Speake examined the papers. Speake felt that they posed a potential "compromise of major proportions," a judgment later supported by the CIA.

Mrs. Slocum and Speake went outside. The plan was for Speake to be met by a CIA official who, if told that the papers were truly important, would show his credentials to Mrs. Leister and take the documents. The official didn't show. The CIA said later that he had been unable to find a parking space close by and was "not instantly available."

Meanwhile, Slocum was with Mrs. Leister in her apartment. He said they talked. Tofte said later that his mother-in-law was "bamboozled." Slocum said she "pleaded" that the prospective buyer be brought up to see her apartment.

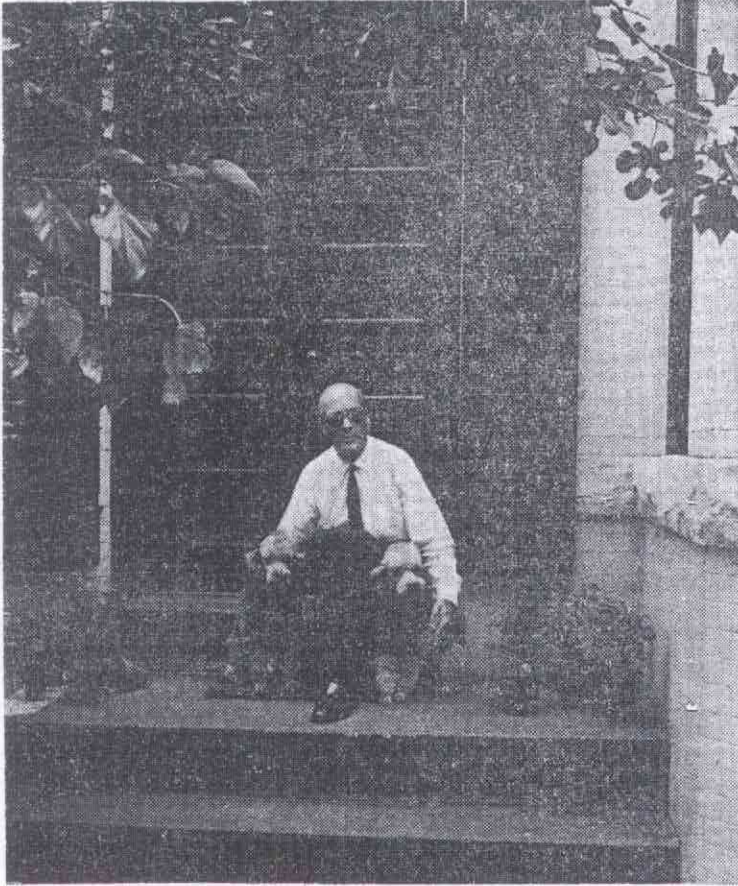
Speake obliged. While he did, Slocum returned to the third floor and looked into the two open briefcases. Near the

bottom of one, he saw a few CIA papers. He added them to the 2½-foot stack and carried the lot out to his car. His story—and the CIA's—is that this act was impulsive and unpremeditated. No "raid" had been planned.

#### Pleased to Have Company

**W**HILE MRS. SLOCUM sat in the car with its hot cargo, Slocum went to get his colleague. Speake was finding Mrs. Leister, in the word of her daughter, Mrs. Tofte, "garrulous." Slocum said she was telling Speake "how happy she was to have guests and being very courteous and cordial."

Slipping out ahead of Speake, Slocum went down to the first floor. In the center room, but visible from the front door, were a third briefcase and an attache case. He opened the briefcase



*Hans Tofte with his poodles on the steps of the 35th Street house.*



*Melita Molloy, an employe of the J. C. Chatel Co., showed the prospective buyers around the 35th Street house.*

and found it empty. He opened the attache case and found it full of documents, some of which turned out to be more "sensitive" than those found upstairs.

Tofte denied having such a case of documents downstairs.

In the account given the WTTG audience, Tofte said Speake tricked Mrs. Leister to "look into the fireplaces, and under the plumbing, and so forth and so on, while . . . Slocum . . . evidently ran up and down . . . and took these official papers out. And his wife was roaming around on the street floor among all my wife's private things. For nearly 45 minutes, I understand."

Tofte says that "someone"—meaning someone from the CIA—"overreached and took Mary's jewelry" in a raid that was "deliberately staged." This cannot be proved; he concedes, "but if anyone has a better theory, I would like to

hear it."

### 'Unprofessional' Bungle

**T**OFTE FOUND IT humiliating that "my own organization could be so careless, unprofessional and stupid." He said a warrant should have been obtained.

One high CIA official agreed. He referred to the Sunday incident as a raid and said it showed "poor judgment." CIA security officials, he added, should have been sensitive about the Agency's vulnerability to criticism for use of "such direct methods in this country."

Another Agency official said that although the CIA was "recovering its own property," there were "better ways to have done it."

At the same time, a strong current of admiration for Slocum's decisiveness flows through Langley. He did get the papers out, his defenders emphasize. What would be said, they ask, if he hadn't and if a foreign country had gotten them?

Tofte had spent that Sunday at his farm at Stannardsville, Va. The CIA

says it was unable to locate him. Late in the day, he went to a friend's home in Georgetown where he was to swim and have dinner. As he was about to enter the pool, Mrs. Leister phoned and told him to call a certain number. He recognized it as that of a CIA security officer.

The officer asked Tofte to come see him. Tofte protested that it was Sunday, that his wife was to join him but had not yet arrived and that he did not have his car with him. The security officer persisted, although he gave no hint what the trouble was.

### Blueprint for CIA 'Reform'

**A** CAR was sent. The two men in it told Tofte only that the matter was "very serious."

They went first to a CIA office in downtown Washington where they talked with a security officer. Then the four men drove to Langley.

By the time they arrived, the sorting of the Tofte papers was well under way. Some dated back as far as 1951. Others were unclassified. Still others were clearly relevant to Tofte's job and to his "5 by 5" plan, which he describes as a master blueprint for reform of the CIA.

But other Tofte papers disturbed the CIA enough that it ordered a review of its document control procedures.

A former CIA official familiar with the case says that the classifications ran "all the way to the top, through 'top secret.'" Tofte says that none of the papers he had was stamped "top secret."

An Agency executive said that the papers included recent highly sensitive "electronic messages" from CIA foreign operatives. Another CIA official noted the presence of recent—and top secret—estimates of "sensitive situations" prepared for the President and other policy makers by the Agency's Board of National Estimates.

### A Decisive Clearance

**T**HE FORMER CIA official commented, "It is not hard for any official with an appropriate clearance to ask for and get papers within that security clearance, even current national estimates, unless it is felt that the particular papers are not needed by him or unless their distribution was restricted."

Hans Tofte was cleared for top secret material. Such a clearance is decisive. A person who has it can, for example, walk in and out of the Agency with a briefcase and not be stopped, so long as he wears his picture and name tag.

Tofte contends that taking classified

papers home "is something that every high-ranking, or nearly every high-ranking, Government official must do . . . Everybody does it." CIA officials, however, say that rules are strict in that regard and that anyone taking classified papers home must give them safekeeping matching that at Langley.

Tofte complained on television that at Langley, he was questioned by "underlings" who engaged in "immediate talk of termination, demotion and, so help me—treason."

The CIA flatly denies such charges. The word "treason," one official said angrily, "was never used, under any circumstances at any time. Nor was it implied." Tofte had not used the ugly word in earlier interviews. Another official said that even today, the CIA knows of "no information indicating disloyalty or any subversive activity."

Tofte "turned on the Agency because he had to," said one CIA executive, having been "caught in error." He and other CIA officials called Tofte "ego-centric."

What the officials did charge was that Tofte could not or would not explain why he had so many documents and why he had some that were outside his legitimate "need to know." Tofte says he told his interrogators that the explanation was in his file—in the material on the operations for which he was then responsible.

### Jewels Were in Closet

**A**T THE HOUSE on 35th street that night, Tofte told his wife what had happened. She, meanwhile, had discovered that some precious ivories and personal mementos were missing from the mantelpieces in the front and middle rooms on the first floor.

She said she checked at once on her jewels and found them missing, too. They had been in a pouch which she had kept in a dark corner on a shelf in the closet of her bedroom, which has a separate entrance off Reservoir Road.

Mrs. Tofte said that about 8 a.m. that Sunday, she had come over from 2362 Massachusetts ave. for coffee with Mrs. Leister. Mrs. Tofte last saw the jewels about 9:20 a.m. before returning to the other house. She said she left them behind because workmen were still preparing the house on Embassy Row. Tofte said he had gone to his farm Friday night.

In the television interview, Tofte was asked what was taken.

"All her jewelry—very lovely things," he said, ". . . a set of beautiful sapphires, including a 130-carat half-moon sapphire, a very rare thin one, that usually sits in the turban of a maharajah of India." Among other pieces "was a set

of lovely diamonds, and there were emeralds."

The valuation Tofte gave on WTTG was "much more" than \$100,000. A decade before, Mrs. Tofte had said earlier, the jewels had been insured for \$18,400 and had been appraised at \$30,000. The Toftes say they have new indications, however, that the half-moon sapphire, which is surrounded by diamonds, is alone worth at least \$75,000.

### Unstinting Confidence

**O**N MONDAY, July 26, Mrs. Tofte went to Leesburg to report the disappearance — as her insurance

policy required — to B. Powell Harrison, her agent. He recalls her being "terribly upset" and urging that the most competent investigators be promptly assigned.

Harrison has known the Toftes for 20 years. Like many others, including high-ranking service officers, business executives, neighbors and friends from the years that the Toftes spent in Mason City, Iowa, Harrison was unstinting in his expressions of confidence and trust in the couple.

Harrison is "thoroughly inclined to believe they are right in everything they say." Gerhard P. Van Arkel, a Washington lawyer who served in the OSS with Tofte, had "personal knowledge" of his "heroic exploits" in smuggling war material to the Yugoslav partisans. Van Arkel termed Tofte "utterly veracious."

Meanwhile, Tofte was reporting daily to Langley. From the start, he said, he considered "the list of suspects pretty short" and accordingly pressed CIA hard for help in recovering the jewels. He said he was laughed at and was asked, "What would we do with jewels?"

The CIA says that Tofte first mentioned the jewels on Monday "in a very casual way. He said it was his wife's business and was told it should be reported to the police."

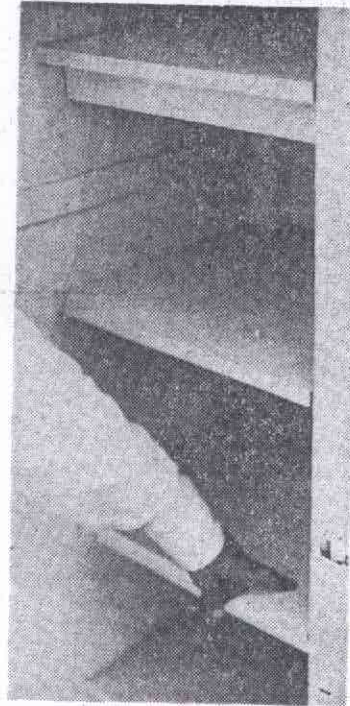
### Police Deny Deterrence

**M**R. TOFTE personally made a preliminary report at the Seventh Precinct late Monday night. She filled in the details soon thereafter. The case was the responsibility of Det. Lt. John B. Kline. Involved at Police Headquarters was Det. Sgt. Hamilton W. Shoop Jr., one of the Department's four trained polygraph (lie detector) operators.

Tofte has charged repeatedly that the "CIA prevented" the police from making a vigorous investigation of the

jewelry disappearance. Kline and Shoop insist that they made a thorough inquiry and deny that the CIA tried to deter them, though Kline was told confidentially of Tofte's CIA connection.

During the investigation, Kline proposed that the three visitors to the house on 35th Street, the Slocums and Speake, come to Police Headquarters



*Hans Tofte's hand points to the spot in the bedroom closet where he says his wife's jewels should have been.*

to take polygraph tests. These were administered by Shoop. Kline believes that the tests showed the three "innocent of any knowledge of the jewelry whatsoever." Shoop is forbidden to discuss any tests he gives.

Kline pointedly called attention to the possibility that a door of the house had been left open. No one has seriously suggested the possibility of a forced entry.

### No Case Against Anyone

**F**INALLY, the officers presented the case to Alfred Hantman, executive assistant to the United States Attorney.

Also present were the CIA's general counsel, Lawrence R. Houston, and its security chief, Howard Osborn. The CIA said their mission was to provide such background as might be requested.

No cause for prosecution of anyone was found by Hantman. In the removal of the documents, he found no intent

to commit an offense and, therefore, "not even a technical violation . . ."

The Toftes had scant evidence of a vigorous police inquiry. Indeed, a description of the jewels was not sent out on the police teletype until 11:44 p.m. Aug. 2—in a case involving the biggest reported household jewel theft in Washington in eight months.

### Newspaper Smokeout

**O**N THE MORNING of Aug. 2, which was seven days after Mrs. Tofte made her preliminary report at the Seventh Precinct, Clark R. Mollenhoff broke a story about the case in the Des Moines Register and the Minneapolis Tribune. Most of his material came from Tofte.

Late that day, the CIA made an extraordinary effort to defend itself by issuing a press release that gave newsmen here their first knowledge about the case. The teletype message about the theft clicked out over police machines after Alfred E. Lewis, The Washington Post's police reporter, started making inquiries.

There was no dusting for fingerprints on 35th Street. Kline indicated that he thought that would have been "futile." Nor was Melita Molloy, the real estate agent, interviewed. Shoop

said he tried to talk to her but gave up after a few unsuccessful efforts to find her at home.

Tofte said in the WTTG interview that he "went public" only after he had been "outraged" by a noninvestigation, the blowing of his cover and his treatment by the CIA. His wife was badly upset and her mother "was sick—her pride is gone."

As far as the CIA is concerned, the publicity bath that followed was the ultimate proof of Tofte's unprofessionalism.

On July 30, Tofte had given police a typed statement that surfaced three days later in the story broken by the Pulitzer Prize-winning Mollenhoff. The story triggered the CIA press release, and overnight the Tofte case became worldwide news.

### Unaccustomed Exposure

**A**CCUSTOMED TO EXPLAINING behind the scenes, if at all; unaccustomed to uninhibited questioning; concerned about a recent flurry of attacks from Capitol Hill and elsewhere, the CIA in the Tofte case reminded some of a nervous elephant beset by a fly.

Presumably as a symbol of its credibility, the CIA blew cover No. 2 by dis-

closing undercover man Speake's home address in the press release. More covers blew later. In mid-August, reporters got an anonymous letter steering them to the fifth floor at 1750 Pennsylvania ave. nw., where a sign says an Army Element is in the restricted area behind the door. Actually, as the letter said, the office is the CIA's. Tracy Barnes, Tofte's boss, works there.

Two more covers were blown by a scrapbook Tofte sent me. In it were two Xerox copies of a letter dated April 26, 1965. It says that for the past



Photos by Frank Hoy, Staff Photographer

*Charlotte Leister, 86-year-old mother of Mrs. Hans Tofte, in her second-floor room in the house at 1667 35th st. nw. with the Tofte poodles, Bobby-Old-Boy and Brigitte, which stayed with her during the considerable rambling that went on in the place.*

ten years — a decade when Tofte was at the CIA — “he has been associated with the Wall Street investment firm Wood, Struthers, and Winthrop.” The signature is that of Roy L. Morgan, director, Office of Field Services, Department of Commerce.

Tofte contended that no harm was done by this disclosure, the CIA having blown his identity to police. The CIA did not share this casual view.

### Assault From Iowa

ON SUNDAY, Aug. 7, a major assault on the CIA began to take shape in Mason City, Iowa, where for many years Tofte had operated the Klipto Loose Leaf Co. Charles E. Strickland, an admirer of the Toftes and a friend — but “never very close” — was about to leave for St. John’s Episcopal Church when he got a phone call from two leading Mason City men who asked him to meet with them that morning.

Strickland, who is a retired president of the People’s Gas & Electric Co., agreed. At his office, the two men talked about the troubles of their mutual friend Tofte. They asked Strickland to write Tofte a letter of introduction to Sen. Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa, a friend of Strickland and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s ranking Republican.

Strickland wrote the letter the same day. Tofte acknowledged the courtesy in a letter to Strickland on Monday. He said he gave a copy to Mollenhoff, among others, and got advance clearance for publication from Strickland. The latter, however, told me he first learned of the letter on Aug. 13, the day after it was published in the Des Moines Register and Minneapolis Tribune. “Apparently,” Strickland said of Tofte, “I was his springboard.”

Tofte wrote Strickland that he would use the introduction “as appropriate.” Hickenlooper never heard from Tofte, who said he has talked to other Senators, however.

### Helms Is Bullseye

THE TOFTE letter appeals to friends in Iowa and Minnesota to trust him “to the bitter end,” but most of it

is an implicit attack on Richard M. Helms, the CIA professional who rose to the directorship. There is a strong appeal for “rigorous congressional controls.”

The letter lengthily recites alleged CIA blunders and contends that the Tofte “5 by 5 plan,” on which he had been working at home nights, weekends and holidays, would curb inefficiency and waste. He said that the

documents seized by the CIA included “reference papers . . . that apparently represented ‘inside’ and knowledgeable criticism” of numerous “‘embarrassing issues.’”

Turning to “my own ambitions,” Tofte wrote Strickland that “once during a secret meeting at the White House early in the Kennedy Administration, I was jokingly asked ‘whether I wanted to be director of CIA.’” His reply was that no President could make a worse mistake than “to put a CIA professional in the top spot of the Agency.”

Tofte recalls initiating the meeting, largely to protest the kind of CIA leadership that fostered the Bay of Pigs. He said he had counseled against that operation.

Tofte said the White House session was on May 5, 1961, that it lasted 3½ hours and that he talked primarily to Theodore C. Sorensen, President Ken-



*Marlys Tofte, who discovered that her jewelry had disappeared after first missing some precious ivories and personal mementos from the first-floor mantelpieces.*

nedy’s top aide. Sorensen says that “I have no recollection of seeing Mr. Tofte in the White House, but if he was there, the Bay of Pigs did not come up, nor did the question of who should be named director of the CIA.”

When the CIA appointed a board of inquiry, headed by Adm. Charles Melson, to look into the Tofte case, Tofte took the offensive. He said he would cooperate when Director Helms would say in public that the CIA had stopped breaking into private homes. Then he



walked out.

\* \* \*

Unprovable elements and persons trained in covert activity characterize the Tofte case.

Tofte told me that the CIA had removed from his scrapbook a letter in which Helms had asked him to stay in the Agency "for life." The CIA says that "no such letter ever existed."

Tofte said CIA had twice put his wife under surveillance. CIA said that "the honest truth" was that it had never even contemplated such surveillance.

So, no one could prove that the jewels had or had not been stolen; Helms could not prove he had not written a letter that Tofte could not produce; and surveillance, when it is expert, is unnoticeable.

Allen Dulles once said: "In intelligence, you have to take certain things on faith."

C