

The Washington merry-go-round

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WASHINGTON — Somewhere in the Western world at this moment reside two men whose routine lives disguise their shadowy pasts in the netherworld of espionage. One is probably a journalist, the other a lawyer.

They are spies who came in from the cold. Their tale is one of double lives, torture and a spectacular jailbreak engineered by the CIA. In the interest of their personal safety, we have decided not to identify them by name.

In 1969, the two men — one a Scotsman, the other an Englishman — were leading what appeared to be normal lives in the white supremacist nation of Rhodesia. One was an editor for the Rhodesia Herald in Salisbury, the second an attorney in private practice.

At the time, the government of Prime Minister Ian Smith had been declared an outlaw by the United Nations and the rest of the world was ostensibly refusing to trade with them. In truth, businessmen from several nations were secretly violating the economic blockade against Rhodesia.

The journalist and the lawyer were recruited by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency to pass on information about the embargo breakers. As they pursued their professions, they also gathered documents and data, and dropped it off in mail boxes at a post office in the suburbs of Salisbury.

The journalist's information, according to our sources, made its way to a man named Paul O'Neill, the U.S. consul general in Salisbury at the time. The lawyer's papers eventually wound up on the desk of a U.S. consular officer in South Africa named I. L. Smith.

Smith, say our CIA sources, was an agency case officer. We have secured the diplomatic lists, but the mysterious Mr. Smith has apparently dropped out of sight.

Eventually, the Rhodesian police began to notice the strange comings and goings of the two secret agents. The "spooks" were followed and photographed, their documents intercepted. They were arrested.

While imprisoned, according to our CIA sources, the journalist and the lawyer were mercilessly beaten and tortured, and the details of their clandestine lives were slowly drawn from them.

They were tried behind closed doors and convicted of violating Rhodesia's Official Secrets Act and other regulations. On Dec. 12, 1969, the journalist was sentenced to 18 months at hard labor. The attorney drew four years

on the rock pile.

The United States, meanwhile, was seriously considering the withdrawal of its consulate in Salisbury. Prime Minister Smith, in desperate need of official recognition, wanted the United States to stay. With this bargaining chip,

Washington managed to negotiate the release of one spy, who was delivered to the airport while allegedly en route to prison.

The Rhodesians, however, stubbornly refused to give up the other. The CIA, say our sources, freed him by staging a daring jailbreak, then whisked him off to a new life in another land.

Footnote: The CIA refused to comment on our story. Paul O'Neill, now the State Department's "country director" for South Africa, was travelling in Africa when we called and could not be reached.

SCIENTIFIC DRUNKS: Alcoholics desperately seeking treatments have been used as guinea pigs for government-funded experiments in which doctors dose them with more booze in the name of science.

The hospitals used for the experiments are frequently advertised as "treatment" centers. Yet, our investigation shows that once inside, the vulnerable and distressed alcoholic may be asked whether he wants to "volunteer" for an experimental program in which he will get still more liquor.

Susceptible to any suggestion, many agree and some are even paid to go back to tipping. Then they are given varying quantities of alcohol to see how it affects them. In the end, they may be dried out and treated without alcohol.

We have found programs being carried out by doctors from such famed institutions as the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia, Brooklyn's Downstate Medical Center and New York's Payne Whitney Clinic. Similar experiments have been conducted at Veteran's Administration facilities and other hospitals.

For example, Dr. Milton Gross, a prestigious scientist at the Brooklyn center, got a federal grant from the National Institute of Mental Health for his study.

Alcoholic patients seeking help were paid as "volunteers" and given controlled amounts of alcohol for four to six days.

Dr. Gross and others ably defend both the history and necessity of such experiments. Gross feels the participants are helped in the long run because "it gives them a sense of worth which often helps with their future recovery."

But many doctors feel that any additional alcohol is damaging to an alcoholic, particularly to his liver. The consensus is that the only way for a true alcoholic to stop drinking is to "leave the stuff alone" completely.

Some doctors also question the ethics of human guinea pig techniques and recommend instead use of baboons or other manlike animals. But this runs afoul of animal lovers who are outraged when baboons, which are sober by nature, are turned into lushes.