

'French Connection' Plot Thickens

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A three-day interrogation of the French counter-espionage agent who smuggled \$12 million worth of heroin into the United States a year ago reveals that a key report implicating his superior disappeared in Paris after arrest here.

A transcript of the questioning also disclosed that the agent's mistress and a son were harassed by French authorities and that a member of the French consulate staff in New York City, identified for the first time, was to be his contact if trouble unrelated to the smuggling should develop.

The 368-page transcript may revive a furore in France over claims by French police and judicial authorities that they have not covered up for certain officials of the French counterpart of the CIA.

The questioning was conducted here last month, mainly by investigating magistrate Gabriel Roussel of Paris. It provides rare glimpses into the agency, SDECE (Service de Documentation Exterieure et de Contre-Espionage).

The record of the interrogation was made public Monday by Donald A. Robinson, counsel for the agent, Roger X. L. DeLouette of Paris, when DeLouette, 48, received a minimum five-year sentence.

Judge Frederick B. Lacey, who imposed the sentence, and U.S. Attorney Herbert J. Stern, who objected to the introduction of the transcript, joined in praising DeLouette for the cooperation he provided federal investigators after his arrest on April 5, 1971.

On that day he went to Port Elizabeth, N.J., to pick up a Volkswagen camper he had had shipped from France. Customs inspector Lynn Pelletier, 21, making a routine spot-check of the interior of the VW, noticed sunlight coming through a hole in a front installation panel—the result, apparently, of a screw having shaken out in transit. Curious, she reached behind the panel—and pulled out a package of heroin.

Under a French-American agreement on narcotics trafficking, DeLouette was ques-

tioned the day after his arrest by a French policeman then assigned to the consulate, Daniel Hartwig, who took notes, and by U.S. customs agent Paul Boulard, who made a tape recording.

In a statement, DeLouette named the man he called the mastermind of the smuggling scheme as an SDECE department head known to him as "Col. Paul Fournier," who since has been identified as Paul Ferrer.

At one point, when the customs agent went to another room, Hardwig took DeLouette aside "to tell me that I should never have said this to the Americans," the agent said.

The transcript disclosed that Hardwig phoned someone in Paris, which led to an immediate visit to Ferrer by Michel Nœquet, chief commissioner of the Police Judiciare in Paris. No written report on

the conversation has been filed with Judge Roussel. French police, after closing a three-day investigation, pronounced Ferrer innocent.

DeLouette learned of the visit to Ferrer from John Cusack, then director for Western Europe of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. Cusack later created an angry controversy by accusing French authorities—who denied it—of not making bona-fide efforts to dismantle heroin laboratories in the Marseilles area.

"I was absolutely astonished," DeLouette said, explaining that he had expected his charge against Ferrer to be pursued in "a discreet investigation."

"Once they went to see him that was it. I never thought he would know that I had talked."

Also in the questioning a year ago, DeLouette identified Donald McNabb, a middle-level official at the French Consulate in New York, as the man Ferrer had told him to contact in event of unforeseen difficulties unrelated to the heroin smuggling, for which DeLouette was to receive \$50,000.

McNabb was "a representative of the SDECE," DeLouette charged.

Soon after DeLouette

named McNabb, Hardwig and the top narcotics official of the Police Judiciare, Claude Chaminadas, called on McNabb to show him photos of DeLouette.

Stern, in a confrontation with Roussel during the interrogation last month, protested that Hardwig made a report on the question of DeLouette that got to French police, but, somehow, according to Roussel, did not reach him. Stern also recalled to Roussel a statement by the magistrate that Hardwig had claimed that DeLouette had never mentioned McNabb.

Last April, DeLouette said, Hardwig "gave me his word" that if he supplied the address of his mistress, Marie-Jose Robert, then 22 and pregnant, "nothing would be done against her."

But, DeLouette said, she subsequently was indicted for possession of \$17,000 in counterfeit U.S. currency, which he said was in her apartment but of which she was "totally unaware." She was jailed for three months and was "liberated" only two days before giving birth. Recently, Roussel lifted her passport, temporarily preventing her from coming to see DeLouette.

In his statement to Hardwig, DeLouette told of being requested by Ferrer to meet a certain SDECE employee who

then gave him an envelope containing the \$17,000. DeLouette, following instructions, went to an Italian town on the French border, Modane, to deliver it to a contact.

But Ferrer cancelled the meeting, suggesting instead that DeLouette take the counterfeit currency to Algeria. The agent declined, not wishing to risk a severe penalty. He said the money was in a bureau drawer in the apartment when he left for the United States.

Last October, DeLouette said, one of the six children by his marriage, a son, arrived in the university compound in Bordeaux to look for a room. And, at Roussel's request, police interrogated the student for 7½ hours and searched his room "in order to seize his letters," DeLouette said.

On March 11—a day after the interrogation ended—Stern sent Roussel a tape of the recording made by the customs agent, Boulard, a year ago. No action against Ferrer is known to have resulted.

A grand jury indicted Ferrer, as well as DeLouette, last Nov. 15. Not until after that was there any public knowledge of the behind-the-scenes legal wrangle between French authorities and Stern and his top assistant, Jonathan L. Goldstein.

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