

NYTimes

OCT 13 1971

Odyssey Among Spooks

By C. L. SULZBERGER

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MONTE CARLO, Monaco — The Spindrift of the cold war is the human spray blown hither and thither by ideological gusts. This is typified by dissidents who flee Communist lands in search of freedom, by draft dodgers seeking to escape the U.S. armed forces abroad, by American black revolutionists in foreign havens and by defectors from rival diplomatic or espionage establishments who for different reasons abandon their native lands.

One of the most puzzling of these instances is that of Jozef Szall, Hungary's senior career ambassador and most recently special adviser to his Foreign Minister. Szall fled Budapest last year, spent a considerable time under interrogation by Italian security representatives in Rome, where he had long been envoy, and early this year was flown to the United States by the Central Intelligence Agency whose voluntary guest he remained for weeks.

Szall, his wife and 12-year-old boy benefited from the hospitality of a C.I.A. safe house near Washington during which time the family acknowledges it was amiably treated. They visited Washington theaters and museums but were isolated from direct contact with friends or non-C.I.A. officials.

However, although the C.I.A. offered to facilitate the Szalls' permanent admission, the ambassador remained uncertain that he wanted to make the final leap. He still felt Hungarian and a "Socialist" if of a heretically liberal sort.

Therefore, with the intelligence agency's help, they flew back to Europe, stopping first in Switzerland. The Swiss security police immediately wanted a report on everything he had told Italian and American intelligence. When he refused they eased him out.

The Szalls then went to Vienna where they established telephone contact with various Hungarian officials as well as Budapest's Embassy in Austria. Somehow, by wishful thinking, they hoped they might still be forgiven and allowed to return home to an esteemed position.

Just why they should have cherished such a delusion is hard to fathom. While the Szalls were still refugees in Rome on the initial lap of their strange

odyssey, they attended a prearranged meeting in St. Peter's, Vatican City, and were almost kidnapped by the Hungarian "diplomatic representatives" whom they met. Alert Italian security agents apparently prevented their forcible removal.

Even before they transferred from an Italian safe house to an American safe house, Mrs. Szall's elderly parents in Budapest had been dispossessed of almost all their belongings and contact between the ambassador and his friends had ceased.

It was difficult to imagine that a term as guest of the C.I.A. would improve Szall's chances of advancement. Nevertheless, at first he was received by the Hungarian ambassador in Vienna and talked with officials by long distance telephone to Budapest.

Soon the freeze began, however, and Szall's curious dream of redefecting began to vanish. He demanded a safe conduct and a written amnesty. "What do you expect?" he was asked. "The red carpet treatment?" All doors closed.

At this point Szall decided to return westward. He had no wish to go back to Italy where the security apparatus didn't feel especially chummy following his departure from the hospitality of Rome spooks for that of Washington's.

Nor did he aspire to try so soon again to revisit the United States, which wouldn't have been easy anyway. He wanted a neutral corner; Switzerland was inhospitable; so he came to this little principality. Although Monaco is virtually a piece of France, it has its own flag and sovereign and no relations with any Communist states.

Szall, who now lives in a modest apartment here, is in no sense a major figure in the criss-crossing tide of humanity set in motion by Europe's East-West ideological cleavage.

Nevertheless, he is the highest-ranking Hungarian defector since the revolution that shook his country exactly fifteen years ago and perhaps the most distinguished political refugee to seek sanctuary here. More singularly, he is one of the few cases of a redefector, by intent if not by achievement, so far produced by the cold war.