

# Professor Vanishes at the University of Colorado

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BOULDER, Colo., Jan. 18 — A Czech-born associate professor of modern Russian history has disappeared from the University of Colorado campus.

Thomas Riha, 40 years old, was last seen nine months ago. He left the university abruptly, apparently taking nothing with him and leaving a mysterious trail.

While friends and fellow faculty members fear that Professor Riha may be dead, police officials in Boulder and Denver and the former president of the university, Dr. Joseph Smiley, all insist he is alive.

They say they have spoken to responsible persons in the Federal Government who have assured them of the professor's safety. They refused to say, either publicly or privately, who their sources were.

In Washington, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department all deny knowing anything about the case and suggest it may be a local police matter.

Professor Riha, born in Prague, came to the United States in 1947. He became a naturalized citizen and received his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1962 he received a doctorate from Harvard University.

He taught at the University of Chicago and at Marburg University, in West Germany, before moving to the University of Colorado in 1967.

## Disappeared Suddenly

Professor Riha disappeared so suddenly that, though normally a neat and precise man, he left personal papers scattered on his university desk where he had been preparing his income tax.

Only one person has maintained that he has been seen since his disappearance the weekend of March 15-16. That is Mrs. Galya Tannenbaum of Denver, an ex-convict who says she has spoken to him and that he is in Montreal.

A number of letters and credit cards signed "Thomas Riha" have turned up, and much of his personal property



Prof. Thomas Riha



Mrs. Galya Tannenbaum

nek Cerveny, of Lyons, Colo., came to the United States from Czechoslovakia following the Russian invasion in 1968.

Following his uncle's disappearance, Mr. Cerveny said Mrs. Galya Tannenbaum of Denver, whom he had met through Professor Riha, called him and said that the professor would not be back. He said she asked them to dispose of his personal effects.

In the following weeks the professor's car and house were sold and his furniture and papers transferred to Mrs. Tannenbaum's house in Denver. She turned over \$19,000 worth of his small art collection to the Denver Art Museum.

Mrs. Tannenbaum, who spent more than two years in the State Penitentiary at Dwight, Ill., after pleading guilty to forgery and embezzlement in 1959, presented Mr. Cerveny with two pistols and said she was a brigadier general in military intelligence.

She is now awaiting trial Feb. 9 in Denver District Court on charges of forging a will following the death of Gustav F. Ingwersen, 78, a friend who died of potassium cyanide poisoning June 16.

The will was witnessed by Mr. Cerveny, who later repudiated it in Denver probate court.

Another friend of Mrs. Tannenbaum's, Mrs. Barbara Egbert, 51, died Sept. 13 of sodium cyanide poisoning.

Both deaths are listed as suspicious by the Denver police and are under investigation.

has been sold or given away.

Professor Riha's lawyer, Richard E. Hopkins, of Boulder, says he is suspicious of the signatures and the letters.

Though Mr. Hopkins has received letters signed by "Thomas Riha," he said, "I simply don't know whether I've heard from him."

Dr. Smiley, now president of the University of Texas at El Paso, said he was assured of the professor's safety "by what I consider reliable sources" in Washington.

"I repeat my real regret that I can't go beyond what I have said," he said in a telephone interview. "A confidence is still a confidence."

Professor Riha's former wife lives in Brooklyn. The former Hana Huskova was also born in Czechoslovakia and is 15 years younger than the professor.

At the time of his disappearance she had been gone from their home for a week after a stormy scene in which a neighbor said she fled to him, with her clothes smelling

of ether, shouting she was afraid acquaintances were trying to kill her.

At the time Professor Riha had already filed divorce papers to end their five-month marriage.

## Judgment Still Unpaid

Following his disappearance, Mrs. Riha filed a counter-suit. She won it on Sept. 30 and received a \$5,000 judgment.

Her husband did not appear in court, and the judgment is still unpaid.

The professor's nephew, Zed-

See also this file

10 Mar 71

11 Oct 71

9 Jan 75

28 Sep 76

"disappeared from the University of Colorado on March 15, 1969" - WXPost 9 Jan 75, Jack Anderson column.