

A Spy Arrest in a Russ Community

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ACROSS A cemetery cluttered with Russian crosses, a threadbare American flag is framed between 23-carat, gold-leaf cupolas that poke skyward from St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church.

This is Russia in New Jersey, a sprawling and steadily dissipating group of communities about 60 miles south of New York City, where thousands can recall how Russian Communists killed their relatives, where wrinkled Russian-Americans sing the "Star-Spangled Banner" with wet eyes, and where there are still memories of the vodka-guzzling bash in 1953 that celebrated Stalin's death.

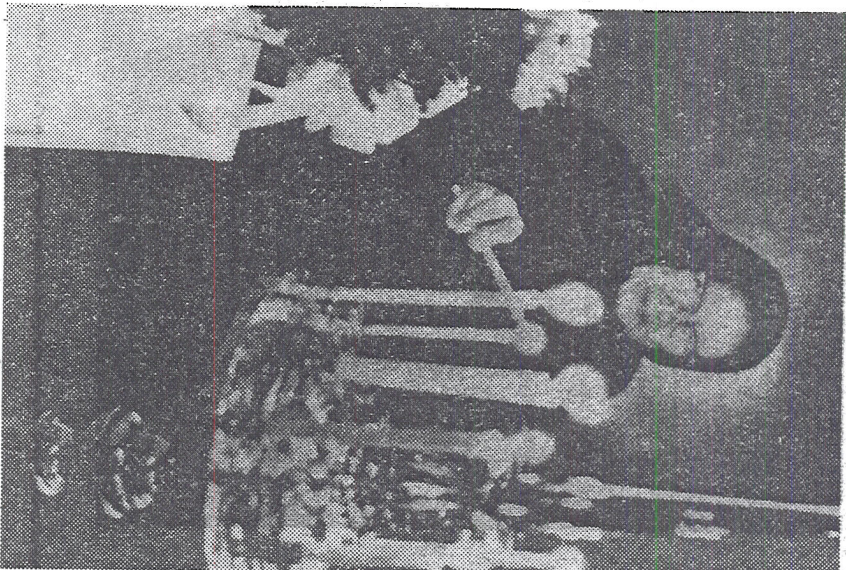
Here, the word Communist is a synonym for damned, and it was where Ivan Rogalsky, a 34-year-old former Soviet seaman, was arrested recently and accused of being a Soviet spy.

Rogalsky, who lived, played cards and drank around here for nearly three years, was arrested for unsuccessfully trying to coax defense secrets from an RCA engineer who works at an astro-electronics plant near Princeton. He was arrested by FBI agents moments after the RCA engineer, who was working with the agents, had handed the Russian "highly classified documents" related to satellite communications.

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LIKE THOUSANDS before him, Rogalsky came to this village of Russians because it was easy.

After jumping ship in Spain in 1970 and coming to the United States a year later to become a permanent resident alien, Rogalsky slipped easily into a community honed by four generations of Russians out of what had once been deserted Jersey pinelands.

By his relative youth alone, he was an anomaly as a Russian-born emigre. And, in an



A Russian-American worshiper in New Jersey fights a candle for the dead

un-spy-like manner, he lived a life that attracted attention.

John Alchevski, the man who invited Rogalsky down from the Bronx — they met when Rogalsky repaired Alchevski's car — frequently spoke with the young Russian during his first year or so in Cassville. Alchevski says Rogalsky refused to accept financing to start his own garage business. He says, also, that Rogalsky quit his part-time job at the One-Stop Garage after about five

months. Rogalsky was known to frequently play cards for hundreds of dollars.

Alchevski asked Rogalsky where he got the money to play cards and not work. Alchevski says the young Russian, who traveled United States up to Alaska in 1975, replied that he had won a little at cards and made enough money to live by doing auto repairs.

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IN APRIL 1975, according to Jackson Township police, Rogalsky ripped a telephone from the wall at the Rova Farms resort and threatened manager Herman Schultz with a knife. Witnesses said Rogalsky warned Schultz: "You will be dead in the morning." Later, in the summer of 1975, according to witnesses, Rogalsky was paying his bill at Rova Farms for a bowl of borscht when he threatened to kill the waitress giving him change.

Townsmen Nicholas Zill spoke frequently with Rogalsky in the resort's dining room and bar. Zill says Rogalsky offered to kill a man who he thought was Zill's enemy. Zill doubts that Rogalsky could have succeeded as a spy.

"He went out of his way to draw attention to himself," he says.

When Rogalsky was arrested, Zill's reaction, along with that of Alchevski, was one of disbelief.

Zill and Alchevski say that if Rogalsky was involved in espionage activity he was duped into it by someone else. They have given their assessment of Rogalsky to the FBI, which interviewed them recently.

The Russian people here are not stirred up about the alleged spy for the regime they despise.

Perhaps a dying community, like a dying man, is difficult to scare.

No one knows yet what lies ahead for Rogalsky, but as for the community, that is another story. (See below)