

ZURICH AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

Jury court in Zurich

Abused Host Country

The Fairytale Castle on Lake Geneva

In the winter of 1947/48, a dark-eyed Greek rented a castle-like villa in Coppet on Lake Geneva with his young wife. Carpenters and plasterers soon came to repair individual imperfections in the house so that His Highness, Aristotle Nyad, with his wife and child, could lead a comfortable life within the house's walls. Along with the rich man, a whole retinue of servants moved in: a chauffeur for the two American luxury cars, two housekeeping staff, and a nanny, as well as a friend of his wife whom Nyad generously supported. And now began a life of rare glamour and splendor. The handsome Greek presented his partner with jewelry and clothes, the likes of which she probably never dreamed of. Only the most expensive furs and jewels were enough, and it has been proven that 60,000 - 70,000 francs were spent on such gifts within four summer months. But those were small things compared to the fabulous earnings that Aristotle Nyad, the former American Air Force officer and much adored Hollywood **dealmaker**, was able to pocket.

The Plane of Gold

The young Greek grew up in simple circumstances in Long Beach, California. Being a hero of the air was his dream from a young age, and so he actually fought tenaciously to get accepted into a U.S. aircraft. Since he did not succeed in doing so for the time being, he tried to detour via Canada, which really trained him to be a pilot. The United States Army authorities were more stubborn and did not want to hear from Lieutenant Nyad for the time being, and when he came to New York from Canada, he was sent to a camp [lager?] in Arizona for four months for improperly wearing a uniform (the camp otherwise housed conscientious objectors). But then there was Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war, and everyone was glad for those who served and wanted to serve. And so Nyad was trained again, this time according to the American model. They first used him in his own country for certain tasks, and then in North Africa, France, Italy and Germany. The long absence from America led to the breakup of his first marriage after Nyad got married in 1943 but had only seen his wife for four and a half months in total. After the armistice, he stayed in the military for two years and then became an American security officer in Athens for fairly good pay. But in the long run, he did not like this peaceful life. He was used to flying across countries and continents, so he was certainly destined for something higher now too. So he resigned from his service in Greece and traveled to the promised land of Switzerland, where he immediately met with financiers in Geneva to build up a powerful black market organization [*Schieberorganisation*] by taking gold and watches to Athens on a chartered plane. In Switzerland at that time the watch and gold trade was unrestricted again. In Greece, smuggling such goods was subject to severe penalties. Nyad piloted the plane himself now and then, other times he let others fly. An average transport alone brought him 80,000 francs profit.

During his short stays in Athens, he was not idle. He bribed a large number of lowly customs officers who then declared the foreign aircraft as "carriage paid" [*«frachtfrei»*] after landing. At night these officials came to the airfield by jeep, picked up the expensive cargo and put it into the hands of the waiting agents. [??]

An emergency landing with serious consequences

But as cleverly and skillfully as everything was thought out, an unforeseen event caused the whole racket to collapse. One time, the plane had to make an emergency landing on Greek soil, but far outside of Athens; the ground crew there was not bribed. And so everything came to light and afterwards no fewer than 25 people were sentenced to heavy prison terms, including Nyad, who was fortunately in Coppet at the time and was able to thumb his nose at Greek law enforcement. The financiers now made him liable for the failure. There were enormous losses, and Nyad's financial situation deteriorated at breakneck speed. Just as the money was won, so it was lost. First, he had to leave the fairy tale castle, then mortgage his wife's jewelry, etc., without daring to describe the seriousness of the whole situation to her. Because he kept it from his wife, he still had to maintain the appearance of well-being, and so he spent another year with the family in first-class hotels until the last franc was used up and — afterwards, the marriage also collapsed.

And the end

Nyad didn't want to face reality. He well knew that he had no credit either, but he temporarily pretended that he did. In any case, to the outside world, he was still playing the rich guy who just had no cash "at the moment". And so he fraudulently obtained a total of 13,176 Fr. in various places in Switzerland. He preferred to approach hotel staff whose customs he knew well, and they granted him loans on the basis of some blank checks he had issued for which there was no backing at all, although he firmly asserted there was. The people were impressed by secure backing of the checks [*Das sichere Checkausstellen imponierte den Leuten*], and within 18 days five people fell for it.

The jury court in Zurich recognized fraud. Following the prosecutor's request, he was sentenced to 1 year and 6 months in prison and 10 years' expulsion from the country. Should he ever turn up in Greece again, there will still be 6 years of imprisonment waiting for him.