

Court in Zurich

The Underworld of Gold

II.

Aris becomes independent

He started his own business with \$20,000 in capital. On a holiday trip (alleged) in Geneva, he made the acquaintance of Swiss capitalists. At their suggestion, gold, watches and other items were loaded on to a plane and flown to Greece. There, they were converted into dollars, which in turn were transported to Geneva by air. Three aircraft handled the illegal movement of goods and money between Switzerland and Greece for this organization. In addition, Nyad had his own company that did its flying business with a Dakota. . .

In autumn 1948, Nyad got into "troubles." By this point in time, he claims to have earned around CHF 500,000 swiss francs [*Franken/CHF*] in commissions and profits in the two organizations. A pilot to whom he claims to have entrusted 300,000 francs delivered 100,000 too little. In order to cover this loss for which he was personally responsible, he was offered a particularly high commission of 10% for the next flight to Greece. But this expedition ended in disaster. The plane had to make an emergency landing in Greece, the goods worth 800,000 francs were confiscated, and Aris himself lost 80,000 francs. His remaining capital at that time is said to have been in Swiss assets of 10,000 dollars and 12,300 [*perhaps a misprint, since next sentence says 2300*] gold sovereigns (at 60 Swiss francs each). Nyad sent the 2300 sovereigns to the famous Jack Taylor, always according to his minimally verifiable statements, as he feared that after the crash/dustup/brouhaha [*krach*] in Athens the Swiss authorities would deal with his easily earned fortune/ill-gotten gains [*leicht verdienten Vermögen*]. The fear was unfounded. It is true that he had been sentenced in absentia by a Greek court to 6 years' imprisonment - and with him 25 cronies to 1-25 years' imprisonment; But Mother Helvetia left him unscathed. Jack Taylor, the great stranger number 1, invested the money he received from Aris profitably in Chaux-de-Fonds watches that he exported to Argentina. But Aris didn't hear from him anymore. So, this money went down the drain too.

Marriage #2 goes down the tubes

In the summer of 1948, Aris had taken a Zurich hairdresser as his second wife, a very pretty thing who - at first - proved to be quite grateful for the obvious proof of the phenomenal generosity of the Greco-American. The little girl from Zurich, who brought a child into the marriage, lived from then on only in the very best hotels in Switzerland, was given a suite on her honeymoon in Cannes, and had with her a nurse, a maid, a cook and a chauffeur. She was given gifts of expensive jewelry from the finest jewelry shops (which she only found out later had not been paid for), received furs worth 23,000 francs from London (Mr. Nyad also failed to settle this bill) and temporarily lived in a villa in Coppet, their rent costing 900 francs a month - in addition to the 6000-franc investment for the renovation. She wasn't feeling bad . . .

When Nyad's wife found out one day that her husband was not, as he had claimed, the son of a wealthy Californian oil magnate, but rather a shady character, it didn't take long for their love story to end. She separated from her husband, began working as a mannequin [*Photomodell*]

again, and finally obtained a divorce without much effort. She now lives in Paris as a photo model and is perhaps happier than when she was allowed to play the role of countess. Or maybe not.

The System

Two things become apparent when considering the facts included in the indictment: they all fall within the very short period from the end of March to mid-April 1950, and the technique of the procedure was basically always the same: Nyad spoke to the night concierge or the hotel secretary of a grand hotel (or the waitress of a fashionable catering establishment) at a time when the bank windows were closed and it was practically impossible to inquire about the status of his accounts (in particular, whether Nyad had enough money to cover for the check he was writing). The only exception is his performance at the “Grand Hotel Dolder”, which we will talk about briefly later. This fact of the skillful choice of the timing was, however, a strong indicator for the jury and, in connection with other features of which we have already spoken, evidence of Nyad’s lack of good faith. At that time, the light of the fixed star Jack Taylor and its little satellite Black - if they exist at all - was very likely to be fading and the luminosity of the star Aris Nyad was also fading. Businesses like this do not [turn a profit overnight??], and so many first-line partners wait for the gains they generate, but then also so do many middlemen and - under certain circumstances - a number of passive, silent collaborators . . .

So, it is not said that Nyad is nothing but a major - by the way, not even particularly large according to the scope of the charge - bluffer. [*I.e., It is said that Nyad is nothing but a big bluffer—and not even that big given the charges.*] However, the probability speaks for it. One can imagine that one day, due to the failure of his notorious comrades Taylor and Black, or for some other obvious reason, Aris Nyad would just become “illiquid,” but not feel like giving up his incredibly high standard of living, or even reduce it a little. In a certain sense, he couldn’t do this either, because if he ever wanted to be “in the thing” [*“im ding” in the thick of things???*] again and play an important role there, he couldn’t let himself appear to have gone bust. Still acting noble, he continued to enjoy the credit of a “Nobleman,” especially where the employees had to decide quickly: in the hospitality industry.

The constant and rapid change in his grand hotel lodgings [quarters/rooms] proves his current shortage of money, but also his fear of discovery.

The “Bellerive-Dolder” episode is characteristic of people of Nyad’s kind. When he was thrown out of the “Bellerive” under the threat that he must pay his big bill immediately if he did not want to meet the police, he moved to the “Grand Hotel Dolder,” following the advice of a Swiss friend there. Again, thanks to his appearance and the American car, he immediately got a loan of 2,700 francs and also enjoyed the credit for a very expensive stay of several days, although his situation had become a hopeless mess of which the hotel staff was aware.

The waitress in the “Chiantiquelle,” to cite another typical example, was not irritated by her boss’s warning of a possibly uncovered check. What the boss did not do out of sensible commercial considerations, namely, to honor a bank check for 1000 francs, the waitress did the evening before on Good Friday. “You were both very charming (Aris Nyad and his wife, who is a friend of the waitress), he was a gentleman, as the saying goes . . . Yes, yes, I would have given him the money if I had known that the check was not covered. In my good nature and because I knew the woman, I gave the money . . .”

Then someone comes along with the claim that women are naturally suspicious . . .

The interpreter and the writing expert

Two personalities were able to create particular suspense in this short but memorable jury trial: the translator René Aeberhard, who translated the jury president's questions from German into English and the defendant's answers back from English into German, and the one beyond the borders of our canton, well-known writing expert of the canton police, Lieutenant Emil Bachmann. The translator not translated, but also an interpreter. Speaking classic Oxford English fluently and with beautiful diction (in stark contrast to the defendant's own everyday English [*Haus-Englisch*], Aeberhard made sayings and remarks by Aris Nyad understandable that would have been meaningless if translated literally. On the other hand, however, he sometimes suppressed a figure of speech [*wendung*] on the part of the accused, whether out of a sense of linguistic piety or to smooth out the somewhat tense atmosphere, which would have characterized Nyad and his milieu even better.

Lieutenant Bachmann had to provide information as to whether, according to the laws of comparative written analysis, the signature "Jack" (alleged surname Taylor) on some documents was identical to the defendant's handwriting. The answer, which he explained using signatures projected on the screen, was positive. For handwriting experts (incidentally also recognizable by some laypeople) the signatures compared were almost certainly identical. Aris Nyad's statement on Bachmann's report was not without its originality. He agreed with the expert's results, but was convinced that the terrible Taylor had copied his (Nyad's) handwriting (for the purpose of covering up evidence in the case of a criminal investigation), and not the other way around ...

The "Aristotle Nyad" dossier is now closed again, the Nyad case has been settled for the Swiss criminal justice system, but the problems it raised persist; they will exist until our little planet earth pulls itself into a reasonably reasonable economic and political order.

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