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7 August 1953

Subject: . Michael OLIAN

1. Attached is an article written on the activities of Michael OLIAN by Michael STERN as published in TRUE magazine dated August 1953.

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The main mansion of the Villa Malama estate, where Olhan lives locally.

WINE, WOMEN AND MONEY

Michel Olhan is a pal of celebrities, a bonanza for bartenders and B-girls, and a man who will handle an international movie deal or a trade of forty tanks with equal nonchalance, provided the price is right. His activities in the past, however, have not always been so respectable.

BY MICHAEL STERN

This is a twentieth century success story, as modern and frightening as the hydrogen bomb. The glittering success is Michel Olhan, until a few years ago an almost penniless Russian, who today possesses hundreds of thousands of acres of timberland in the Cameroons, factories in Argentina, utility companies in Switzerland, one of Europe's largest film studios in Rome, a fabulous jewel collection in one hip pocket, an even more fabulous diamond collection in the other, safety deposit boxes stuffed with cash in

Paris, and gilded securities in such concerns as Standard Oil of New Jersey, Westinghouse Electric and Chase National Bank, which, until recently, were in the United States in the hands of the Alien Property Custodian. The major portion of his assets, however, is tied up in money. How much all this amounts to is known only to Mr. Olhan and he has intimated that it totals a modest \$100,000,000.

In addition to this great wealth, Mr. Olhan is also a social success and counts among his intimate friends

An exclusive photo of Michel Olhan as he boarded a train in Italy, his most recent homeland.

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the families of Arturo Toscanini, Premier Alcide De Gasperi and Fedor Chaliapin; Orson Welles who visited Olian for dinner one night and stayed for a year, and countless stars and producers from the cinema world whose sympathies are stirred because poor Olian, having too much of his wealth tied up in cash, finds himself in an unhealthy financial condition. Each of these bleeding hearts is armed with a script guaranteed to cure the rare ailment.

Like most got-rich-quick multimillionaires, Olian runs the gamut between overwhelming generosity and penny-pinching tightness. When he wished to liberate himself from a friendship with Assia Noris, a blonde movie actress whose real ability does not come through on the screen, he put up \$250,000 for a movie production designed to prop her sagging career. He gave the money with a single condition—the picture was to be shot in Egypt.

On another occasion he took Maria Montez to lunch at the Cisterna Restaurant, a colorful left-bank spot in Rome's Trastevere. During the meal he pulled a scuffed leather change purse of the kind used by Russian peasants from his pocket, opened it and pulled out a fabulous collection of diamonds valued at one million dollars. Among them was the champagne-colored Cross of the South and a 20-carat diamond Napoleon had once given Josephine. Maria cooed with delight. She lifted the Napoleonic diamond, held it over her finger and said, tenderly, that it was now in a perfect setting. During the maneuver it slipped from her fingers and fell to the floor. For half an hour the apologetic restaurant proprietor and his waiters searched feverishly for the \$75,000 trinket. Finally one of the waiters found it at some distance from the table where it had evidently been kicked. He returned it to Mr. Olian who promptly handed him an 80-cent tip.

Towards Olian is one of the lustier livers of life and in this he compares favorably with such high-livers as ex-King Farouk, Ali Khan and Errol Flynn. This is made somewhat easier for him by his lack of scruples. A heart attack slowed him up, but only momentarily. A leading cardiograph specialist, after a careful examination of the patient, gave as his considered opinion that Olian, if he did not immediately give up drinking, smoking, and the more vigorous type of feminine companionship, would not survive the year. Olian took the diagnosis as a personal insult. He told a friend recently, "Do you know what I did when he told me that? I went out and smoked five packs of cigarettes a day and drank three bottles of champagne at a sitting." Despite this nose-thumbing attitude, Olian does take certain precautions. Friends who spend the night with him are taught the facts about cardiac first aid.

Olian is a garrulous extrovert who is happiest when surrounded by people who will listen to him speak about his prowess as a financial manipulator. In spite of his loquacity he manages to keep his real affairs secret. He doesn't lie. He merely mixes up the truth. For example, should there be a discussion about trees, he may drop the information, off-handedly, that he possesses a million acres of teak forest in India. This is not fact. Yet it is not wholly fiction because he possesses a million acres in mangrove and savanna, but they are located in the French Cameroons in Africa, not in India.

Acquaintances listening to his stories for the first time suspect that he is in a class with the show-off who wraps a thousand-dollar bill around a thick bankroll of one-dollar notes. One of these was an American motion-picture producer, long on ideas but short on cash, who was hungrily looking for a backer. Olian, having imbibed four bottles of

wine and two of champagne at a meal at which the producer was present, said airily, if somewhat thickly, that he'd be glad to put up a quarter of a million dollars. The impecunious producer, having heard his host conversationally juggle utterly fantastic sums, concluded that the man was a phony and haughtily brushed the offer aside. Next morning, Olian sent him a check to cover the production costs. This didn't surprise the producer. What did send him into a state of shock was the fact that the check was a good one.

Olian's irreverence for truth is noticeable in his stories about his amorous adventures, too. At dinner one night recently he told some friends about a brief affair that he had with a lady I shall call Countess Marina Piza, wife of a wealthy Italian industrialist. This surprised the dinner guests—not for the brevity of the liaison, because a European woman's idea of romance is inclined to be rather direct—but because she was young, beautiful and wealthy. Her white-haired host did not compare favorably in looks.

"It was at the Lido in Venice last summer," he said dreamily. "When I tried to give her a fitting present she brushed it aside and, instead, gave me a check for 100,000 lire."

"What did you do with the check?" one of the guests asked.

"I cashed it, of course," Olian replied.

Just then another dinner party entered the restaurant, paused at the Olian table to say hello to some of the diners. One of the newcomers was a remarkably beautiful woman about 30. As she walked toward her table Olian leaned forward and remarked to the man on his right, "Now there is a beautiful woman. Who is she?"

"That is the Countess Marina Piza," was the reply.

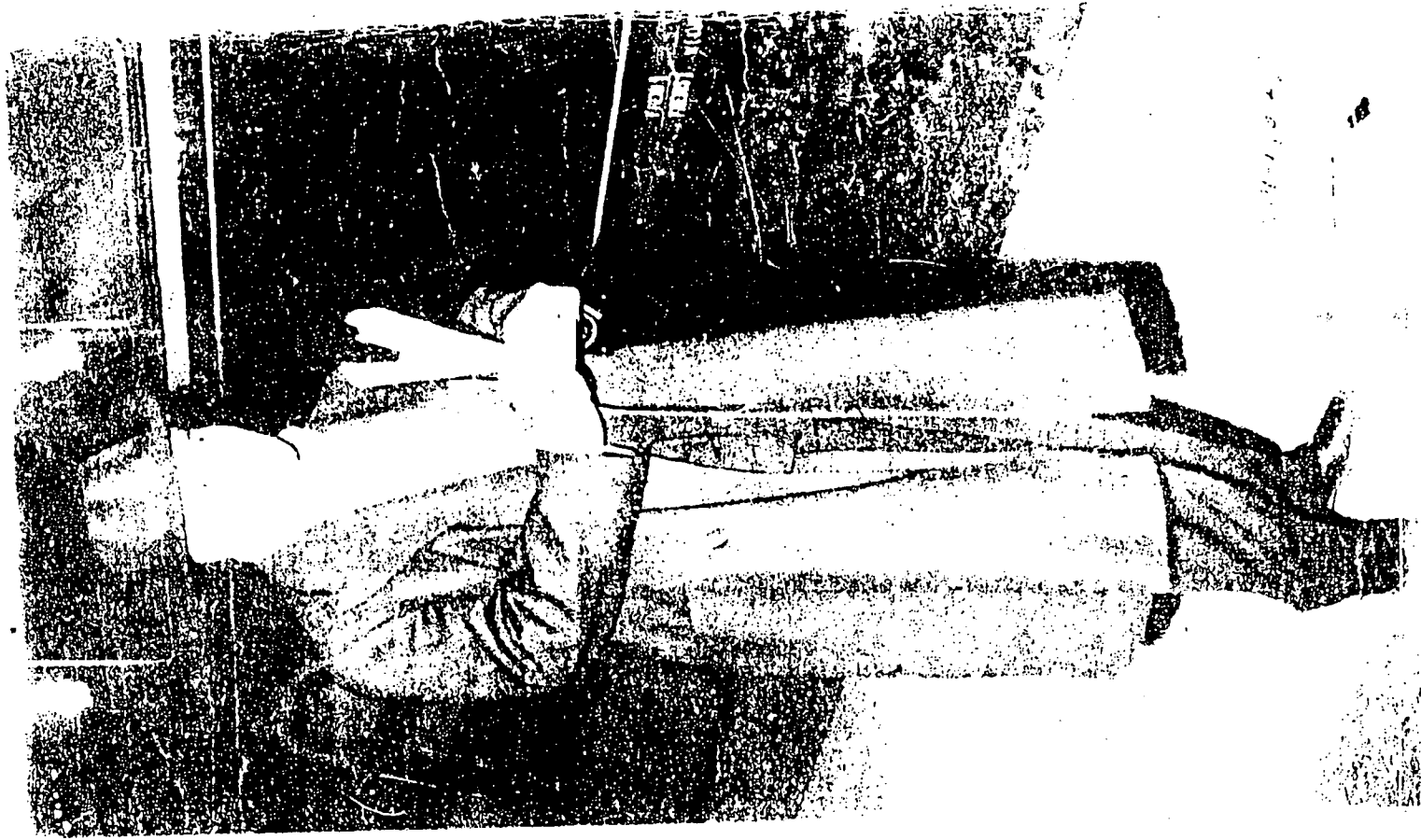
The answer didn't disturb Olian a bit. "I find it very difficult to see with these glasses," he said calmly.

There is nothing in Olian's appearance that would make him stand out. He has the neat, scrubbed appearance of a bank clerk, is of medium height and favors dark pin-stripe suits. He has round owl-like eyes set in a pink face that turns purplish when he is angry. People who have done business with him say that he automatically divides all people into two classes: Those who need him and those whom he needs. With the former he can get rather rough, with the latter he is servile and compliant.

Much of his background is shrouded in mystery. Born July 27, 1897, in Riga when it was still part of Russia, he has described himself variously as a Lithuanian, Roumanian, Latvian, and at one time or another he has had passports from Italy, Russia, Latvia and the League of Nations and a nationality status resulting from residence in Germany, France and Switzerland. One of the few bits of information he has confided to friends is that his father was a high government official under Czar Nicholas and that when the Bolsheviks came into power in 1919 the family was forced to flee. Yet there are official indications to show that a few things are wrong with this sympathetic portrait of a persecuted individual, apparently kicked from one nation's doorstep to another.

The International Police Bureau have a complete record on him—all, that is, except the one in Italy where a high member of the present government has lifted the dossier. The record contains an entry dated 1922 showing that he was arrested and imprisoned in Riga for an offense connected with a small export-and-import business. On this charge he was released in a 1500-ruble bond. No final disposition of the case is given, and with the USSR in its present mood of international cooperation, it is not likely

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that there will be one. In 1924 the Russians gave him a passport, bearing number 1927, so that if he was "escaping" it was certainly with the sanction of the Bolshevik rulers. All this tends to show that he was neither a White Russian fleeing from the Bolsheviks or a Red Russian fleeing from the terror of Uncle Joe's political police. His departure from one mother country appears to have been hastened by a bit of unpleasantness he had with a garden-variety foot patrolman for an infraction of the criminal code.

Today Olian is a recognized expert as a dealer in foreign currency. He earned his reputation the hard way. During his brief residence in Berlin in the mid-Twenties he became a small-time money changer, but whether he operated out of an office or out of a sidewalk suitcase is not known. For about fourteen months he worked in close contact with the sharp elements of this half-world of finance, but post-war inflation was too lunatic even for him. In describing this episode to friends Olian adds characteristic color. "I opened a private bank but it failed."

His attitude toward the law is highly individual. Where a criminal statute restricts his financial operations, he will blithely ignore it and only sometimes do the gendarmes know or care. For example, soon after he reached Paris, he hit on a very profitable gimmick in the money business. The value of dollars, marks, francs and pounds fluctuated each day and the changing values were signaled to the Parisian Bourse by telegraph. Because national boundaries were crossed messages took anywhere from one to four hours to go through. Being a clear thinker, Olian reasoned that by setting up his own network of radio receivers and transmitters he could get the information through in a matter of minutes. With the prices on the money exchange being set by the telegraphic advisers, Olian would be in the position of a horse player who knows the result of a race before he lays his bet. Assisted by radio operator Jacques Parent, banker Alfred Goldwasser, Nicholas Freudenstein, who describes himself as a journalist, and Sam Dubrowitch, an old Russian buddy, he got the scheme rolling and the profits poured in. There was one minor defect in the scheme, however. It was illegal. The sudden prosperity of these gentlemen brought them under suspicion and pretty soon the gendarmes collared the whole crowd with the exception of old pal Sam Dubrowitch who took it on the lam. Before the common criminal court of the Seine Olian was convicted of violating the government radio-telegraph monopoly laws and was sentenced to one month imprisonment and a 500-franc fine.

Olian began his experiments in shifting nationality during his Paris residence. Bolshevik passports were not regarded with great favor in France and Olian renounced his Russian citizenship. In its place he secured a police residence permit but the French authorities were not too happy about their new guest and on April 26, 1926, ordered his expulsion from France as an undesirable. Olian

managed to secure a chain of three-month extensions on the expulsion order until February 21, 1933, when the order was cancelled.

A French banker told me, "Olian was a man who took large risks, which marked him as an unusual person in the money-changing business where brokers are content with a .005 percent commission. When the Soviets were having trouble buying equipment from our factories because they were short of foreign exchange they paid in notes which Olian discounted for as much as 25 percent. On paper he made an enormous profit, but it was all worth zero if the Soviets didn't honor the notes. In his case the gamble paid off. The business of discounting their notes petered out as the Soviet government became more stable. Olian took all his money and risked it in a deal with a man named Gualini, and all of it went down the drain."

There is one business about which Olian is duly reticent in his conversation. In the late thirties he opened a real-estate office which was called the *Societe Civile Mobiliere*. It was a very peculiar setup since the business that it did didn't warrant the expense of its maintenance. Neighbors and brokers wondered what business really did go on there, since Olian was always away on long trips, and his absence generated a good deal of suspicion during these unsettled days when Hitler was setting up an efficient spy network. During the war our O.S.S. learned that he was an agent acting for enemy interests. It is not unusual to find such people working both sides of the fence. Unless a person takes up this hazardous profession from motives of patriotism—nobody ever accused Olian of this unprofitable sentiment—he is apt to be a double or triple agent.

Olian's great fortune stems directly from World War II. It is entirely likely that he would have achieved wealth in time of peace, also, although not as much or as fast, because he recognized early that the Horatio Alger hero who becomes a success through hard work and honesty is as out of place among international financiers as a virgin at a Polly Adler soiree. The usual wartime success was one who found himself with raw material that was suddenly vital and hard to get, or the owner of factories or communication lines. What makes Olian's triumph more remarkable is that he had none of these. The French banker told me, "When the war started, Olian left France for Switzerland with less than 10,000 francs in his pocket. He succeeded without capital and out of an office no bigger than his hat."

Like many money-making schemes his was extremely simple. The war had closed all normal avenues of trade. It had suddenly become a reasonable act for a Frenchman to do business with a German. Those who had business interests in Germany or other Axis countries knew that their property would be sequestered and, most probably, lost to them forever. The same went in reverse for the Germans. That's where Olian came in. He lived in Switzerland, a country that encouraged friendly financial relations with both sides. Olian, a man without a coun-

ty, owing allegiance to neither side, didn't give a damn as to the eventual outcome of the conflict.

This is the way it worked. Say a German had a million dollars worth of General Motors stock in a safety-deposit box in a Berlin bank. These were sent on to Switzerland where Olian would convert them into cash. Or suppose a Frenchman had a stock interest in a German corporation. The stock was sent to Switzerland and converted into cash. His assistant handling the Axis lands was a Russian named Gregoire Beridge. His assistant in France was another Russian, Alexander Kronstein. Quite naturally the way had been smoothed by Olian in advance. He regarded the return of properties to their rightful owners as no more than an act of simple justice performed on a global scale. Funds going from west to east and from east to west passed through his hands and, with meticulous honesty, he deducted the pre-arranged one-third commission for himself and transmitted the rest to the rightful parties. Just how large a volume of business he did is hidden in the notorious, spyproof number accounts he kept in Swiss banks. One Swiss official estimated the gross at half a billion dollars, but he carefully pointed out that the payoff in both Germany and France must have been enormous. Technically, Olian should have had a license to do this sort of business in Switzerland. Less technical was the law which required him to pay a tax on the business he did. The result was that the *Bureau du Compensation*, casting an eye over his visible dealings, levied a \$1,250,000 fine against him. Much of the heat that the Swiss put on Olian in an effort to collect this sum was chilled by a high government official who was eventually forced by the resultant scandal to resign his position.

France was less charitable. After the war, following an exhaustive investigation, he was placed on trial in the *Deuxieme Chambre Correctionnelle* of the Paris Criminal Court, charged with these activities. He was convicted. In sentencing him to a 2-year term of imprisonment, the judge said that during the German occupation Olian was a specialist in fraudulently transferring funds from enemy-occupied countries into France. Convicted with him were his two Russian assistants, Kronstein and Beridge.

There were other sources of income, too. During the early days of the war businessmen of all nations, suddenly cut off from sources of raw material which were in the hands of their enemy, sought to circumvent wartime embargoes. Again Olian, working as a neutral from neutral Switzerland, was able to place a large volume of orders in many countries, including the United States. This lucrative practice was not cut off until American intelligence services caught up with him and had his name placed on the official blacklist.

A French banker who knows Olian rather well told me, "He had the reputation of being very correct in his dealings. Clients in my bank had occasion to use his services. In the early days of the

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war the Swiss government sent several billion dollars worth of liquid assets to Canada as a precaution against an invasion of their country by Germany. The Canadian government held these funds as custodian for the Swiss, but put a freeze order on them for the duration on the ground that much of these assets belonged to enemy nationals. Olian was able to unfreeze much of these monies for his usual commission of 3 1/2 percent.

Olian was fortunate in being on good terms with Himmler and Goering. According to the information gathered by our O.S.S. in Switzerland, Goering used Olian for many of the international phases of his financial operations. For Goering he opened one of the famous number accounts. This was the system devised when spies of all nations filled Switzerland to keep financial transactions secret. It permitted banks to give numbers instead of names to the people who had accounts with them. The same attorney, Fromberg, served as legal counsel for Olian and Goering. According to our State Department after the war, when Goering's number came up at the Nuremberg trials, his other number, in the Swiss banks, passed on to his agent.

Although Olian's name is totally unknown in the United States, this being the first article to be printed about him, it is entirely likely that in the very near future it will compare favorably in fame with such professional mystery men as George Dawson, Basil Zaharof and Aristide Socrates Onassis, for at this writing the military attaches of several friendly governments, the French Sureté, the Swiss Government, our own Central Intelligence Agency and the Congressional investigating committee under Representative Kenneth Keating are scrutinizing his present activities with more than passing interest. Congressman Keating's major assignment is an attempt to pin-point the frequent lapses from rectitude of various functionaries of the sprawling Department of Justice. Specifically, he wants to know why the funds of Michel Olian, seized during the war by the Alien Property Custodian, because his name was on the blacklist, were returned to him. Since Olian's generosity in dealing with public officials is not able, the Keating committee wishes to know whether it was in any way responsible for the strangely favorable treatment our own government employes have accorded him.

The simple facts in the case were these. Information gathered by the O.S.S. indicated that Olian was an enemy agent. For this reason he was placed on the official U.S. blacklist and it became a crime for any citizen of the United States to trade or communicate with him. Treasury agents uncovered the fact that the Panamanian Holding Corporation, doing business in the United States, was wholly owned by him, and its assets, consisting of stock in Du Pont, Standard Gas, Shell, Westinghouse Electric, A.T.&T. and Socony were seized and turned over to the Alien Property Custodian. Several years after the end of the war Olian felt that it would be nice to have these funds

in his own pocket again, even though they only amounted to a piddling \$125,000. In order to get this back it was necessary for him to prove that he had had no business transactions with the Axis powers. He promptly swore an oath that he had never been guilty of such heinous conduct and anyone who said different was either a jealous business rival or a liar. How did he happen to be put on the blacklist? Probably wartime hysteria. Somehow the French government found out about it and the French embassy in Washington told the American agency that they had an action pending against Olian. This action was concluded on October 28, 1949, when the money operator was convicted of dealing with Axis countries and given a two-year prison sentence, fined 200,000 francs and ordered to pay pecuniary damages of 16,163,950 francs—roughly \$13,000. Reasonable men would have regarded this as documentary proof that Olian was not being truthful. The Alien Property people evidently either didn't know or didn't care about other Olian statements in their file or they would have discovered, as I did, that he was also careless with the truth in such minor matters as swearing that he was a Swiss national when, as a matter of actual fact, he had hurriedly left that country months earlier because of nonpayment of the \$1,250,000 fine; and that he was also being careless with fact when he told them that he was born in a part of Lithuania that was annexed to Rumania, when the simple truth was that he was and is a Russian. In spite of this, on December 1, 1949, barely one month after his conviction in France, the funds were unblocked and returned to him.

I checked with the gentleman responsible for this strange decision, one Paul Gewirtz. I told him that TRU was running an article about Mr. Olian, and that since his manner of doing business was, to put it delicately, unorthodox, I was trying to find out why there had been a decision in his favor. The answer to that, he told me, was none of my damned business. The Alien Property records dealing with this matter and his own decision were secrets of state into which the press had no right to inquire.

As has been intimated, Olian is noted for his highly individual approach to government matters. Take his conviction before the French court. He did not bother to appeal the verdict. Instead, two years later, he filed what is euphemistically called an "informal" appeal which consisted of an offer of 50 million francs, roughly \$120,000, to go to the special charity of the public official who would succeed in taking the conviction off the books.

Hard as he is in business, Olian can be stirred by a charitable appeal, even though the single charity to which he contributed was the one nearest the heart of the wife of the Italian premier. This was a home for mutilated children of war to which he gave one million dollars. The major portion of his gift was in real estate. He had taken over the Villa Negroni-Morosini near Milan in payment of a business debt and had tried to turn it into a gambling casino. When this idea was frowned upon he turned

it over to Signora De Gasperi's favorite charity. There was some sort of vague understanding that his generosity was to be recognized with a passport. There was some unpleasantness over which should come first, charity or its reward, but this was eventually ironed out. Olian's charity brought him so close to Italy's first family that the premier's son-in-law became his business associate.

In fairness to Italy's rigidly honest and able premier, the close connection between Olian and his son-in-law is a source of keen embarrassment and De Gasperi has tried to keep the pair apart.

Since the end of the war Olian has limited himself to business deals which, if not quite legitimate, are at least legal. His first appearance in the motion picture industry in which he has since become a potent figure, was as backer of an American production: *The Dark Road*, filmed in Italy and released here by Republic Pictures. The financing of some of his picture deals has been simplicity itself. At one time all the earnings of American film companies in Italy were blocked. This meant that their money was tied up in Italian banks. The funds only could be released if they were used for film production in Italy. It was common practice on international money exchanges for major American studios to pay a 50 percent premium to obtain their release. An Olian stooge draws up a contract with a major studio, calling for the production of a film in Italy with the use of blocked lire to the equivalent of, say \$1,300,000. As a guarantee of completion of contract, Olian hands the studio a check for one million dollars. As soon as the funds have changed hands both sides tear up their contracts. The studio has the million for which it paid the normal 50 percent premium. Olian has his million back plus a profit of \$300,000 which he invests in the picture. As a critic, who has seen Olian-backed films, I must confess that I find his deals far more interesting than any of his pictures.

Another deal pulled by Olian was pristine in its profit-making simplicity, though it left a chain of more or less serious complications in its wake. For a while it threatened to put a crimp in our plans for building a NATO army. It did set our various intelligence agencies back on their heels because they didn't find out about it until it was too late. It dealt with forty-one Sherman tanks which the United States had given Italy as a part of its program to build up the armies of its Western Allies. One of Olian's companies, assisted by some of his social and charitable contacts, managed to have these vehicles declared "wrecks" and purchased them from the Italian Army as scrap for a price of about \$1,600 a vehicle. He immediately resold them to Israel for a reported \$50,000 apiece, so that by a mere paper transfer, Olian had made for himself a profit of \$2,000,000. This transaction took place while Italy's able Minister of Defense was in Washington making an urgent request for tanks so that he could build up his armored forces.

It was, naturally, most embarrassing for the Defense Minister to discover,

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when he returned home, that his armored forces were even weaker than he had thought. He ordered an immediate investigation into the affair and learned that at that very moment the tanks were being loaded aboard a specially chartered freighter in the harbor of Civitavecchia. He sequestered both the vessel and its cargo on the spot and ordered the tanks brought back into the army depots. This action was considered very high-handed, indeed, because Olian's company had a valid contract with the Army and Israel had a valid contract with Olian's company. The upshot of the matter was that the Defense Minister saved the tanks but had a \$500,000 damage claim slapped on him by the Israel government. A functionary in the Israel ministry in Rome informed me that 80 percent of their claim has been paid. Whether Olian received any compensation as a result of loss of profits is not a matter of record.

Olian's closest friends in Italy are Don Carlo Crocchi, an Italian priest, and Countess Wally Castelbarco, daughter of Arturo Toscanini. He rented her flat at 20 Via Durini in Milan, for a reputed \$10,000 a year. His present residence in Rome is Villa Madama, a sixteenth-century palace designed by the great Renaissance artist Raphael, which he rents from Countess Dorothy Di Frasso, an international gambler. This abode makes Mr. Olian practically a next-door neighbor to my villa on Monte Mario, just a stone's throw away. For this I am exceedingly grateful since it made coverage of the story almost a foot assignment.

Today, Olian is a dominant figure in the Italian motion-picture industry, in size second only to Hollywood. He was attracted to this business, about which he knew nothing a few years ago, because he likes the charming company of the people in it. For a time Mike Frankowitch and his wife, Binnie Barnes, were his inseparable companions. Then Orson Welles replaced them. The one-time low genius visited Villa Madama for dinner one night and explained that he was just finishing a film, *Othello*, in which he was both the star and director. Five shooting days were left but, unfortunately, no funds were available. If Olian would put up the \$35,000 necessary to finish the picture, he would gladly grant him first recoup rights in England and the United States plus a 50 percent general ownership. This dinner brought Orson not only a backer but a home as well, because he moved into the Villa Madama and stayed for a year. Olian and Welles made a gay pair in Rome's night life. A favorite amusement was the Florida Club, a B-girl joint where soiled doves get a percentage on what they induce a customer to drink and are one step above their streetwalking sisters. The enormous tabs paid by Olian made him the outstanding favorite of both the proprietors and the accommodating employees. Often in the evening, after ushering government officials, church dignitaries and other important guests out of Villa Madama, he would usher in a selected group of as many as fifteen Florida Club lovelies.

One year and \$200,000 after Olian had

made his agreement with Welles, *Othello* still was not completed. The parting of these amiable companions was inevitable because the chief facet in Welles' genius is his ability to run through a bankroll, his own included. Recently, walking through the lobby of the Excelsior Hotel, one of the true crossroads of the world, I saw Welles and Olian in a heated, though thoroughly one-sided, discussion. What the Russian bankroll was angrily shouting, while not clearly audible in the street, could be overheard by anyone in the lobby. He made a point of calling Welles a fool, dwelling on the reasons, while the embarrassed actor-director tried desperately to mollify him with: "Tu as raison, Michel." You are right, Michel.

On the whole Olian continues to be the idol of the distaff side of the international set, even though his experiences with them have not been uniformly happy. The girl to whom he was most deeply attached was a raven-haired, sultry Italian beauty with flashing black eyes, a young charmer some thirty years his junior. He set aside in Parioli, Rome's plushiest quarter, a tastefully furnished apartment for the woman and her baby daughter born of a previous union with an American air-force captain. This charming arrangement endured until Olian one day paid an unexpected visit and found her entertaining a former high United States official. The embarrassing encounter ruptured the sentimental bonds between them. The girl packed the furniture and, assisted by her new protector, moved to a home of her own choosing. When Olian heard that the furniture was gone he literally lit the ceiling. The furniture, he shouted, is mine. No, replied the girl, it's mine because you gave it to me and even if you didn't give it to me, I am keeping it because I gave you the best two years of my life. This evidently was a sound argument and Olian gave her a check for 2 million lire, about \$5,300. With true Latin shrewdness, the girl had her maid endorse the check, cashed it and then told Olian that he still could not have his furniture because she had not been paid for it. The rooked millionaire let out an anguished scream and hurried to the Criminal Courts where he filed charges against her.

Olian has changed his nationality as lightly as some people change a suit of clothes. Knowing that eventually he would either have to pay the Swiss government or be thrown out, the good Tovarisch, on February 19, 1946, secured a Latvian passport. Since the short-lived Republic of Latvia had been gobbled up by Russia six years before and since it is known that Russia does not issue these documents lightly, it gave rise to the suspicion that Olian had entered into a fresh alliance. Italian Intelligence Service files cover this point with: "Olian has been indicated by many authoritative sources, such as Senator Falk, as being an agent of the Russian secret service." Once in Italy he renounced his Latvian passport and with the help of a socialist member of the Chamber of Deputies named Dugone, whom he met through a French resistance leader named Hirsch (to

further complicate Olian's international position, while doing business with the Vichy government, he helped finance the French resistance movement) he was granted a stateless-person certificate. The police gave him a *carta di soggiorno* permitting him to remain in Italy indefinitely. Shortly thereafter, he added Italian nationality to his long list when he managed to wangle an Italian passport for himself and for a Latvian Communist friend of his. All this, according to Italian regulations, was highly irregular and certain voices rose in anger. One such voice was Realino Carbone, publisher of *Momento-Sera*, a Rome afternoon daily. Olian's passport was quietly lifted, but his friend had already used his to get out of the country. The chief of police of Rome who had issued the passports was asked to justify his actions in writing. His explanation was simple. It was a spy passport, issued at the request of the chief of the Italian Corps of Marine Intelligence.

Exactly how much Olian is worth today is difficult to judge accurately. In Italy where he made a single cash deposit of \$4,500,000, bankers put his worth at \$10 million. Olian's own estimate goes as high as \$100 million. It is probable that the truth lies somewhere between these extremes. When I was in Geneva recently, I stayed at the Hotel des Bergues which was Olian's home and office during his profitable war years. The director of the hotel told me, "I don't know too much about his business. But I do know that he spent thousand-franc notes (\$230) faster than my ordinary guests spent franc pieces. Of course, this behavior on his part made him stand out as a person who was, to put it delicately, not acting in the very best taste, since many of our countrymen, especially those depending on the tourist trade, were in very poor circumstances. I remember on one occasion some police officers asked me to open his safety deposit box. I told them that I could not do so unless they had a court order. They returned about a month later with the order, but of course, by that time, Olian had cleaned it out."

Lately Olian has begun pulling in his horns. His night life is considerably quieter, and his business affairs more nearly normal. None of it, though, has brought him peace of mind. He walks as though someone were continually shadowing him. He has a positive dread of being alone. One of his confidantes reported that Olian couldn't fall asleep unless she held his hand. When he rented the Villa Madama from Countess Di Frasso he received with it Luigi, a tailcoat butler of impeccable manner. Under the Olian influence this butler is apt to receive visitors in his shirt-sleeves, pour drinks for them and one for himself. Frequently when Olian's guests argue, Luigi will join in.

Friends report that Olian is becoming restless again, and that he is casting around for another country in which to reside. One of them suggested that he go to the United States.

"I will never go there," Michel Olian said, raising his lip in a sneer. "It is a country of gangsters."—Michael Stern