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24 September 1951

"The PLATON Case"

1. In late August 1951, Dr. Robert PLATON, publisher of the weekly (bi-monthly) economic information sheet "Wirtschaftskorrespondenz," and his deputy, Dr. Arno WEGRICH, were arrested in HAMBURG for the alleged bribery of a number of Federal government officials. PLATON's arrest, as well as some of the circumstances leading to it as well as a resume of PLATON's personal history, was described at length in a number of German newspapers, particularly by the political weekly "Der Spiegel."

2. As a whole, it is felt that the PLATON case is not of direct interest to this writer, however, this writer has recently had occasion to glance at some of the original documents of the German agency most concerned with the security angle of the incident of the briberies, this same agency also caused PLATON's arrest. Since these documents (classified SECRET), were too lengthy for copying, the following is a resume of such notes as this writer was able to take "on the spot," plus oral information taken from memory.

3. One of the documents mentioned in par 2 above was dated 16 September 1951, and contained information leading to the arrest of PLATON and WEGRICH:

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a. Dr. Albert Robert Kurt PLATON, born 7 May 1903 in HAMBURG, married Jolanda, nee SANTI-MARIS, born 29 August 1908 in JALATZ, Roumania. One child, born 21 May 1946 in BERLIN. The family resides at Juergensallee #4, HAMBURG-NIEDERSTADT, phone HAMBURG 493105. PLATON's profession is given as press stenographer and independent journalist, with offices at Esplanade #6, HAMBURG, phone 3410197.

N/A
b. Dr. Arno WEGRICH, born 9 August 1896 in ELSERFELD, widowed, residing at Eulerstrasse #79, HAMBURG-VOERSTADT.

4. Dr. PLATON, described as an intelligent, unscrupulous, self-made man and an opportunist, has, for several years, published a private information service pertaining to economic and industrial developments and planning in the Federal Republic. This mimeographed service was mailed to approximately 300 to 400 subscribers in West and East Germany at prices ranging from 50 M to 500 M per month, according to the financial capacity of the individual subscriber. These also included a large number of news media, such as newspapers, radio station, and news services as well as business firms and ECOW government officials. The information published was usually of "such stunningly actual and accurate nature, including next week's predictions," which almost always came true, that it alarmed the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Economics and others to the degree that they initiated a secret investigation as to the manner in which the data was obtained. It is alleged that some of the items were reproductions of confidential reports and conferences held, or plans made, by the Ministry of Economics, or, etc., plans and prospects of export-import quotas for certain items of the Federal economy, which had, in some cases, not even reached the eyes of the Ministry of Economics.

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5. The agencies conducting the investigation were fortunate in that a ledger was found in PLATON's possession listing the names and addresses of a number of persons, in and out of government circles, to whom payments had been made periodically via postal money orders. It was found that PLATON paid as little as 5 DM for small items of news to a German "Putzfrau" (scrub-woman) who had recovered discarded items of information from the waste paper baskets of the Ministry. His highest paid informant, with a regular monthly salary of 500 DM, was Dr. phil. Guenter KEISER, born 20 September 1902 in WIRSEBEN, residing at Lotharstrasse #16, BONN. Dr. KEISER is a Ministerialdirektor in the Ministry of Economics and the Chief of Sub-Division I-a (Planning). He is a personal friend of Professor ERHARD, the Minister, who took him along on a recent business trip to the US as ERHARD'S advisor. It was revealed that Dr. KEISER undertook monthly "business trips" to HAMBURG in his official Mercedes, which always ended at PLATON's apartment.

6. Following the arrest of PLATON and WEGRICH, and after it had become evident that the bulk of further inquiries would have to be conducted in BONN, the two individuals were moved to that city. The HAMBURG special prosecutor also moved to BONN. The following information was gained as a result of these inquiries:

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a. Dr. Guenter KEISER was interrogated and immediately suspended pending trial for having accepted bribes for revealing secret information to unauthorized persons.

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b. Kuno OCKHARDT, press office chief of the Ministry of Economics, was interrogated and suspended from office awaiting further action.

c. Wolfgang STEVENS, born 20 August 1924 in GUELLINTE, residing at Ritterhausstrasse #28, BONN, press office chief of the Ministry of Finance, was interrogated and suspended from office awaiting further action on his own.

d. Oberregierungsrat SCHMIDT, section chief of Sub-Division I-a of the Ministry of Economics, was interrogated and suspended from office awaiting further notice.

e. Dr. Rudolf DIERCKMANN, a member of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forest, was interrogated and suspended from office awaiting further investigation.

f. Regierungsrat SCHMIDT, press office chief of the Ministry of Communications and Traffic, is under investigation.

g. Oberregierungsrat Dr. Dierckmann, sub-section chief in the Ministry of Reconstruction, is under investigation.

h. Dr. SCHNEIDER, section chief in the ERM Ministry, is under investigation.

i. Regierungsoberratinspektor FLEISCH, employee of the press office in the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forests, is under investigation.

7. The following persons, not employed by the Federal government, but as so-called "Freie Mitarbeiter" (agents) of Dr. PLATON, are under strong suspicion:

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of having participated in the bribing of government officials and are under investigation:

NKO
a. Heinrich FRENZ, a business relations expert, residing in AIDGUND/Mosel.

Wald
b. Dr. Rudolf BALCH, a BONN journalist with offices in the Bundespräsidium VI, representing the "Holsteinische Nachrichten," the "Europa Kurier," the "Ueberssee-Post," the "Agrardienst," the "Passauer Zeitung," and the "Volkswirtschaftliche Blätter."

Clark
c. Otto SCHUMACHER-HELLMOLD, representative in BONN of the NWDR, the North-West German Radio Corporation.

2-36-51
d. Herr HERTSOLT, independent foreign trade and foreign currency advisor, residing at Wilhelmstr #23, VILICH-MUELDORF near BONN. It is believed that HERTSOLT served as intermediary, letter drop, courier and contact man for PLATON. He was reported to own five private automobiles, including a '50 Cadillac; further, that he entertains lavishly, preferably high government officials from the above listed ministries.

9. COMMENTS:

a. Unless otherwise directed, this writer will not conduct a further investigation of the personalities mentioned above, pending receipt of a complete report of investigative results promised this writer as soon as the prosecution has satisfied itself that all angles have been exploited in this case. These angles include the possibility, although presently believed not probable, that Dr. PLATON was also engaged in collecting informatic for the East-Zone government-connected intelligence agencies.

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