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THE RAPPORTEUR

Espionage in the weapons industry
behind the Iron Curtain



Introduction

The descriptions of the journeys are based on experiences of the writer during the Cold War. The manufacturing process of semiconductors was becoming an important pillar in the production of electronics such as computers and electronics for military armament systems. Industrial espionage was applied very intensively by all countries concerned. The main character, Mark Freeman, was in charge of a large Western organization and performed many different tasks, but never for the Dutch intelligence service. The experiences are shortened and the intermezzos on page 157-179-187 are dramatized. But the many changes in the Eastern bloc countries and after the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as the disappearance of the wall between East and West Germany, he is sought to identify the most important relevant changes in the Eastern bloc countries.

Albania journey

Panic and a thank you note from the Minister

It was eleven o'clock at the airport in Belgrade. It was hot and humid, which made it almost unbearable. I assumed that any moment we would begin with the boarding because the departure time was scheduled for 11:20 hours. At noon the gate remained closed. A large number of passengers had gathered around the counter because all domestic flights had been delayed or cancelled. A large lady spoke from behind her counter in a loud voice, would Mr. Freeman please come to the welcome service desk sign?

I walked briskly to the desk-counter where the lady told me, without giving me a reason that the plane to Tirana city in Albania would not leave today. We have removed your suitcase from the plane and you can now find it in the lost luggage area, she said.

The lady understood that I wanted more of an explanation. She said, you know, sir the President of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, is coming for a visit and will arrive anytime and that is the reason that all international flights have been cancelled. You can come back at eight o'clock tomorrow morning and we will know more then when your flight will be

rescheduled. I got the idea that they had thought seriously about what they would say knowing that there is only one flight from Budapest to Tirana once in a fortnight. I realized that it was not going to be easy journey this time.

With all my worldly experiences, I came here with no advance notice, so there was nothing else to do but go back to the friendly Ambassador, Mr. Akipi, and consult with him. Mr. Akipi was a small man like many Albanians, with a sad look in his eyes, but if I came along for a visa he was always very friendly. Also I knew him and his family for quite some time and they were always very grateful to me. When I came and visited I always brought along cigars, coffee, nylon stockings and candy for the children that I had brought with me from Netherlands.

I had asked him after one of my first business trips if there was anything I could bring him from my country. He had mentioned the coffee, cigars, nylons and candy since he could not get these Western products from the Intershop¹ because he lacked hard currency. He knew that I regularly went to Tirana for business and could bring him these items, and was always very thankful for these tokens of friendship.

Now it was important that Tirana was informed, as soon as possible, that I would not arrive today. Mr. Akipi was just as surprised when I reported to him my experience at the airport and immediately tried to reach someone at the airport that he knew. I listened to his commentary that there was a solution to my problem after he had completed the call. He said, with joy in his voice, there is still a possibility

¹ Intershops where Western products were sold against hard currency.

Mr. Freeman, you can leave tonight at seven o'clock, so you can be at the Titograd airport in Tirana by tomorrow.

This was also good news to me because the gases contract for Albania was important and represented a sizable revenue stream. The man continued, saying you should quickly go back to the airport because my friend at the airport said that you can buy a ticket quickly. I will inform Tirana of your delay and have a car ready for you tomorrow morning at the border. Try to find a place to sleep in Titograd² and a car that you can bring to the border tomorrow.

With my spirits lifted, I went to the airport. The road was very busy and congested because the main road to the airport was closed. After quite some time, I received the ticket and my suitcase at the depot. Not until well after six hours did the boarding begin, and I was seated in a small cramped seat. I felt yet again the old very and dirty plane made little or no impression on me. The flight which lasted about one hour would have been less severe had the passenger next to me taken the trouble to take a bath and clean his breath.

After a while, I was handed a cup by the stewardess in uniform that was old and worn and well past its time to be replaced. She then gave me choice of tea bags or Nescafe powder. It was safer to keep the cup in hand because the tray was completely missing. At the whistling sound announcing the kettle of boiling water was ready, the girl came with the tea kettle and filled the cups for the coffee or tea.

When the plane arrived, the passengers began to reach for their hand luggage which included bags, suitcases and boxes. All forms of politeness had disappeared and with much pushing and shoving they began to depart the plane.

² Titograd is now called Podgorica.

Titograd was small, and like many airports in that region, very dirty and poorly maintained. There were a few seats in the airport that were still a bit clean so that I could sit. Something that resembled an information desk was unmanned and no one of authority was present.

After some time searching, I discovered a young officer with two stars on his uniform who stood against a wall smoking a cigarette. He gave me a surprised look. I realized that he did not often see a man in a two-piece suit with tie.

He was a young man looking to be around 35 years old with black curly hair and a big mustache. His uniform gave the impression of being new. He made a good impression on me. I asked him in English if he could hail a taxi and if he knew of a hotel where I might stay. He spoke between puffs on the cigarette. He said in broken English, yes I can help you. I will take you to the barracks and my uncle will be able to help you. He has a guesthouse that he calls his Grand Hilton hotel.

On the way to the barracks he told me a lot about his family. He was very proud of them because they had survived tough times during the Second World War. His father was an important leader of a well-known partisans group. He died last year, he said. I have the medals he received, he said with pride in his voice. He that made it clear that he missed his father. Later he confirmed that he was enormously proud of his father.

You can call me Bogor, he said uncertainly. And you can call me Mark, I said smiling. He had a very cynical sense of humor. Bogor said, I am in charge of about 20 men although we have not seen some of them for a very long time. We have two army trucks; they do not work but we have the parts on

order. However, we have been waiting almost a year for the parts. We do have a vehicle that is about six years old and in good condition. We will not win a war with these trucks, but we don't need to because our big brothers from the Soviet Union will protect us against good and evil, he said cynically. He went inside the barrack and came out with the key. He put my suitcase in the back of the truck and said 'come to sit next to me'.

After some time, the truck finally started sending off great plumes of stinky smoke. As we went towards Titograd, the truck made many creaky sounds and my fear was the truck was not up to the task of getting us there in one piece. During the ride on the very bumpy roads, I often laughed very hard at Bogor's special cynical humor.

He stopped in front of a very old house and said, here you are at the only real Grand Hilton hotel of Titograd. It used to belong to a very old and well-known family but now it belongs to the state. This means it belongs to everyone, he said with a soft voice. Now tired from my long journey and being hot and sweaty, all I wanted was to take a shower and get some rest.

When entering the Grand Hilton hotel, the man behind the front desk came out and greeted us. He hugged Bogor as if he had not seen him in years. The man's name turned out to be Tagor. Tagor spoke reasonable German and made me feel very welcome at the Grand Hilton Hotel. Bogor told me the story of Tagor, who regularly looked to me and nodded approvingly.

I bade farewell to Bogor and gave him a 10 DM banknote. Bogor did not want to accept the money, but at my insist-

ence he took it. I told him, buy something for your wife and child. He quickly put the money in his pocket and left.

Tagor gave me a key attached to a long rope fastened to a board with the room number 0102 painted on it. I took my suitcase and climbed the wooden staircase to the first floor, I was thinking of taking a nice shower as I climbed the stairs. There were two rooms on the floor, numbered 0102 and 0103. The room was reasonably equipped with a chair and bed. On the wall there was a big broken mirror. The washbasin underneath left something to be desired, but I was too tired to care about the room and wanted to get into the shower. The shower and toilet were in the hallway not far from my room. From the tap on the washbasin and in the shower came a small trickle of water, just enough for me to be able to freshen up.

To be sure that everything was prepared and that I would be able to continue my trip the next day, I went back downstairs to discuss the matter with Tagor. Tagor was drinking glass of wine at the table. I sat down with him at the table, and with a big grin on his face, he looked at me and asked, is everything to your satisfaction?

I replied in the affirmative. He gave me, without my asking, a glass of red wine. The wine tasted excellent considering the bar was sparsely supplied.

I asked whether he could arrange something for me to eat. But of course, he said laughing, but then you must be patient because my wife is yet home. When she gets here, she will prepare something for you. She is not a good cook but she is a very beautiful woman. Tagor also had a great sense of humor. The bottle of wine which Tagor and I drank from eventually would be on my check. He toasted me, himself and his cousin, General Bogor, who must defend this coun-

try with only twenty men. Togar told me he would have the car Bogor had brought me to the Grand Hilton ready for me to go to the border tomorrow. It would cost me 50 DM, Tagor said, and he added quickly that the room would be 20 DM, the meal including breakfast costs 10DM, and for the good bottle of wine only 5 DM.

It was agreed that his friend, the professor, would drive me to the border and that it would take about six hours. The distance was only 90 km, but the roads were very bad and sometimes the bad dirt road could cause delays. After all the arrangements were made, Elena, Tagor's wife came home. Within minutes Tagor commanded her to prepare a meal for me.

She was a very beautiful woman with a finely sculpted face without wrinkles or blemishes. She was dark with curly jet black hair and very slim.

She was dressed in a bright red dress with bright white flowers. Elena reappeared, after some time, with a plate with of fried green peppers and half cooked boiled potatoes for me to eat. There was something that resembled a pork chop.

There is no disagreement with Tagor's assessment about taste but it was edible and I was hungry and my stomach was soon satisfied. After the meal, and with the last of the wine finished, I went upstairs and fell asleep immediately.

At five o'clock in the morning Tagor came knocking on the door to wake me. I went in quickly to shave and take a shower. The shower didn't work and there was not much water for me shave and just enough water for me freshen up. Elena was also up early and was kind enough to prepare a sandwich with goat cheese. She handed me a steaming mug of coffee. I paid the account that Tagor had written on a sheet of stained

paper, typed above was the Grand Hilton Hotel Titograd with his signature.

I gave him 10 DM extra as a tip and he was extremely grateful. Then he said, come back again and we can have a hearty glass of wine again.

The professor drove up in a very old Mercedes which I estimated was at least 25 years old. At the bottom of the doors were large holes were rust had eaten through, and the seats had small cushions that I hoped would at least give some comfort during the long ride. I was surprised what so far I had only seen a few, old fiat models during the drive such as Trabant and Wolga cars. At exactly six we left the Grand Hilton hotel and went towards Tuzi on the Albanian border. He wanted at least 25 DM paid in advance for the petrol, he said.

The roads were exactly as Tagor had described. They were barely passable and we had to drive along the edge regularly to avoid the deep holes in the road.

The professor, who answered to the name Magyar, told me with pride that his parents were from Hungary and had come from nobility.

After more than four hours on the nearly inaccessible roads, we arrived at a border. There was a barrier and the post was closed and the no-man's land border guard ordered me out of the car. He told me bring the suitcase, which had to be put in the Frontier House for inspection. I paid the remainder of the agreed amount of Magyar so that he could be on his way. It soon became apparent that the Commander was not in the best of moods because he said with a very grumpy voice that I had to sit on the bench.