

Story 36.
The Spy that Wasn't
Part 2. The Council of Europe

The combined UN-Council of Europe meeting occurred as scheduled. A total of twelve “experts” as they were all called, plus supportive staff to warm the seats for the experts, take notes, and pass to them special handwritten notes conveyed to them from the Rapporteur, assembled in the cavernous Council of Europe Debating Chamber. Dr. Ferrapotti, Andrea and Dennis attended and sat to one side, though during the entire meeting Dr. Ferrapotti rarely sat, but constantly paraded about the hall, stopping and chatting with whoever was in his path, a look on his face as though he were indulged in some great conspiracy, a smirk of superiority, his eyes dancing around as if to scan the great hall for hidden spies. On the other side were various representatives of the Council of Europe, though it turned out that the only country sending its representatives was the Netherlands, and there was one country represented by an “observer,” a representative who sat at the far back of the hall, a very large suitcase sitting in the aisle beside him. This man with a ruddy complexion, lined face and very red cheeks, head shaved, was the observer from East Germany, who, as it turned out, spoke only Russian. He had, however, been invited to observe at the special request of Dr. Ferrapotti, as a sign of good will.

The Rapporteur called the meeting to order and made a special plea that all participants come down from their seats perched way back from the dais, so that all could hear each other speak, and besides as an act of international friendship. Without thinking, Dennis, an obedient person who wanted to please everyone, got up and moved and, surprisingly, others did as well, mumbling and joking as they did so. The Rapporteur, Professor of Law from the esteemed Sorbonne, a veritable Napoleon look-alike, addressed the members in English, with a sonorous French accent that seemed to issue from his large nose:

“Good morning,” he tapped the microphone, “I regret the lack of simultaneous translation, but with our small numbers, we did not we did not qualify. Esteemed members, experts and observers. I am honored to serve as rapporteur for this important meeting in which we will develop the necessary protocols for the

collection of crime statistics worldwide and will, we very much hope, result in the construction of not only a World Crime Index, but establish a framework for universal transparency in criminal justice. This is a pioneering study, a giant first in collaboration between the Council of Europe and the United Nations.”

The delegates and experts all clapped lightly in response to these uplifting remarks. The Rapporteur smiled and raised his hands as if to accept the applause. Dennis was spellbound. He was probably the only person present whose native language was English. How privileged he was! He looked around the chamber and could hardly believe that he was here, among such illustrious people, and most amazing of all, he was going to direct the first ever study of world crime statistics. He was himself clapping. He could not remember having ever before clapped in a meeting of any kind, when he felt a touch to his arm. He turned and looked up to see Dr. Ferrapotti staring down at him, his usual big grin. Ferrapotti leaned over and with his hand cupped over his mouth, whispered loudly, “Oh, ah, this guy is trying to get the Turks into the Council of Europe and the EU. He’s a lawyer and they are writing a new criminal code that excludes the death penalty. You know, it’s a requirement of the EU that all member states abolish the death penalty. Keep this under your hat.”

Before Dennis could answer, though he had nothing to say except some kind of in-awe grunt perhaps, Dr. Ferrapotti had gone to some other delegate to pass on another piece of top secret information. The Rapporteur continued:

“And with those short introductory remarks, I now welcome you all to the Council of Europe and ask that you briefly stand and introduce yourselves.” The Rapporteur did not call on anyone to start, because as a skilled Rapporteur he did not want to give any impression of who he thought of first. All must be treated equally here in this illustrious place.

A quintessential European, silver haired, tall and straight, arose and announced, “I am Professor Dr. Der Groot, University of Amsterdam, and Director of Research, Supreme Court of Netherlands.”

The mysterious man who had remained at back, stood and said, in broken English, “I observer East Germany, not tell department.” He sat down with a bang and then noisily opened his suitcase, retrieved a bottle of vodka and small glass, which he

filled, gulped it down, and cried “*За встречу*” (to our meeting!).

Dennis waited for other delegates from other countries to announce their presence. None came forward. His boss, that was how he had come to think of him, Ferrapotti made no attempt to announce himself because he was too busy talking to the Rapporteur, his hand cupped over his mouth almost touching the Rapporteur’s ear. Dennis rose slowly. “I am Dennis Cotter, and will be leading the project for Professor Dr. Ferrapotti and Professor Dr. Di Napolitano, for the United Nations Social Defense Research Institute.” All stared at this scruffy individual, dressed in cheap pants and open neck shirt, no tie. His accent, the words rolling inaudibly from his mouth to his chin, revealed his obvious nationality. The East German, greatly excited, immediately reached into his suitcase and pulled out a bottle of beer. “You want?” he called with a big grin.

“Thank you Mr. Cotter,” said the Rapporteur with a forced smile. “And are you able to tell us anything of your preliminary design for the project?”

Dennis, deeply embarrassed, still standing, had started to sit, then nervously stood again. “Like what?” he asked with a touch of belligerence.

The Rapporteur looked away and directed his gaze at the man from Holland, who quickly stood and responded.

“It is our considered opinion that we should start by collecting information only on the numbers of persons in prison throughout the world. This would be phase one. After that, we should then collect information on the crimes that have been committed in every country.”

“Oh, er, ah,” interrupted Ferrapotti, having taken his seat in the front row, “it should be the other way around. First we count the crimes, then count the prisoners.”

Dennis raised his hand and, seeing that the Rapporteur was not looking his way, he stood and coughed loudly. “In America we count crimes by number of crimes reported to the police. It is the most valid, front line measure, unsullied by the complexities of the criminal justice system.”

“You are not Australian?” asked the Rapporteur rudely.

“No, I mean I am an Aussie, but I graduated from the renowned criminology program at University of Pennsylvania.”

“That explains it,” announced Der Groot, full of his cultured

superiority. “You are not a lawyer, so you know nothing of the definition of crimes or for that matter criminality.”

Dennis sat back in the padded seat, thoroughly embarrassed, and very angry. “What a pompous asshole,” he mumbled to himself. His boss came to the rescue.

“Oh, er, ah, as a psychiatrist I can support Dr. Cotter’s observation. One does not have to be a lawyer to know what a crime is.”

“Mr. Cotter is a psychiatrist?” asked Der Groot imperiously.

Dennis, motivated by his boss’s support rose quickly and raised his hand. The Rapporteur pretended not to see him and looked back to Ferrapotti. But Dennis was not to be dismissed so easily. “I am a sociologist,” he said proudly, “and we know much more about the entire criminal justice process, the behavior of police who collect the initial information of crimes and who have a well-established procedure for recording and counting them. You have to look at the whole process from the initial report of a crime through to the end result, the punishment, depending on the seriousness of the offence, the final prison term served by the offender.”

“Yes, of course,” ceded Der Groot, “but what you have described would require a lifetime of research and is simply not practical, to collect information of the entire criminal justice system of every country in the world. Besides, many may not even have a criminal justice system as you Americans seem to assume.”

“I am not an American,” snarled Dennis again, deeply offended.

The Rapporteur abruptly stood up. “I see that our morning break is upon us. We shall retire for a tea or coffee as you prefer, and return in half an hour.”

As they made their way up the steps to the exit of the great debating chamber, Dennis tried very hard to catch up with his boss. But Ferrapotti was already busily talking in very loud whispers to the Rapporteur, then to the Dutchman, ignoring the East German, who in any case, remained in his seat with his suitcase, and beckoned wildly to Dennis as he passed, to join him. But Dennis hurried outside, eager to get away from these most obnoxious Europeans, all of them seemingly ignorant of the simple basics of crime statistics. He walked towards the barred

and flagged entrance to the Council of Europe compound, when he realized that he should have gone to the toilet. He did not want to return to the chamber, for fear he would meet one of the delegates and would say something he would regret. He looked around for a convenient place. Hardly a tree in sight, but plenty of green grass, and no significant buildings behind which one could hide. Maybe if he simply stood between a couple of the flags, facing away from the building, no one would notice. But of course someone would. He had a feeling of being spied on all the time. And there's nothing worse than that feeling when one wants to pee.

Eventually, Dennis found a bathroom in another part of the building and was able to return to the chamber, ready for the next round. His boss caught up with him just as he was entering the chamber, nudged his elbow, whispered in his ear, his lips almost touching. "Oh, er, ah," he whispered, "keep going. It doesn't matter what they say. We will do what we want. We have the money, they don't." He hurried off to accost some other member, probably Der Groot.

All were assembled, but as yet the Rapporteur had not arrived. Dennis looked around, caught Ferrapotti's sly glance, and maybe a nod towards the door at bottom of the chamber. And there, he saw Andrea emerge, her cheeks rosy, her hand touching her hair as though it were blowing in the wind. In a few moments, the Rapporteur tried impossibly, given his Napoleonic stature, to walk as upright as Charles de Gaulle, his pin striped suit fitting so snugly that it accentuated his protruding belly, a great match for Andrea's simulated Carabinieri attire.

"Now esteemed delegates," announced the Rapporteur, "we appear to have something of an agreement, or should one say a compromise. Statistics on those convicted of crimes will first be collected. This takes into account the legal definition of when a crime is a crime, which is defined by a conviction. There can be no doubt about that. At the same time, our sociologists will collect information of the number of offenders in prison."

Dennis could not help himself. "After trial or before trial?" he asked.

His boss looked back and frowned. He should shut up. That was the message. The Rapporteur also scowled and shuffled some papers.

“Yes, we know that France has the highest rate of incarceration awaiting trial of any modern country,” noted Der Groot with a touch of glee.

“Though an important measure that statistic is not available from French authorities. Besides, this assertion is based on rumor, not fact, and cannot be accepted as true without the relevant data,” answered the Rapporteur, looking over his glasses at the rest of the audience, avoiding Der Groot’s pompous stare.

The Rapporteur looked at his watch. “It is time for our lunch break. It will be served in the Council of Europe dining room for delegates. Follow our event coordinator, the beautiful Andrea, and she will show you the way. I am told there will be five courses, as there should be, with the best quality French wines. We will reconvene in three hours.”

Immediately all rose and made their ways to Andrea. The East German had understood well enough and was already by her side, grinning and licking his lips.

The afternoon session was cancelled for reasons unknown, though Ferrapotti had whispered to Dennis that all was well, and that a solution to the difficulties would be reached by the next morning. He, Der Groot and the Rapporteur would meet for dinner. Dennis was not invited. It was a chance for him to get to know Andrea, Ferrapotti had said with a wink.

To be continued.....

