

Chance meeting with girl in ship turned Jo'burg

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## David Plotz tells amazing story of intrigue

By PETER HAZELHURST

DAVID PLOTZ, a young Johannesburg industrial executive, can now be revealed as an amateur spy whose activities led to the discovery of the African Resistance Movement in South Africa. The African Resistance Movement (A.R.M.) included among its members Randolph Vigne, Denis Higgs, Robert Watson, Adrian Leftwich and persons recently convicted of sabotage.

Mr. Plotz has given me the full story of his adventures, which began with a chance meeting with an attractive young woman on board ship, her disclosure of a system of coded letters used by Robert Watson (one of the A.R.M. leaders who fled from South Africa) and Mr. Plotz's eventual exploits as an amateur detective and "secret agent."

He flew back to South Africa on April 25 last year with a secret assignment: To locate the members of a new underground organisation in Cape Town and to infiltrate its ranks.

He succeeded so well that the information he could supply contributed to the A.R.M. being smashed—and a number of its members were charged with sabotage or as co-conspirators.

"Now that it is all over, and the A.R.M. has been smashed, I can tell my story for publication," said Mr. Plotz, as he settled down to recount his remarkable adventures.

Mr. Plotz sailed from Cape Town for Southampton on May 18, 1962.

At sea he struck up an acquaintanceship with an aloof, pretty American brunette. Their conversations were to lead to the discovery of the political in-

became firm friends. In their long discussions Sheila reminisced about her life in South Africa.

### Mystery man

One night she told him why she had left South Africa.

"She said she had met a handsome young man in Singapore with whom she had fallen in love. He was a domineering person, romantic, dashing and with an air of mystery.

"They decided to come to South Africa, where they planned to marry. His name—Robert ('Bob') Watson.

"The name meant nothing to me. Later it was to be mentioned in court as that of a sabotage instigator.

"In Cape Town Watson persuaded Sheila, at the last moment, to put off the marriage.

"Eventually Watson told her that he was involved with another woman and that he did not intend to marry her," Plotz recalls her saying.



PLOTZ . . . took on the job to infiltrate—provided a girl's name was not dragged into the mud.

SHEILA JO GLOVER, the American girl... she talked of broken romance.

# SECURITY POLICE "AMONG BEST IN WORLD"

# Amateur spy unmasked A.R.M.

on February 17, so the next day I phoned a contact in Paris and asked for X. After being questioned by another person, X came on the line," Mr. Plotz went on.

"X said: 'Don't talk on the phone. Where can I meet you?'"

They arranged to meet during the lunch-hour in an unpretentious back-street hotel in Versailles.

X said he would carry a green hat in his hand and would be accompanied by a man with a white flower in his lapel.

"The two men arrived punctually, and we went upstairs to a rented room."

Plotz produced Sheila's letter. After reading it carefully X said: "Will you write to this American girl and try to find out the names of all the people she and Watson were connected with in Cape Town? But do it discreetly and don't let her know that anything is going on."

X's companion then intervened, saying: "We had better make it worthwhile for the young man."

## Whispered

The two men whispered together before Plotz was told that they would offer him a certain amount of money for each of Sheila's letters.

"I told them: 'Look, for that amount of money it's not worth betraying a friend. I would rather do it for nothing. I will be doing it for the right reasons then.'"

"X seemed happy about this. I was told that my contact in Paris would be his companion and that I was not to use the phone for anything important, and that I was not to discuss the affair with anyone.

"After a few drinks they left."

That night Plotz wrote to Sheila.

"I asked her for names of friends in Cape Town. Adopting a suggestion made by X, I told her that I was contemplating returning to South Africa and needed introductions in Cape Town.

"I also asked for Watson's full name, as she had only referred to him as Bob Watson."

Within a few days Sheila replied giving the names of several people she and Watson had been friendly with in Cape Town.

Plotz sent her letter to his associate in Paris.

About a month later David Plotz moved on to La Rochelle, in southwest France, where he hoped to sell books at an American military base.

"Soon afterwards his book-seller employer arrived at his hotel and told him that the "money was

movements and find out about his associates.

"X impressed on me the necessity of not pushing myself.

"It was also suggested that I might casually mention that I was a miner and held a blasting certificate.

"To allay suspicions I was to tell people I had just returned from Europe and was taking a long holiday in Cape Town.

"X handed me a wad of bank notes for expenses. He told me that I would be paid about R190 a month, which would include expenses.

"In Cape Town I went to a café which Sheila had said was the meeting place of her friends.

"For days I hung around, but made no progress. Eventually I approached one of Sheila's women friends.

"Through her I learned much about Watson's movements, and gradually I met people who knew Watson.

"But whenever I brought his name up people were reluctant to talk about him. This might have been my imagination at the time, but I am almost sure that they were nervous when his name was mentioned.

"Through 'contacts' at the café I learned that Alan Keith Brooks, a young law student at the University of Cape Town, was very friendly with Watson.

"I wanted to meet Brooks personally, so I phoned him and said: 'I have a message from Sheila Jo.

"Instead of asking for the message on the phone, Brooks said he would meet me at the railway station. We spent some time talking about mutual friends, and I learnt a lot from him."

Gradually Plotz built up a picture of Watson's friends and their movements. On one occasion he saw Watson enter the café, which was packed with students, and weave his way through to a back room.

"I managed to follow him and found him talking to an African whose name was already known to me."

Then came a day when David Plotz left his newly-formed student friends in the café with the excuse that he was going to "get an early night."

He went back to his hotel, wrote a report on his activities, posted it to the secret address in Paris, and disappeared from Cape Town.

## Named

Robert Watson was named as a co-conspirator together with John Harris, Adrian Leftwich, Randolph Vigne and Denis Higgs in the

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"She told me that her name was Sheila Jo Glover and that she was returning to the United States after two years in Cape Town," David Plotz recalls.

Plotz — a Rhodesian and once a miner and "Wall of Death" rider — and the young American



ROBERT WATSON, an A.R.M. leader... A woman friend's conversation gave first clue.

became firm friends. In their long discussions Sheila reminisced about her life in South Africa.

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"In Cape Town Watson persuaded Sheila, at the last moment, to put off the marriage.

"Eventually Watson told her that he was involved with another woman and that he did not intend to marry her," Plotz recalls her saying.

Her romance shattered, Sheila boarded the first available ship from Cape Town.

In June, 1962, the ship docked at Southampton and Sheila and David said goodbye — Sheila to continue her journey to America and David Plotz setting out to work his way around Europe.

They promised to correspond.

### The letter

Plotz found a job in Germany as a travelling book salesman. Sheila wrote regularly from her home in San Francisco.

It was a letter in 1962 that led to a startling change in Plotz's life.

"Sheila wrote that she was corresponding with Bob Watson again. I read her letter and was mildly surprised. She explained that Watson had written asking her if she would act as a 'post-box' for him in America," Plotz said.

"Watson wanted her to receive letters from various parts of South Africa and the Protectorates at her address and re-direct them to him in South Africa. The letters would be in code.

"Sheila asked me for advice: Did I think that if she helped Watson there would be a chance of renewing the broken romance?

"I wrote back that I thought it would be futile—because of Watson's previous behaviour," said Plotz.

A few weeks later Sheila wrote that she had decided to help Watson.

### Queer

The young Rhodesian had another look at the previous letter, and after carefully going over the reference to "coded letters", thought Watson's request "very queer", particularly in the light of known underground political activity in South Africa.

"I decided then to write to a contact in London informing him of Watson's request.

"I quoted Sheila's letter and suggested that there might be something in it, or that my suspicions might simply lead to a wild goose chase.

"A month later, when I had almost forgotten the affair, a mysterious letter arrived from Pretoria."

It was typewritten on plain white paper and dated February 5, 1963.

The letter thanked Plotz for the interest he had shown in the affairs of South Africa. It informed him that a man (who will be referred to here as X) would arrive in Paris on February 17 and would telephone him in Germany to arrange a meeting.

"But I was working in Versailles

didn't have enough money for a packet of cigarettes."

Realising that the only person he knew in France was the contact in Paris, he put a collect call through to him.

Plotz asked him for a loan to enable him to get back to England.

"He seemed to jump at the chance to help me.

"He told me: 'I will send money for your hotel bill and enough to get you to Paris. When you get here come straight to see me'."

"Within a few hours R160 arrived by wire, and I was on the train for Paris.

"I looked like a tramp, and I got a few odd glances when I entered the building where the contact worked. But as soon as I mentioned his name I was shown up to his office immediately.

"He told me that he had followed up my information and that the people I had named did exist. He said there seemed to be 'something up' in Cape Town, but he was not sure what it was all about.

## Proposition

"Mr. Plotz, we have decided to make you a proposition,' he told me.

"He then asked me to go to Cape Town and infiltrate Watson's clique, using Shella's name as an introduction. All expenses would be paid.

"I told him that I would accept — only if I was guaranteed that Shella's name would not be dragged into it.

"He said: 'Now go back to your hotel and don't come near me again unless it's an emergency.'

"He told me that if I wanted to communicate with him I should send a telegram to an address in Paris.

"He wrote the address on a piece of paper and passed it to me, saying: 'You never know where there are microphones.'

"He laughed and said: 'That address is the same to me as Shella's address is to Watson.'

"It suddenly struck me that I was becoming a kind of amateur 'special agent.' I was photographed and supplied details of my background.

"I waited at the hotel. Then I was ordered: 'Check out immediately and bring your bags to the contact's office.'

"There I was told: 'You are leaving tonight on an Air France plane from Orly Airport.'

"I was told that I would change planes in Frankfurt, Germany. I suppose in this way my links with the contact would be further concealed.

"X was to meet me at Jan Smuts Airport and arrangements would be made by him."

David Plotz landed at Jan Smuts Airport on April 25 last year. X took him by car to a well-known Pretoria hotel.

"X had booked a room for me, and there he told me to go by train to Cape Town. I was to meet the people named in Shella's letters, and, to avoid suspicion, to take my time about it.

"I was not to communicate with Watson directly but to watch his

with sabotage.

Alan Keith Brooks was charged with sabotage earlier this month, but after pleading guilty to an alternative charge of contravening the Suppression of Communism Act he was sentenced to four years' imprisonment (two suspended) with two other Cape Town University students.

Watson, an ex-British paratrooper in Malaya, fled from South Africa shortly before the police detained members of A.R.M. earlier this year. In a trial when two former associates were sentenced to 15 and 10 years' imprisonment for sabotage, Watson was described as the mystery man in the organisation.

Witnesses told the Cape Supreme Court that it was Watson who instructed members in the use of explosives.

Watson is reported to be living in England, where he has a divorced wife and two children.

Last week three other conspirators in the A.R.M. plot were sentenced to nine years and seven years imprisonment for sabotage.

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BUSY

DR. J. SCHWARTZ, chairman of the South African Association of Private Hospitals, told me this week that private hospitals would increase their charges early next year. His association, he said, would meet early in 1965 to

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