



**The duchess had a tooth-ache**—When the Duchess of Windsor wanted a tooth yanked, neighbor Axel Wenner-Gren loaned her his yacht for the

trip to Miami. Here are Wenner-Grens and Windsors aboard Southern Cross. (Windsors got a royal spanking for their choice of playmates.)

# International Mystery Man

*graphia 10/7/42*  
**The "world's largest land-owner," barred from admittance and black-listed by Uncle Sam, is now secretly playing around "somewhere in Latin America"**

by Patricia Bronté

**T**HE question-mark in World War II is Latin America.

In peace-time, the coquetry of her diplomats was amusing; the vagaries of her intrigue stuff for story-books.

But in a world at war the republics south of our border have yet to be tried on for size.

For as fast as one South American country

kicks out the local fuehrer, another breaks out with a Waldo Frank demonstration, shaking its fist under democracy's nose.

Trembling with unrest, devastated by foreign agents and inundated in propaganda, the hot-blooded Latin Americas can menace the future of the entire world.

Now floating muddily to the surface are factors which play upon Pan-America's instability.

Gradually, curiosity arises about one individual — Axel L. Wenner-Gren.

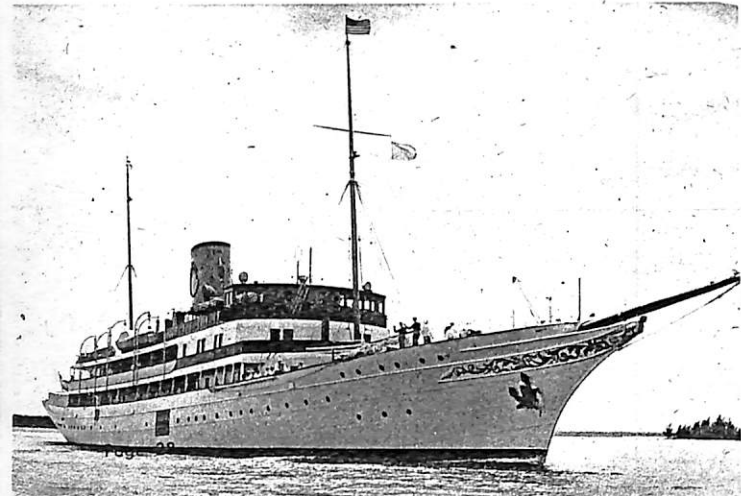
In recent months his name has been cropping up in the news with increasing regularity.

In January, he was curtly denied admittance to the United States.

Only a few weeks ago the United Nations announced they had seized his canneries in Nassau.

**Now she belongs to Mexico**—But when Wenner-Gren sailed her, the beautiful Southern Cross was the largest, privately-owned ship in the world.

**Closed to the public**—is breath-taking Paradise Beach, one of Wenner-Gren's real estate developments in the Bahamas, adjoining his home.





**Richest man in the world?**—Munitions-maker Wenner-Gren's estate has worldwide dimensions.

Just prior to that, there was an investigation and search of his lavish estate in the Bahamas, Shangri-La; in quest of secret enemy stores.

His gaudy Paradise Beach nearby was closed to the public by government edict.

Since early winter he has been a conspicuous figure in the social and political life of Mexico, consorting with such assorted characters as:

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor; Carol of Rumania, and light o' love, Magda; Atlanta architect, Lawrence "Chip" Roberts and his gadabout wife;

General Maximino Camacho, brother of the President, reputed "real boss" of Mexico; John A. Hastings, ex-Tammanyite, who ran for Congress on a Father Coughlin ticket;

Paulette Goddard, other glamorous gew-gaws. His palatial yacht, the Southern Cross, last month was hitched to a pier in Vera Cruz, a "gift" to Mexico — just one jump ahead of Mexican seizure.

In the Bahamas, spokesmen for his erstwhile pal, the Duke of Windsor, say bluntly Wenner-Gren will not be allowed to return here.

In New York, Serval, Inc., manufacturers of Electrolux, announced he no longer has any stock in his name, no voice in their policies.

And while friends protest he is no Axis sympathizer but a friend of the democracies, Wenner-Gren, reputed to be the world's richest man, unaccountably fawns on Latin America.

*Can it be that the presence of a single human being south of the Rio Grande may have a decisive influence in the outcome of the war?*

Strictly a character from an Oppenheim novel, Wenner-Gren's resemblance to the late Sir Basil Zaharoff, is almost photographic.

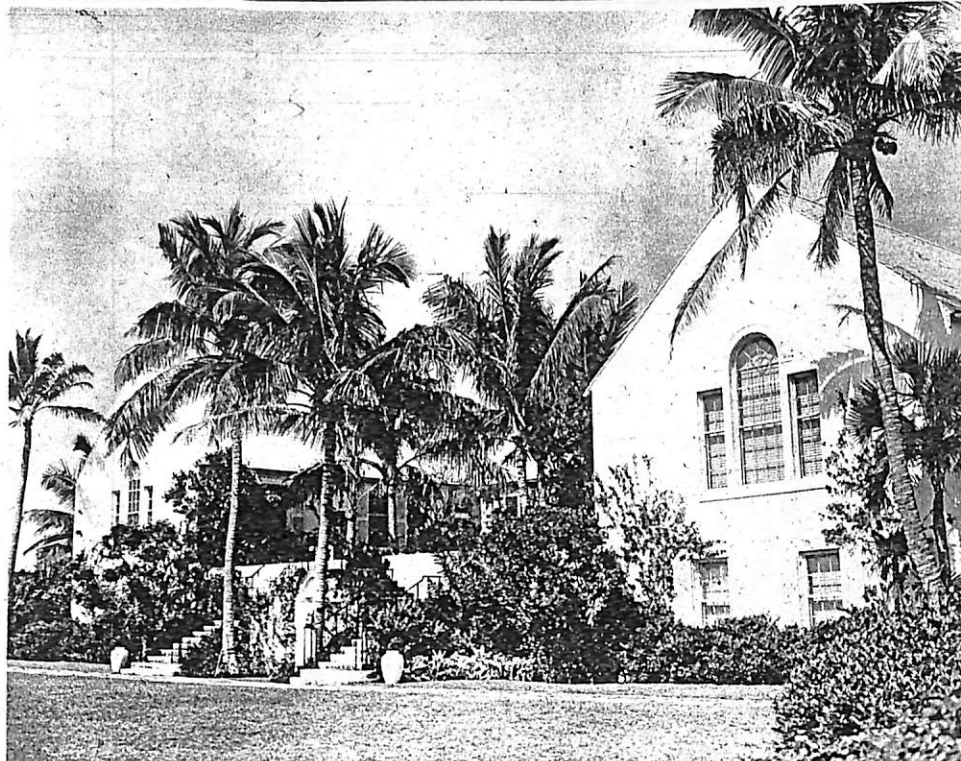
Zaharoff, a Greek, was the Mystery Man of World War I.

Wenner-Gren, a Swede, is the Mystery Man of World War II.

Both of them rose from catchpenny obscurity to globe-girdling power.

*Both manufactured munitions.*

Zaharoff, a generation earlier, juggled his Vickers arms, oil, steel and shipping in competition with Krupp, Creusot, Skoda and Midvale.



**This is Shangri-la!**—His glittering retreat on Hog Island, in the Bahamas, rivals even Wenner-

Wenner-Gren tangled with airplanes, timber, steel, paper, scientific research, newspapers, and at last, Bofors, a Krupp monopoly. When Match King Kreuger's vast empire went up in flames, Wenner-Gren was Axel-on-the-spot with the extinguisher, salvaged the gigantic Pulp Trust.

*Both became powerful politicians.*

Zaharoff's puppet-manipulation of statesmen and kings earned him the grisly sobriquet, "Merchant of Death."

Wenner-Gren scampered back and forth between Goering and Chamberlain, campaigning for "peace in our time."

*Both dabbled in philanthropies.*

Zaharoff financed such incompatible causes as the establishment of chairs of aviation at the Universities of Paris and Petrograd, invested millions in Venizelos and his struggle for Greek freedom, bestowed thousands to restore the monkey house at the Paris zoo.

Wenner-Gren backed an archaeological expedition to the mouth of the Amazon River, organized the new motor and propellor testing laboratory at the University of Kentucky; blessed Peru with a million-acre public park; gave \$10,000 for research to the University of Toronto, donated \$200,000 to the poor of Mexico City.

*Both liked to play with expensive toys.*

Zaharoff, with his interests in Monte Carlo, Wenner-Gren with his development of a Bahamas resort adjoining his own glittering estate.

Zaharoff's wife, whom he waited 30 years to marry, until the death of her unbalanced Bourbon husband, was a Spanish duchess. But her charm and dark, striking beauty were not unlike that of the Kansas City merchant's daughter who became Mrs. Wenner-Gren.

**T**ALL, well-built, bronzed, there is no look of the scheming Machiavelli about the 60-year-old Viking. His ice-blue eyes are guileless; his white hair lends dignity. His manner is as unassuming as any babbitt's.

Though he is now the largest land-owner in the world (a single tract amounts to 5,000,000 acres), he was born in a tiny, Swedish town.

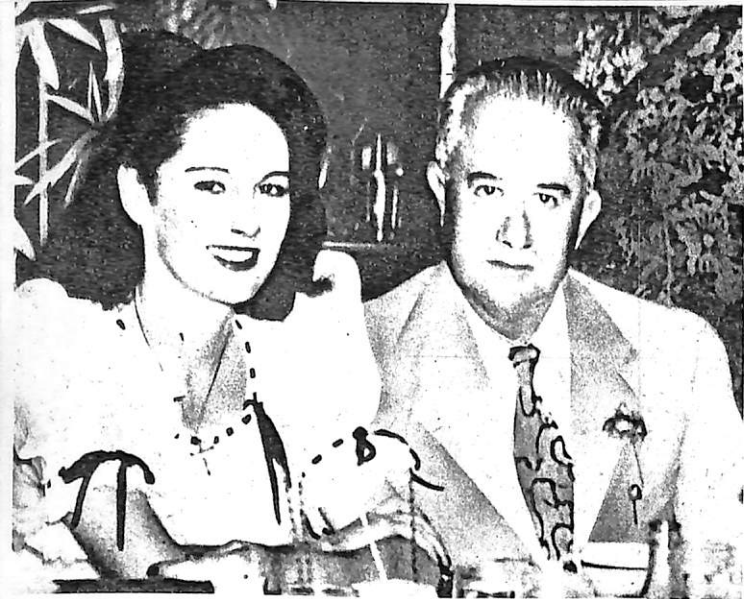
Gren's castles in Sweden, his villas on the Riviera. Today, he's not allowed to return to the Bahamas.

**She's from Kansas City**—Opera-singing Mrs. Wenner-Gren is daughter of U. S. merchant.



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**Mexico's strong man**—General Maximino Camacho, President's brother, whose friendship Wenner-Gren courted, compliments a Mexican dancer.



**Rumania's Carol and Mexican charmer**—Magda's in the background, but Carol, another of Wenner-Gren's chums, enjoys his Mexican holiday.

Son of an exporter and grandson of the village mayor, he was educated in Germany.

He borrowed money from his father to manufacture farm equipment, went broke before he was 25. Soon thereafter he came to America to study modern industrial methods, taking a job as a common laborer in a N. J. motor factory at 15c an hour.

As he returned to Europe, a shipboard romance matured into marriage. His opera-singing bride was the former Marguerite Liggett, from the U. S. wheat belt.

In Vienna, a vacuum-cleaner in a shop-window caught his eye. He made some improvements and promoting it, he gave the Continent its first taste of the American installment plan, laying the groundwork for his capitalistic career. He financed two young scientists experimenting with refrigeration. His Electrolux ice-boxes and vacuum-cleaners were sold here by Servel, Inc.

Wenner-Gren hit the big-time — munitions — when he purchased Bofors, the plant which made the first usable anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns. Under Wenner-Gren, the Nazis managed to wangle every Bofors invention first. Some features became German "exclusives."

Soon he was acquiring other substantial interests, a tie-up with I. G. Farbenindustrie.

When the acquisition of wealth was no longer a novelty, Wenner-Gren published a book of essays entitled, "Call To Reason."

His treatises denounced Fascism and during one visit to this country he had much to say about "Nordic culture," carefully explaining it had nothing to do with German racism. Yet his Swedish daily newspaper showed increasing sympathy for the German regime.

From 1935 on, Wenner-Gren was the self-elected Ambassador for Appeasement. Powerful men like himself, said he, should preserve the peace. He commuted between London and Berlin, like a one-man ways and means committee.

He must have got the results Germany wanted, for Goering then asked him to negotiate the Russo-Finnish treaty.

This mission accounted for Wenner-Gren's presence on the liner Rex when it sailed from New York, carrying Sumner Welles and George Messersmith, the American conferees, to the white-dove deliberations.

The Swedish Croesus immediately proposed a Hitler solution to the frosty Welles. The Secretary of State-to-be brushed him off.

But in Italy, when Welles, arrived for a long delayed appointment with Mussolini, Wenner-

Gren was strolling casually out the door! This Houdinish hallucination recurred in Berlin when Welles dropped in for a chat with Shickelgruber.

Abandoning the swastickish situation in Europe, Wenner-Gren took refuge in the Bahamas, where his old sidekick, the Duke of Windsor, was now Governor-General.

Wenner-Gren settled down near Nassau. His magnificent estate, Shangri-La, rivalled his Scandinavian castles, his villas on the Riviera.

He invested some \$3,000,000 in five local concerns. He designed and opened to the public breath-taking Paradise Beach.

These enterprises were, coincidentally, front and center of the newly-acquired U. S. defense bases.

Most fabulous of all his accoutrements was Wenner-Gren's yacht, the Southern Cross, largest privately owned ship in the world. Long as a destroyer, she carried a crew of 315.

When his neighbor, the Duchess of Windsor, got a tooth-ache, he hospitably offered the Southern Cross for the trip.

The duchess had her tooth pulled amid hulla-

**Tammanyite**—John A. Hastings tried to get Wenner-Gren "in" on a \$150,000,000 promotion.



baloo amounting to an international incident, the duke went shopping at Sears-Roebuck, and the Wenner-Grens went night-clubbing.

On that first day of the war (Sept. 1939), a great liner steamed toward America. She was 200 miles off the coast of Ireland when —

Disaster took the form of three torpedoes, and, mortally wounded, the Athenia slumped slowly into the night-black waters.

Then . . . out of the darkness sailed a sleek, swift ship on whose prow was engraved "Southern Cross." Oily, frantic hands clutched at her immaculate white sides, lifeboats were put over, and picked up some 400 survivors.

The American press made much of the heroism of the Southern Cross but in many quarters there was wild speculation about the yacht's providential presence at that scene.

In early 1941, the Wenner-Grens embarked on a South American odyssey, stopping first at Peru. That country rolled out the red carpet.

The University of Cuzco awarded Wenner-Gren an honorary doctorate; the glamour guy was plainly pleased.

Also: the border war between Peru and Ecuador broke out.

From Peru, the Wenner-Grens went to Mexico.

There, John Ambrose Hastings, ex-New York politician who was promoting a \$150,000,000 syndicate won Wenner-Gren's interest. Hastings proclaimed virtuously (after Wenner-Gren's black-listing) he would have no business with such a man.

The blacklisting of Axel Wenner-Gren by the State Department made a dent in the capitalist's plans, but he had no beef coming. For, though the State Department cracked down the rich Swede learning the news some three hours before the information became public, managed to block freezing of his funds.

Today, Wenner-Gren is still in Mexico, but he and his activities have gone underground.

Among other things, he is now cuddling up to General Maximino Camacho. When, for instance, the General's daughter was married, Wenner-Gren's gift was a 154-piece solid gold tea service.

Though he is listed as living in the Hotel Reforma, Wenner-Gren remains inaccessible to newspapermen.

But sailors from his appropriated yacht still weave in and out among the gay international set at the Reforma Bar where recent arrests of Axis spies have splashed into world-wide print.