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July 19, 1956

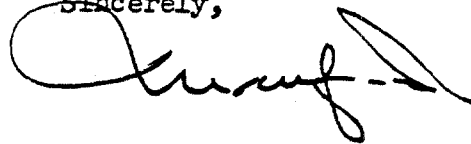
Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.
Director, Kettering Laboratory
University of Cincinnati
Eden Avenue
Cincinnati 19, Ohio

Dear "Dr. Kehoe":

As one of the first to sign up for a part in "The Luscious Luce Lunacy," now playing in all the papers, I think you are entitled to the enclosed ticket to what strikes me as the most knowing performance of this thrilling melodrama thus far.

What I have learned from inside sources about the case, plus what I have reason to suspect, makes quite a story, which unfortunately cannot be told at this time. It should all come out in due course, however, and whenever it does, some faces may glow a bit.

Sincerely,



MB:GW

Enclosure



KE 02915

Italy Doubts Arsenic Made Mrs. Luce Ill

U.S. Experts Also Skeptical Of CIA Report on Paint

By the United Press.

WASHINGTON, July 18.—Something very much resembling the mystery of the month seemed to be developing today in the story of Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce and the arsenical roses in her boudoir.

Mrs. Luce, U.S. ambassador to Italy, is suffering from arsenic poisoning. And the question arises: How did she get it.

According to Time magazine, of which Mrs. Luce's husband is editor-in-chief, the ambassador has been getting slow doses of arsenic-containing paint dust and particles from the bedroom ceiling of her 17th century villa near Rome.

The "fallout" came from the Borgian white roses that adorn the ceiling of the room. It not only drifted into the air but got into Mrs. Luce's food and morning coffee, the magazine reported.

This, said Time, explains the recurring illness which Mrs. Luce has been suffering. Time credited agents of the Central Intelligence Agency with discovering the source of the poisonous particles.

Questions Raised.

But questions have been raised about the accuracy of CIA's detective work, although no one was suggesting a definite poison attempt or foreign intrigue.

Italian newspapers openly asked if the CIA had given a complete explanation to back

up its report. These newspapers devoted thousands of words to the story in dispatches from New York and Rome. They were splashed across the front pages with photographs and questions.

But Il Tempo of Rome reported that one of the two toy poodles that Mrs. Luce had brought to Italy apparently was a victim of the poison.

"To tell the truth, the one who got caught in this was a small beast—a little white dog who apparently was a victim of poison," Il Tempo said.

'Explanations' Awaited.

Even though Il Tempo gave credence to the CIA report, other newspapers questioned the agency's deductions.

"The American public is awaiting some explanations how a situation discovered and remedied 17 months ago has continued to affect Mrs. Luce's health at least two months after she returned to America," the pro-government newspaper Gazzetta del Popolo of Turin said.

The rightwing Il Giorno of Milan said it was another chapter of the "perils faced by

American women in Italy, especially in Rome."

Joseph F. Battley, president of the National Paint Varnish and Lacquer Assn., said he would "question that someone could formulate, deliberately or accidentally, a paint with an arsenic compound of sufficient strength . . . to cause illness of the type which Mrs. Luce suffered."

"Paint forms a tough, hard film that has no pigment affluence," he said. "A good example is the murals, hundreds of years old, on ceilings all over Italy. Today's modern paints are specially formulated to withstand numerous scrubbing and washing."

Agricultural Sprays.

Mr. Battley said arsenic trioxide "has been used extensively in Italy for agricultural sprays. It is conceivable it could be used against house insects or rodents, but it is inconceivable that it was used intentionally in a paint film."

In Italy, Anst, the semi-official Italian news agency, quoted Rome scientists as saying the use of arsenic compounds in paints was "generally abandoned" at least 30 years ago.

The scientists went on to explain, however, that when arsenic compounds are used in paint, a poisonous hydrogen-arsenic gas develops very slowly under the influence of air and moisture and through the action of moulds.

But if there were an arsenic

compound in the paint, the question arose why other persons in the ambassador's residence were not poisoned.

A State Department spokesman said the situation which led to Mrs. Luce's case "has been corrected." The roses have been covered with heavy tarpaper redone in a different type of paint.

"Let me emphasize," the State Department spokesman said, "this was purely an accident and there is absolutely no implication that it was otherwise."

No Ill Effect.

Ellsworth Bunker, who occupied the same villa while ambassador to Rome in 1952 and 1953, said he suffered no ill effects.

"My wife does recall the paint did fleck off some," Mr. Bunker, now president of the American Red Cross, said, "but it didn't seem to bother me. Of course, I was only there for a year."

In Cincinnati, Dr. Robert A. Kehee, of the Kettering Laboratory of Applied Physiology, said that prolonged exposure to small amounts of arsenic can produce "chronic" cases of arsenic poisoning.

Dr. Kehee said such cases often develop after the subject absorbs tiny particles of arsenic "over a long period of time."

Both from N.Y. World-Telegram

'Seaman Jo

The fallout

Luce proves the handled, can be tion—or any TV

It had every former playwright Luce losing her h ing and her finger

In an Italian 17th waltz that soured foot turned numb

But then the with plenty of cr ge nce Agency wh United States Na

ambassadorial sp the wonderful n Department whic

matic relations m And a final

zine, which just l husband. Turned

down from the p in her breakfast

Mrs. Luce r we're glad she's this week for a

Next: Will a speaker at the R tuned.