

*The Adventure of the Seven Passengers - 7Pas*  
*In Re: Sherlock Holmes, 1945*  
*Regarding Sherlock Holmes: The Adventures of Solar Pons*

Date

Copper/January, 1930

Patrick/January, 1930

Quotes

- *But if not this time, there will always be another time for Baron Kroll, and still another, no doubt, and so on, until it is our turn. Let us just be patient and wait upon time.*
- *The Baron has been engaged in several rather dubious matters on the Continent; understand, nothing definite has ever been proved against him, but it remains that more than once someone in his household has been arrested for serious crime. Strangely enough, the criminal, after pleading guilty and being sent to prison, has in most cases been released. Some power has been at work, and no one who knows him has much hesitation in designating that power as Baron Kroll.*

The Case

Evan Holdridge St. John visits Pons and tells him that the most important papers of the ongoing Naval Conference have been stolen. Every evening, seven couriers, each with a coded section of the daily report, took a train to the country estate of Lord Stapleton, the ailing Minister of War. St. John carried the most important section and traveled alone, sharing his compartment with an elderly gentleman. On the seventh trip, St. John and the other six were unknowingly gassed and woke up to find the man gone and the papers stolen. If the papers were made public or sold to a foreign country, the Conference would be useless and relations with other nations would be strained.

Comments

- The first reference to Baron Ennesfred Kroll is made in this tale, though he would not appear in person until the next story, *The Adventure of the Lost Holiday*. Baron Kroll is to Solar Pons what Professor Moriarty was to Sherlock Holmes. However, he is not a carbon copy. Moriarty was a Gaslight Era Godfather, ruling London like a Victorian don. Crime was his trade. Pons refers to Kroll, who appears in multiple stories, as the prototype of an arch-criminal. However, he is more of a specialized villain: he is an espionage agent. That is, a spy.

From available sources, it appears that *Seven Passengers* was written in late 1944 or 1945. World War II and its effects were the most dominant aspects of daily life. Choosing to make Pons' nemesis a German spy was a natural act by Derleth. Even though the story is set mid-way between the two world wars, international intrigue was a contemporary theme.

- Pons first met Krons at a German Embassy ball the year before (1929) and describes the Baron as having "stooped shoulders" and a "sinister appearance."

That certainly reminds the reader of the late, unlamented James Moriarty. But Moriarty had to keep a low profile as an underworld leader. Krons, on the other hand, is described as “a social lion,” which is more fitting for a spy on the diplomatic scene.

- Kroll works behind the scenes, much like Moriarty. However, he is caught “red-handed” in the *Lost Holiday*. The Baron was a much more active participant in his second appearance in Parker’s chronicles. He is set up as Pons’ foil in the first story, and then removed from the scene in the second, leaving the reader to wonder if he will return later.
- St. John traveled alone in his compartment, with three men each in two other compartments. It would certainly seem more secure to have three men in one compartment, then two each in the remaining ones. It is possible that the method used would still have been effective, but it is hard to imagine leaving one man alone when he is traveling with six companions was considered the safest option.
- Constable Mecker appears in several of Pons’ cases, never excelling but always doing a dependable job. He seems to be a reliable “cop on the beat” whose contribution often extends no further than providing an official presence and making arrests.