

# DIENES MÁRTON

Dumba Konstantin (nagykövet)  
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## MEMOIRS OF A DIPLOMAT

large groups of men we might at least disorganise and impede the production in Bethlehem. Captain von Papen repeatedly besought me to do what I could towards hindering the delivery of munitions.

It so happened that at a banquet held on August 18 for the purpose of celebrating the Emperor's birthday, Consul General Nuber introduced to me the editor of the Hungarian newspaper *Szabadság* ("Freedom"). This rather notorious journalist had been deeply involved in the bribery trial of Count Khuen-Hedervary at Agram. He had therefore thought it better to put the Atlantic between himself and Croatia. On the day following the banquet he laid before Nuber plans for calling out the Magyar workmen—plans which he also brought to me himself. In a memorandum drawn up in Hungarian he elaborated his plans with the obvious hope of thereby enhancing the value of his services. As bad luck would have it, I was invited to dinner by Count Bernstorff that same evening with the American journalist, James Archibald; and this did not escape the notice of the English Secret Service.

A very clever journalist and lecturer, Archibald was in our pay and had access to our various theatres of war; he had just toured successfully as a propagandist lecturer with photographs and he was about to embark the next day on the *Rotterdam* for Berlin and Vienna. Count Bernstorff and I had given him letters of introduction to Austrian and German staff officers. In the course of dinner he repeatedly pressed his host and myself to use him as a messenger to carry any dispatches we might have for Berlin and Vienna. I replied that I would confide to his care a number of letters which were signed and ready. At about ten o'clock on the following morning Consul General Nuber surprised me by handing me the German translation of the long Hun-

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**COUNT J. H. VON BERNSTORFF**  
The German Ambassador.

The Kaiser chops and chops all day,  
The doctor said he should;  
But his Ambassador, they say,  
Just keeps on sawing wood  
And making good.

garian memorandum to which I have already referred above; and to the production of which he must with regrettable zeal have sacrificed part of his night's rest. At first I thought it was too late, and that I should hardly have time to read

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through the lengthy document and to write a personal covering letter, if it was to catch Mr. Archibald on board the *Rotterdam*, which was due to sail at noon. Unfortunately I allowed myself to be over-persuaded, instead of going through the proposal leisurely, and then sending it through the post in cipher to a covering address in Holland.

The memorandum pointed out that the Magyar workmen, who could hardly speak English and only read Hungarian newspapers, could only be induced by serious propaganda, first of all in the *Szabadság* and then in other Hungarian newspapers, to make the grave decision to leave their well-paid work at the Bethlehem Steel Works simultaneously on patriotic grounds. Since the *Szabadság* ran the risk of losing many subscribers by this Press campaign—were it successful—it must be compensated for undertaking the campaign. Next there followed a lengthy disquisition on the lamentable financial state of the newspaper, the subscriptions that were in arrears, and so forth—all of which was a preliminary to a demand for ten to fifteen thousand dollars. The imaginative journalist further suggested that the patriotism of the Magyar workmen should be fired by means of a novel. (He even swaggered, alluding to the creation of a Magyar Union.) Finally, he averred that he was in a position to smuggle into Bethlehem men he could trust who would stage the strike at which we were aiming; yet this was patently impossible in view of the fact that ever since the outbreak of the War no further enemy subjects had been engaged. Although the verbosity and exaggerations—faults from which his verbal statements had been free—were far from pleasing to me, I had no time either to score them out or to comment on them in detail if my letter was to catch the *Rotterdam*. Hence in furious haste I wrote the following private letter to Baron Burian, the Austro-Hungarian Min-

ister for Foreign Affairs, which was later to appear as "corpus delicti" in the columns of the *World*:

New York  
August 20, 1915

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

Yesterday evening Consul General Nuber received the enclosed memorandum from the editor of the local influential paper *Szabadság*, after that gentleman had had an interview with me and in elaboration of his verbal proposal to arrange strikes in the Bethlehem Steel and Munition Works as well as in the Middle West. To-day at noon Mr. Archibald, who is well-known to Your Excellency, leaves for Berlin and Vienna on board the *Rotterdam*. I am anxious to avail myself of his offer to carry these letters, and to recommend these proposals most warmly to Your Excellency's favourable consideration. My impression is that we can considerably disorganise and delay—if not indeed stop altogether—the manufacture of war materials in Bethlehem and the Middle West: an achievement which, in the opinion of the German military attaché, would be of great value and more than compensate for the relatively small expenditure. Even if the strikes are not successful, there is every reason to believe that we can use them to enforce more favourable working conditions for our poor oppressed countrymen. At present they are working like slaves in Bethlehem—twelve hours a day for seven days a week. Weaklings go to the wall—they die of consumption.

In so far as there are German elements among the skilled workers, their withdrawal will be arranged for at once. Moreover, a private German employment bureau has been organised to find new posts for such voluntarily unemployed men, and this is functioning very well. We shall cooperate in this and have been promised every assistance.

I shall be much obliged if Your Excellency will kindly acknowledge this letter by wireless and inform me whether you approve.

In the greatest haste,

I am,

Your Excellency's most humble servant,

C. DUMBA.



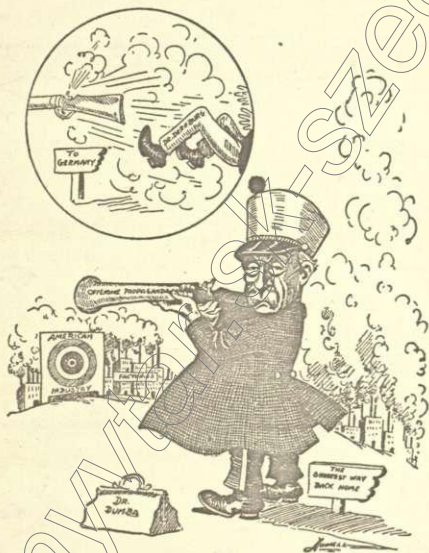
The rest of our mail—as far as I remember—had been sent to Mr. Archibald at his hotel. I sent my private letter on board the *Rotterdam* by von Hedry, who was one of the secretaries to the Embassy, and told him to impress once more upon Mr. Archibald the importance of exercising special care in the case of this document. I sent word to Archibald that if need arose he might surrender all the rest of the mail; but the private letter to Baron Burian must at all costs be destroyed. I had the more reason for expecting this imperative request to be carried out exactly, since I knew Mr. Archibald to be a clever amateur conjurer, who readily produced eggs and coins from the noses and ears of his friends and as easily caused them to disappear again. Unfortunately, however, I was mistaken in my expectation. Mr. Archibald turned out to be as careless as he was cocksure. He handed over the mail to the purser for safe keeping in the strong room, thought that he had thereby managed to divert the suspicion of the British authorities in Falmouth, where the *Rotterdam* was forced to berth, and calmly kept the letter in question in his coat pocket instead of hiding it in some little-read book in the ship's library. In Falmouth he was at once seized upon and searched and the incriminating letter was found. The mail in the strong room was also confiscated and subsequently all the documents of any interest were published in a Parliamentary White Paper.

The sensation caused in London by this capture was as nothing compared with the excitement to which it gave rise in America. Wilson's organ, the *World*, led the chorus in which all the great New England newspapers joined without distinction of party. In my haste I had committed the blunder in my letter to Burian of suggesting not only the possibility of strikes in Bethlehem but also all through the Middle West. This I had done because the Hungarian editor had

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also made such a proposal. Further, an awkward mistake occurred in that the word for strike (*Ausstand*) was confused with the word for rebellion (*Aufstand*), so that my letter ap-



peared in several newspapers in this version. Explanations do more harm than good in such cases. In common with all the Austro-Hungarian consuls I was immediately accused of seeking to organise strikes and disorder in the whole industrial East as well as in Pittsburgh, St. Louis, etc., etc.; and of having engineered various smaller upheavals in the muni-



tion factories, which in reality were the work of Germans. There ensued a perfect storm of real or assumed indignation. The newspapers, which, after all, live on sensational news in the United States, published whole columns of truth and fiction about me, telling all I had done or left undone, at times accompanied by vulgar abuse, at times with undisguised regret that I and not Count Bernstorff should have been compromised by the affair. On this account they vented their fury all the more on Captain von Papen, who, less careful than Bernstorff, had like myself entrusted some letters to Mr. Archibald. The public discovered anew from the confiscated letters how successfully the German military attaché had worked to prevent delivery of munitions. But what the American Press took particular exception to was his saying in a private letter to his wife, "I always say to these idiotic Yankees, etc."

It is noteworthy that this was the only private letter which was published in the White Paper as being particularly offensive. Several private letters of mine did not share this fate, but were only mentioned under the name of the addressee. In one of my reports published in the White Paper I did, as a matter of fact, say that it would be a waste of time to try and induce the "somewhat self-willed" President to place an embargo on the export of arms and munitions. This description was, however, so just that the American Press made very little comment. Numbers of caricatures of me appeared, some very clever and quite good likenesses, which together with such cuttings from newspapers as we managed to obtain were pasted into two albums by my wife and to this day serve to amuse our friends.

Since the abuse in the Press got to be more than I could tolerate, I decided to go to Washington to explain my standpoint to Lansing, who was then Secretary of State, and to

place the correct facts before him. I was able to submit to him the telegraphic instruction of my Government, ordering me to call out those of our subjects, *i. e.* exclusively Austrians and Hungarians, who were working in munition factories delivering supplies to the Allies, on pain of their being liable to punishment for having assisted the enemy. I referred to the fact that my English, French and Italian colleagues had taken all their countrymen out of all occupations, in order to send them home to take an active part in the fighting. All we wanted was to prevent those of our own people who had not been naturalised from producing munitions for our enemies. If intervention for a definite active aim be legitimate, then our intervention for a purely negative object must be equally legitimate. Mr. Lansing pointed out that the Bethlehem Steel Works were also producing munitions for the United States army. I knew nothing of that, but later I heard that it was only to a very small extent. I emphasised that I could state on oath that I had undertaken absolutely nothing and that I had not spent a single cent to promote strikes. I had recently asked by wireless for permission to hand over ten thousand dollars to the Hungarian Press, which would lose many subscribers on account of the abandonment of their work by the Hungarian workmen. Mr. Lansing vouchsafed no reply; a fact which did not occasion me any surprise, since on previous occasions he had also said very little. When, however, I made an end to this very short interview, he did not offer me his hand and remained standing stiffly by his writing table until I left the room. I concluded from this that Wilson had already determined to demand my recall.

(Folytatás a Könyvben.)

