

511

Vienna, June 21, 1935.

Wally Suber

Dear Dunn:

I have not thought it worth while recently to write anything with regard to the activities of Papen, the German Minister here, but I think that a little background to bring the situation to date will be of interest to you.

I find that he has not made more headway in the last months than he had made as reported in my previous despatches and letters. He and Frau von Papen are staying here much more than they did when he first came here, and while he goes assiduously to all public gatherings to which the Diplomatic Corps is invited here, one does not find him any more in private houses. He has made no progress with the Austrians and is invited into very few houses. In some of the houses to which he was invited he made himself somewhat unwelcome by endeavoring to use these people in getting into the homes of their friends. I think it is quite clear that he has shown a good deal of lack of delicacy in this respect, and people find it saves them embarrassment if they see as little of him as possible. It was, of course, among the Catholic nobility here that Papen hoped to make the most progress, but the Catholics here look on him as a renegade and completely unworthy of confidence.

A very well informed friend of mine in one of the principal legations here told me a few days ago that Papen had complained to a highly placed Catholic here that the Cardinal would not receive him, and Papen asked this friend to try to arrange a meeting with the Cardinal, so that he could talk things over with him. Papen said to his friend that he was sure it would be very useful if he could talk at length with the Cardinal and that he would be able to clear

James Clement Dunn, Esquire,
Chief, Division of Western
European Affairs,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

up a lot of misunderstandings. The only reply which Papen's friend made to this overture was that he could not do anything about it, for if the Cardinal was not acting on his own initiative, he was undoubtedly acting under instructions from Rome, and in either case, therefore, it was too delicate a matter to take up with him.

To this friend Papen also complained about his life here and his comparative isolation. He said that he and Frau von Papen were practically shunned. He complained particularly about his colleagues here in the Diplomatic Corps, whom he characterized as a rather "inferior" lot, but spoke enthusiastically about Gavronsky, who he said was very intelligent. The only reply which Papen's friend made to this observation was by putting the question as to whether Gavronsky was not the Polish Minister here.

Officially, of course, with the Government Papen has made no progress. They have no confidence whatever in him, for none of the things which he promised to do are performed, and the Government claims to have information that promises which he makes in the Foreign Office are in direct contradiction with the orders which he gives in the Legation. Then, too, Papen has made direct statements to high-ranking officers of the Government which show that he is not lacking in sympathy with the efforts of the present German Government to bring Austria completely within Germany's orbit. He has caused the Government concern by his desire to get recognition as a Minister on special mission, and as I brought out in a letter to Mr. Phillips some months ago, as a consequence we have had no diplomatic list published here for months. The Austrian Government is determined not to give him this special recognition.

But if Papen has not been able to get this official recognition of his status as a Minister on special mission, he continues to try to get it in every other form. On various occasions at unofficial gatherings to which the Diplomatic Corps has been invited, he has seen beforehand that he was given a special place, and this has led to a number of the chiefs of mission

staying away from such gatherings, where Papen has been given a place which his official position does not justify. These questions of precedence, of course, are very silly in some ways and personally mean little to me, but you know they mean a lot to some of the people over here, and by his action he has made himself very ridiculous.

A definite incident to show you how he tries to put himself in an important position and to emphasize the position of Germany here may be interesting. First I should say that Papen really feels it his duty to take first place among the diplomats here, irrespective of the usual rules of precedence, in order to show Germany's predominant position in Austria. The Spanish Riding School here gave last week a special show in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the building which Maria-Theresia erected for the school in the Hofburg. All one end of the building on a level with the ground was reserved for the President and the members of the Government, and they were all there. Immediately above is a large loge, which was reserved for the chiefs of mission. Papen came and seemed to be unhappy that he was shown into this loge for the diplomats. He kept saying to the Swedish Minister, who has been here for years, "But the Government is below, and one can really see the movements of the horses better down there." To this the Swede replied that the loge below was for the President and the Government and apparently for no one else. Papen kept trying to get encouragement from his colleagues to go below into the government box, but when he got none, he finally arranged it that he sat in the front row in the middle of the box for the diplomats, so that his seat was immediately above the President's down below. There was, of course, no question to any of us that he had deliberately ~~arranged~~ this, and he, of course, took a place in the diplomatic box which in no way was his. Even with this he was not happy, and on the first occasion he could work it during the program he went to the box below and mixed with the President and members of the Austrian Cabinet. It was absolutely necessary for him to have the assembled crowd in the building see him occupy this special

position. You can quite appreciate that this sort of thing does not increase his popularity, either with his colleagues or with the Government.

I have noted from time to time that whenever there is any occasion where the Government is present and the diplomats are invited, he always tries to work his way into the Government group rather than to remain in the space reserved for the chiefs of mission. Whether he is acting under instructions or on his own initiative I do not know.

He does a certain amount of entertaining in the Legation, but people do not show any eagerness to go there. He gave a tea the other afternoon, to which I understand the whole Diplomatic Corps and many Austrians were invited. I could not go, but my wife tells me that there were very few people there, and mostly diplomats. There was a marked absence of people from Austrian society.

He has, however, made a certain amount of headway among a very small group of the Austrian nobility which have German branches. You know a good many of these families have branches in Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, etc. It is interesting that the few people here among whom he has made some headway are those who have brothers or near relatives in Germany with estates there, and I suppose they feel that they must maintain some contact in order to protect their families and interests in Germany.

When Papen first came here, he was constantly running to Germany. These trips have become less frequent, but they are still frequent enough to arouse comment. The other day I got an invitation to come and lunch at the German Legation with Mrs. Messersmith "en petit comité", and a few days afterwards I got a note recalling the invitation, as he had to make an unforeseen official trip. I am sending you the note herewith, as it is quite interesting. You will note that he says that "to his regret he must again recall an invitation". He refers to the fact that he is more or less doing this all the time. What no one here is able to understand is that with

the close contact which he can have with Berlin by telephone, he finds it necessary to make these trips there, which usually seem to be unforeseen, if one can judge by the way he recalls these invitations he has given to people to come to the Legation. Rightly or wrongly, both in official and other circles, these trips to Berlin are connected with the belief in Government circles that the Legation is being used more and more as the center for Nazi propaganda in Austria and for the efforts to rebuild the National Socialist organization in the country. The Government here has informed me in strict confidence that it knows that the German Legation is being used in this way. I confess, knowing Mr. von Papen's devious known methods in the past, and also knowing something by actual experience of his devious mental processes, there is a good deal of reason to believe that a good many of his activities here are not in accord with those usual to the diplomatic representative of a friendly power.

Although, as you will gather from this letter, he has not made much progress with the Government or with his colleagues, or with the Austrian people, I think it would be going too far to say that his activities have been altogether without effect. He has the Polish Minister here completely under his thumb and uses him in various ways. Anything he wants to put over he puts into the head of the Pole, whose contact with his colleagues is more friendly than Papen's. His overbearing attitude and his misrepresentation of the situation in Germany also has some effect on some of the diplomatic representatives here, particularly of the smaller countries in South-Eastern Europe. Papen does not hesitate to misrepresent any situation and is absolutely shameless about it. One evening, in the house of the Foreign Minister here, I sat so close to him while he was talking to several highly placed Austrians that I could not help but overhear what he was saying, and Papen knew that I could hear what he was saying and that I knew that what he was telling these people was a total misrepresentation. This sort of thing, of course, has a certain amount of effect with certain people.

On the whole his mission, therefore, has been and continues to be a failure, but he continues to be

6.

a dangerous individual, not because he is clever, but because, unfortunately, so many people are stupid and uninformed and are impressed by bluster and such assurance which Papen always displays. One thing he must be given credit for, and that is that he maintains an excellent front under very difficult circumstances.

I thought this intimate background might be of some interest, in view of what I have previously written, and if you think Mr. Phillips would be interested in this letter and has the time to look through it, I would be glad to have you show it to him. I would also be very happy if you would show it to Schoenfeld.

With all good wishes,

Cordially and sincerely yours,

George S. Messersmith.

GSM/LGW

June 22, 1935.

P. S. After having written this letter, I saw in the TELEGRAF of last evening the little article which I pin to the left below, with translation, and in the FREIE PRESSE of this morning I see the article which I give to the right below, with translation. I am sending you these, as they explain Papen's methods. The luncheon engagement which we had with him was for Friday, June 21. You will note in his letter I append herewith that he cancels it, as he has to go away unexpectedly on official business. According to the TELEGRAF correspondent in Budapest, Papen said he was there purely in a private capacity, to show Budapest to his daughter. According to the FREIE PRESSE, Papen visited the Hungarian Foreign Minister von Kanya. In view of the information uncovered here recently by the Austrian Government that a good deal of the Nazi money and propaganda are coming into Austria via Budapest from Germany, and as the Legation here is believed to be connected with this propaganda, the visit of Papen to Budapest is not without significance. This is the third or fourth visit of this kind he has made to Budapest, where Germany is at present making a tremendous effort.

Minister Papen arrived yesterday noon by car in Budapest unexpectedly, accompanied by his daughter. He declared that his visit was of a purely private character. He had come to Budapest for two days to show his daughter the beauties of the Hungarian capital. He had no program at all, and to prove this he was going to spend the whole afternoon at the international riding competitions, in which German officers, too, are taking part.

The German Minister in Vienna, Herr von Papen, came to Budapest yesterday, accompanied by his daughter, where he first was present at the riding competition. This morning he visited the German Minister v. Mackensen. Afterwards he called on Foreign Minister von Kanya, with whom he remained some time. We understand that Papen's visit to Budapest is of a private character.