

WINDISCHGRÄTZ' MEMOIRS

BY COUNT BOTHO VON WEDEL

[Count Wedel was German ambassador at Vienna during the period to which the following incidents relate, and his review of the Windischgratz' Memoirs gives us a glimpse into the chaos and discord which attended the breakup of the Central Power alliance and of the Dual Monarchy. It is, of course, an *ex parte* statement.]

From *Preussische Jahrbuecher*, December, 1920.

(BERLIN CONSERVATIVE NATIONALIST HISTORICAL MONTHLY)

PRINCE LUDWIG WINDISCHGRATZ, who was Hungarian food minister during the latter part of the war and is at present a monarchist member of the Hungarian National Assembly, has published his war reminiscences under the title, *Vom roten zum schwarzen Prinzen*. During the first part of the conflict, he fought at the front. Later, he entered political life, became food minister as we have said, and just before the surrender accompanied Count Andrássy to Vienna. Official business brought him into frequent contact with Emperor Charles, and with the highest army leaders and statesmen of the country. He records his experiences, conversations, and impressions with great frankness, and is by no means sparing in his criticism of the injustice done his own country. His book has the advantage over many similar memoirs of possessing unusual literary merit. It reads like a historical romance.

Hungarian magnates who take to writing are apt to confide their materials to courtly hack writers, who do the laborious part of their task for them. Apparently this occurred in the present instance. Windischgratz kept a diary, which grew into a

stately row of volumes. He seems to have put this in the hands of some hired writer and to have given him oral explanations where necessary. His writer then made a book of these materials. Obvious errors and ambiguities are to be attributed to this fact. Windischgratz, who seems to be a man of rather superficial habits read his proofs carelessly, and overlooked many blunders. He arrives at Spa, the German Headquarters, and writes: 'Spa was dead. Part of the buildings had been burned and not yet repaired.' No fighting ever occurred at Spa or anywhere in the neighborhood; and there was not a single burned building in the town. He is obviously referring to the burned and ruined buildings which every traveler finds around Liege. Apparently the man who wrote the book erroneously located them at Spa. While he was on this trip, Windischgratz called on me twice at the Vienna Embassy. Vienna was again threatened with famine. It was *vis a vis* with hunger and had no choice but to appeal for German aid. It had often done so before. Only a few weeks earlier, barges loaded with Indian corn belonging to Germany,

and urgently needed on the Western front, had been simply confiscated as they passed up the Danube. Windischgratz calls it bluntly, 'highway robbery.' However, Germany's angelic patience and inexhaustible charity were still counted on, although this time it was felt that the circumstances demanded a rather more formal appeal than usual. So Emperor Charles wrote a letter in his own hand to Kaiser Wilhelm, and commissioned Count Fürstenberg to deliver it at Spa. Windischgratz and a representative of the Austrian General Staff were to accompany him and to handle the negotiations. The authorities at Spa suggested in the friendliest manner that Fürstenberg might as well come on alone, and the two other gentlemen go directly to Berlin, where the actual business would be arranged. Windischgratz was in a fury. Late that evening, he says, he stormed into the German Embassy, which he had visited a few days previously, in regard to the same mission. He considered that he had been insulted and describes the way he laid the matter before me as follows: 'If they are not going to deal with us at Spa, I shall make the whole thing public tomorrow in the Hungarian Parliament; and the Hungarian government, and my king, as well, will draw the proper conclusions from such a refusal. Wedel understood and at once telephoned to German Headquarters and the Imperial Chancellor. The same night a very courteous invitation came for all three of us to visit Spa.' I personally recall that visit. Windischgratz came with Fürstenberg. He was silent and very modest, as became a food minister begging for help in a serious crisis. There were no big words or open or insinuated threats. They

would have been dreadfully out of place. Fürstenberg did the talking. Tactfully amiably, frankly, and with a clear mastery of all the details, he explained to me that the Spa proposal would put the Hungarian food minister in an embarrassing predicament, and even imperil the success of the negotiations. He suggested that I try to arrange the affair. I did so; and the same night Fürstenberg notified me that my intervention had been successful. Windischgratz probably explained to the man who did his writing for him just how he really felt, just what he actually thought, in his natural temperamental way; and the latter misunderstood it and incorporated it in the interview. Though he states in this place that he called upon me twice at the Embassy, later in his book he refers to having made but a single visit.

Windischgratz not only relates his own experiences, but reports incidents which he heard from others. He is often deceived in regard to the latter. For instance he says: 'My cousin, Berchtold, told me much later of an important episode which occurred on July 30, 1914. Bethmann Hollweg had been requested by the English government to transmit Grey's proposal to the Austrian minister of foreign affairs, and to urge that the ultimatum be toned down. The telegram came when Berchtold was taking breakfast with Tschirschky, the German Ambassador. This request of Grey's could not be refused. At once, therefore, Berchtold made it known to the Emperor. The latter said: 'Yes, but I must first ask Tisza.' Tisza was consulted over the telephone and gave his approval. The note went to Berlin that evening. During the interval, the mobilization had made such progress in Germany

that Franz Joseph's conciliatory attitude was inopportune. Berlin wanted war. Consequently the note was not transmitted to England.' This book, which has only recently been published, was written as far back as the summer of 1919. The Vienna and Berlin documents appeared a little later. During the interval, Windischgratz must have learned that his cousin, Berchtold, whom he represents with cousinly kindness as impulsive, yes, even 'frivolously thoughtless,' had given him utterly false information. The truth is that Tschirschky was taking breakfast with Berchtold when Bethmann's telegram was brought to him. That telegram has now been printed verbatim. Bethmann Hollweg urged his ally strongly and vigorously to accept the English proposal. Tschirschky, who is a serious and conscientious man, more inclined to be a pessimist than an optimist, and who was deeply impressed with the danger which threatened, read the telegram to Berchtold twice and advised him emphatically to be cautious. Berchtold hastened off to the Kaiser. Tschirschky received the reply that Tisza, who was expected the next day, must be consulted; and that an answer could not possibly be given until then. Why must Tisza be consulted? He had always advocated peace. He had always urged prudence and caution; and with the temperamental decisiveness, which was his strong personal characteristic, he had from the very first vigorously opposed the ultimatum to Serbia, because he feared a world conflict. Even after Tisza was consulted, a reply was not immediately dispatched to Berlin. A telegram was only sent late in the evening, so that the German government could not receive it on July thirty-first. This telegram did not

contain an acceptance of the proposal. All it stated was that Grey's request would be carefully considered. Under such circumstances a reply of this kind was practically a refusal. In a crisis like that, only the immediate and unconditional acceptance of Grey's proposal could have saved the situation. We all know now that the Austrian ambassador never submitted the delayed and noncommittal answer to the German government. It is certainly a strange proceeding, to distort truth in order to shift one's own responsibility and conscious guilt for the war—upon the enemy?—no, upon one's own ally.

Windischgratz conceived early doubts of the Dual Monarchy's power to stand the strain. He wanted peace, a peace of conciliation, and he is wrapped up in the same errors and makes the same blunders as our German pacifists. He fails to recognize that our enemies were determined to destroy us. In particular, he believes, as many Hungarians did at the time, that Hungary itself was not in danger. Even in the hour of defeat, he fancied that under any circumstances Hungary's territorial integrity would be preserved. Its enemies, however, had long before this divided up the booty in writing, and each one naturally insisted on his allotted share. The Italians demanded Austrian territory; the Serbs and Roumanians demanded the Hungarian territory already promised them. It was not until after the revolution in November, 1918, that Windischgratz learned in Switzerland that the Entente regarded 'annexations of Hungarian territory by Czecho-slovakia, Roumania, and Yugoslavia as *faits accomplis*.' He dispatched several telegrams to this effect to Budapest. Proceeding on

the false assumption that the enemy were fighting a defensive war, he believed, as did our own pacifists, that all we needed to do was to renounce annexations, to extend a friendly hand, and to proclaim loudly our desire for peace, in order to get a peace of friendship and understanding. Such tactics produced precisely the opposite effect, and made a peace of understanding impossible. The enemy recognized from the wild way we waved our flag of truce that we were already in extremities. They wanted to reap the full fruits of the tremendous sacrifices they had made, by a peace of dictation,—the kind of a peace we later learned to know so well at Versailles, St. Germain, and Trianon. They saw they had won the game, and had no idea of letting their enemy go scot free. After a costly law suit, the winning litigant will not content himself with a single tree, when he can have a whole forest. The only way we might have got a peace with understanding, was by bitter and obstinate resistance, by fighting to the last ditch, and by hanging together the way our enemies did... It is a very prevalent error in Germany that Austria and Hungary were at the point of economic and military exhaustion in the autumn of 1918. Windischgratz, who was at the head of the Hungarian food ministry at the time, informs us that the maize crop of 1918 was large enough to carry both countries over until the next harvest.

When we made peace with Russia, the dual empire was at last able to concentrate all its forces against its hereditary enemies, the Italians. In the autumn of 1918, the Austro-Hungarian army acquired a definite ascendancy on the Italian front. In every conflict along this line, its

enemies were defeated. If the morale of the Austrian army had been good, it might have marched to Rome. However, political blunders, secessionist agitation among the Slavs, and above all, Karoly's treason, demoralized the spirit of the troops; and with appalling suddenness, the military ardor of the soldiers vanished. Windischgratz reports, apparently on information derived from Frenchmen in Switzerland, that Karoly had received 5,000,000 francs to spread defeatist propaganda. This would explain the contemptuous manner in which he was treated later by General Franchet, French military commander in Hungary. The latter dealt with him as though he were a paid spy, instead of the highest official in the Hungarian government. The truth is, that Karoly in spite of his vast estate had become heavily involved in debt before the war. During the conflict, he reestablished himself financially, and constantly had large sums constantly at his disposal. He operated first among the furloughed men. Later, he sent his emissaries to troops in repose, replacement troops, and finally troops in the fighting line. It reached a point where the General Staff lost contact with the army, and Karoly practically controlled the telegraph lines along the front. He issued direct orders to the Hungarian divisions. The emperor's manifesto made that easy. He commanded our soldiers to cease fighting and come home. The Hungarians withdrew; the Czechs followed their example. Only the German-Austrian divisions remained behind, separated by wide intervals and stunned by what had happened. The Italians, who had been roughly handled during the late fighting, could not trust their eyes. They did not seize the opportunity to begin an

immediate pursuit. When they finally realized what had occurred, they fought a sort of stage battle against a hypothetical enemy, as is done in grand manoeuvres. Advancing along a broad front, they encountered no resistance, and captured without fighting several completely isolated German-Austrian regiments. They reported this to Rome as a brilliant victory. Our allies were not exhausted economically nor defeated in open battle. They collapsed on account of political and moral disorganization. Austro-Hungary committed suicide.

Last of all, Windischgratz joined the imperial cabinet, as a department head in its Foreign Office, and right-hand man of Count Andrassy. He advocated a separate peace. Like his chief, he staked all his hopes in this last manoeuvre. These Hungarian statesmen, however, overlooked two facts: in the first place, they were merely furthering the ends of their enemies, and in the second place, they deprived the monarchy of its last support, that of the Germans; for the Poles, Czechs, and South Slavs had already seceded. Our enemies had given up hope of crushing the Central Powers by force of arms. They were counting solely upon our internal collapse. The Sixtus letter suggested the hope of dividing the Central Powers, and the peace resolution in the German Reichstag showed them that the German nation itself was rent into hostile factions. After 1917, they trusted entirely to these possibilities. Vienna's tender of a separate peace was most welcome to them, for it made Germany's case hopeless. The Entente could easily impose its will on individual governments, as was shown later at Versailles, St. Germain, and Trianon. Count

Andrassy evidently did not know, or did not believe, that the Entente regarded the annexation of Hungarian territory as a settled matter. Our enemies had, however, entered into binding engagements to that effect with the Serbs, the Roumanians, and even the Czechs. Bratianu's negotiations with the Entente over Roumania's compensation for joining the war were, indeed, known to the Vienna foreign office; but Andrassy and Windischgratz personally appeared to have been ignorant of them. By tendering a separate peace, furthermore, these gentlemen robbed their own monarchy of German support. It may be doubted whether a revolution could have been prevented in Vienna in any case, but their act certainly hastened it. They started the avalanche. Any man informed of contemporary conditions and sentiment in Austria knows that. The patience of the Austrian Germans had been tried to the limit. Their indignation had reached the breaking point. They felt that this last manoeuvre was intended to save Hungary at the cost of the Germans; that it signified sacrificing not only the dual monarchy, but also the German people; that the Germans were being delivered over helpless to the Entente, and to its friends the Poles, Czechs, and South Slavs. It was to be foreseen that the German element in Austria would repudiate Andrassy's policy. The depth of their bitterness is indicated by Windischgratz' statement, that the proprietors of the Bristol Hotel, where Andrassy regularly stopped, and which he had made his official residence, asked him to leave the house. For a Vienna hotel to show the highest officer of the empire, its minister of foreign affairs, the door, on account of his

policies, is an unprecedented incident in history. The Austrians comprehended the situation better at this moment than did the Hungarians. The latter fancied, as Windischgratz confesses, that they were fighting only for Germany. The peace of Trianon finally forced them to realize that they were likewise fighting for their own existence. Hungary was regarded by the Entente as the backbone, the militant element, in the dual monarchy—due to receive the heaviest punishment, because it was primarily responsible for the conflict with Serbia and had used Germany as a tool to unchain the world war. Entente newspapers frequently expressed themselves with the utmost clarity on this point. Anyone might have known what the sentiment was, if he had taken due pains to inform himself. Windischgratz is unwilling to admit this blunder as to conditions and sentiment in Austria. He tries to shift responsibility for the Vienna collapse upon the German embassy. He says: 'Andrassy considered it his duty to request the German ambassador to confer with him as soon as he had taken office. Count Wedel came in the course of the forenoon. Andrassy described to him the critical situation of the monarchy. Count Wedel declared that he understood that perfectly, and appreciated Andrassy's position; that he approved his action. Hardly had he got back to his office, before he began a vigorous agitation, with every device at hand including money, to arouse his followers in Vienna against a separate peace. He spurred our politicians, as I learned that very evening, to attack our peace tender violently in the National Council. Nearly all the mass meetings and demonstrations at that time,

where the people of Vienna despite their desperate situation clamorously demanded that we stand by Germany to the last, were organized and paid for by the German embassy. Money was placed where it did the most good. Several Socialist leaders were won over. Simultaneous demonstrations occurred in Germany; and the people of Vienna were kept in the leading strings of Berlin.'

I think I have already shown with sufficient clearness that Windischgratz is sometimes almost fantastic in his narration. The statement I have just quoted is pure fiction. That is easily proved. Andrassy never invited me to visit him. I presented myself without an invitation and rather to his embarrassment; but he could not refuse to see the German ambassador. He was very reserved in his communication. He did, indeed, say that he proposed to make an independent effort to obtain peace, by a telegram to Wilson; but he emphasized that he would do nothing that would prejudice Germany, and concealed from me his intention to tender a separate peace. I therefore did not appreciate the true situation, as my reports to Berlin proved. I did not know that a separate peace had been offered until the news was printed in the papers. Andrassy himself has publicly admitted this. In May, this year, he wrote to the *Neue Freie Presse*, in reply to General Von Cramon, who asserted that Andrassy deceived me with half truths: 'Our obligation to inform the German government of our real intentions was fulfilled by the telegram which Emperor Charles sent Kaiser Wilhelm. For that reason I did not desire to communicate my plan to the German ambassador, Count Wedel. I feared that he would exert himself at once

to organize a violent protest.' Windischgratz states that Prince Hohenlohe, Austrian ambassador at Berlin, inquired by telephone what the step signified; and that when he learned that it was to secure a separate peace, he at once handed in his resignation. Prince Karl Fürstenberg, Austrian ambassador at Madrid, immediately resigned by telegraph when he learned of the tender of a separate peace. Windischgratz tells us of the vain efforts of the Vienna foreign office and its agents—he, himself, among them—to persuade political circles in Vienna, and particularly the newspapers, to support Andrassy's policy; but everywhere they met a direct refusal. This time, also, he holds the German embassy responsible. The newspapers felt they were 'obligated to the German embassy,' or they were inspired by it, or subsidized by it, as he reports in several places. He does me too much honor. He overestimates my influence. But it suits these Hungarian politicians better to believe and profess that their efforts failed because of the intrigues of the German embassy, than to admit that they failed because of the patriotic resentment of the German Austrians, that they miscalculated, and that their policy was an unwise one. The fact is that Andrassy's programme in Vienna was brought to naught by honest forces, namely the disinterested, patriotic sentiment of the Austrian Germans and their newspapers.

Windischgratz goes still further. He says repeatedly that reports kept coming in from every side describing the efforts of the German embassy to instigate disorders in the city. He thus imputes to me a pan-German,*

*Pan-German,—i. e. an advocate of the political union of the German population of Austria with the North German empire.

the promotion of revolution in order to help the pan-German cause. Should a foreign minister descend to such puerile fairy tales as these to conceal his own failure and the fiasco of his policy? I acted with the utmost reserve during those critical days. I instructed and commanded the gentlemen of the embassy to keep away from the business part of the city, in order to avoid any excuse for giving offence. I was never a pan-German. Quite the contrary. I was in ill favor with the gentlemen of that school. The *Ostdeutsche Rundschau* and another pan-German newspaper, the name of which I have forgotten, were the only newspapers in Vienna which regularly attacked me. I entered the diplomatic career back in Bismarck's day, and have always been a follower of that leader. Bismarck consistently held that it was a vital necessity for Germany to maintain and strengthen Austria-Hungary. I adopted that article of the great statesman's creed without qualification. I was a true friend of the dual monarchy, and was recognized as such everywhere in Austria and also by responsible statesmen in Hungary. I did not adopt pan-Germanism until the old empire had fallen and there was no longer any hope of saving it. Even then, I took the view that it should be left to the free, uninfluenced action of the German Austrians, in accordance with the right of national self-determination, to decide whether they wished to join the German Republic. Our part should be limited to opening the door if our neighbor knocks, and to giving him a friendly welcome.

Windischgratz does not like the Germans. To be sure, he is unable to repress an occasional admiring comment upon Germany efficiency

and organization; but ungracious criticism predominates in his book. He hardly alludes to what Germany did for Hungary; he does not say a syllable regarding the fact that German soldiers saved Hungary repeatedly in its hour of need, and drove the invading enemy from its borders. Hungary deserted us in the autumn of 1918. Now that country has been mutilated and exploited by the hands of the same enemies from whom we have suffered so much; and the eyes of its people have been open. The old feeling of friendship for their former allies has revived. The Magyars find themselves in the same

hopeless condition as ourselves. Like the Germans, they have ceased to be an independent nation; but they are going vigorously to work to rebuild their fatherland, and the time will come when they will shake off the foreign yoke. We wish them, our old friends, every success in their courageous struggle for a better future.

The book, *Von rotem zum schwarzen Prinzen*, is a somewhat fanciful but still an important contribution to our war literature, affording plausible and interesting explanations for many incidents otherwise hard to understand; but it cannot claim to be a reliable source of history.

BUONAMICO BUFFALMACO

BY JOSEFINE GRAF-LOMTANO

From *Deutsche Presse—Korrespondenz*, March 24.

(BERLIN MISCELLANIES WEEKLY)

BUONAMICO BUFFALMACO's roguish countenance and impish smile contrast strikingly with the sober features of his dignified colleagues among the early Florentine painters of the Thirteenth Century. He was, indeed, a merry fellow. No knight of the brush has had more mischievous tricks recorded of him. Indeed, his reputation rests almost as much on his audacious jokes as on his art.

When he was fourteen years old, he was apprenticed to a venerable old painter, Andrea Tafi. Like other old people, this aged master needed but little sleep, and he was accustomed to awaken his apprentice from his sound youthful slumbers in the middle of the night to grind colors or to tidy his studio. Buffalmaco soon tired of this and set about devising a remedy. He knew that his master was very

superstitious. So he quietly captured some thirty *scarafaggi*—the immense black cockroaches which we nickname 'Schwabians' in Germany—from under a warm kitchen hearth, and with a very fine needle attached a tiny taper to the back of each. Lighting these tapers and quietly opening the door of his master's room, he released the sparkling caravan of roaches. It was just the darkest hour of the night, when Tafi usually arose and called his apprentice. When the old painter saw the mysterious little specks of light moving about on the floor, however, he remained trembling in bed. The next morning he summoned a priest, and told him, still terrified, that he had seen demons or the devil himself the night before. The sympathetic old *abatte* agreed: 'It is quite possible that the evil