

# The most powerful man in the world

*The Life of Sir Henri Deterding*

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notably Fritz Thyssen's United Steelworks, had begun to hand over millions; there were other movements which, at that time, seemed a much better investment for reactionaries.

But Deterding was impressed, and the Dutch press reported that, through the agent Georg Bell, he had placed at Hitler's disposal, while the party was "still in long clothes," no less than four million guilders. This huge subsidy came at a decisive moment in the history of the growing Nazi movement. Let there be no doubt that, had it not been found, the whole racket might have collapsed and the history of Germany and of Europe might have had a different complexion. Georg Bell was continually visiting England at this time.

Early in 1930 a most extraordinary trial was held in Berlin. This was the famous but still extremely mysterious affair of the "chervonetz" or "chervontsi." Chervonetz were Russian banknotes, and two Georgians, former aristocrats, were accused, with a number of associates, of having forged an immense number of these notes for political reasons. It is not quite clear whether Soviet credit was to be impaired by flooding capitalist Europe with these notes, or whether the Caucasian Soviets were to be demoralized by the sudden influx of worthless chervonetz. At all events, the intention was to create political tension and disorder in the U.S.S.R., and particularly in the Caucasus, and this tension was to be followed up by a rising of "the sound elements" and a call to arms to all White Russians to strike at the Bolsheviks while they were wobbling. Probably the idea included a general war on the Soviets, but there is evidence of disagreement among the parties to the plot and of apathy and lack of confidence in some.

The two principals in the case were Karumidze, "the uncrowned King of Georgia," and Sadathieraschvili. Associated with them, more or less directly, were General Hoffmann, Georg Bell, and a Bavarian business man named Willi Schmidt; and accusations of complicity were made during and after the trial against the Nobel family, Sir Henri Deterding and even the German and British Governments—or, at any rate, against their irresponsible officials. The excitement of the affair, as