

BRITISH EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON, D. C.,
January 7th, 1939

No. 21

17/35/38

My Lord,

In paragraph 5 of my despatch No. 1141 E of the 23rd December, I mentioned the case of the late Donald Coster (alias Philip Musica) whose ten years' masquerade at the head of a respected firm has just come to a sensational end.

2. With reference to the report, in this connexion, of an arms deal involving 2,000,000 rifles, the Military Attaché informs me that according to reliable reports the War Department has been checking its stocks of Lee Enfield rifles in order to find out whether Coster Musica figured in any deal in rifles in the past. As a result they have been able to announce that no such deal has ever taken place.

3. When the United States entered the war it was discovered that the army could not be supplied with the Springfield rifle in sufficient quantities and the United States Government therefore acquired 2,300,000 British Lee Enfield rifles. At the close of the war these were returned to store and since 1918 the following have been disposed of:-

Sold as unfit for military use	25,000
Sold and loaned to the Philippines	295,000
To members of the American Rifle Association	30,000
To various schools	3,500
Disposed of in miscellaneous fashion	<u>26,000</u>
	<u>379,000</u>

The Right Honourable

The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,

etc., etc., etc.

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The balance of approximately 2,000,000 rifles has presumably been accounted for by the United States War Department.

4. As the War Office is aware, the Military Attaché has received several offers of Lee Enfield rifles in the past year or so, the most recent being in April, 1938. Although Coster Musica has never figured in these offers the Military Attaché has no doubt that they refer to the same rifles (and equipment, ammunition etc.) and it seems very probable that Coster Musica was at the bottom of them, possibly guaranteeing the financial end of the deal. There is also little doubt that if Coster had found a purchaser the War Department would have released the rifles, for they have been trying to get rid of them for years. They appear, for example, to have made recent attempts to dispose of them to the American Armaments Corporation, since the latter approached the Military Attaché to ask if he knew of a likely purchaser.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Canada.

I have the honour to be,

with the highest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

humble servant,

(Sgd) V. A. L. HALLST

H.M. Chargé d'Affaires.