

President's Secretary's File
Departmental File
State: Welles, Summer Jan-May 1941
Box 77

B.F. Stahl

Index # 100

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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

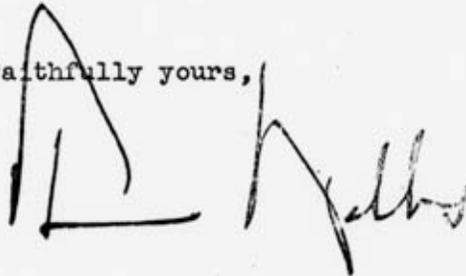
February 1, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

I am sending you a copy of a letter I received from Frank Gunther under date of December 17. I believe you will find this letter interesting. It contains a great deal of detailed information concerning the abdication of King Carol and the last days of his regime.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enc.
From Frank Gunther,
December 17, 1940

The President,
The White House.

No. 44.

Bucharest, December 17, 1940.

Dear Sumner:

I have been seeking an opportunity for some time to round out my despatch No. 1560 of September 9, 1940, with some further facts and sidelights, for the sake of the historical record, on what happened after King Carol had abdicated at 8 a.m. on Friday, September 5th. As I embody, herewith, some intimate details, I think it better not to do so by despatch.

Since preparing the above-mentioned despatch, I have learned that during the night of September 4-5 General Antonescu, on one pretext or another, enticed nearly all of the King's Court officials, one by one, to the building of the Presidency and there locked them up. The King kept calling for one or another of these but found himself by 3 a.m. deserted and alone. This undoubtedly had an additional psychological effect on him. But even so, he might not have abdicated had not General Antonescu got that evil genius, Urdareanu, Minister of the Court, on his side. The latter is an ardent coward and was thoroughly frightened. He also, at the General's instigation, urged the King to abdicate. Madame Lupescu managed to get safely to the Palace through a side door from her own house, some way off, where she had been making final arrangements for departure. She was definitely in favor of abdication and escape. What is very interesting is that she tried to induce King Mihai to leave with his father. This he refused to do. In the end she kissed him good-bye, much to his disgust and subsequent comment. One must have lived in Rumania for some time to realize fully just what a feat General Antonescu accomplished in the removal of the King and without consequential bloodshed.

The

The Honorable
Sumner Welles,
Under Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

The General undoubtedly saved the lives of the King and his party by sending with them on the train twelve picked and heavily armed soldiers. When the train got to Timisoara, members of the Iron Guard were awaiting it with every intention of killing all aboard. Here they were protected by the Station Master, who became aware of what was happening and when the train slowed down signalled it to go right through Timisoara without stopping. Even so, a battle was soon raging. The train was badly shot up and had it not been for the steady fire of the soldiers aboard, who used one or more machine guns as well, the train would have been boarded. Quite a number of Iron Guardists were killed. The Iron Guard was furious with the Station Master and shot him, but fortunately, according to last accounts, he has survived. When the train arrived at the Yugoslav frontier the guards of course left it, and the Yugoslav authorities arranged to send them back. There was quite a flutter at the frontier upon the sudden arrival of these armed men.

M. Guranescu, the former Rumanian Minister to Switzerland, met the King's car when it arrived at Lugano. He told me on a subsequent visit to Bucharest that it was positively riddled with bullet-holes. The King had told him that he had sat through the entire trip facing Madame Lupescu with a loaded revolver on his lap. General Popescu, former Chief of Staff and at that time Minister of the Interior, had also been charged by General Antonescu with the task of accompanying the party to Switzerland. According to M. Guranescu, the party did not tarry at Lugano as they had had word that further attempts would be made and that they were being followed to Switzerland by Iron Guard members. The King was unable to take with him his entire train of several cars, so had to trans-ship the most valuable and necessary things into one car. The others were left behind in Switzerland under seal.

A Colonel Filotti, one of the King's personal aides, who accompanied the party to Spain, has since returned and, I have heard, paints a sorry picture of boredom and wrangling among the three as they spend their dreary days in a large but empty Spanish hotel.

As you probably know by now, Carol and Madame Lupescu have been permitted to go to Tangier and Urdareanu

to

to Portugal. Franco is nothing if not chivalrous and information reaching him of forthcoming attempts by Iron Guardists upon the lives of all three, possibly influenced him to permit this change of residence. I understand that though the prolonged presence of the Royal Party in Spain was unwelcome, the Spanish Government would never accede to the requests of the Rumanian Government for the extradition of Madame Lupescu and Urdareanu.

Shortly after the King's departure I had some side-lights on his palace life from Daws, who had been the British butler to the King since many years. He came to me looking for a job as he was not being retained. Daws, who is not really "a top 'ole butler," waxed confidential out of the corner of his mouth which held one of the King's cigars, and described how night after night this curious triangle dined alone in the Palace. Mihai apparently always had his meals separately. Sometimes, however, he confided, the King would be kept waiting till ten o'clock or so only to learn then by a telephone message that Madame Lupescu pleaded a headache and so would not come down from her villa. Later he would learn that she was dining there tête-a-tête with Urdareanu. According to Daws, on two occasions in the last year, the King dined away from the Palace, and on each occasion when Madame Lupescu and Urdareanu entered the dining room, she whispered to the latter to sit in the King's seat.

Urdareanu's influence in the country was tremendous. No one of the King's Ministers ever seemed to feel that it was sufficient to obtain the King's approval on a matter without also taking it up with Urdareanu. That the latter feathered his nest is a most likely hypothesis. In addition, he was quite a heavy gambler and I heard from time to time of poker parties which went on even until ten o'clock the following morning, large sums having changed hands. King Carol governed by shutting his eyes to graft and then holding it over those who had profited. It is said that he kept a file on everyone, and should a Minister become recalcitrant he would draw out the file and let him see the evidence against him.

Psychologically this triangle is probably one of the most curious in history. That the King was genuinely in love with his clever, semi-Jewish friend, there is no doubt. She, on the other hand, was fascinated by

Urdareanu.

Urdareanu. For the King she probably had a deep affection, but for Urdareanu a positive passion. Urdareanu and she, moreover, were mentally akin. Both the King and Urdareanu were physically attracted by many other younger women. Urdareanu's long illness in hospital this past summer was in all likelihood superinduced by his excesses. My informants in this connection are both a doctor and a nurse who happened to treat him. However, on top of this he had received a bad blow in the back, which might have come either from a kick or from a heavy stick. King Carol was often very violent and it is said that he lost his temper with Urdareanu and belabored him. This is quite possible. Before his departure, in connection with his "sale" to the Government of one of the Royal residences, he desired to be paid in Swiss francs to his credit in Switzerland; Mitiza Constantinescu demurred, I am fairly reliably informed, and Carol seized him, mauled him and shook him so badly that he was upset for days.

I have often ruminated upon how different might have been the course of Rumanian history had the King long ago got rid of Madame Lupescu, as Maniu, the National Peasant Leader, begged him to do, and as Carol himself agreed in order to obtain Maniu's support in regaining his throne. This outstanding difference between these two men inhibited the normal development of political relationships as the National Peasant Party could not come to power. It will be recalled that it polled the largest vote in the last elections held at the end of 1937 in spite of a National Liberal Party being in power at the time. That the King should have been so obdurate in his relations with Maniu and so stubbornly refused to set aside Madame Lupescu is a strong indication that he and Madame Lupescu had been secretly married, morganatically of course, as many well-informed people maintain. My own deduction is that they were married while the King was in exile and before he returned to take up the Kingship. He never would have shown such staunch loyalty nor made such sacrifices for a mere mistress.

Rarely in history has the mere presence of a woman in a country exercised such a tremendous influence, for the worse, on the history and development thereof. I am not speaking of her meddling, of her financial acquisitiveness, of the groups of grafters and crooks who sought

her

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her favors for their own ends and whom she used for hers - nor am I speaking of her diabolical cleverness and resourcefulness. But it was she, I think, who induced the King to resort to the ruse of the Goga Government, for it was a ruse, just to show the country that it could not do away with the Jews overnight and survive as a going concern. But behind this also there was the purpose of setting aside the growing power of the Iron Guard, which had just polled the third largest vote in the country, by departing from democratic principles, doing away with elections, and devising a totalitarian system of government and a new Constitution. Once embarked on this road, one step led to another and to the final unhappy plight of the King and his downfall.

With warmest personal regards,

(Franklin D. Roosevelt)

PSF: Welles

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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

February 7, 1941.

My dear Miss LeHand:

In accordance with the request contained in the President's memorandum of January 31, I am returning herewith the enclosure which the President sent to the Secretary and myself with that memorandum.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely,

Enclosure:

Statement "The
Situation of the
Former French
Premier Leon Blum".

Miss Marguerite A. LeHand,
Secretary to the President,
The White House.

THE SITUATION OF THE FORMER FRENCH PREMIER LEON BLUM

This report was brought to the United States by a man who arrived from France about January 20, 1941. It is based on two interviews which a friend of his had with Leon Blum. The second interview, which took place shortly before Christmas, was between this friend and Blum alone, with no guards present. The fact that this was probably the only such interview, makes it necessarily confidential, for the safety of those concerned.

Leon Blum is imprisoned in the buildings of an old neglected estate in ~~B~~Basel, three miles from Riom. This prison and the court were established not long ago, for the purpose of confining and trying Blum and his fellow prisoners. There are only two of these: former Premier Daladier and Generalissimo Gamelin.

Blum occupies a rather small corner room with two windows. The room is unheated. This has been an extremely cold winter with temperatures far below freezing, and Blum, who is close to seventy, suffers severely from the cold. He has repeatedly asked for a stove to be installed, but the request has not been granted. He is often unable to sleep because of the cold. There is no running water in the room, and no other sanitary arrangements. He has to call the guard for permission, and be accompanied, whenever he needs to leave the room.

This prison has no kitchen, but the prisoners are now allowed to have food brought them by a relative. Before this, the feeding was bad and inadequate, and Blum has lost about twenty pounds. Blum now has permission to have food brought to him once a day by his daughter-in-law, the wife of a son who was taken prisoner by the Germans. She has to bring the food by

bicycle from Riom, where she lives. In this way he is able to have one warm meal a day.

Blum complained much of bad treatment by the guards at the beginning, but said that this had improved. At first their treatment was brutal and disrespectful. They addressed him as "Blum", even omitting "Monsieur", and used the familiar form "tu"; but recently they have become more respectful and begun to call him "Monsieur le President".

He is allowed to have a number of French newspapers and thirty books which he needs for his work. Whenever he is physically able to write, he works on his memoirs. But the cold is the main obstacle. So far nobody has interfered with his manuscripts. Letters addressed to him are delivered to the judge of the court, but handed over to Blum after a few days.

He has no contact with the other two prisoners and has never spoken to them although they are on the same floor.

Most interesting is Blum's own report of the charges made against him. These have been changed several times. It seems that LeSueur, the prosecutor, has not found it easy to manufacture a crime supposedly committed by him. In Blum's case he did not even try, as has been done in other cases of former French leaders, to accuse him of embezzlement, fraud, or misuse of office. Blum's integrity is too well known. The first accusation against Blum was that he, as leader of the Popular Front Government, was responsible for carrying out its program which was detrimental to the welfare of the country. This accusation was brought forward in an elaborate document by the prosecutor. To this Blum replied in a written statement that the Popular Front program was not his own. His program was much more comprehensive and differed in many respects. He was called upon by the President of the Republic, after the election had shown that the people

favored the Popular Front program, to form a government on the basis of this program and to try to carry it out. The accusation should be directed against the voters, all groups and leaders of the Popular Front, and the President of the Republic. After Blum had given this answer, the charge was withdrawn.

It was followed by a second accusation: that he was responsible for the social laws which hampered the defense of the country. Blum replied that all laws were first passed by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. He obviously convinced the prosecutor of the weakness of these charges, and they were again withdrawn.

The third accusation, which was still standing at the time of this interview, reduced the crimes committed to inciting strikes and creating social unrest to put pressure upon employers and parliament. The testimony of two hundred witnesses had been collected by the prosecutor to prove this charge. The witnesses were mostly industrialists and included the representatives of the Employers' Committee with whom Blum had his decisive negotiations in the spring of 1936. Blum is bitter because these people falsified the facts and related untrue stories to give some foundation to these charges. He has already prepared his defense speech. He has engaged two attorneys, Shpanin and Le Troquet.

The trial was expected to take place between Christmas and New Years, but has again been postponed. In view of the charges, Blum is threatened with deportation or a term in a military fort, either in France or the colonies.

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This was the situation at the time of the interview. The newspapers of January 28 report the text of a new constitutional act issued by the Chief of the French State, Petain. This act, according to Article V,

is applicable in the case of Blum. No trial need be held. The Chief of the State has the power to pronounce any of the following punishments, which may be either temporary or definitive:

Deprivation of political rights.

Confinement in residence under guard in France or the Colonies.

Administrative internment.

Detention in a fortified citadel.

There can hardly be any doubt that one of the motives for this act was the wish to avoid trials which might prove embarrassing to the Vichy government.