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SOE DOCUMENTS ABOUT GRIGORE GAFENCU 'S SITUATION IN 1944-1945

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Abstract. *After Grigore Gafencu finished his mission in Moscow in 1941, he decided to go to Switzerland, where he lived during the Second World War. After 23rd August 1944 Romania was occupied by the Soviet Union's Red Army. The problem of the return of Gafencu in Romania became very complicated. This article presents the story of the contacts of Grigore Gafencu with SOE during the year 1944-1945 and his attempts to return in the country.*

Key words: Grigore Gafencu, SOE, Red Army, Romania, Soviet Union.

Gafencu's attempt to return in the country.

In a meeting with a SOE agent, at 31st August 1944, Gafencu has expressed his anxiety to return as soon as possible to Romania, where he believed his presence would be usefully influence the political tone of new regime. He believed the most practical as well as politically, the most desirable route, would be by air to London via Paris as soon as the facilities are available. On arrival in London he would endeavor to obtain the permission of the USSR to proceed via USSR. How would not however, wish his arrival to coincide with the signature of armistice to Romania as his presence simultaneously with that of the officials of his own country prove embarrassing. If USSR consent is not forthcoming, he would proceed by whatever route you might indicate.

Gafencu lays stressed on the fact that this journey would be of a strictly private character avoiding all publicity. It would enable him to renew contacts on the route and to convey to the Romanian government ideas suggestions derived there from.

He considers, having regards to his long standing friendships with Maniu, his consistent activity here with a view to facilitating the political change now achieved and his public declaration in support of king Michael, and his presents adviser, his return in the manner propose could not cause any uneasiness to the new Romanian Government.

He attaches however great importance to the fact that his journey should be approved and facilitated by SOE in view of his consisted friendly attitude towards Allied cause. He does not seek, and would apparently prefer to avoid asking for, the formal concurrence of the Romanian Government in his proposed journey.

He would like if possible to be accompanied by his wife only but he does not press this point. He is speaking in confidence in the above sense to my United States Colleague [1].

The financial problems

In 12th December 1944 the Treasury took decision to pay 100 pounds a month. Up to December 1942 Gafencu had been drawing sum of 100 pounds per month from a deposit he had made before the war in London. When this was exhausted, he presented a letter from Max Auschnitt to the latter's London bank authorizing the bank to pay in Auschnitt's name a sum of 6000 pounds to Gafencu. As it was not possible to transfer this money of Auschnitt's abroad in view of it being held by the Custodian of enemy property arrangements were made of

¹ Romanian Society of Historical Science,

whereby SOE would advance Gafencu 100 pounds per month to be repaid out of Ausnit's credit when the latter could be used for the intended purpose.

As Romania has now come out of the war and Treasury see no further purpose in subsidizing Gafencu. Quite apart of this, colonel of Chastelaine was authoritatively told in Bucharest that Marshal Antonescu had rejected the Allied armistice terms in April 1944 on the advice of Gafencu, who stated that better terms would be forthcoming if Romania held out [2].

A SOE report in 7th February 1945 said that Gafencu met with a British agent with the nickname John and discussed the problem of his return in Romania. Gafencu has been advised not to return in Romania because Romanian Communist Party intended to stage a political campaign against him and Maniu. At recent meeting question of Gafencu's return was not mentioned by either party. Gafencu was therefore doubtful it would be acceptable to Russians. Gafencu has expressed the intention of returning Roumania when conditions allow. He still considered himself at His Majesty Government disposal if at some future time his presence in London for consultation or otherwise should be of service. British agent consider that taking a long view it seem most desirable not to to discourage his friendly attitude [3].

Gafencu was very upset at abrupt cessation of payments since November which was causing him financial embarrassment. As regards Ausnit funds he stated that Nussbaumer from Swiss Bank Corporation Basle has already given orders to London office of Bank to block in favor of BBC (subjects to approval of British authorities) any balance remaining. Swiss Bank Corporation was willing to make payments to Gafencu against these payments to Gafencu against this blocked balance. Matter maybe more complicated, than Gafencu and Nussbaumer thought if Ausnit had the power to draw also an funds and had be doing so. Gafencu, also had 1750 pounds deposited on April 29th 1939 in his name with Guarantee Trust Company, Paris. Consent of His Majesty Government would be required for unfreezing of this sum. Gafencu was going to ask Nussbaumer to take up this matter also.

Gafencu had already asked Caranfill, to look after his financial affairs in London and was evidently under the impression that Caranfil's standing with Foreign Office was better than has been led to believe.

Gafencu also inquires whether Le Rougetel could not be asked confidentially to approach Visoianu, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs to have remittances made to him out of Gafencu's own funds. Other Romanian residents in Switzerland as Pella were receiving such moneys without difficulties.

Finally, Gafencu has raised the question of the possible sale to the British government of his house in Bucharest. John appreciated from this foregoing that he was really anxious about his financial position. John also believe that unless SOE work for the past three years were to be abruptly undone some efforts surely should be made to ensure the continuance of the monthly payments of 100 pounds.

Gafencu, believed John, was in any case entitled at least to one month's notice. John strongly recommended that SOE with be given telegraphic authority to pay arrears December to February and continue payments until main question is clarified. In John view it would be preferable in the future those payments be made through SBC rather the SOE channels [4].

At 7th February John Sullivan sent to D/H 109 the following draft concerning Gafencu situation: As the Gafencu financial situation was passed to him he sum up the situation from SOE point of view, as follows: SOE have had a friendly association with Gafencu for the last few years. From this point of view. From this point of view this has meant that he has received this fund regularly from a London account, although normally the account would

have been frozen. From SOE point of view, Sullivan did not say that SOE truly say we have achieved anything concrete.

Taking a long distance view, it would need somebody more versed in high politics than Sullivan itself to judge whether it is worth keeping Gafencu sweet by seeing that his funds do not dry up. As far as this situation was concerned, there does not seem to be anything to be got out of the Gafencu contact and D/H 109 therefore suggested and Sullivan and Gafencu agreed that once the principle of continued payments had been accepted by London, it would be simpler for all concerned if payments would be direct to him through the Swiss Bank Corporation as Nussbaumer is thoroughly in the picture, was a friend of Gafencu's and was perfectly willing to help him.

John Sullivan was asked by D/H 109 whether SOE was interested in Marinescu the sailor, who intended proceed to Paris from Istanbul, saddled with recommendation from the French Charge d'Affairs in Bucharest. He thought that he could maintain one or two useful German contacts in Switzerland and could come there for the purpose. D/H 109 said that SOE were definitely interested in any useful German contacts and would welcome details on this subject [5].

At 1st September 1945 SOE received an Memorandum from his resident in Berne. He informed that Gafencu called at his private address at 31st August 1945 and enquired whether he would be able to ascertain from the British Authorities, for his own personal and confidential guidance, whether the British and American Governments had instigated a recent gesture of King Michael inviting the Allied Powers to assist in securing a representative democratic Government in Romania. The majority of the Romanians living abroad who look upon Mr. Gafencu as in some sense being their leader, were anxious to associate themselves with King Michael's gesture by some public pronouncement. If, however King Michael's actions were merely prompted locally of the advice of his immediate entourage, or of Mr. Maniu and Bratianu, they might consider it imprudent or rash to associate themselves to openly therewith. Indeed, unless such a gesture on the part of Romanians abroad commended itself to His Majesty Government, Grigore Gafencu would discourage it.

The British agent informed him that he would endeavor to have his message passed a *toutes fine utilisee*. It would not necessarily follow that a replay would be forthcoming, but he would no doubt use his discretion in discouraging such manifestations if this were not clearly indicated as being agreeable to His Majesty Government.

In this connection Gafencu draw attention to the subsequent statement attributed to King Michael that he was really quite satisfied with the present Government. This message had been published in the Swiss press as emanating from the Exchange Telegraph Agency. The agency's representative in Zurich Mr. Garrett, on being asked for confirmation in details, is said to have been evasive, and left the matter by no means clear as to whether or not the story emanated from Moscow. Gafencu thought it was unfortunate that a British News Agency should be playing the Russian game by disseminating information suggesting that everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds in Romania. Exchange Telegraph had been running a runnographed Romanian Bulletin for distribution to the Swiss Press under the name Service Maxim. The Service is run by one, Maxim ed Maximo, a very crooked individual, whom the Black List Section of the Commercial Secretariat have used as an informant on inter-Axis trading deals during the war. His real name was said to be Max Edelstein and he is understood to have a bad criminal record in various foreign countries, including bigamy and fraud. Maxim Ed Maximo was in process of returning in Romania. John Sullivan attaché a copy of a memorandum left with him by Gafencu [6].

The political situation in Eastern Europe

Three months after the end of hostility in Europe the differences made by the Soviets between the regions they occupy Western Europe is more firm. This mysterious exclusivism was realized to ensure the true bases of democracies and liberty by the Atlantic Charter, or indeed to insure the total domination of the Soviets over half of Europe.

If we cannot obtain precise indications as to what happened in Czechoslovakia, Austria, or in certain Balkan countries, the news which reaches us from Rumania shows us how the Soviets are definitely settling there, and try to evince all the power of the world. Western (the military agreements signed in Moscow in June 1945 and granting military bases to Russia from the Adriatic to Prague and the Black Sea giving the most obvious prove that Russia considers its region as its preserve). This is also home to the Russian policy, which has been skillfully conducted elsewhere since their arrival in Romania. It may hardly be considered that those who were the most surprised by this old friend of the great Western democracy have not even found an infinite number of Romanians, including the aspirations of looking at Moscow. (Serious information coming from Bucharest says that there are currently 150 communist sincerest in Romania).

How could Russia achieve a revival of the situation? In the first place, by suppressing a government which represents the great majority of public opinion, it also interpreted the sentiments of great fidelity to the West. A servile government was set up by the public forces and power, thus finding itself in the hands of five Moscow attorneys, two of whom had been claimed by the Soviet government to be narrates as USSR beneficiaries. The first step was to destroy all the Romanian elite in which the powerful democracy to choose these leaders. It was therefore necessary to reverse all the situations of fortunes existing to be able to take away the means of subsistence of those who would have embodied a state of hope which was not exclusively favorable to the USSR. Romania, an agricultural country, had already in 1922, by a profound social reform, the division of lands with the peasants. The communist government of Mr. Groza, however, has the right to expropriate the limited property which had been left between the farmer's more than 50 hectares per family. The land thus made available will be distributed not to the countries which, if need be, had no means of sustenance, but to soldiers who had fought against the Germany under Soviet command.

Here is how the USSR wants to form a political clientele among some of the Romanian peasants. In the industrial and commercial sphere, the economic agreement signed on May 8, 1945 between Romania and Russia in Moscow provides for the effective participation of Russia in all the resources of the country and especially in the areas of reliance: agriculture, food industry, metallurgical industry, carboniferous exploitation, petroliferous, metaliferous, forest, transport and banks. At present, however, the great turbulence produced in the Romanian economy by inflation and Soviet developments, as well as by the agitation among the workers, has made the numerous enterprises being obliged to appeal for public credit.

At this time the subsidies are only granted to them subject to the penetration of the Soviet state into these private enterprises whose management is thus under Russian total control. By adding to these two processes that the complete ruin of the country and the famine will lead to the disintegration of the current social structure of Romania (in Bucharest stores have been opened selling furniture and corporal objects of people no longer finding any means of subsistence) Russia hopes that it will be able to create a new clientele which forgets

that Romania has always been the pawn of the West and will ask Russia to come and rescue and rebuild Romania on the new bases. The following examples of Romania are closer, in a greater or lesser measure, to the situation created today in half of Europe.

In the aftermath of the Victory of the Allies against the domination that Germany wanted to secure and the triumph hoped for the principles of civilization, have so sadly continued that many countries sinking into tyranny and misery. But Western powers are losing their friends and business partners. What can be the future of British, American and French economic interests in this part of Europe? What opportunities will America find in these import-hungry countries at the moment when the problem of finding a new use for the product of its industry will be transformed from war to peacetime production? All this painful observation makes us proud after the principles that seem far away from the Charte de l'Atlantique and the decisions of the Yalta [7]

Gafencu's last years in exile

As a representative of the group of diplomats in exile conducting an action parallel to that of the Bucharest government, he deposited at the Peace Conference table in 1947 two memoranda requiring respect for Romania's political and economic rights as long as they had been insured by the Armistice Convention of September 12, 1944. Relations with the government installed in Bucharest after King Mihai's abdication, strained by Gafencu's pro-British pro-Western, worsened after the delegation of the Communist regime from the Paris Peace Treaty after the results were discussed at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. After this analysis, Grigore Gafencu, who lived in Switzerland in 1941, appeared in the evidence of security as "the main exponent of the Romanian reactionary movement abroad", and Gheorghe Maurer, then communications minister and public works, raising the question of citizenship Gafencu group members (including diplomats and Camil Alexandru Cretzeanu Demetrescu), what would happen a year later. Finally, Grigore Gafencu was sentenced in absentia, on November 11, 1947, to sentences amounting to 52 years in prison, in the lot with Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache. In the year he was convicted in Romania, Grigore Gafencu was responding to the invitation to conference at two prestigious universities in the United States. Discussions on spheres of influence in Europe and a federal Europe began after Grigore Gafencu, who was already established in New York, made available his Park Avenue apartment for a series of weekly meetings known as "Tuesday Panels", attended by key Romanian exiles and American politicians, including Allen Dulles, CIA's first civilian director (who also financially supported him, according to sources, after his fortune had been seized by the communist regime), or his brother, John Foster Dulles, State Secretary in the Eisenhower administration. The group formed in America around Grigore Gafencu militated for the European Movement, the pillar of the idea of federalization of European states and the theoretical root of the European Union today.

Also here was the way in which, through a radio station, the liberation of captive peoples after the Iron Curtain is attempted. The talks would lead to the establishment, on 15 March 1949, of the Committee for a Free Europe, funded by the American Congress, which then founded the famous radio station that was to be broadcast first in 1950 in Munich for Czechoslovakia [8]. Grigore Gafencu was a member of the Romanian National Committee, representative of Romania in the Captive Nations Assembly, and he worked relentlessly to unmask the dramatic situation created by Romania entering the Soviet sphere beyond the Iron Curtain.

A well-informed European policy analyst (among other things, the Counter-Offensive Peace Volume, 1953), a promoter of federalism, saw in this form of state organization a chance for political equilibrium. He was the honorary president of the Association of Romanian Lawyers [9]. Abroad, of the European Union of Federalists. Grigore Gafencu died on January 30, 1957, at his residence in Paris. On the day of death the newspapers in exile were mournful and the homage articles were signed by personalities such as Virgil Ierunca - with whom Grigore Gafencu collaborated for the Romanian Union newspaper published in Paris, the philosopher and diplomat Vintilă Horia - another important leader of the Romanian exile, Mircea Eliade - who spent his last year in Paris before the post of coordinating professor at the University of Chicago Religious History Department to definitively move him over the ocean, or the writer Nicolae Herescu, also in exile in Paris [10].

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