

GENERAL RĂDESCU'S LAST YEAR IN ROMANIA (MAY 7TH, 1945 – JUNE 15TH, 1946)

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(Abstract)

In Great Britain, there were people who thought about the former Prime Minister's safety upon leaving the British Legation (inside the British Mission) – where he was given sanctuary between March 6th-May 7th, 1945, fearing for his life after his Government fell under Soviet duress. Inquired by Mr. Martin, MP, in the House of Commons, the British Foreign Office informed that the General had left British Mission on May 7th, 1945, as the Romanian Government offered assurances in taking steps to protect him. Still, the Romanian Government imposed to the General that he should not leave his nephew's house, although he was not charged of anything. Alerted by Rădescu's nephew, British and United States officials manifested concern about the General's fate. On September 21st, Brigadier General Schuyler, supported by his British counterpart Air Vice-Marshal Stevenson, complained to Soviet General Vinogradov in the matter of the house arrest, as the Soviets were in charge with the Allied interests in occupied Romania. Vinogradov promised only to continue protection.

In order to be recognized by British and United States Governments, the Groza Government were obliged to increase the degree of freedom. In this context on February 4th, 1946, the house confinement was lifted. Fearing arrest, Rădescu left Romania secretly by plane on June 15th, 1946 and became one of the most important leaders of the Romanian émigrés. He died in New York on May 16th, 1953.

Introduction

The study deals with the life and political activity of the politically unaffiliated General Nicolae Rădescu, former Romanian President of the Council of Ministers (last democratic Romanian Prime Minister before Communism) and Minister of Interior (December 6th, 1944–March 6th, 1945), after the British Mission withdrew the right of sanctuary on May 7th.

The main sources were British diplomatic microfiches and reels of microfilm regarding United States diplomatic documents studied at the Central National Historical Archives (Bucharest) and the published papers related to General Rădescu.¹

The British managed to be granted the support of the Groza Government (backed by the Soviets), after they delivered a Note to the Romanian

Minister of Foreign Affairs, in order to protect the general's life, mainly to not be subject to violence and torture, with the right of mobility, on condition of respecting the rule of law. The British had not granted the sanctuary to avoid the General being prosecuted and they would respect any decision of a fair trial. The British did not concur to general's departure abroad but in the nearby future; at the general's request, they would help him leave Romania but not to settle in a British territory. The Soviets refused to offer any assurance related to general's life as they considered a matter in charge of the Romanian Government.²

The house confinement

Twelve agents of the Corps of Detectives, a branch within the Romanian counter-espionage service, had to protect the house where general lodged, in the No. 4. Clopotarii Vechi Street, at his niece and her husband, businessman Nicolae

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¹ *Un sfert de veac de urmărire: Documente din dosarele secrete ale Generalului Nicolae Rădescu* (hereinafter DNR), Documente selectate și editate de: Monica Grigore, Oana Ionel și Dragoș Marcu, Studiu introductiv de Gheorghe Onișoru, București (2004).

² See details to Marian-Alin Dudoi, General Rădescu's Sanctuary at the British Legation in Bucharest: the British Efforts to Secure his Life. *Revista Arhivelor*, Issue 2 (2012), 171–177.

Șerbănescu; the agents were instructed to be vigilant as the general should not leave Romania with the help of foreigners, meaning they should follow him when he left the house.³ In practice, the general was obliged to stay there as only on February 4th, 1946, the agents were withdrawn and the general had the right of mobility.⁴

In the night of 31st May–1st June, twenty civilians, thought to have represented Police, visited the house in order to investigate Șerbănescu's papers. The policeman on duty informed Tătărescu, Romanian Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Foreign Minister, and a Police inspector soon arrived and they began to search the house but no attempt was made to enter Rădescu's room. Șerbănescu, Rădescu's nephew-in-law, later told the British the action was made to intimidate his uncle because he had no political activity and he was not in Bucharest.⁵

In London, there were people who thought about the former Prime Minister's safety upon leaving the Legation, as the British honour should haven't been affected. Mr. Martin, a member of the Parliament, inquired the Foreign Office in the House of Commons about the situation of Rădescu. On 13th June, the reply was given by Richard Law, Minister of Education, on behalf of Anthony Eden, Foreign Minister, and consisted in the fact that General had left the British Mission on May 7th as the Romanian Government offered assurances in taking steps to protect him.⁶

Le Rougetel, British Foreign Office envoy to Bucharest, discussed in June 1945 the general's situation with Tătărescu who regretted the night investigation and demanded from the Communist Teohari Georgescu, Minister of Interior, that such events should not happen anymore; Tătărescu also told Le Rougetel time had come the general should leave Romania but Le Rougetel refused to discuss the matter as he had no authorization from London to discuss such things with Tătărescu.⁷

³ The Corps of Detectives' Report of 08.05.1945, DNR, 318–319.

⁴ Note of 09.02.1946 concerning Rădescu, *Ibid.*, 327.

⁵ Le Rougetel's decrypted telegram no. 591 of 1.06.1945 to Foreign Office, (The Microfiches of) Great Britain, Public Record Office, *Foreign Office* (studied at Central National Historical Archives, Bucharest, *England Microfiche Collection 1940–1945*, hereinafter PRO FO), 371/48554. Le Rougetel's decrypted telegram no. 608 of 6.06.1945 to Foreign Office, *Ibid.*

⁶ Foreign Office encrypted telegram no. 695 of 18.06.1945 to Le Rougetel, *Ibid.*

⁷ Le Rougetel's encrypted telegram no. 674 of 29.06.1945 to Foreign Office, Id, 371/48542.

The incommunicado status

After August 23rd, after the Royal Strike broke out – King Michael's refusal to collaborate with the Groza Government – nobody could visit him, only his nephews stayed in.⁸

Beginning with August 26rd, Tudor Sepeanu, a senior officer within the Corps of Detectives, forbade the physician to visit him.⁹

The harassment of the general's collaborators continued. Adriana Georgescu, his former private secretary at the Ministry of Interior, had visited him frequently, and had been arrested in front of his house on July 31st, and convicted on September 14, 1945 in the trial of the T Organization.¹⁰ At that time, the British believed even Rădescu could be arrested, due to the two's collaboration.¹¹ Communist papers considered the General as the secret leader of the T Organization, as Remus Țețu, formal leader of the organization, had visited him and had offered him the clandestine paper of the T Organization, but the General had refused to play a part in the leadership although T Organization had really democratic views.¹²

On September 18th, the Americans were told by Șerbănescu that the Government imposed that either his family, or Rădescu should leave the house. The following day, the General complained through a window to the visiting United States Colonel Tucker about being sequestered in the last four months.¹³

On September 21rd, U.S. Brigadier General Schuyler and British Air Vice Marshal Stevenson expressed hopes for a relaxation of the treatment, but the Soviets declined the proposal in the meeting of the Allied Control Commission in Romania

⁸ Hulick's decrypted telegram no. 715 of 21.09.1945 to U.S. State Department, Dinu C. Giurescu, *Imposibila încercare: Greva Regală, 1945. Documente diplomatice*, București (1999), 311. Hulick's decrypted telegram no. 715 of 21.09.1945 to U.S. Secretary of State, Central National Historical Archives (Bucharest), *USA Microfilm Collection*, No. 667 Reel.

⁹ Oana Ionel, *Supravegherea informativă a generalului Rădescu (6 martie 1945-15 iunie 1946)*. *Caietele CNSAS*, VI, Issue 1–2, 11–12 (2013), 217.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 222.

¹¹ Le Rougetel's decrypted telegram no. 959 of 20.09.1945 to Foreign Office, *PRO FO 371/48542*.

¹² Dinu C. Giurescu, *Uzurpatorii. România 6 martie 1945 – 7 ianuarie 1946*, București (2004), 431.

¹³ Cortlandt Van Rensselaer Schuyler, *Misiune dificilă. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945 – 20 septembrie 1946)*, Ediție îngrijită de Alexandru Oșca și Mircea Chirițoiu. București (1997), 210–211.

as they considered it a matter of the Romanian Government only.¹⁴

This treatment continued as in a letter of December 20th, the General complained to the General Director of State Safety Police (counter-espionage service) about not having all the rights of a normal citizen although nobody accused him of anything, and that nobody could visit him – even his relatives.¹⁵ Used to having long walks throughout Bucharest, he walked round the courtyard dozens of time.¹⁶

When the visit of American journalist Mark Ethridge took place at the request of U.S. President with the aim to ascertain the situation in Romania, he asked the Minister of Interior if Rădescu was free and the Minister replied affirmatively; consequently, Ethridge tried to visit but three agents prevented him and the Minister withdrew the agents for a short time.¹⁷ We did not know how long this situation lasted as seven days passed between the interviews with Georgescu and Rădescu (November, 21st and 28th).¹⁸

On November 28th, the agents were told to bring the General at the U.S. Mission, but the Americans went to the house a few hours before the arranged time, took Rădescu at the Mission, followed by agents still, and brought him back after the interview.¹⁹

An Allied High Commission, formed by the First-Deputy of Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Andrey Vyshinski, and U.S. and British Ambassadors to Moscow, Harriman and Clark Kerr, was sent to Bucharest and imposed King Michael to end the Royal Strike by adding two opposition ministers in the Groza Government,

but the Government had to increase the degree of freedom, while the United States and the Great Britain recognized the right of Groza and his ministers to govern until the elections; during the visit, December 30th, 1945-January 7th, 1946, the relatives could see Rădescu.²⁰

Resuming political activity

After granting the right of mobility on February 4th, 1946, the former Prime Minister resumed his activity in politics. The Government offered him the use of a car but the driver had to watch over him. He talked with Dinu C. Brătianu, the president of National Liberal Party (the faction of Tătărescu had split and become the companion of Communists in the Groza Government), with Iuliu Maniu, the President of National Peasant Party (both the main parties of the opposition), and other anti-Communist politicians.

Romanian Intelligence Services considered that Rădescu benefitted the help of former members of the former People's Party, led by the late Marshal Alexandru Averescu, and a large number of retired army officers. The General promoted the idea of a united opposition against Communism. When Simion Bărnuțiu, a Romanian leader during the 1848 Revolution, was commemorated at the Bucharest Athenaeum, communist rioters entered the main hall at the end, and killed or wounded the participants; Rădescu got slightly wounded only due to the help of two American officers, Colonel Farnsworth and Major Hall.²¹

At the end of May 1946 a series of arrests on political grounds took place, and a detailed search was planned in the General's house, followed by the return to the situation before February 1946, in case of finding compromising material. Finally, both Lucian Stupineanu, General Director of Special Intelligence Service, and Alexandru Nicoliski, Director of the Corps of Detectives, renounced to search Rădescu's house considering he was under tight surveillance.

On May 29th, Rădescu applied for a passport in order to go abroad for medical treatment and submitted medical documents in this respect, but

¹⁴ Minutes of the Thirteenth Allied Combined Meeting of the Allied Control Commission (on) Rumania on 21.09.1945, Id., *USA Microfilm Collection*, No. 664 Reel.

¹⁵ Rădescu's letter of 20.12.1945 to General Director of the State Safety Police, DNR, 326.

¹⁶ Dinu C. Giurescu, *Guvernarea Nicolae Rădescu*, București (1996), 365.

¹⁷ https://books.google.ro/books?id=jM5IAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA123&lpg=PA123&dq=ethridge+radescu&source=bl&ots=yo_LWRNIxF&sig=ACfU3U1uHASS5EtwlNwBKQsSB8p7pK0rUg&hl=ro&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjpmJ70xbDIAhXBxIsKHWtBdK8Q6AEwAnoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=ethridge%20radescu&f=false, accessed May 24, 2021; (*Evidence of Violations of Human Rights Provisions of the Treaties of Peace by Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary*, Volume I, *Violations by the Rumanian Government, Freedom of Expressions and of Press and Publication*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951, 123).

¹⁸ Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge în România*, București (2000), 102–107.

¹⁹ Oana Ionel, *Supravegherea informativă...*, 218

²⁰ Șerban Papacostea, Generalul Rădescu a doua zi după instaurarea guvernului Petru Groza. În Venera Achim (ed.), *6 Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, București (1995), 121.

²¹ https://books.google.ro/books?id=jM5IAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA123&lpg=PA123&dq=ethridge+radescu&source=bl&ots=yo_LWRNIxF&sig=ACfU3U1uHASS5EtwlNwBKQsSB8p7pK0rUg&hl=ro&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjpmJ70xbDIAhXBxIsKHWtBdK8Q6AEwAnoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=ethridge%20radescu&f=false, accessed May 24, 2021.

on June 14th the President of the Interministerial Commission within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers avoided any answer as the applicant was a former Prime Minister and sent the request to Emil Bodnăraș, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers and the man in charge with all Romanian Intelligence, and the General Director of Special Intelligence Service; Stupineanu answered negatively.²²

In the morning of June 15th, he visited Iuliu Maniu, later he went to another niece at 12,40 hours and told the driver, detective Ștefan Militaru, to return at 16 hours. At 14,30 a plane had to leave for Medias; the pilot Nicolae Spuză sent the mechanic Dragu to buy some wine. In the Savoia 79 plane there were only Spuză and Giuseppe, a specialist in avionics, when suddenly the General, his secretary Barbu Niculescu and a woman got on. Unarmed, the airport security did not manage to stop the plane taking off. After a difficult flight with no stops, the plane landed in Cyprus (a British colony, then).²³ Rădescu had known that only two days later he was going to be arrested.²⁴

On July 27th, 1946 the Ministry of Interior put Blood's Voice, led by Ion Vulcănescu, on the list of terrorist organizations and name the General as the leader.²⁵ On June 5th, the arrested Vulcănescu had admitted the General as a collaborator; this meant that Rădescu was going to be arrested.²⁶

Conclusions

After being sacked from the Government by the Soviets and returned from the sanctuary at the British Mission, Rădescu pursued an anti-Communist activity with the help of his friends and later

relatives only as he was forbidden nine months to leave the house (and its yard) without any notice or trial and he was considered by many as the first formal prisoner of Communist Romania.

In the following four months of liberty, he advocated the idea of a united opposition as the only possible stronghold against Communism and encouraged people to involve actively in politics. Until his death in 1953, he became one of the prominent émigrés and the leader of two well-known Romanian organizations in the United States who were destined to be a sort of a Government in Exile.

²² Note of 15.06.1946 regarding General Rădescu's request for a passport, DNR, 350–351.

²³ Report of 20.06.1946 on Rădescu's Leaving, DNR, 354–355.

The Reuters' Communiqué from Famagusta (Cyprus) about Rădescu's Leaving (June 1946), *Ibid*, 362.

A Note of 21.06.1946 regarding British Mission, *Cartea Albă a Securității*, volumul 1, 23 august 1944–30 august 1948, Editor Serviciul Român de Informații (București, 1997), 305.

²⁴ https://books.google.ro/books?id=jM5IAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA123&lpg=PA123&dq=ethridge+radescu&source=bl&ots=yo_LWRNixF&sig=ACfU3U1uHASS5EtwlNwBkQsSB8p7pK0rUg&hl=ro&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjpmJ70xbDIAhXBxIsKHWTbDK8Q6AEwAnoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=ethridge%20radescu&f=false, accessed May 24, 2021.

²⁵ British Minister Holman's Annual Report on Roumania (1946) on 12.03.1947, *România. Viața politică în documente. 1946*, Editor Arhivele Statului din România, București (1994), 565.

²⁶ Arrested Ion Vulcănescu's Statement of 05.06.1946, DNR, 347–348.