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\$8.95

July/August 2020



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AN INCIDENT IN SAN FRANCISCO

BY **DANIEL J. DEMERS**

In November of 1940, German Captain Fritz Wiedemann, Sir William Wiseman (a British aristocrat), and Hungarian Princess Stephanie von Hohenlohe-Waldenburg held secret meetings in San Francisco.

Unbeknownst to the participants, the meetings were bugged by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The FBI had learned of the planned meetings during a routine bugging of San Francisco's German Consul-General Fritz Wiedemann's telephone. Wiedemann had been under surveillance by the FBI for nearly two years. Princess Stephanie had been a houseguest of the Wiedemanns since her arrival in San Francisco during the same period of time.

Revelations of the wiretapped meetings were not disclosed to the public until 1981 when they were declassified.

According to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, the purpose of the meetings was to explore "possible peace negotiations between Germany and England." The two nations had been at war with one another for sixteen months. The trio was representative of political elements within their respective nations desiring peace and an alliance between Germany and Britain.

Wiedemann had been Corporal Hitler's commanding officer during World War I. When the Nazis took control of Germany, he was appointed Hitler's Personal Adjutant. The two men were close, and, for a while, the duo dated the Braun sisters—Hitler with Eva and Fritz with Gretl. Hitler's relationship with Eva would be a lasting one—marrying her shortly before their joint suicide in 1945. The married Wiedemann's sexual appetite for Gretl gradually diminished in favor of other women—especially Princess Stephanie.

As Hitler's closest aide and a personal confidante, Wiedemann participated in the Nazi's re-occupation of the Rhineland and assimilation of Austria (*Anschluss*). That same year, his secret diplomatic meetings with British Foreign Minister, Lord Halifax, paved the way

for the Munich Accords and German invasion of Czechoslovakia. He was appointed Consul General to San Francisco in March of 1939 and was touted by the national press as Germany's chief propagandist in the U. S., as well as Hitler's American spy chief.

Sir William Wiseman was an experienced diplomat and spy *extraordinaire* since his original appointment in 1915 as chief of the American Station of MI6, Britain's secret intelligence service. It was alleged that his skillful manipulation of President Woodrow Wilson led to direct American intervention in World War I. His secret meetings with Wilson and Wilson's closest aides were exposed during the interwar years. His World War I successes made him a legend in espionage circles.

After the war, Wiseman remained in the United States, married an American and eventually became managing partner of the second largest investment banking firm in the U. S. As the new war brewed, he became a key player in trying to stop American intervention. It is believed that he carried messages from Britain's ambassador to the United States to Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Minister, which outlined proposed German peace terms.

The FBI transcript was interpreted by Hoover in memos to the State Department and Department of the Treasury: "from the tenor of Sir William Wiseman's conversation, he apparently is the spokesman for a British political group headed by Lord Halifax which hopes to bring about a lasting peace between England and Germany..."

At the time of the San Francisco meetings, public opinion polls showed the vast majority of Americans overwhelmingly opposed to involvement in the European conflict. The Roosevelt administration was determined to involve America in the conflict to destroy Nazism.

Princess Stephanie von Hohenlohe-Waldenburg was an Austrian by birth and a Hungarian princess by marriage. Her aristocratic pedigree was a bit sullied. She had gained her title by becoming impregnated by the Austria-Hungarian Archduke's son-in-law.



Sir William Wiseman



Fritz Wiedemann



The scandal was quickly hushed up by her arranged marriage to a bachelor Hungarian prince and, thus, her title. Divorced in 1920, she had shamelessly used her sensuality to further herself socially and financially. A resourceful, intelligent woman, she lived a life of international intrigue, and in the 1930s was considered a confidante of Adolph Hitler, who affectionately called her his “little princess.” According to the FBI, she “...would resort to anything to obtain her ends.”

This trio was a formidable group of international movers and shakers. They had the confidence of their powerful peers—Wiseman the appeasement faction of Great Britain and Wiedemann and Princess Stephanie that of High German officialdom who wished an alliance with Britain. Together the two nations could exert far-reaching control and dominance over world affairs. If successful, they could foster or actually usher in a revitalized western imperialist-colonial world order.

Once the plot was discovered, the Roosevelt administration took almost immediate action. The Treasury department threatened to

deport Wiseman back to England and exile from America forever. By June of 1940, Fritz Wiedemann was expelled from the United States along with all other German diplomats by the Roosevelt administration.

Princess Stephanie was jailed in San Francisco and ordered deported by President Roosevelt. Lemuel Schofield, director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, flew to San Francisco and interviewed the Princess, whose son managed to smuggle a “little black dress” for her into the INS detention facility. Instead of deporting her, the portly Schofield fell in love. The married INS director had her transported back to a Washington Hotel, where he shackled up with her. Later he moved her into a house in Alexandria, Virginia, where the duo continued their illicit affair. An enraged President Roosevelt went apoplectic, demanding she be deported. Schofield refused.

Fourteen months after Roosevelt’s demand, the Princess was interned in federal prison, the result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and declaration of war against the U. S. by Germany.

Coincidental to this, Lord Halifax resigned his position as Britain’s Foreign Secretary and was appointed British Ambassador to the United States.

After the war, Wiseman continued his successful financial career unabated.

Wiedemann was convicted of war crimes at Nuremberg minimally fined and returned to farming in Bavaria—his pre-Nazi occupation, Part of the reason Nuremberg prosecutors went soft on Wiedemann was because of a petition from a number of prominent San Franciscans threatened to travel to Nuremberg and testify on Wiedemann’s behalf. The handsome Nazi diplomat had been wildly popular with San Francisco society while serving there.

Princess Stefanie was released from prison and rejoined Lemuel Schofield. After his death, she began a successful journalistic career interviewing numerous luminaries, including Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, and; the Shah of Iran for the leading magazines of the day. **PI**

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