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RUMANIA

COMMUNICATIONS  
FOREIGN TRADE  
Merchant Marine

The following report describes the true circumstances of the sinking in BEYROUT harbor, in June 1951, of the Rumanian cargo boat Midia, 600 tons, built in TURNU SEVERIN and hailed as one of the greatest achievements of the Communist regime.

One STEFANESCU (fnu), who pretended to have finished a Naval School in Italy, was appointed Captain of the Midia. From the beginning it became obvious to the crew that he had no expert knowledge or experience; he bluffed and adopted bullying tactics to intimidate his inferiors.

Midia proceeded to BEYROUT with a mixed cargo and unloaded it. She was about to receive her new consignment, when the captain decided to load her over the customary limit. When warned, he told the men under his orders to mind their own business, unless they wished to face a court martial. Not only did he confirm his instructions, but he made the additional mistake of loading lighter cargo at the bottom and heavier on top of it.

In consequence, the boat overturned with the cargo and everything, and the crew had just enough time to jump into the water in working shorts. They considered themselves lucky to have this happening to them in a port; otherwise they would have perished as the ship carried very little rescue equipment in order to increase commercial tonnage.

In BEYROUT, each member of the crew was issued a shirt and a pair of trousers; they had lost with the Midia everything they possessed. Afterwards they were repatriated on board the Transilvania. In CONSTANTZA, the Sovrom decided that no compensations were due to anybody, and the price of shirts and trousers distributed in BEYROUT was deducted from the men's pay.

It is stated that in spite of everything, the government still carried on with nominating inexperienced people to important posts, whose only merit is their allegiance to Communism, as in the case of STEFANESCU. In consequence, the few who know the job, must do all the work, and there is a number of officers in the Rumanian Merchant Fleet who have not had a single day of leave during the last two years.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: June 1951

EVAL. COMMENT: Source: fairly reliable;  
Information: possibly true, unconfirmed.