

“[I’ve] never seen a couple more devoted to each other or more united,” an ex-staffer told Pasternak of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (ca. 1942 in Nassau, Bahamas).





WHAT

85 years ago the newly titled King of England shocked

THE

WALLIS & EDWARD
THE ORIGINAL
ROYAL RENEGADES

the world by abdicating the throne for the controversial

HEART

love of his life—a divorced American

by **SIMON PERRY**

WANTS

W

allis Simpson became the most vilified woman in the world when the man who would become King Edward VIII gave up the throne in 1936 in order to marry her. The twice-divorced American was labeled a greedy social climber and had bricks thrown through the windows of her London home. But in *The American Duchess: The Real Wallis Simpson*, biographer Anna Pasternak reveals new insights about the woman who shook the monarchy. “Wallis became a convenient scapegoat and took the rap for the abdication,” says Pasternak—but the bold move “was the last thing she wanted.” The man who reigned for just 326 days had other ideas, harboring “this kind of ferocious, obsessive love for her—he was never going to let her go.” In this excerpt Edward meets his legal adviser Sir Walter Monckton after receiving a letter from palace courtier Sir Alexander Hardinge that Edward’s relationship with Simpson was about to change everything.

That Friday night, Edward played after-dinner cards with Wallis and Aunt Bessie, his gaiety temporarily restored with rounds of three-handed rummy. On Sunday afternoon, excusing himself from lunch on the pretext of business with the librarian at Windsor, Edward left for a secret rendezvous with [his legal adviser] Sir Walter Monckton. Wallis and Edward had been invited to the Duke and Duchess of Kent’s for tea [and he reassured] Wallis that the car would return in an hour so she could collect him from Windsor for their trip to tea. Monckton was waiting at Windsor Castle and Edward handed him [private secretary Sir Alec] Hardinge’s letter, which Monckton read slowly. The lawyer’s expression turned to shock. He agreed with the king that it could not have been written without some discussion with Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin.

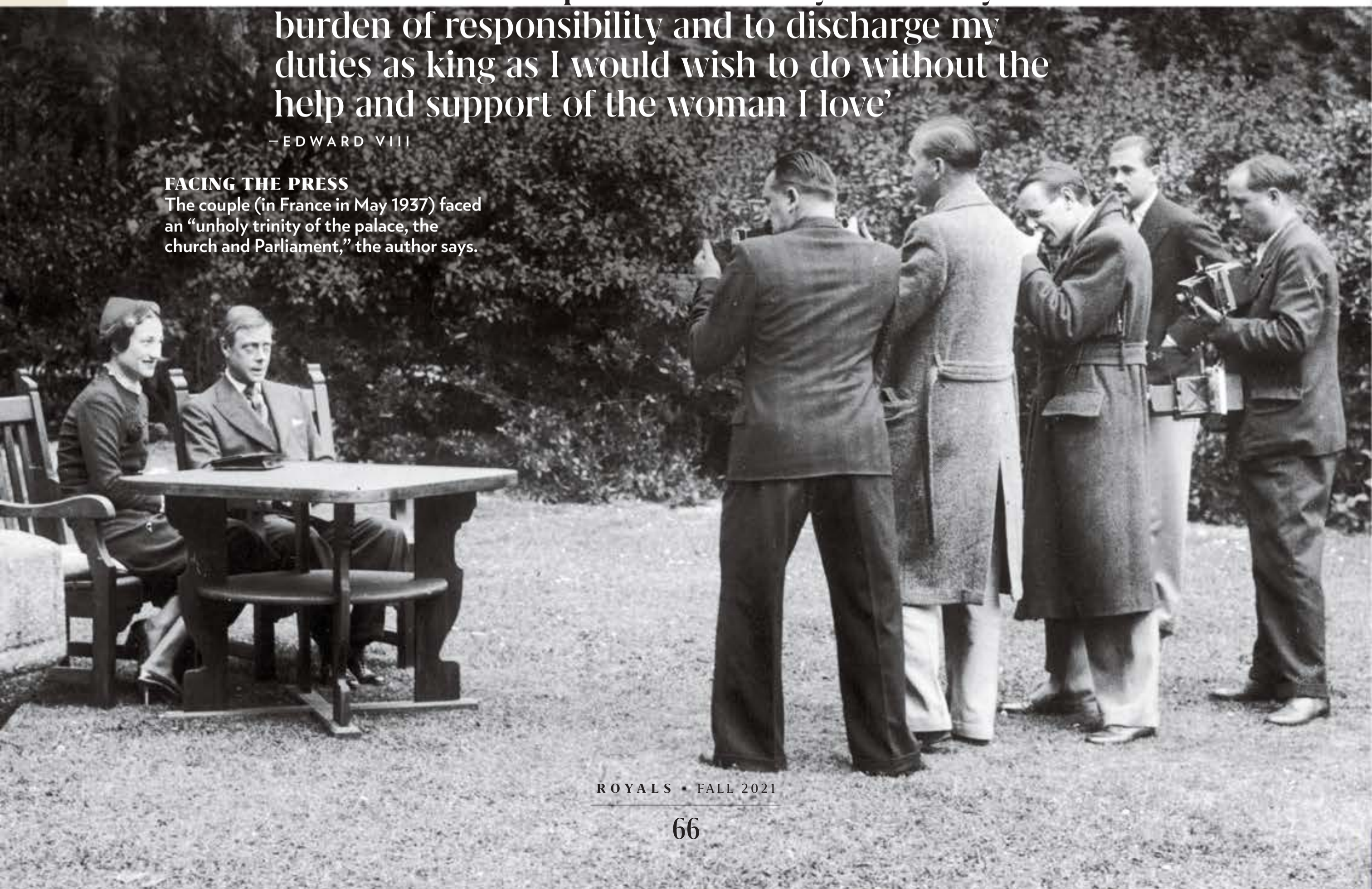
“The first thing I must do,” said Edward, “is to send for the prime

‘I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as king as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love’

—EDWARD VIII

FACING THE PRESS

The couple (in France in May 1937) faced an “unholy trinity of the palace, the church and Parliament,” the author says.





INSTRUMENT OF ABDICATION

I, Edward the Eighth, of Great Britain, Ireland, and the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Emperor of India, do hereby declare My irrevocable determination to renounce the Throne for Myself and for My descendants, and My desire that effect should be given to this Instrument of Abdication immediately.

In token whereof I have hereunto set My hand this tenth day of December, nineteen hundred and thirty six, in the presence of the witnesses whose signatures are subscribed.

SIGNED AT
FORT BELVEDERE
IN THE PRESENCE
OF

Edward VIII

Albert

Henry

George

THE LETTER THAT CHANGED HISTORY

minister—tomorrow. I shall tell him that if, as would appear, he and the government are against my marrying Mrs. Simpson, I am prepared to go.”

“He will not like to hear that,” said Walter gravely.

“I shall not find it easy to say.”

Wallis and Edward went to tea with the Kents, which the king described as “an agreeable but brief visit.”

But back at [their home] Fort Belvedere, it became impossible for him to conceal his burdens a moment longer. He took Wallis into his study and said: “A most serious thing has happened. I have kept it from you since Friday evening. But since it concerns you no less than it does me, you must know what is involved.” On his desk stood his red dispatch box, which he opened with a key. He took out the

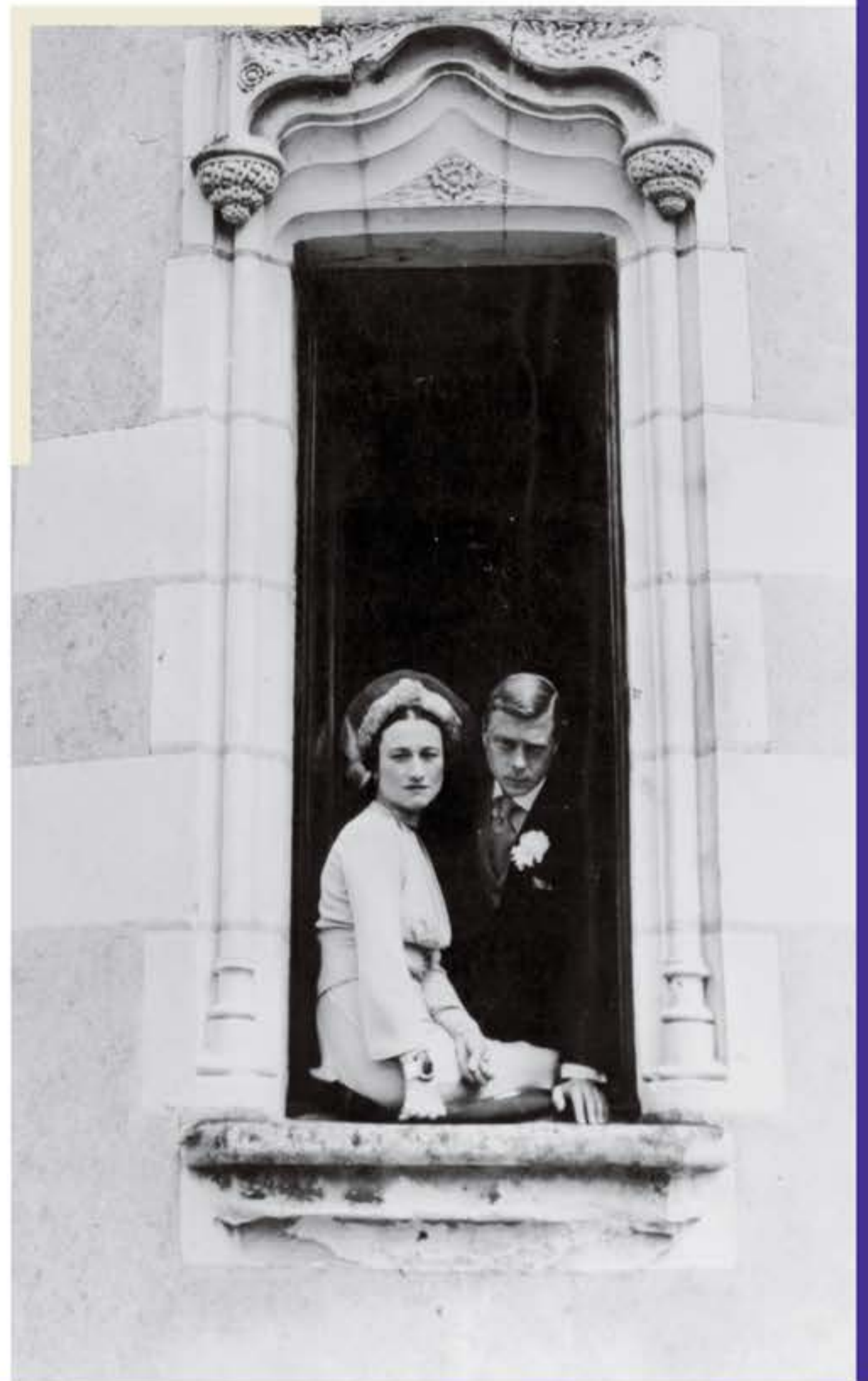
King Edward VIII’s intention to abdicate was made known to Parliament by the reading in both houses of this 1936 letter, the Instrument of Abdication.

ROYAL WEDDING LIKE NO OTHER
Edward and Wallis on their June 3, 1937, wedding day at the Château de Candé, near Tours, France.



TOTAL DEVOTION

“The duke always said that not once did he regret the abdication, because he was so happy,” says Pasternak.





AMERICAN WELCOME

Simpson (in Miami ca. 1942) "did make [Edward] happy," the author says.

letter and handed it to Wallis. Asking her to read it alone, he left the room.

After she had read the explosive missive, Wallis felt numb. She said: "This was the end I had always known in the back of my mind was bound to come." Realizing that the government's stance would trigger a crisis with the king, Wallis concluded: "Clearly, there was only one thing for me to do: It was to leave the country immediately as Hardinge had implored." When Edward returned a few moments later, Wallis told him that her departure would be in everyone's best interest. "You'll do no such thing," he told her. "I won't have it. This letter is an impertinence."

"That may well be," replied Wallis. "But just the same, I think he's being sincere. He's trying to warn you that the government will insist that you give me up."

"They can't stop me. On the throne or off, I'm going to marry you." "Now it was my turn to beg him to let me go," Wallis later recalled. "Summoning all the powers of persuasion in my possession, I tried to convince him of the hopelessness of our position. For him to go on hoping, to go on fighting the inevitable, could only mean tragedy for him and catastrophe for me."

Edward remained deaf to her entreaties. Taking Wallis's hand, he said: "I'm going to send for Mr. Baldwin. I'm going to tell him that if the country won't approve of our marrying, I'm ready to go."

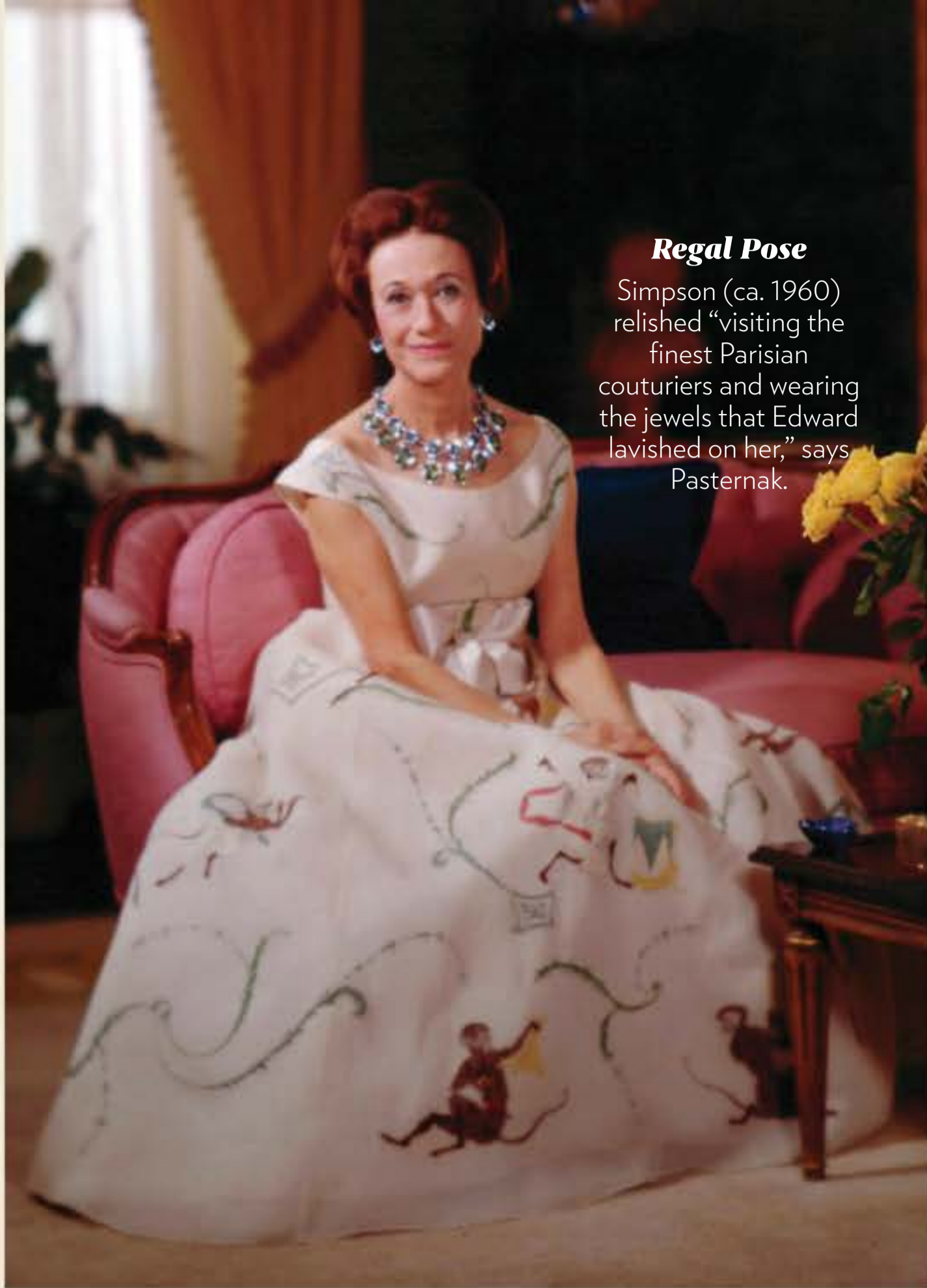
At this, the first mention between them of abdication, Wallis burst into tears. "David was determined that I stay," admitted Wallis. "He insisted



THEIR LUXE LIFE IN EXILE

At a villa in Biarritz, France, in 1951 (above), and (right) at a 1953 ball in Versailles. They didn't think they'd be shunned forever, but "life was aimless in a sense, as they were displaced," says the author.





Regal Pose

Simpson (ca. 1960) relished “visiting the finest Parisian couturiers and wearing the jewels that Edward lavished on her,” says Pasternak.

The Duchess's High Style

A fixture on best-dressed lists of the time, Simpson reigned as a global fashion icon



Guarded Glamour

Simpson (in 1937) had a “signature look that was a form of sartorial armor that belied how vulnerable she really felt,” says Pasternak.

that he needed me, and as a woman in love I was prepared to go through rivers of woe, seas of despair, and oceans of agony for him.” She had fallen in love with Edward and was now all too aware of the sacrifice this would entail. Yet the thought of the vicissitudes of her suffering never seemed to register with him. Surely, the greater act of love would have been for Edward to let Wallis go? Yet he did not seem to be able to see matters from any other perspective than his own. As far as he was concerned, he could not live without her and could not see that she might not be able to live with the consequences of his single-mindedness. Being blamed in perpetuity for stealing a beloved, popular king from his throne and almost destroying the British monarchy would prove to be a lifelong annihilating burden that Wallis was forced to bear.



Wedding White

Simpson (two days before her June 1937 nuptials) in the garden of the Château de Candé, France, where the couple wed.



Slim and Simple

The duchess (in 1944 in a Vionnet dress) “favored a clean, neat silhouette, with a cinched-in waist,” says Pasternak.

Their Pampered Pups

The couple, who never had children, lavished their pets with attention



Dog Days

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor (in 1941) favored terriers (pictured) along with pugs.



Their No. 1 Pup: Slipper

A Cairn terrier, Slipper (in 1935) was a “kind of substitute child” for Wallis, says Pasternak. The dog died after being bitten by a snake on its first night with her in France.



Travel Partners

After arriving by yacht during their 1951 tour of the Mediterranean, the couple strolled across a square in Portofino, Italy, with their dog Thalmet.



Plaid and Pugs

The duke and duchess dressed up to pose with their pugs at Le Moulin de la Tuilerie, their home near Paris (in 1967).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY ATRIA BOOKS; EVERETT; PHOTOSHOT/VALON/ZUMA; COURTESY ATRIA BOOKS; PATRICK LICHTFIELD/CONDÉ NAST/SHUTTERSTOCK; AP/SHUTTERSTOCK; HISTORIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

Typically, Wallis later reproached herself—rather than Edward and his narcissistic neediness—for being deflected from her decision to leave England immediately. “I should have realized that this was the fateful moment—the last when any action of mine could have prevented the crisis.” She still could not fully comprehend that Edward was not going to let her go anywhere. Wallis also blamed herself for not realizing the true position of the king in the British constitutional system. Because she was accustomed to witnessing the apparent deference to his every wish, the fawning adulation that surrounded him, she was unaware of how vulnerable he really was and how little power he actually had vis-à-vis his ministers and Parliament. As a result, it was still inconceivable to her that his adoring public in Britain and the Empire would “ever allow anybody who had served and loved them so well to leave them.”

The king summoned Stanley Baldwin to a meeting at Buckingham Palace on Monday 16 November at 6.30 p.m.

In less than a month, he would give his abdication address.

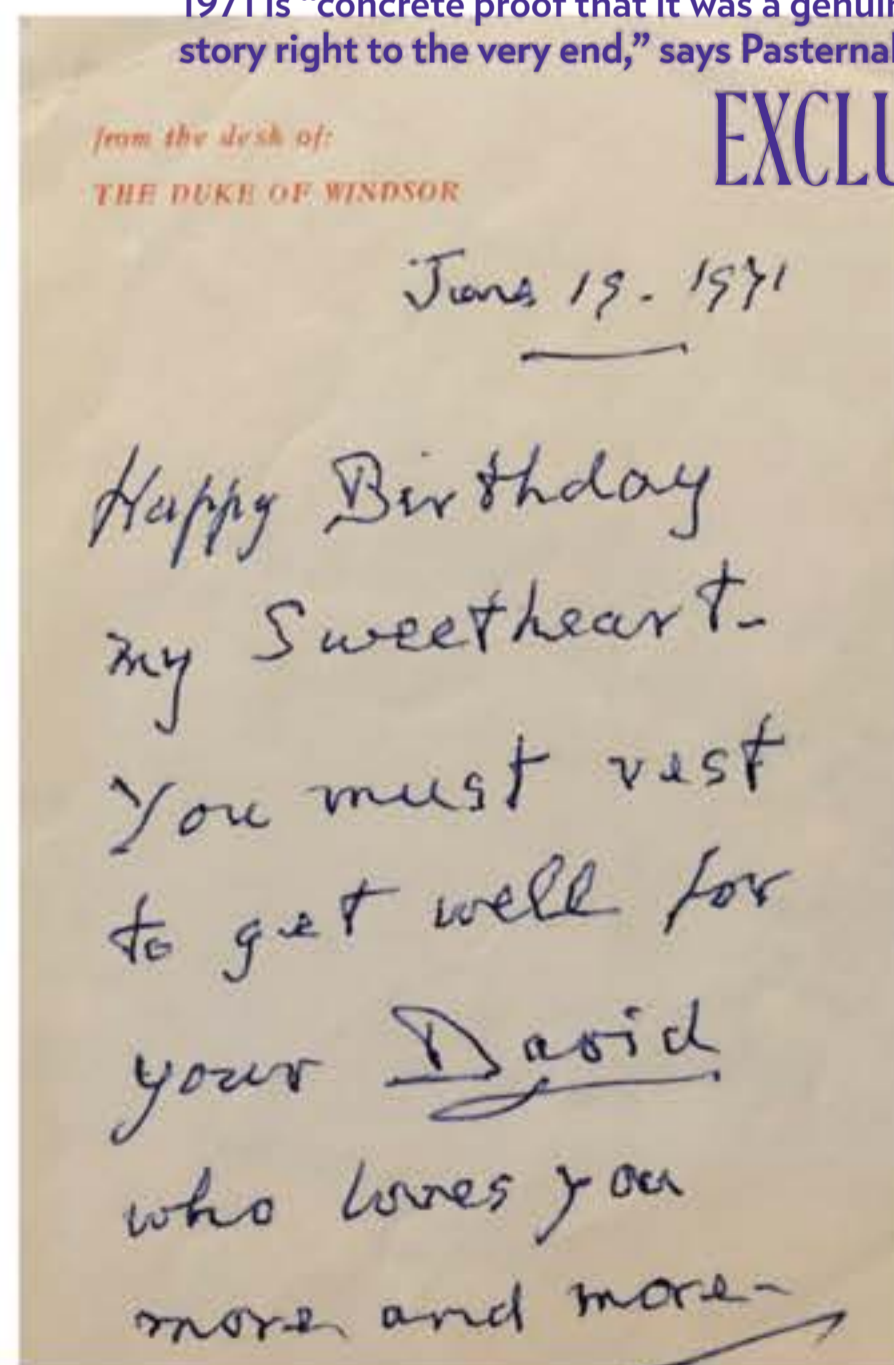


Excerpted from *The American Duchess: The Real Wallis Simpson* by Anna Pasternak, published by Atria Books (Simon & Schuster).



LATER YEARS
President Richard Nixon hosted the pair at a White House dinner in 1970 (top, right). Edward died of throat cancer in 1972 and was buried near Windsor Castle. Simpson died in 1986 and was buried beside him.

The last birthday note Edward wrote to Wallis in 1971 is “concrete proof that it was a genuine love story right to the very end,” says Pasternak.



EXCLUSIVE

‘You have no idea how hard it is to live out a great romance’

—WALLIS SIMPSON

