

THE RUMANIAN QUESTION

BY

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Mankind at large, which longs for peace, was delighted to welcome the Munich Four-Power resolution, which it regarded as the first stage in a process of peaceful evolution. The short period that has elapsed since that resolution was taken has been fraught with bitter disappointment. Today the peoples of Europe are once more divided into two hostile camps; and a single spark may produce a general conflagration. And, we would ask, why all this race in armaments and all this gigantic-scale preparation for war? This question is easily answered. All that the Great Powers assembled at Munich did, was to endeavour to obtain a peaceful settlement of the Czecho-Slovak question which had then arisen; but these Powers did not possess — or at least did not display — the resolution to broach the great problems which had made their appearance since the Great War, the result being that these problems continued to act as precipitous abysses dividing the peoples of Europe against one another. Munich failed to bridge over the gulfs created by the provisions of the Paris Peace Treaties. Apart from other questions left unsettled, the problem primarily responsible for the renewed international tension now in evidence was that of conditions in Central and Eastern Europe. The trouble must be traced to the bad treaties of peace and to the foolhardy operations which cut to pieces the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and dismembered the virile Hungarian Kingdom which was and is the heart of Central Europe. How strange that there should be nations in Europe still dumfounded at the disappearance of Czecho-Slovakia from the map of Europe in compliance with the laws of historical development, and that those nations should

not have been even taken aback when the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was wiped off the map of Europe and an operation of dismemberment carried out on that Hungarian kingdom which had for a thousand years defended Europe against all the inroads of Eastern barbarism and had during the whole of that period acted as the mainstay of equilibrium in Central Europe. In the Paris Peace Treaties the peace-dictators defied all geographical and geopolitical laws; and that challenge was bound to and did lead to disaster. The artificial State-formations called into being by that defiance of natural laws have had — and will have — to disappear and make room for States called into being by geographical and geopolitical laws.

Certain of the Great Powers of Europe are still unable to realise the necessity and the importance of a general and just settlement of the Central European question, and are still attempting to stem the natural development of things by establishing blocs of defence and by supporting certain unviable States. Prior to Munich Czecho-Slovakia was the spoiled *homunculus*; while recently the role formerly played by that country has been transferred to Greater Rumania, which is being dignified as the State by the artificial maintenance of which the Powers in question would fain stabilise the situation at present prevailing in Europe. In its present form Greater Rumania is almost as artificial a State-formation as the Czecho-Slovakia of former days. Prior to the Great War Rumania — with an area of 137,903 sq. kilometres and a population of 6,966,000 souls — was a uniform and viable State-formation with a natural „*Lebensraum*“ of its own which both economically and geopolitically was a valuable member of the European community. However, this young State, which in 1878 was liberated from the Turkish yoke and can therefore boast only of a serious historical past of sixty years, — a State which during the Great War played a very dubious role, having concluded with the Central Powers the Treaty of Bucharest during the War and after the War posed as a „victor“ during the Paris Peace Negotiations —, resorted to all kinds of subterfuges to take Bessarabia from Russia, to wrest Transylvania from the Hungarian Kingdom and to sever the Dobrudja from Bul-

garia, and actually came into conflict with Yugoslavia as a result of claiming possession of the section of Southern Hungary known as the Banate. The appetite of Rumania under the Peace Edict added 157.146 sq. kilometres to the pre-War area of that country — an increase of 114%. The increase of population resulting from the augmentation of its territory — according to the data of the 1910 census — was 8,738.000 souls, a number including nearly 5 million persons belonging to national minorities, some 2 millions being Magyars, 3 millions being Russians, Ruthenians, Bulgarians, Turks and others. We see, therefore, that Rumania dismembered all her neighbours; but not one of those neighbours has renounced its claim to the territory wrested from it. During the past twenty years Rumania has clung desperately to the status-quo policy and has failed to come to an agreement with any of her neighbours on the basis of equity and justice.

Rumania's foreign policy and her domestic policy have alike been dictated by her insistence upon the status-quo. It was for the purpose of maintaining the present status-quo that the foreign policy of Rumania was for years based upon the support of France and the Soviet. And when, after the occupation by Germany of the Rhineland, King Carol realised that as a consequence of the advance in the power of Germany the Franco-Soviet connections were quite unable to ensure the status-quo so desired by Rumania, he immediately dismissed one of the most intransigent advocates of that policy — M. Titulescu — and began to approach the Berlin-Rome Axis. At the end of the year 1937 that Axis appeared to be particularly dangerous; so King Carol — in the person of Octavian Goga — appointed to the office of Prime Minister a politician whose connections with Berlin and Rome were common knowledge. We see, therefore, that the appointment of the Goga-Cusa Government was also made for the purpose of maintaining the status-quo. But even during the term of office of the Goga-Cusa Government the foreign policy of Rumania did not turn its back entirely on the Franco-British Axis: it continued to play its political game with both Axes, watching the rise and fall of the prestige of either in order to im-

mediately withdraw its connection with the other. As soon as negotiations began between Italy and Great Britain — negotiations which led Rumanian politicians to conclude that there had ensued a weakening of the Berlin-Rome Axis — King Carol of Rumania (though his action was dictated by other considerations too) suddenly withdrew his favour from the Goga-Cusa Government and by the appointment of the Cabinet headed by the Patriarch Miron Christea introduced a dictatorship which once more entered the orbit of France. This political opportunism and time-serving change of tactics on the part of Rumania dumfounded the whole world; but it was also due solely and exclusively to a desperate attempt to maintain the status-quo. More recently too Rumania has continued to pursue this double-faced foreign policy, — having on the one hand established close economic connections with Germany and on the other hand carried on negotiations with Great Britain and France for the purpose of participation in the bloc of defence which the Western Powers are anxious to form against Germany. Rumania's foreign policy is today just as unstable and unreliable as was the role played by that country during the Great War.

The political anaemia in evidence in Rumania's domestic policy is also due solely and exclusively to her desperate insistence upon the status-quo. In their anxiety lest they should lose the new provinces obtained after the War the Rumanian Governments endeavoured rapidly and suddenly to convert their polyglot country into a uniform national Greater Rumania. The means employed for the purpose of welding their country into a national unit were not the pacification of the inhabitants of the newly-acquired provinces — not conciliation or appeasement —, but the intimidation of the national minorities subjected to their rule, and attempts to forcibly absorb or expel them from the country. The several Rumanian Governments and Parties vied with one another in persecuting the national minorities, thereby creating a permanent spirit of revolution. The Miron Christea — and later the Calinescu — Government was given the arduous task of overcoming the internal revolutionary crisis and bringing about the national unity

of Rumania. The task is an impossible one, for as a consequence of the double-faced foreign policy pursued by Rumania the Rumanian Government is barely able to control the direction of events. This very double-faced foreign policy is due to the fact that forces directed by the Great Powers are already working in Rumania; and the political factors of Rumania follow a double track in groups conforming to the action of those forces. While on the one hand the Franco-ophile policy is engaged in defending its position, on the other hand — through the medium of the Iron Guard now dissolved — German and Italian policy is endeavouring to ensure its influence. The Constitution brought into being by the dictatorship — combined with the other Draconian measures — has for the moment created a condition of peace and tranquility. But force has never been a means of forming a State or of welding the sections of that State into a unit.

Another question arising in this connection is whether in the situation in which she finds herself today in the field of foreign policy and of domestic policy Rumania represents a serious asset to either of the groups of Powers? The history of Rumania — and in particular her attitude during the Great War — proves that she does not represent a real value. The Rumanian people cannot really be credited with any particular military prowess; and her power is in addition weakened by the divergency of minorities numbering five millions. In her present shape Greater Rumania would be unable to resist any serious attack — from whatever direction that attack might come — except on the line of defence provided by the Eastern and South-Eastern Carpathians, though the experience of the Great War shows us that the Rumanian resistance to the attack of the Central Powers was extremely weak here too, the Rumanian army being unable to hold even this powerful line of defence. History, on the other hand, shows that in the hands of the Hungarians the Carpathian mountain system is an impregnable stronghold. In the Great War, for instance, it was on the ridge of the Carpathians that the mighty Russian army was shattered by the heroic defence of the Hungarian troops.

We may therefore establish the fact that in the treaties of peace concluded after the Great War the young Rumanian State showed an excessive greed when claiming new territories, — that it has failed to solve the problem of its five million minority inhabitants, — that it has failed to come to an agreement with either of its neighbours, — and that, as a consequence of its double-faced policy and of its unfavourable geopolitical situation, it will be unable to keep the territory at present in its possession, unless certain European Powers undertake to act as gendarmes. We should like to know, however, which Power feels it in its interest to undertake such a role? Which of the Powers could undertake the responsibility for continuing to keep Europe in a state of permanent tension simply — to encourage Rumania's political megalomania?

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