

THE SITUATION OF RUMANIA

BY

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On January 27th, when General Antonescu, the Leader of the Rumanian State, formed his new Government after the overthrow of the three days' civil war or rather Iron Guard insurrection, he issued a proclamation in which he stated, when speaking of *Rumania's foreign policy*, that Rumania was "marching unhesitatingly with the Axis Powers". The meeting between Marshal Göring and General Antonescu and their conversations in Vienna are believed by the German Press to have been necessitated by the events on the Lower Danube. According to the statement made by Antonescu — intended to enlighten Rumanian public opinion — the co-operation between Rumania and Germany is developing in a spirit of perfect understanding. According to Antonescu's statement Rumania's export quota of corn has been reduced simply because last year's harvest yield was a poor one; nor is the work of supplying provisions to the German troops in Rumania being done by the Rumanian Government. The statement explains further that there is no longer any uncertainty either as to the principle that no one is entitled to interfere in the internal affairs of Rumania. It is probably to be regarded as one of the latest results achieved by German-Rumanian co-operation that the biggest industrial undertaking in Rumania — the *Malaxa* engine and armaments factories, which by expropriation recently came into the possession of the Rumanian State — is to be leased by Germans. As established in Berlin, in the operating company which is to take over the direction of the *Malaxa* establishments 50% of the shares are to be in the hands of the *Göring Works*, the rest of the shares (the other 50%) to ensure the interests of the Rumanian State.

Concerning the rupture of the relations between Britain and Rumania the "Journal de Genève" (February 13th) wrote

as follows: — "With the territories detached from Hungary, Bulgaria and Russia, Rumania became almost a Great Power. During the 22 years that have passed since then Rumania played a political and diplomatic rôle which may without exaggeration be described as immoderate. When the storm threatened to break, Rumania sought shelter under Chamberlain's umbrella. At that time Weygand's army was standing sentinel in the East, and there were some people who expected a great British-French offensive that would have affected King Charles's country too... When Poland had ceased to be a combatant and when as a consequence of the German-Russian treaty Rumania could not expect any help from the Soviet either, Bucharest found itself faced with a Hungary and a Bulgaria supported by Germany. Completely disheartened, Rumania either drove her former leaders out of the country or had them executed; and then she moved over to the Axis camp arms and all. After the accession to power of Antonescu Great Britain waited to see how the unequivocal attitude of Rumania would develop. As Churchill declared in view of the events: — "Rumania is in the other camp, her petroleum is serving the German tanks and bombers, so it would be superfluous to continue to treat her with indulgence. But the rupture of diplomatic relations does not yet involve a declaration of war. We do not yet know for certain whether a fresh volcano will break out in the Balkans." On the other hand, as reported by the London Correspondents of American papers, the British Government is said to have officially announced that from February 15th, 1941, it would regard Rumania as territory occupied by the Germans and would therefore treat her as an enemy."

In the *Hungarian-Roumanian relations* a certain improvement has resulted from the agreement concluded in Budapest on February 26th concerning the optant question. The situation had been rendered acute, as is well known, by the one-sided measure taken by the Rumanian Government in respect of the exercise of the right of opting stipulated in the Vienna Award of August 30th, 1940, and by the official explanation offered by that Government to the effect that the time-limit for opting was to expire on February 28th. Official Hungarian quarters, on the other

hand, strongly emphasised that the determination of the time-limit and the conditions of opting must be effected internationally by agreement between the two Governments concerned. *The Hungarian Press is loyally observing the truce agreed upon; but that cannot be said of the Rumanian papers.* We would merely refer particularly to the article by General G. Băgulescu, Leader of the Rumanian ex-servicemen, in the "Unirea" (Union), a paper started quite recently which may be regarded as the official organ of the Antonescu Government, — the article in which General Băgulescu stressed that the most important commandment of the nation is that enjoining union for the purpose of effecting consolidation "and *restoring the frontiers*". The Bucharest paper, "Universul", also emphasises the necessity for *the restoration of the country's territorial integrity*. And an article written by Nichifor Crainic, Propaganda Minister, and published in all Rumanian papers, blazons to the world that Rumania has reached a turningpoint and *must either recover her ancient glory or perish*.

The *internal political situation in Rumania* is still chaotic. At a Cabinet Council held at the end of February it was established, on the strength of the report of the Minister for the Interior, that peace reigns in the whole of Rumania. From the official communiqués published in the Rumanian papers appearing early in March it transpired that the discontented Iron Guard elements are continuing their agitation against the Antonescu Government despite the overthrow of the insurrection and even despite the recent plebiscite. Quite recently a large number of anti-Government pamphlets were seized at Jassy — pamphlets *accusing Antonescu of being a freemason* and calling upon the Rumanians to swear "never to rest until the country has been freed from the yoke of foreigners, freemasons and traitors". No doubt this accusation was the reason why Antonescu sent a written summons to the Chief Public Prosecutor attached to the Bucharest Courts instructing him to carry on an investigation to discover which of the Members of the older Governments formed by Antonescu holding office previously were freemasons? And in the event of the investigation resulting in proving that not a single Member

of the former Antonescu Governments was a freemason, the Public Prosecutor shall institute proceedings against those who have presumed to make this allegation.

The Leader of the Rumanian State, *Antonescu*, in an Order issued by him on February 16th, in any case *invalidated the Order dated September 14th last, which proclaimed Rumania to be a legionist or Iron Guard State respectively*. According to reports circulating in Bucharest political quarters Antonescu desires to re-organise the political life of Rumania on a "monarchist-totalitarian" basis. In the opinion of well-informed political circles *it is proposed to give Rumania a National Socialist Constitution*, a former Minister for Justice, *Micescu*, having — it is said — been already entrusted with the elaboration of the draft Bill. In the general opinion Antonescu is engaged on the work of forming a new State Party, which he desires to organise on the basis of the corporative system to replace the Iron Guard movement. There has been — and still is — some talk also of Antonescu wishing to find a place in his Government for the Liberal Party and for Maniu too. This seems to be suggested by the latest Government measure ordaining the return to the Liberal Party of its property. For the property of the Liberal Party was confiscated already in 1939 by order of King Charles at the time when the parties were dissolved. The idea of inviting Maniu to take a seat in the Government does not seem to tally with *the mission to London, on behalf of Maniu, of Cornelius Bianu*, a Rumanian solicitor formerly functioning in Kolozsvár who is *one of Maniu's confidants*, — a mission connected with the change in the British-Rumanian relations ensuing recently. It is not probable that Maniu would start his action in co-operation with *Viorol Tilea*, the former Rumanian Minister who has formed a reparate Government in London; for Tilea, as is well known, has often been in conflict with the National Peasant Party and has attacked even the person of Maniu himself. This the Rumanians of Transylvania will never be able to forgive Tilea; and in view of Maniu's disposition it may be taken for granted that he has not forgotten the attack made by his one-time adherent. Many moments seem to point rather to Maniu moving towards the orbit of *Titulescu*.

For the political coceptions of *Titulescu* and Maniu agree in many points; and on the occasion of the 1937 parliamentary elections *Titulescu*, the former Rumanian Foreign Minister, entered the contest as a candidate figuring on the list of the National Peasant Party. Bianu's mission in any case throws an interesting light on the present international political situation of Rumania.

Antonescu as Leader of the Rumanian State is continuing with draconic severity the work of purification, having during the process had all property belonging to the Iron Guard placed under an embargo and nearly five thousand persons taken into custody — the latter including Creteanu, formerly Rumanian Minister in Berlin, and Petroviceanu, former Rumanian Minister for the Interior, who however recently succeeded in escaping from his place of confinement. The official *communiqué* giving a report of public conditions in ordinated to the Ministry for the Interior 17,523 — i. e. Rumania, also establishes that of the 33,756 officials *submore than 50%* — *had only passed four classes of an elementary school*, while university or college certificates could be shown only by not quite 9%. According to the *communiqué* this fact too proves the manner in which the appointment of officials was effected under former Rumanian Governemnts.

The Rumanian daily press is still displaying a fever of excitement over *the plebiscite*, which was carried out on March 2nd, the result being announced amid solemn ceremonies and in the presence of Antonescu by the Chairman of the Committee of Scrutineers (Returning Officer) in the forenoon of March 11th. According to this report, the number of votes cast was 2,960,298, — *all votes with the exception of 2996 being "yes"-votes*. After the result of the plebiscite had been ascertained, State Leader Antonescu addressed to the people of Rumania a Proclamation in which he announced that he would shortly make public a new programme of work. As is well known, Antonescu ordained the plebiscite by Edict, summoning the Rumanian people to express its opinion of Antonescu's person and policy. According to the relevant provisions every person already 21 years of age — with the exception of Jews — was

required to vote openly by speaking loudly the word "yes" or "no". The so-called plebiscite was preceded by an intensive press and wireless propaganda and by innumerable proclamations of Antonescu addressed to the Rumanian people, and was carried out in an atmosphere of intimidation following the overthrow of the Iron Guard insurrection, when a large number of opposition legionists were shot or thrown into prison. The propaganda intended for foreign countries did its best to exploit also the result of the plebiscite ordained by King Charles of Rumania. Then 95% of the voters swore allegiance to the sovereign who was later driven out of the country.

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