

# RUMANIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AS THEY AFFECT THE MAGYAR MINORITY

BY

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**T**he Rumanian Parliamentary elections held on 1st and 2nd June were conducted in conformity with the Franchise Act of 9th May. This Act did away with the old system of Party representation, and the new Parliament was elected on a corporate system of proportional representation. *For the national minorities this new system is particularly unfavourable*, and the result is that the Magyars have not been able to secure the number of seats to which on a proportional basis they would have been entitled.

The Hungarian Ethnic Union (Volksbund) — which has taken the place of the General Hungarian Party recently dissolved — concluded an agreement with the Calinescu Government in terms of which the Magyars nominated 16 candidates for Parliament and 5 for the Senate. *But the result of the elections was that the Magyars only secured 9 seats in Parliament and 2 in the Senate.* The Germans nominated 11 candidates for Parliamentary election and 5 for the Senate. Five of their candidates won seats in Parliament, but none of their candidates for the Senate were elected. According to official statistics the Magyar minority forms 7.9% of the total population, and *would thus be entitled to 20 of the 258 Parliamentary seats and 7 seats in the Senate* out of the 88 filled by election. The Germans, again, whose percentage in the country is 4.1%, would be entitled to 10 seats in Parliament and 3 in the Senate. *The number of seats secured by the Magyar minority does not tally with the proportion of Magyars in the population of Rumania* — says the report issued by the Hungarian sub-department of the Rumanian National Renaissance Front.

This report points out that very little time was available for making preparations for the elections and that therefore there was *no possibility of their being ready to deal with the uncertainties of the situation created by the introduction of the new system of election*. This had proved a distinct disadvantage to the organization of their forces. Despite this the Magyars had taken an effective part in the election campaign, thus giving praiseworthy evidence of their political maturity and racial spirit. The Magyar electors displayed a unique self-discipline at the elections.

The new election system was detrimental to the minorities — above all to the Magyars — chiefly because of the way the constituencies were formed. For the area most compactly inhabited by Magyars, the so-called Szeklerland, was broken up by the new geographical distribution of the provinces. The province of „Buceg” was formed by adding the Magyar counties of Háromszék and Brassó to eight counties belonging to the Old Kingdom (Regat). In this way the large number of Magyars living in these two counties are now an insignificant minority as compared with the Rumanian population of the province. Instead of each county being a separate constituency, there is only one constituency per province and this expansion of the areas of the constituencies is both an injustice and a great disadvantage to the Magyar minority. The present cannot be said to have been a great improvement on former elections, which were attended with shocking illegalities, brutality and violence. Abuses there were now, too, in abundance. In many places the authorities prevented the Magyar candidate from posting placards with his photograph and a short printed address at the town hall; the only method of approaching constituents which the election law allowed. A very great number of electors were not allowed to vote at all. In the province of Temes the Magyar candidate of the intellectual classes was disqualified, which meant the loss of a sure seat to the Magyar minority.

The results of the senatorial elections did not come up

to the expectations of the Magyar minority, for only 2 of their 5 candidates secured seats. This disappointment was slightly counteracted by the circumstance that, besides the Bishop of the Reformed Church in Transylvania — the only official Magyar Senator — there are 3 Magyar Senators among those appointed by the King.

The Magyars in Rumania number two millions, the Germans 750.000. It cannot therefore be considered that the proportions are fair when there are 4 appointed and 1 official German Senators (the Bishop of the Saxon Lutheran Church) in the Rumanian Parliament, and only 6 Hungarian Senators.

The injustice, so injurious to the interest of the Hungarian minority, that only the Bishops of minority Churches numbering 200.000 adherents are members *ex officio* of the Senate, has been partly corrected by the circumstance that the Magyar Bishops of the Roman Catholic and Unitarian Churches were appointed by the King. Even so the new Act has deprived the Bishop of the Reformed Church in the Királyhágó diocese and the Bishop of the Hungarian Lutheran Church of their official seats in the Senate.

In conclusion we would point out that the agreement between the Germans and Magyars at the time of the elections was not a success. The reason is to be sought in the fact that the agricultural electors — the farmers — were unversed in the intricacies of the new system. This was responsible among other things for the fact that 1 Magyar and 2 Saxon candidates failed to be elected in the Szamos constituency. On the other hand, it is undoubtedly true that in spite of the agreement 6000 Saxons did not vote for the Magyar candidate in Nagyszeben, certainly not through ignorance of what to do.