

RUMANIA'S INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLITICAL SITUATION

BY

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In certain circles dissatisfaction with the Antonescu Government is in evidence. This explains the Law published on 5th November in No. 3052 of the "Monitorul Oficial", the Rumanian Official Gazette. This Law, which bears General Antonescu's signature, invited the Rumanian people to a plebiscite on 9th November last that they should "express their approval or disapproval of Leader Antonescu's régime of liberation inaugurated on 6th September 1940 and express their confidence in him, so that he should be able to begin his national reform of the State and the protection of the nation's rights." With the exception of the Jews, who were debarred from the plebiscite, every Rumanian citizen over 21 years of age was compelled to vote "yes" or "no". Meetings and speeches of a propaganda nature for or against Antonescu were forbidden on pain of a sentence not to exceed five year's imprisonment. *This ban, however, applied in practice only to anti-Antonescu propaganda*, for no attempt was made to muzzle even the most vociferous propaganda in his favour. The plebiscite was namely preceded by a campaign of propaganda in the press and the radio; nor must we forget General Antonescu's own appeal containing the following statements deserving special attention. In it General Antonescu referred to the problems of the year that had elapsed since 6th September 1940 and the work that had been accomplished in that time. He emphasized that Rumania had linked her fate to that of the Axis Powers and pointed out the historical significance of the war of liberation. He laid particular stress on the real Rumanianization of economic life and urged the necessity of creating Rumanian elements to take the place of foreigners who had filtered into the country. His idea of the organization of the

Rumanian State was a corporate system. The appeal ended with the words "Long live the 'King, long live Rumania!'"

On 23rd November the final result of the plebiscite, which lasted from 9th to 15th November, was handed amidst impressive ceremonies to General Antonescu by the President of the Central People's Organizing Committee. The result was 3.446.889 for and 68 against Antonescu. The Bucharest daily papers published in an official form the names and particulars of the 68 persons who dared to refuse Antonescu the vote of confidence ordered. The newspapers established the fact that their names had been made public because many people had asked General Antonescu to publish them, adding that apart from this no proceedings would be taken against them.

This was the second so-called "plebiscite" during the one year of Antonescu's rule. The first obligatory plebiscite took place on 2nd March, on which occasion 2,900,000 persons voted for and 2996 against Antonescu's person and policy. At the time this result was made much of by Rumanian propaganda in foreign countries, as was previously the similar result of the plebiscite ordered by King Carol II, when 95 per cent of the voters expressed their confidence in the king whom they later on drove out of the country.

A great change has taken place in the composition of the Rumanian Cabinet. *M. Losetti, Minister of Education, handed in his resignation and for a time General Antonescu himself took over his office. Later Professor Petrovici became Minister of Public Education. The Propaganda Ministry also received a new head in the person of Professor Marcu Alexandru, while Professor Dragos Titu is now at the head of the Rumanianizing Department.* It would appear that General Antonescu is gradually getting rid of generals and appointing professors in their stead. Hitherto General Radu-Rosetti was his Minister of Education and General Zwidenek was at the head of the Rumanianizing Department. A Cabinet held on 17th November decided that *the administration of public supplies should be taken over by the army.* The former Public Supplies Department was therefore wound up and a new military and civil one created under General Constantin.

According to the opinions entertained by Bucharest circles there is no political significance in these Cabinet changes.

The latest development in Rumania's foreign policy is that the Government, in the belief that internal equilibrium has been reestablished by military successes, is striving to consolidate the country's position abroad, and for this purpose is contemplating *the creation of a new Little-Entente-like alliance*. With Slovakia the plan is in full development, and attempts are being made to enlist Croatia and even Bulgaria. The new formation is naturally directed against Hungary. Rumania has been encouraged in this respect by the turn of international affairs that was responsible for the restoration of Bukovina and Bessarabia.

Speaking of Bessarabia, mention should be made of the Language Ordinance issued by General Voiculescu, Governor of that province (see "Bukarester Tageblatt" XII. 2.). In terms of this Ordinance public servants in public offices may not speak in any language but Rumanian and, with the exception of the cases specified in the Ordinance may not use any foreign language whatever. Similarly the Ordinance prescribes that *as a matter of public interest the personnel of private firms may not use any language but Rumanian in business life*. In the secondary schools the pupils may not speak to each other except in Rumanian. In the markets it is forbidden to label goods in a foreign language. *Shop signs in any other language than Rumanian are also forbidden. A breach of these provisions is punishable with two years' imprisonment and a fine of 20.000 lei.*

For the rest, Rumania's dreams again begin to circle round Northern Transylvania, and there is no limit to the unbridled propaganda against Hungary and the Magyars in the Rumanian Press.

In December 1941 the Rumanian Government established a "Minority Directorate". This institution functions in Bucharest within the framework of the Secretariate of State for "Rumanianization, colonization and registration". According to the official statement issued by the Government, "all appeals and petitions dealing with questions affecting minority life and action must be filed with the Directorate.

All requests addressed to the State authorities by minority persons or racial groups must be sent to it."

Strange as it may sound, it is a fact that the affairs of the national minorities in Rumania are to be dealt with by a State Secretariate established — as its name reveals — for the purpose of "Rumanianization". Law No. 1219 promulgated on 3rd May last year provided that the "Minority Directorate" to be established should be organized within the framework of the Rumanianizing Department.

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