

THE RUMANIAN "NATIONAL RENAISSANCE FRONT"

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The Rumanian Crown Council meeting held on 14th December, 1938, is of historical significance to the minorities in that country. The communiqué issued on the same day by the Marshal of the Royal Court briefly states that at this meeting were determined "the methods of protecting Rumanian labour." From the rest of the communiqué it may be gathered that in future only the majority will enjoy rights, while the minorities, as distinct from the Rumanian ethnic body, will be practically outlaws.

Next day, on 15th December, the King sanctioned the Edict which is intended to enforce the resolutions of the Crown Council in the sphere of politics. This Edict was promulgated in the December 16 issue, (No. 293) of the "Monitorul Oficial" (Official Gazette) sub No. 4321/1938; it introduces a one-party system in Rumania.

The Edict comprises eight articles. Article I decrees the creation of a „National Renaissance Front“ as the only political organization in Rumania.

This provision is particularly prejudicial to the interests of the Hungarian, Bulgarian, Tartar and Albanian national minorities, whose rights as collective bodies have never been recognized by the Rumanian Governments. The German minority, on the other hand, will not be greatly affected by the one-party system, for their collective rights are safeguarded by their having been allowed by Government to organize collectively on a racial basis. With the exception of

the Germans, Rumania's minorities were deprived of all Parliamentary representation by the Constitutional Law of 27th February, 1938, which dissolved their political parties and failed to establish organs that would have been entitled to represent them as collective bodies before authorities and the people of the country. This lack of the right of representation signifies that in Rumania no minority except the Germans is recognized as existing; that is to say, no provision has been made to ensure the rights of the other minorities.

The one-party system now introduced legalizes the political disabilities of the minorities enumerated above. Although their rights are guaranteed by international treaty and by the Rumanian Constitution, the new Rumanian régime, which to all intents is a dictatorship, has deprived these minorities even of the restricted political freedom of movement and of the possibilities of complaint and protest hitherto at their disposal by means of which they had been able at least to give signs of life. In consequence of the dissolution of the Hungarian Party and the measure forbidding any attempt at organization, the Hungarians of Transylvania are in danger of being completely silenced. What is now taking place in Rumania is in direct defiance of the minority treaty guaranteeing the rights and liberties of minority citizens, which treaty was the condition upon which the territorial aggrandisement of Rumania was permitted.

Article II says that "the object of this political organization is to foster national consciousness in order to make it possible to inaugurate a united Rumanian movement for the defence and development of the country and the consolidation of the State."

The "united Rumanian movement/" mentioned in Article II designated as the object of the new front is so elastic a term that it can be stretched to embrace any movement the object of which is the denationalization of the minorities. That this is likely to happen is the more probable in view of the fact that a leading rôle in the new political system has been assigned to two ex-Premiers, Tatarescu and Vajda, who are well known to have been the most implacable and malevolent enemies of the minorities.

Article III provides that permission for the National

Renaissance Front to pursue its activities is to be procured from the Minister of Justice at the request of 25 persons, of whom 20 must be men who some time or other were Ministers or State Secretaries. This means that from the outset the minorities may be considered as excluded, since the terms under which the formation of the Front is permitted are such as to make minority participation impossible. For no State functionary of high degree will ever be appointed from the ranks of the minorities.

According to Article IV, in terms of public law all persons holding the title of King's Councillor are members of the new party. This title has never yet been given to minority citizens, who cannot therefore apply for membership of the Front under this Article. The same is true of the bishops of the minority denominations, for, although several bishops of the Rumanian Church have received this title, it has never been conferred on minority bishops.

Article V says that with the exception of soldiers and judges "every Rumanian over 21 years of age" may apply for membership. In Rumania the word "Rumanian" means only persons who belong to the Rumanian ethnic body. And as the aim of the Front is to create a united Rumanian ethnic State, it is manifest that no minority citizens will be admitted to membership.

In terms of Article VI the National Renaissance Front alone will have the right to nominate and recommend candidates for Parliamentary, administrative and professional elections. The Constitution of February, 1938, stipulates that the members of the new Rumanian Parliament must be elected in January, 1939. This new Constitution introduced a corporative system into Rumanian Parliamentary life. This means that the Parliament to be elected in January next will consist of three groups representing agriculture, industry (including shopkeepers and workmen) and the professional classes. The new one-party system deprives the minorities of any possibility of representation within the framework of this corporative system, for there will be only one list of candidates containing the names of trusted adherents of the new party, and all the electors will be permitted to do is to vote "Yes" or "No".

Alone on the strength of the branches of occupation represented by the Hungarians that minority would be entitled to at least 30 seats in the new corporative Rumanian Parliament. There are about 1.200.000 Hungarian farmers (peasants), 350.000 "tradesmen" (shopkeepers and workers) and 150.000 people engaged in professional occupations, all of whom are entitled to be represented, though an attempt is now being made to deprive them of that right.

Article VII declares all political activity outside the framework of the Front to be illegal and makes any breach of this law punishable by "civil disability" for a period of from 2 to 5 years.

Article VIII provides that the executive measures shall determine the details of the organization and activity of the Front.

The Hungarian minority, and indeed the Hungarians everywhere, await with anxiety the realization in practice of the Rumanian one-party system, for everything points to its being directed chiefly against the Hungarians of Transylvania.

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