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Roumania and Bessarabia

by

C. G. RAKOVSKY

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FOREWORD.

THE correspondent of *The Times*, Stephen Graham, relates his amusing experiences in Bessarabia during his tour of the province in the previous autumn.

During his visit, a Roumanian journalist asked him for an interview. In the interview Mr. Graham frankly expressed his views about the position of things in Bessarabia, but what was his astonishment to find, when the interview appeared in a Roumanian newspaper, that he was supposed to have said the very reverse of what he had actually said. To proceed, I will quote Mr. Graham's own words when speaking of this interview.

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"I had many amusing adventures while 'under the protection of the Government.' I was interviewed by a Roumanian journalist, who printed in his paper the opposite of what I said. In specially large, black type he made me say that I found everyone happy and prosperous under Roumanian rule, everyone speaking Roumanian, and that I was sorry to see so many Russian newspapers in a country whose national tongue was obviously Roumanian. I was angry when I saw it, but incidentally it proved useful to me. I kept it as an additional passport in case of danger of arrest, saying always: 'This is mostly untrue and very tendentious, but it is what one of your editors wrote about me.'"

(*The Times*, 20th October, 1924.)

I must say that it is not only importunate petty reporters who retail the views of foreign correspondents in this way, for diplomatists do it as well. Thus, when Mr. Lagovari, the Roumanian representative at Rome, says that peace and plenty reign in Bessarabia, he invokes the testimony of the "great European press."

Despite the fact that the correspondent of *The Times* was under "Government protection" during the whole of his stay, an officer being attached to him, so that he

could not get in touch with or talk to people, and that the official boom about him in the Roumanian newspapers made the population regard him with distrust, some persons even holding that the Government was using him for propaganda purposes, Mr. Graham was nevertheless able to make some interesting investigations, which he set forth in a series of three articles appearing in *The Times* of October last.

Though I am somewhat anticipating (the present conditions in Bessarabia will be dealt with later on), the amusing experience of Mr. Graham is so characteristic of Roumanian journalists and diplomatists that in digressing from the proper order of this enquiry, I merely wish to lay special stress on the actual conclusions to which Mr. Graham had come.

Mr. Graham asserts that the condition in Bessarabia is one of general discontent and disaffection and that there is a continual state of ferment even among the Roumanian-speaking portions of the population. He says that, according to every manifestation, life in Bessarabia was much easier under the Russians, that the Roumanians are incapable of governing, that their administration is brutal and corrupt, that the economic life of the country is in a complete state of collapse, that the Roumanian authorities are incapable even of re-building the bridges. He says that the Roumanian Government tries to suppress Russian culture, that it has closed the libraries, prohibited the import of Russian books (even those which are published in Berlin and Paris), that it has stopped the publication of new books, shut up the Russian theatre, forbidden the exhibition of films which depict scenes of Russian life. Mr. Graham himself while in Akkerman (now "Chetatea Alba"—the White Fortress) had seen posters of the film "Taras Bulba" posted in the streets, but the film was not shown owing to the intervention of the Roumanian censorship. Religion is persecuted, the first act of the Roumanian authorities being to stop Slavonic services in the churches.

Everyone is discontented, with the exception of the German colonists, against whom the Roumanian Government, which apparently desired to please General Mackensen, did not enforce the agrarian reform law, leaving them all the land which belonged to them formerly (for my own part I should like to observe that it is not surprising that the German colonists were the only ones to form themselves into voluntary bands against the rebel peasants in the last Bessarabian rising). A statement of Mr. Graham's which is characteristic, is that the Jews, who usually adapt themselves easily to a new régime, told him that they preferred Soviet rule to the bourgeois rule of the Roumanians, a statement which grieved Mr. Graham greatly. No less characteristic of the present Bessarabian conditions are the words of some Roumanian Colonel N. in Chetatea Alba, who said to Mr. Graham, "This is not Roumania, it is more like Morocco; nothing but anxieties, I hope they will soon move me from here."

One more word about the political life of Bessarabia. The Roumanian ambassador in London—Mr. Titulesco—boasts that the Roumanian Government has now become "democratic," that the peasants of Bessarabia have been granted the right of universal suffrage. Mr. Graham is far from agreeing with him. The latter says that there are no elections in Bessarabia; there are nominations, but that the Government nominee is always returned. To substantiate this the correspondent of *The Times* refers to a secret circular signed by Mr. Kantaniari, the Prefect of the Akkerman district, advocating the calling out of the civil and military authorities during election times. Things seem to be going back to the familiar old formula of the Roumanian Government—a policeman to the right, a policeman to the left, and the elector in the middle.

Roumanian ministers and diplomatists assert that Bessarabia is like a "blossoming garden." We have no doubt that something or other blossoms in Bessarabia,

but what species of bloom this garden contains, Mr. Graham tells us enough. A curious thing happened to Mr. Graham. I am not referring to the interview, but to what actually happened to Mr. Graham himself. He was sent out by a big London newspaper for the purpose, apparently, of according moral support to Roumania—one of those “barriers of civilisation,” which are to prevent the influx of barbarians from the East to the West. That this barrier was built with rotten material was not Mr. Graham’s fault. But the duty of the professional journalist proved stronger than that of the politician, and, arriving to praise, Mr. Graham, without evincing the smallest sympathy for Soviet rule, composed one of the most telling indictments against the Roumanian Government that we have yet had.

I will now pass over to my own articles and speeches of 1912, which are so persistently quoted by the Roumanian diplomatists—Titulesco and Lagovari. I have met with a similar fate to that of Mr. Graham and his interview with the Roumanian reporter. I who have all my life been an enemy of Roumanian landlords and the Roumanian oligarchy, who have been made the scapegoat in all the bitter struggles of the peasants and workers for liberation, who have frequently had occasion to meditate in prison on the sweets of the rule of the bourgeois parties in Roumania, and against whom a sentence of death had been passed, who have always denounced the Roumanian Government for its oppression of national minorities, even in the Roumania of old, am turned by the Roumanian diplomatists into a supporter of the annexation of Bessarabia by Roumania, that is to say, of one of the grossest and meanest deceptions perpetrated in the history of contemporary politics.

How did this come about? In the first place, these gentlemen have not the courage to quote everything that I have said, and in the second, they are incapable of analysis, even to the extent of a proper comprehension

of the quotations from my articles and speeches of which they make use. So it comes about that they give me an antedated certificate as a Roumanian patriot, even a better patriot than themselves, for had I not denounced the policy of grab and force of the Russian Tsarist régime, when they were singing its praises? I thank them for the belated high honour they have done me, but I have no need of an “additional passport.”

It is useless for them to try to create a diversion with my articles. There is nothing in the articles to their credit. On the contrary, I have no wish to deny that which is of service to us all. We, Communists, who once termed ourselves Social Democrats, are proud of the fact that for many decades we have been the most determined fighters against the Tsarist Government and its policy of grab and force. It is useless for the Roumanian Government and its representatives abroad to imagine that when they have unearthed a book of mine written in 1898, almost a quarter of a century ago, denouncing the system of dishonesty and oppression practised by the Russian Government not only in Bessarabia, but in Poland and the Crimea, in Finland and in the Ukraine, they can find argument in it in their favour.

The same may be said of my speeches and articles of 1912 on the annexation of Bessarabia by Russia. If they were to give themselves a little more trouble, they would find similar criticisms in the past written by representatives of our party who enjoy greater authority, best of all, in the speeches and writings of our leader, Lenin.

Only one conclusion follows from this, and that is, that we have all along fought for the self-determination of peoples and not for their hoodwinking and forcible annexation by other States. We have advocated the right of peoples to strive for national union, but on the basis of genuine political equality, which is only possible with the overthrow of agrarian and capitalistic feudalism. Starting from this position, in my book of 1898, denounc-

ing Tsarist Russia, and in my speeches and articles of 1912, I propounded a single fundamental principle, that of the creation of a Federation of Democratic Republics of the Peoples of the Balkans and the Danube. A preliminary condition to the liberation of Bessarabia, I held to be a revolution in Russia; this did not mean that the Roumanian oligarchy was to make use of the civil war to come there in the night with its tanks, guns and aeroplanes, and wrongfully to seize Bessarabia, that is, to steal it, but that the Russian revolution was to create the necessary conditions for a Free Federation of Democratic Republics. These are the views I propounded in my speeches and writings of 1912. That is why, at the time, I no less ruthlessly attacked the order of things in Roumania, which to my mind were indistinguishable from the system under Russian Tsarism. Constrained to give a quotation from one of my speeches, to the effect that the liberation of Bessarabia would come *through the Russian revolution*, my opponents did not mention my insistence on a Balkan Federation of Democratic Republics, nor my emphasis on the necessity of overthrowing the Roumanian oligarchy itself as a preliminary condition to the liberation of peoples from a foreign yoke. To the Roumanian oligarchy I did not concede the smallest right to talk of the liberation of the Bessarabian population from the Tsarist yoke. In my speech, reproduced in *Romania Munchitoare* of 20th May, 1912 (a portion of which I quote below), I dealt with this matter in detail, while maintaining at the same time, that the problem can be settled only with the victory of the working classes, not in Russia alone, but in Roumania itself.

"We, Socialists, are optimists because we believe in the triumph of peoples. We see that even our enemies are compelled to rely on the victory of international social democracy, when we have 'Viitorul' looking for the liberation of the Transylvanian Roumanians in the achievements of the Socialists. We look for the liberation of Bessarabia in the triumph of the Russian revolution. We protest against the crime committed by the Tsar's Government against the

Russian workers of Lena. We protest against the crime of Tsarism which exiled fifty-four Socialist deputies from the Second Imperial Duma. The Russian proletariat must be an example to all. When the bourgeoisie in Austria refused to grant them the suffrage, the Austrian proletariat retorted 'Then we will talk Russian.' The Roumanian proletariat, too, must learn to talk Russian. It must learn to organise strikes for the protection of its own interests. The Russian proletariat is a part of the international proletariat and of international Socialism. Consequently, we must shout with one voice with the millions of workers of all countries—'Long live international Socialism.'"

It is thus clear to everyone that the fall of Russian Tsarism, the liberation of Bessarabia, the liberation of Roumania itself from the masters who are in power even to this day, presented one and the same problem.

Such is the gist of my speeches of 1912. One of our aspirations has been realised. Bessarabia was snatched from the tenacious hands of Tsarist Russia; but Bessarabia must be snatched from the greedy hands of the Roumanian oligarchy. This task is not yet accomplished. If I belonged, as I did in 1912, to the Workers' Movement of Roumania, and took an active part in it, my task would be a wider one. It would not be limited to the peasants of Bessarabia, it would embrace the peasants of the whole of Roumania. This, however, is not my task; it is the task of the Roumanian Workers' Movement, its own internal problem. The problem of Bessarabia, though, is not an internal but an international one.

C. RAKOVSKY.

AN HISTORIC INQUIRY.

BESSARABIA AND DOBRUJA.

MESSRS. Titulesco and Lagovari are continually confusing the question of the annexation of Bessarabia by the Russian Tsarist régime with the annexation of the three Bessarabian districts which were joined to Roumania after the Crimean war, and went back to Russia after the war of 1877-78.

As we are the confirmed opponents of the fates of peoples being bound up with any kind of historic right ascribed to this or that Government, the differentiation, from this standpoint, is an immaterial one, but Roumanian diplomatists, who are for ever harping on historic rights and treaties and so forth, must be reminded of a few facts. Bessarabia, which had been occupied by Russian troops in the opening years of the nineteenth century and was annexed to Russia by the treaty of 1812, had, in the course of the eighteenth century, from the years 1711 to 1812, been seized by Russia no less than five times, and when the agreement of 1812 was concluded, the country did not belong to Roumania but to Turkey. In fact, Roumania did not herself exist as a State, but was merely a province of Turkey. Even if we go back to the dim and distant days when Roumania was an independent state, we find that it only owned Bessarabia for a period of less than fifty years, in the reign of Stephen the Great, from 1457 to 1504. In 1520 Suleiman the Great was already in occupation of the southern parts of it.

Now what was Bessarabia in 1812 when it was occupied by the Russians? It was rich in natural resources, but a desert land, with a population of less than 200,000. According to the Russian census of 1915,

Bessarabia possessed a population of 2,686,000. What claim has the Roumanian Government to Bessarabia even from the view of its so-called historic rights, when it had absolutely no part in the country's organisation and development?

One is simply amazed that persons who attempt to settle the fates of living people, with their own definite interests and desires and aspirations, should take refuge in scientific controversy and juggle with words such as anthropology, ethnology and philology. We have always refused to take this line, and consider it to be a mockery of the population. The Bessarabian workers and peasants know what they want better than this or that professor, who tacks on to them his pedantic ideas. However, if Roumanian diplomatists desire to base their arguments on these grounds, we have shown how nothing but defeat awaits them. We can instance the testimony not of Russian or Ukrainian scholars, but of past and present historians of other nations, who have no personal interest in the dispute.

The historian of the Roman Empire, Enacco, describes Bessarabia as a place to which the Romans deported state criminals during the Roman rule, i.e., Bessarabia was used by the Roman Empire in the same way as the Russian Empire used Siberia at certain times. Later, Bessarabia became the cross-road in the wanderings of nomadic tribes such as the Huns, the Bulgars, the Magyars, the Kumans, and did not become a province of any kind of order until its subjection to Turkey at the end of the fourteenth century. We see that the population of Bessarabia was composed of the descendants of exiled Roman colonists, intermixed with the remnants of migratory peoples, mostly Slavs and Mongols. "The History of the Middle Ages," published by Cambridge University Press, says that the Roumanian population in Bessarabia is composed of Roumanianised Avars and Bulgars. The Moldavian population is a conglomeration of

different ethnographical groups. These populations adopted the easier Latin tongue in preference to the more difficult Slav and Mongolian. Consequently, even though Bessarabia is regarded as a Roumanian country, it is populated mostly by Latins, Slavs and Mongols who speak Roumanian.

The fact that among the original population of Bessarabia the Slavs occupied a prominent part is testified by the old names of the little Bessarabian towns. For instance, the town of Acheria, a name which means White Fortress in Turkish (Akkerman), and has been re-named Chetatea Alba by the Roumanians, was in the olden days called Belgorod.

On the whole, it is ridiculous to have these ethnographical theories used as an argument in the favour of this or that state owning this or that people, not only in relation to Bessarabia, but to Roumania itself, for the population of Roumania consists of a similar ethnographical mixture. This is true not only when we speak of the Roumanian Boyars who are nearly all of foreign origin, as Roumanian historians have frequently shown, or of the Roumanian bourgeoisie, which is three-parts of foreign extraction—Bulgar and Greek, mostly—but when we are speaking of the Roumanian peasantry, which has far more Slav blood in its veins than Mr. Lagovari (the Roumanian representative in Rome, who is of Greek extraction, probably from the Greek quarter of Constantinople—Phanar) has Roumanian.

The moments of assimilation give an impetus to national culture. But the fact remains that until the middle of the last century, Roumania had no national culture of its own. The old Bulgarian language was used in the churches, in the few schools of the day, and in the official documents of Moldavia and Balakhia. These are historically established facts, proof of which can be found even among the historians of Roumania. Nevertheless, this does not prevent Roumanian diplomatists endeavouring to deduce from the sciences of

ethnology, anthropology and philology theories to substantiate such phrases as "the sovereign right" of Roumania to Bessarabia, with which the articles of Messrs. Lagovari and Titulesco are liberally besprinkled. Not every self-styled sovereign can claim this right. The "sovereign right" of Roumanian landlords has no better foundation than the "sovereign right" claimed by Jacques Lebaudy, the French lunatic, to be emperor of the Sahara. The only difference between them is that the public in the different countries had only to burst out laughing and the emperor of the Sahara was uncrowned, while to upset the "sovereign right" of Roumania to the Bessarabian people, stronger arguments are evidently required.

Regarding the three districts which went to Roumania in 1856, namely the whole of Ismail and parts of Kagul and Bolgrad, they consisted of an area of 10,220 square versts. But the British Foreign Office, in its official publication on Bessarabia, a publication which though on the whole defending Roumanian rights, gives the necessary tribute to historic truth when it says that, though under the Paris Agreement Roumania received a big piece of the so-called "Budjak," the part of Bessarabia which went back to Roumania happened to be from a racial point of view, as a result of the migration of foreign colonists in the past, *less Roumanian than the rest of Bessarabia*.

In the regions that went to Roumania there were about forty Bulgarian colonies. As the Roumanians at the time knew how to apply the art of squeezing out the population, many of the Bulgarian colonists (about 22,000), unable to bear the persecution of the Roumanian administration, emigrated from Bessarabia to Russia. Though Roumania did everything she could to colonise this region, until quite recently, the Roumanian population consisted of the smallest fraction of the population. For instance, in 1897, the percentage of the population in the Ismail district was: Moldavian 39, Ukrainian

19.5, Great Russian 12.5, and Bulgarian 12.5. In the Akkerman district the percentage of Moldavians was 16.3, while that of the Ukrainan was 26.7, and Bulgarian 21.

To this day I do not recognise the right of the Tsar's Government to these districts, but still less right to them has the Government of Roumania, if one may talk at all of the right of any government to a population outside its own boundaries. Only a population itself has the right to dispose of itself. Thus regarded, the seizure of the three districts by the Tsar's Government in 1878 was an act of violence. However, the protestation of the Roumanian Government against the act is the merest hypocrisy. As long ago as 1912 I drew attention to the fact—in the very speeches which are the subject of so much discussion now—that the father of Bratiano, while in Livadia before the Russo-Turkish war, settled the fate of South Bessarabia with Alexander II. My assertions were based on historic documents, such as the correspondence between King Charles Hohenzollern and his father, Anton, and on the data given in the history of Roumania written by Professor Ksenopoulo. In a country with a broader political life this act would have penalised the government, but in Roumania where political life is even now limited to a few nobodies of the governing class at the top, the re-annexation of the Ismail district by Russia passed unnoticed. It is true, there was a storm in the Roumanian parliament, but it was a storm in a tea-cup. It was over as soon as Roumania received compensation on the other side of the Danube at the expense of Dobruja, particularly as the territory received in compensation covered a bigger area than that taken from her.

With this I must stop awhile, even at the risk of upsetting the anti-Bolshevist idyll of Bratiano and Tsankov.

In the debates of the Roumanian Parliament at the time on the question of Bessarabia and the annexation

of Dobruja, much was said which Roumanian diplomatists would not now like to be reminded of. I have before me at the moment a big volume with the characteristic title of "The Testimony of Roumania on Dobruja." In this book are collected the speeches of Roumanian orators, the resolutions of the Roumanian Parliament, and many articles which appeared in the Roumanian press, all of which proclaim with one voice that Roumania will not agree to give back the three Bessarabian districts (three, according to Roumanian official calculation, but one in the Russian), that she has no desire for Dobrujan territory, even if offered to her, because Roumania does not want to pursue a policy of grab, does not want to barter the three Bessarabian districts, does not on any account want Dobruja, which geographically, historically and ethnologically has nothing in common with Roumania, and would only be a continual source of hostility between her and Bulgaria.

What brave words, springing from an honourable indignation against a policy of annexation! Here is a resolution passed unanimously by the Roumanian Senate on the 26th January, 1878, and adopted the same day by the Roumanian Chamber of Deputies:

"The Senate (or the Chamber of Deputies) declares its intention to maintain the integrity of the country, and will not permit the giving up of any part of it to a foreign Power on any conditions whatever, even in exchange for territorial compensation and indemnity."

Senator Ghika said, with general approval:

"I think it necessary to state that we did not participate in the war with the object of conquest."

Deputy Ourékia said, also amid the general approval:

"We are not a nation of conquerors. If we drew the sword for our own independence, it was not to rob other people of theirs. We do not want to create conditions of unrest for the future by the annexation of territory which does not belong to us."

While the whole of the Roumanian press came out with the two points in bold type, and after the fashion of Hannibal vowed that

"For no price will we give up a part of our country. We did not help to liberate an enslaved people to rob it afterwards of the heritage of its fathers. Roumanians will receive compensation for their sacrifices in the friendship and confidence of Bulgarians, Serbians and other nations on that side of the Danube, which will be for them sufficient indemnity for the sacrifice of men and materials they have made. It was not for the purpose of annexation that Roumanians fought on that side of the Danube, but in order to achieve their own independence; they fought for a great principle—the liberation and unification of the Balkan peoples."

All this hypocrisy had only one aim—to take as big a chunk of the other side of the Danube as was possible. For all that the Tsar's Government at the time gave Dobruja to Roumania, it did not prove enough. That is why thirty-six years later—in 1913, with the help of the same Tsar's Government, without a single shot having been fired, Roumania seized a new chunk of Bulgarian territory, the so-called square of 6,000 square kilometres—a rich chunk of land, which provides the Roumanian treasury with a third of its revenue, while its population of 300,000 are half Bulgarians, half Turks and Tartars, with about 5,000 Roumanians. As in the question of Bessarabia the Roumanian Government has begun to invoke historic, ethnographic and every other kind of principle, I should like to be allowed to ask it a question. How about the application of these principles to Dobruja which doubly paid Roumania for Southern Bessarabia? The Roumanian Social Democrats formerly held that the new Dobruja should be returned to Bulgaria, while the old Dobruja, which had so greatly changed in character in the last half-century, should not be an object of dispute, that the Roumanian Government should establish complete and genuine equality between all the ethnographical elements. Besides which, we always insisted on a Federation of Democratic Republics which would once and for all remove all national conflicts. The Roumanian Government, however, desired another solution to this problem, namely, that both old and new Dobruja should form a separate,

independent State which should constitute part of a future Balkan-Danube federation.

I fear that at this point, our good sophists, the Roumanian diplomatists, will begin to use other arguments. Dobruja was a desert; we have expended large sums of money on it; we have built a bridge over the Danube; we have made a port in Constanza and strengthened our position there; there is no reason why we should go away. *J'y suis, j'y reste*. In other words, they will say what the Tsar's Government could have said to Roumania about Bessarabia with greater justice. In the application of principles, ethnographic and otherwise, the Roumanian diplomatists put me in mind of a well-known comic character in a work of the famous Roumanian dramatist—Karajadi. The character in question is Uncle Leonido, a retired civil servant, who longs for the realisation of all good principles, and regrets that Roumania has not its national hero like Garibaldi, who would turn Roumania into a republic. "But what is the advantage of a republic?" says his wife, who is carried away by her husband's political eloquence. "No one would have to pay taxes," says Leonido. "But who would pay us our pension, then?" the old woman persists. "Oh, the pension is another matter," replies Uncle Leonido, "we should get that under the old law."

The case of the Roumanian diplomatists is similar. Under the new law of the self-determination of peoples promulgated by the late President Wilson, they want to receive Bessarabia; while under the old law, they desire to retain Dobruja. Moreover, by successfully juggling with the ideas of geographic, strategic and economic boundaries, they seize the whole of the Bukovina, where the Roumanians form but a third of the population, as well as a big slice of old Hungary, which has a Hungarian population of over 2,000,000. The net result of these annexations is that of the 18,000,000 population now comprising Roumania, only about a third are Roumanians, even if the Bessarabian Moldav-

ians agree to be counted with them. No greater proof than this fact is necessary to show that Roumania, both during the imperialist war and now, is pursuing a policy of annexation and imperialism. She has adopted all the vices and mistakes of the old feudal-monarchic governments of Russia and Austro-Hungary, which have met with so complete a collapse.

In my articles in *The Manchester Guardian* and in *L'Epoca*, I have stated that we do not deny the fact that a comparatively large part of the population of Bessarabia is Moldavian. The Roumanian census, however, subjects its figures to the political aims of the Government and tries to prove that the Moldavian population forms an absolute majority. Even if we take these figures as being correct, the fact in no way alters the case of the Soviet Government. What we call the ethnographic principle does not involve an absolute right, but a presumption. What do we mean by right based on ethnographic principles? Do we mean that because a population speaks the language of another country, we are to presume that it desires to be joined on to that country? Or that we must ascertain that the population actually desires it? What is important is not the percentage of population of this or that ethnographic element, but the will of the population. The adoption of a common language is an insufficient basis to go upon, and would lead to mischievous conclusions to the degree in which one acted upon it. We know that a majority of the population of Switzerland speaks German, and that a part speaks French, but no one therefore, suggests that the German-speaking cantons should be joined to Germany and the French-speaking to the French. Numbers of similar examples could be named.

Thus, the question that confronts us is not what percentage of Moldavians inhabit Bessarabia, but what is the will of these Moldavians and what is their attitude to the Roumanian realm. With this I will deal later on,

when I come to speak of the celebrated Sfatul Tseri, and of the manner in which Bessarabia was annexed, but just now I should like to analyse the figures of the Bessarabian populations and to trace the way in which these populations were created.

First of all, the geographic distribution of the population may be divided into three zones—the south, middle and north. In the southern districts—Ismail, Akkerman and Bender, the Moldavians certainly form a minority, while in Akkerman the percentage of Moldavians is only 16.8, as we have shown above. In the northern district in Khotin, they are also in a minority—23 per cent. altogether, while the Ukrainians form 53 per cent. On the other hand, in the four middle districts—Orgeev, Kishinev, Beletski and Soroki—the Moldavians form a majority of the population, from 62 to 70 per cent. These figures are based on the Russian census. Altogether, according to the census of 1897, the proportion of Moldavians in Bessarabia was 47.6 per cent, Ukrainians 19.6 per cent, Great Russians 8.1 per cent, Jews 11.8 per cent, Bulgarians 5.2 per cent, and Germans 3.1 per cent.

The Roumanian nationalists, however, assert that the Russian census has given a lower proportion of Moldavians than there are actually. This, however, is not borne out by Professor Rudnitsky, who says, on the contrary, that the Russian Government registered many Ukrainians as Moldavians, because it did not fear the latter and fought the former persistently. We do not know in how far the one or the other assertion conforms to the truth, but as one example of nationalistic invention we cite the Roumanian professor—Dragichesco, who maintains that the Moldavian population forms 80 per cent, not 23.8 per cent, the figure given in the official census of 1897. Certainly, if we add the whole of the Ukrainians, we obtain the figure of 80 per cent, but every one knows that the Khotin district is really Ukrainian. We do not object to this view. It provides

us with a surer proof that the Bessarabian Moldavians hate Roumanian rule, for, in this very district of Khotin, in 1919, a general rising of the peasants broke out, and we have an irrefutable document of the period in the protocol of the British Minister, Mr. MacLaren (but to this I shall refer later). As far as the Bessarabian population is concerned, I am inclined to accept the figures given by the British Mission, namely, that the Moldavians form one half of the Bessarabian population.

However, the actual history of the Bessarabian population is far more interesting than all this sophistry. How did the Roumanians come to Bessarabia, and moreover, how did they penetrate to the Dniester, and send out shoots as far as the Bug, where a Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic is now established? The emigration of Roumanians into Bessarabia, the Balkan Peninsula, Serbia and Bulgaria, has only one cause, to which all Roumanian historians subscribe—the cruel oppression and robbery to which the Roumanian peasants were subjected in Moldavia and Balakhia. In order to escape from their landlords, there was a general exodus into the neighbouring countries. When the Roumanian landlords found themselves minus a peasantry, they were forced to accord certain privileges to emigrants. Consequently, a stream of Bulgars and Serbs came from opposite sides, who form large oases, sometimes the majority of the population of a district. The whole of this population figures as Roumanian in the Roumanian census, though in a village near Bukharest itself, the entire population speaks Bulgarian. Of course, many of these emigrants have forgotten their native tongue and have become Roumanian. Many Ukrainian and Russian peasants eager to make a living or because they were persecuted by the Russian Government, such as religious sects, settled in what is now north Dobruja. Consequently, we may say that both sides of the mouth of the Danube, Northern Dobruja, Southern Bessarabia and Moldavia, are wholly populated

by people of Ukrainian and Russian origin. Now we have these same landlords, or the sons and successors of fathers who oppressed the Roumanian peasants of Bessarabia, claiming them back. "The peasants ran away from us," they say, "but now we have managed to bring them back into the boundaries of our realm." The time has long since gone by, however, when escaped slaves may be returned to their masters. Hatred of the Roumanians has become ingrained in the psychology of the Moldavian population of Bessarabia.

But Bessarabia has not only been colonised by Moldavians. In order to populate this rich but desert land, the Russian Government granted privileges to all colonists. Consequently, there came into Bessarabia from Dobruja and the outlying parts of Bulgaria a stream of Bulgarian peasants who had been oppressed by the Turkish authorities and Turkish landlords as well as Ukrainians and Russians, life for whom in the Ukraine had become insupportable. It was in this manner that the population of Bessarabia grew up. There were, of course, the native elements—remnants of Slavs who had settled in Bessarabia as far back as the sixth century, the early Roman colonists, as well as Tartars and Turks. Ethnographically Bessarabia presents a perfect mosaic, but geographically and economically it is a single whole, destined to live its own independent life, free from subjection to an inefficient dishonest Roumanian administration, or to any other State.

HOW WAS BESSARABIA ANNEXED ?

MESSRS. Lagovari and Titulesco are bold enough to maintain that Bessarabia joined the Roumanian realm of its own free will. It is enough to instance the rapid metamorphoses which took place in Bessarabia in the space of a few months in order to realise that there could have been no question of the will of the people. We have to deal with a comedy with marionette actors and with the Roumanian Government pulling the strings.

On the 2nd December, 1917, the so-called Sfatul Tseri proclaimed a Bessarabian-Moldavian Democratic Republic, which entered as an independent, autonomous member into the Russian Federation of Democratic Republics. But on the 24th January, 1918, i.e., in less than a couple of months later, this republic becomes the Independent Free National Moldavian Republic. In March of the same year, i.e., again in less than a couple of months, this Independent Free Republic resolves to relinquish its "independence" and "freedom" and to put itself in the hands of the Roumanian Government. However, it still retains its autonomy within the boundaries of the Roumanian State. This is the last tribute which the wretched hypocritical leaders of the Sfatul Tseri pay to the Bessarabian people. A few months later—in November of the same year—during a night session at which only a quarter of the deputies were present, the Sfatul Tseri magnanimously relinquishes the remaining rights of the Independent and Free Moldavian Republic, and declares itself dissolved. There has rarely been a case in history when a body formed for the purpose of defending a country's rights, so quickly and easily relinquished those rights.

Roumanian politicians and diplomatists are fond of instancing the Sfatul Tseri when they want to throw dust in the eyes of foreigners and to disguise the

outrageous seizure of Bessarabia under the mask of the principle of self-determination. But when at home among themselves, with an unprecedented cynicism, they boast of the fact that had they not sent military forces into the country and adopted a series of coercive measures, Bessarabia would to this day not have belonged to Roumania.

Very instructive in this respect are the protocols of a session of the Roumanian Parliament of the end of October, 1922. As each of the political parties wanted the credit of the annexation of Bessarabia, the leaders mutually gave themselves away in the debates. The Bessarabian deputy, Khalippa, reproaches the minister, Bratiano, with saying that the joining of Bessarabia to Roumania was accomplished by the Roumanian troops, while the minister, Mr. Sassu, says that Mr. Bratiano's words must be taken to mean that the Roumanian troops "provided protection" for the carrying out of this great historic act, and that the Roumanian Government sent the army merely to safeguard the Sfatul Tseri from all external influence! Deputy Khalippa boasts of having gone with his friends to Jassy to demand the sending of Roumanian troops, while at the same time he accuses the former president of the Sfatul Tseri, Mr. Inculetz (now Minister of Bessarabian Affairs in the Bratiano Cabinet) of having opposed the sending of the troops. When the Roumanian troops entered Bessarabia, Inculetz went to General Broshtianu the commander of the troops and said :

"The Roumanian army must evacuate Bessarabia. The Bessarabian Government has not asked for Roumanian troops. If you do not go, there will be trouble."

The trouble, according to the words of Deputy Khalippa consisted in the bombardment of the Roumanian divisions by the troops of the Bessarabian Republic near Kishinev. When another Bessarabian deputy, a supporter of the Government, asked who had fired on the Roumanian troops, the Moldavian soldiers

or the Bolsheviks, Khalippa replied : "It was the division under your command that fired on the Roumanian army."

The picture will be complete when we add that on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the joining of Bessarabia to Roumania the president of the Council of Ministers of the Roumanian Government of 1918, the famous Germanophile, Marghiloman, who was put into power by the Germans, said that he *was obliged to resort to threats and to force, to compel the leaders of Sfatul Tseri to agree to the joining of Bessarabia to Roumania.*

These facts, which have been disclosed in the Roumanian Parliament, prove conclusively that the pretence that there was any manifestation of the people's will in Bessarabia is an impudent falsehood. It is contrary to the evidence of Roumanian deputies and ministers of all parties. Moreover, as I have already pointed out in my reply to Mr. Titulesco in the *Manchester Guardian*, the Sfatul Tseri had no authority to settle the question of the joining of Bessarabia to Roumania, not merely because it was not a properly elected body, but one created from above and in which the Roumanian peasantry forming 90 per cent. of the population were allocated but a fifth of the seats, but because the Sfatul Tseri had itself *passed a resolution to the effect that all questions relating to the fate of Bessarabian territory must be settled by a national referendum.* This point, by the way, figured in the draft constitution elaborated by a commission appointed for the purpose by the Sfatul Tseri. The Sfatul Tseri merely regarded itself as a temporary institution functioning until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly of the Moldavian Republic, elected on a basis of universal suffrage. It was the Constituent Assembly only which was to have the right of

"Adopting a constitution for the country and settling the relations with other countries, if the welfare of the *peoples* of the Moldavian Republic required it."

I have purposely emphasised the word "peoples" to show that the Sfatul Tseri was conscious of the fact that not only one people inhabited Bessarabia, but several peoples, all of whom had equal rights. Everyone knows of the resolution in question passed by the Sfatul Tseri. Even Mr. Titulesco does not deny it ; he only adds, with amazing naïveté that the resolution had in view the safeguarding of Bessarabia from union with the Ukraine, not with Roumania. Instead of exonerating the Sfatul Tseri, Mr. Titulesco merely makes the treacherous part played by it worse. It confirms the fact that when the Sfatul Tseri declared a "Free and Independent Republic," it was only deceiving the Bessarabian people.

We know every little incident in the history of the seizure of Bessarabia. It is well to remember that we have in our hands all the archives of the Roumanian Government and part of those of Bratiano, all the archives of the Government of the late Tsar, as well as those of the Provisional Government. We have a fund of diplomatic and historic material of the year 1918, and we can trace step by step the intrigues of the Roumanian Government, as well as the intrigues of the shady heroes of Bessarabian annexation who served it. There are two telegrams from Russian ambassadors in Bukharest and in Rome concerning August and September of the year 1914, in which it is definitely stated that Roumania had asked through the Italian Government (the latter refusing to pass on the request) that for her "benevolent neutrality" she should be given the three Bessarabian districts which were joined to Russia in 1878. Afterwards, for the space of two years we know that Roumania engaged in "honourable" blackmail of the two belligerent groups, calculating which of them would conquer and out of which she could make the most. When she eventually decided to join the group of the Entente, the question of Bessarabia was abandoned. About this time Roumanian Nationalists, both in the Roumanian press and in Parliament, repudiated the idea that

Bessarabia was Roumanian, and as for the other countries subjected to the Tsarist régime, such for instance, as the Ukraina, the famous Roumanian professor, Nikolai Jorga, purported to have heard of the Ukraina for the first time. It was a time of *Russophilism*, when the Russian autocracy was depicted in Roumanian newspapers as a kind of democratic order. After the Russian revolution when Roumania again thought that victory might be on the side of the central Powers, she began to direct her gaze to Bessarabia, not only theoretically, but practically to prepare for its annexation. The investigations of the Provisional Government elucidated the fact that Roumania was carrying on conversations with the Germans for this purpose, and that it was decided, with Bratiano's consent, that on the evacuation of Bukharest, the leaders of the Germanophile party were to remain, and that in addition, Roumanian agents were to be sent to carry on an agitation in Bessarabia. In June, 1917, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Government—Mr. Tereshchenko—asked the Russian Ambassador in Jassy for accurate information regarding the group of persons who left Roumania for the purpose of carrying on an agitation in Bessarabia for the severing of that province from Russia.

Into history now comes an adventurer named Catareu, who had organised the Roumanian agitation in Bessarabia and subsequently became the commander of the Kishinev garrison. It is said that this individual was shot by the Roumanian authorities because they wanted to conceal their actions in Bessarabia. However, in the archives of Bratiano we have a whole file of interesting documents which show that this same Catareu (a Russian deserter) was an agent of the Roumanian Secret Service, and that he had been used by the Roumanian Government as far back as 1913 for the purpose of organising an anarchist outrage in Hungary. (There were several victims in this outrage, among whom was the Bishop of Debreczin.) Photo-

graphs of these documents were reproduced in the Ukrainian "Krasnaya Kniga" (published also in French) under the heading "Soviet Ukraina." There is also, by the way, a letter from Mr. Lagovari (now the Roumanian Minister in Rome), in which he gives a detailed explanation to Bratiano from Paris (he was the Roumanian Minister in Paris at the time) of the legal advice he had received from French lawyers regarding the exoneration of Bratiano in the event of Catareu being arrested by Hungarian agents on Roumanian territory (Bratiano had promised the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in Bukharest—Czernin—not to interfere in the arrest of Catareu by the Hungarian Secret Service).

I think this fact is enough to show the manner in which the Roumanian Government organised the "freely manifested will" of the Bessarabian population. Is it not a mockery that the resolution adopted by the Sfatul Tseri under compulsion of the military occupation should be described as an act free from foreign influence? It is true, the Roumanian generals who occupied Bessarabia solemnly declared that they had no intention of remaining there, that as soon as order was restored the Roumanian troops would be evacuated. It is true that documents to the same effect were sent to the Soviet Government and the Allied representatives in Jassy. The Sfatul Tseri made a similar declaration. But this was all false. As a complete perversion of actual fact, the declaration serves as a model. We will cite a few of its points :

"On the morning of the 19th June a delegation was summoned to Jassy to elucidate questions relating to the entry of the Roumanian troops. The delegation consisted of representatives of the Sfatul Tseri, a committee of peasants, a committee of Moldavian sailors and soldiers. It went as far as Kalarash (the frontier line). The delegation established the following :

1. Among the advancing troops there are Roumanian and Ukrainan units (officers and men).
2. There are many troops and they are well armed with artillery and aeroplanes.

3. The only objective of the troops, according to the declaration of the higher command, is *to safeguard the railways*, which are essential to *Russian*, Roumanian and Ukrainian troops at the front, and to safeguard the stores and transport of food supplies purchased in Bessarabia.
4. There will be no interference in the internal affairs of Bessarabia ; non-interference will be guaranteed by the French and other Allies.
5. The troops will be and are being evacuated as they are replaced by Moldavian units.
6. The entry of Roumanian troops into Bessarabia was decided on by the Russian, Ukrainian and Roumanian higher commands and by the Allies. Rumours to the effect that they were invited to come are not true ; and so on.

Of course, this document is false from beginning to end. It was not true that the Roumanian troops entered only to safeguard the railways ; it was not true that the Roumanians had no intention of interfering in internal affairs ; it was not true that Roumanian troops were being evacuated or were intended to be evacuated ; it was not true that Inculetz and others did not invite the Roumanian troops to come. These lies were all necessary to deceive the Moldavian peasant population, which hated and hates the Roumanians. The Roumanian generals were forced, in consequence, to keep on pacifying the population. General Pressan, one of the commanders, made declarations of this kind : "Do not believe the lies ; we have not come to annex you." Who it was that lied was proved by subsequent events.

This is what General Pressan said in the first proclamation he published during the occupation :

"Rumours are being circulated to the effect that we have come to seize your country, to take away your land, and that our only desire is to bring back your old rulers so that they may deprive you of the national and political rights you have won by the revolution. How can you believe that the Roumanian soldier, who, by the generosity of his king and government, has increased his own bit, can come to the country of his brothers in order to prevent them from establishing their rights ? I say that all may hear ; the Roumanian troops have no desire other than to restore order and tranquillity, which their presence ensures, so as to give you the

possibility of establishing your autonomy and independence in accordance with your own wishes. The Roumanian troops will not offend a single citizen, no matter what his religion or nationality may be. As soon as order and quietness have been restored, as soon as we are assured that robbery and murder have been completely stamped out, the Roumanian troops will go back to their own country."

In another proclamation, the commander of the 1st Roumanian Cavalry Division—General Skina—said :

"It grieves me to observe that far from everybody believes the proclamation issued by our military command on the entry of the Roumanian troops into Bessarabian territory. Our coming to you is the fulfilment of a Christian duty. To carry out our mission—a pacific mission for the establishment of freedom, equality and brotherhood—I look to everyone to help. Citizens ! In the name of our holy Orthodox Faith, in the name of freedom, in the name of the revolution, which has overthrown the autocracy, under whose heel you have been ground for centuries, I conjure you not to listen to the voices of the criminals who would lead you to ruin !"

The Roumanian generals knew how unpopular the Roumanian Government was in Bessarabia, and were consequently obliged to resort to the most impudent of falsehoods, and to hide behind the back of the Russian revolution, the conquests of which, as it were, they had come to defend.

By one way and another they were compelled to soothe the feelings of indignation of the Bessarabian population. The Roumanian generals and agents systematically circulated rumours that the presence of the troops was only temporary. On the hoardings of the towns and villages of Bessarabia there was posted up the following declaration, which completes the collection of lying documents :

"Our sole purpose in coming was to safeguard our food supplies and stores and to protect the railways. We have no desire to interfere in your internal affairs."

To what methods the Roumanian authorities were compelled to resort in order to quell the will even of the wretched Sfatul Tseri, may be seen by the protest

signed by deputies of the Sfatul Tseri, representing all the national groups of Bessarabia, including the Moldavian Peasant Party. This document begins with the words: "We, the undersigned deputies of the Sfatul Tseri, in order to expose the unprecedented and revolting swindle, outrage and wrong that has been perpetrated, have drawn up the following memorandum." The memorandum describes the manner in which on the night of the 25th and the 26th November, 1918, Bessarabian autonomy was buried, the Sfatul Tseri was dissolved, and Bessarabia was joined to Roumania "without reserve."

These sittings of the Sfatul Tseri were summoned by the deputies of the so-called Moldavian *bloc*, who were the agents of the Roumanian Government. The other deputies received no notice of the sittings. Some of them heard by accident about two hours before the sittings took place, but not one had the remotest idea of the nature of the matter that was to be under consideration. Consequently, of the 202 deputies composing the Sfatul Tseri, only 54 were present, not enough to form a quorum to give the proceedings a legal character. And it was at this sitting, at 2.30 in the morning, that the President—Mr. Khalippa—without any preliminary notice having been given, moved a resolution to the effect that Bessarabia was to be incorporated with Roumania and to lose her autonomy. Only 46 deputies were in the Chamber at the moment. "Anyone against?" asked Mr. Khalippa, and without waiting for a reply, announced, "Carried unanimously."

The deputies of the peasant faction present protested and asked for leave to make a declaration, but this was refused them. At that moment General Voitoianu was summoned over the telephone. He arrived at the chamber and dissolved the Sfatul Tseri in the name of the king. This took place at 6.30 in the morning.

And after this telling document which bears the signatures of the most prominent public men in Bess-

arabia, including Moldavia, a copy of which, with the original signatures, is in our possession, Roumanian diplomatists have the impudence to speak of the freely expressed will of the Bessarabian population! But this is not the only document of the period in existence. We have a copy—also with the original signatures—of another memorandum of the deputies of the Sfatul Tseri of Bessarabia, which protests against the measures adopted by the Roumanian authorities after the occupation of Bessarabia—measures which were in direct contradiction to the promises of the Roumanian Government. This document bears the signatures of persons who afterwards became deputies and senators in the Roumanian Parliament. Though these persons were afterwards made tractable by the usual methods of the Roumanian Government, the document retains its significance as a testimony to the outrage perpetrated by the Roumanians against Bessarabia.

The mood in Bessarabia at the time may be judged by the newspapers which the Roumanian Government issued to carry on a propaganda in the country.

By the way, the journal of the Roumanian Transylvanians "Ardialul," in its issue of the 13th January, says that Moldavia was going the way of the Bolsheviks. These very newspapers show that even as far back as the Christmas holidays—December, 1917 (actually 6th January, 1918, old style), when an attempt was made to send small military detachments to occupy Kishinev, they were met with resistance on the part of the Moldavian units. The latter disarmed the Roumanians, who later took reprisals in the form of firing on Kishinev from aeroplanes, killing several persons in the public square.

In order to pacify the population, the Sfatul Tseri made a series of declarations, two of which are characteristic. They are to the effect that (1) the Sfatul Tseri will not interfere in the struggle between the Roumanians and the Bolsheviks; (2) no military tribunals will be

admitted on Bessarabian territory. However, as soon as the valiant Roumanian generals became the masters of a helpless country, the most cruel system of terror was introduced from the first day. Foremost were the reprisals taken against the peasants. On the 21st January a congress of the whole of the peasants of Bessarabia met in Kishinev, and as at their very first session the congress had protested against the occupation of Bessarabia by Roumanian troops, General Broshchianov ordered Mr. Rudiev, the president of the congress, to be arrested and shot. On the next day there were arrested and shot Chumachenko, the Under-Secretary of Agriculture of the Bessarabian Republic, Prakhnitsky, the Under-Secretary for War, Pantsyr, also a member of the Government, Cataros (the latter must not be confused with Catareu). They were all members of the presidium of the congress. "Ardialul," the Roumanian Government newspaper already mentioned, when it announced these facts, made the comment that the persons got what they deserved for protesting against the coming of the Roumanian troops. Without delay, the Roumanian authorities compelled the army of the "Free and Independent Moldavian Republic" to take the oath of allegiance to the Roumanian king. When seventeen Moldavian soldiers refused to take the oath, they were instantly shot. In a short time unrestrained terror reigned throughout Bessarabia. People were robbed, assaulted, shot, thrown into the Dniester. This is what came with the Roumanian occupation from the very start. We have a fund of material from the most varied sources describing the actions of the Roumanian authorities, including Roumanian official documents. The Sfatul Tseri itself was subjected to the terror. When, on the 27th March, the vote was to be taken on the annexation of Bessarabia to Roumania, Roumanian troops lined the streets, and under the pretext of a guard of honour, were present even in the Sfatul Tseri itself. Roumanian aeroplanes

were flying over the town. Marghiloman himself had come to Kishinev to direct the police and military expedition. And it is this resolution of the Sfatul Tseri that is spoken of as the expressed will of the population!

THE ROUMANIAN OCCUPATION.

IN the preceding pages I have drawn a picture of the Roumanian occupation, which does not differ in any way from the type of occupation of the most rapacious of governments amidst a conquered people. There is no harm, however, in citing a few facts of the Roumanian military and administrative practices during the period of implanting Roumanian "civilisation" in Bessarabia.

It is hardly necessary to mention that the first act of the Roumanian authorities was to take the land from the peasants and return it to the former landlords. At the same time that they reinstated the landlords, the Roumanians implanted their military and civil administration. There was not a single method of terror which was not resorted to to compel the Bessarabian population to submit to this administration. Compulsory labour was instituted for everyone from 16 to 70 years of age; everyone was compelled to speak Roumanian; the rod, whip, scaffold, shooting were re-introduced, also mediaeval torture, these things being the mark of the new "civilisation." At the same time unrestrained robbery reigned to an unprecedented degree.

I take the first information to hand regarding the behaviour of Roumanian officers in Bessarabia. The country was given over to their absolute power and they subjected it to all the horrors of the Middle Ages.

"There is no one to complain to and it is no good to complain. Flogging has become a common occurrence; the operation is performed on the spot, without trial or investigation, from five to one hundred strokes being administered according to the nature of the offence. A disobedient Roumanian officer was given twenty-five strokes. In Soroki the Roumanian commander issued an order to the effect that all the inhabitants of the town were to parade the streets from five to seven o'clock in the evening. Anyone disobeying the order was subject to arrest and punishment. From the latter, women and girls were not immune; they even ran

greater danger than the men. One day during this official promenade, a Roumanian Don Juan cast his eyes at a Jewish girl, and because she repulsed him, he ordered her to be arrested and flogged. The father of a young man who had been arrested, a venerable old Jew, went to petition the commander. He arrived at the time when an orgy was in progress among the Roumanian officers. The commander ordered the old man to be undressed and compelled him with the aid of the whip to dance stark naked."

And this is what took place in the country:

"In the country conditions are worse. Scaffolds have been erected in the public squares everywhere. The land has been given back to the landlords, and all property seized by the peasants is being returned. Rebuilding is going on of the buildings which have been burned down. In the Soroki district compulsory labour has been introduced three days a week, to which the population is driven with the whip."

In my hand is an official document signed by the Prefect of the Ismail district—Mr. Dumbrau—dated the 16th June, 1918. It contains three pages of complaint to the director of Bessarabian Foreign Affairs on the open, systematic robbery to which the peasants are subjected when they bring their produce to the Ismail market. Officers and men take their produce without paying a single kopek for it, and if a peasant protests, he is flogged there and then. The document concludes with the significant remark:

"Were I opposed to the joining of Bessarabia to Roumania I could only rejoice that the action of most of the military authorities is killing any idea of union."

One of the public supporters of the annexation, the oldest member of the Sfatul Tseri—Alexandri—at one time a Tolstoyan and now a senator of the king of Roumania, in the summer of 1918, during a speech at a meeting reported in one of the newspapers, said that the Roumanian authorities had done more towards the Russianising of Bessarabia in six months than the Governments of the Tsars had been able to do in a hundred years. And this remark was made by an enthusiastic Roumanophile!

In this 1918 period the names of two officers became notorious—Dimitriu and Izvoranu. These two names are the symbols of Roumanian administration and it is worth while to devote a little space to them.

Dimitriu acquired fame in the Khotin district. Here is an order of his, posted up in the streets of the little town Edinetz in the north of Bessarabia. :

"The following is the way in which all Roumanian officers must be saluted by the population :

- " 1. Every person saluting must stop still and face the officer and with a gallant smile on his face, must remove his cap and bow to the ground.
- " 2. In order to instruct the people in the proper way of observing this order, my own cap will be carried through the streets on a stick at different hours of the day, and all persons must salute it in accordance with the instructions in the first paragraph of this order.

Captain Dimitriu, Commander of the Edinetz Garrison, Elevterescu, Chief of Police, for the President of Vulpa Administration, for the Secretary" (the latter signature is indecipherable).

For criminal offences Captain Dimitriu introduced capital punishment, other offenders were punished by the rod. One can imagine the kind of exploits that Dimitriu and his assistant Elevterescu indulged in.

As for the officer, Isvoranu, he was by nature a Sadist; his exploits assumed a character so alarming that the Roumanian Government was obliged to recall him. This hero shot and drowned in the Dniester approximately some 500 inhabitants of Bender and Kishinev, 200 of whom were Bender railway workers.

It would be illusory to imagine that the present Roumanian administration differs to any extent from the infuriated one of 1918. At the present moment the case of Captain Morarescu is being tried in Roumania. Morarescu is accused of killing and robbing no less than thirty persons—some of the evidence makes the number fifty—among whom were women and children. Most of the victims were refugees who had crossed the frontier

from the Ukraina to Bessarabia. This military Roumanian Landriu in the guise of an officer, carried on his criminal operations for a period of two years with the approval of the higher authorities, who saw in his methods Roumanian immunity from the infection of Bolshevism. It was only on the intervention of foreign societies that the Roumanian Government arrested this monster. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that he will be acquitted by the Roumanian court, just as Colonel Stere was acquitted. The latter killed Roshal in December, 1918; he also killed three merchants and a child in the summer of 1917, the former because they were suspected of acting as spies for the Provisional Government; the child to cover the traces of the crime. Stere's acquittal gave him complete immunity; quite recently he did not hesitate to kill a Roumanian peasant near Jassy because the latter did not stop his load quickly enough to allow him to pass in his motor car on the way back from the hunt.

Of the doings of the Roumanian administration during the occupation there is a document which has received international publicity, because it has been signed by a member of the British Mission—Lieutenant MacLaren, R.N. The document relates to the Roumanian suppression of the Khotin (north Bessarabia) rising, which broke out early in January, 1919. The date is significant, because at the time, in the Ukraina, the Soviet Government was only in the occupation of the Kharkov and the Donetsk governments, and consequently could not have influenced the rising, which was a fundamental protest against the horrors of the Dimitrius and the Isvoranus. MacLaren's memorandum is concerned with a few villages, the first of which is the village of Nedoboutzi. A detachment of Roumanians retreating from Khotin arrived at this village on the 10th January. The troops began by burning houses in different parts of the village, forbidding the inhabitants to put out the fires. The troops took away with them money, wearing apparel,

and everything else they could carry. They shot fifty-three peasants (a list of whom is attached to the protocol), three women and a twelve-year-old boy. In addition, a large number of peasants were wounded, among them being two women. Cold steel and firearms were used in the killing of the inhabitants. Acts of incendiarism and murder were likewise committed in the villages of Stavchani, Doliniani, Sheroutsi and others.

The protocol cites several instances of Roumanian ferocity in the village of Nedoboutzi. One is that of a family named Batamaniuk, which consisted of four members. The mother was killed, also a twenty-year-old daughter and a twelve-year-old son; a thirteen-year-old girl was wounded. The boy—Nikola Batamaniuk—was dragged from the cottage and shot outside; Ilya Maniuk, who had managed to ransom his life on the first day by paying the soldiers fifty roubles, was dragged out on the second and hacked to pieces by the soldiers, so that when he came to be buried the pieces of his body had to be collected and put into a sack. Terenti Starchuk, fifty-four years old, was wounded by a bullet in the abdomen when he opened the door of his cottage to go to the soldiers who were firing into his cottage from the outside. Vasili Sofroniak, fifty-six years old, was killed by a rifle shot in the chest after he had given a soldier forty roubles. Nikita Zankovsky was dragged out of his cottage and impaled against a tree with bayonets in sight of his family, notwithstanding his cries and the cries of his children.

These were the acts perpetrated by the Roumanian troops when they were flying from the advancing rebels. One can easily imagine what the ferocity was like a few days later when, reinforced by a whole army, the valiant troops began to advance and to hem in the poorly-armed and badly-organised rebels and to settle their score with the population, not in a hurry, in passing, but with satisfaction, deliberation, with intervals between. . . . The victims of these terrible days number many thousands.

THE DIPLOMATIC SIDE OF THE QUESTION.

THE Roumanian Government bases its legal right to Bessarabia on the treaty concluded in October, 1920, between the four Great Powers—England, France, Italy and Japan—in which Bessarabia has been recognised as a part of the Roumanian realm.

The diplomacy of capitalist countries likes to take its stand on international law. But regarded from the view of international law, the treaty of 1920 is a deed which has no precedent. In accordance with international agreements Bessarabia formed part of the Russian Empire. The agreements concluded between the Allies on the eve of and during the war, mutually guaranteed the inviolability of the territory of each of them. Neither before nor after the revolution did the Allies formally declare war against Russia; consequently Bessarabia could never have been regarded as the spoils of war. On what grounds then did the Allies dispose of Bessarabia? The country did not belong to them, nor had it been won from the enemy. Roumania has about as much right to Bessarabia as, let us say, Russia has to Ireland, or to some province belonging to France, Italy or Japan. There has not been a case in history when one country has disposed of the territory of another country without the latter's consent. From the view of international law, consent is required to make the procedure legal. The consent may be voluntary or enforced, but its presence is essential. In the case of defeated Germany the Allies adopted this course; in Upper Silesia, a plebiscite was taken before a part of it was ceded to Poland. And our Union, moreover, is not a defeated country. Towards Russia, which fought with the Allies, and by her innumerable sacrifices saved them from defeat in the early stages of

the war and thus conditioned the German collapse, the Allies acted in a manner worse than they did towards the defeated enemy. But I leave the moral question alone ; I will confine myself strictly to the legal side.

Concerning the treaty itself, it is based on false precedents and contains elements which reduce it to impotence. It is quite impracticable. This latter point must receive our attention.

The treaty begins by recognising Bessarabia as a part of the Roumanian realm on the grounds, as it were, of the will of the Bessarabian population. How did the Allies ascertain the will of the Bessarabian population? They had made no enquiries, if only for the sake of appearances, nor had they collected any information. In the official documents which have been given publicity, such, for instance, as that of MacLaren, we are told quite the opposite. The Allies had only the assurances of the Roumanian Government, whose lying propensities are unexampled.

One of the clauses of this monstrous treaty sets out that the boundaries between Roumania and Russia shall be settled by an international commission, consisting of three members, one of whom (the president) shall be Roumanian, the other shall be chosen by one of the other signatories, and the third shall be a Russian, but the appointment of whom shall rest with the League of Nations. A boundary settlement between two countries one of which has no say in the matter, has had no precedent in history. The Allies justified the course on the plea that at the time the treaty was concluded the Russian Government had not yet been recognised. Now that the Soviet Union has been recognised by all the Governments which have signed the treaty the appointment of a commission which is to settle our boundaries without our participation, is an impudent provocation. We would have no hesitation in immediately arresting such a commission if it set foot on our territory. A commission so appointed is so absurd that

I am certain that not one of the signatories would now agree to it. Consequently we see that the treaty is impracticable.

There is another circumstance, however, which shows that no matter what the provisions of the treaty may be, it has, as yet, no legal force. The treaty lays down that it shall come into force after ratification by the Parliaments of the Governments which signed it. So far, it has only been ratified by England and France, and that, by the way, was done before these two countries had formally recognised us. The circumstance is important, as ratification of a treaty which violates the most elementary international laws, would be impossible after recognition, it being incompatible with friendly diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Governments which signed the treaty. The treaty has not yet been ratified by Italy and Japan, and I consider that ratification on the part of these two Governments with whom we are carrying on normal diplomatic relations, is impossible. At the time the treaty was signed, it was evidently supposed that it would be ratified in a short space of time and that the boundary commission would also be appointed quickly. Happily for us, and for the Governments who are interested in preserving friendly relations with us (I speak of Italy and Japan), ratification was delayed until it had become impossible, diplomatically, politically and morally.

Here we must mention that the United States not only was not a signatory to the treaty, but protested against it in the person of President Wilson.

The history of the signing of the treaty is not without its significance. Roumania attempted to attain recognition of her right to Bessarabia in 1918 and 1919 but without success. In my hand are the protocols of the commission dealing with the Roumanian question which sat during the Conference of Versailles and afterwards continued to function at the Conference of Allied

Ambassadors in Paris. According to these protocols, which were subscribed to by the Allies, a monstrous act would be perpetrated if the question of Bessarabia were to be settled without the participation of Russia.

In a resolution of the 8th February, the "Roumanian Commission," i.e., the commission concerned with the Roumanian question, laid down that in its opinion it was impossible to adopt a solution which would violate the territorial integrity of Russia, except in the case of Poland, the independence of which Russia herself had recognised.

The commission on the whole refused to consider the question of Bessarabia, notwithstanding the persistence of the Roumanian Government and the resolutions of the Sfatul Tseri, of which it has boasted so much. We must emphasise this. We have a memorandum of these same Allies which says that the cutting off of one or other province or territory from the former Russian Empire is not possible without the consent of the Government of that Empire. However, the Roumanian Government began to exercise pressure on the Allies in every possible way. On the 22nd March, the Roumanian commission passed another resolution on Bessarabia to the effect that the question of the Roumanian boundaries will have to be settled by separate agreements, between Roumania and her neighbouring States.

The French professor, Ernest Lagarde, who has written one of the best books on the relations between the Soviet Union and the Allies, in commenting on this new resolution of the Roumanian Commission, says :

"The fact that the commission considered it necessary to submit the draft of the agreement (on the boundaries between Roumania and Russia) to the Russian Government for the latter's signature, shows that, in the opinion of the commission, Bessarabia cannot be severed from Russia legally without the consent of the latter."

But just at this time the Allies had decided to embark on a policy of active intervention in Russia. Besides the help they were according Kolchak and Denikin,

it was essential to secure the co-operation of Roumania. And thus, for the first time, in an official document sent to Kolchak, they reserve to themselves the right to settle the question of Bessarabia. However, even then, they had not in view the whole of Bessarabia, for in paragraph 6 of the document, it says : "The Peace Conference reserves the right of disposing of the Roumanian parts of Bessarabia." In this document of the 26th May, 1919, the Allies somehow recognise that there are parts of Bessarabia which are not Roumanian even from the fantastic ethnographical view on which the Roumanian Government takes its stand, and that the fate of these particular parts of Bessarabia (the north and south) cannot be settled without Russia.

Some weeks later, on the 22nd July, the Allied Ministers of Foreign Affairs, notwithstanding the long speech of Bratiano, resolved to grant no further concessions to Roumania, and retreated a step by passing a resolution to the effect that, in their opinion, it was impossible to come to any solution of the Bessarabian question in view of the international position of Russia. At the end of October, 1920, however, the Allies forgot all their former declarations and signed the treaty annexing Bessarabia to Roumania.

We must recall all the hesitations which were manifested before the settling of the Bessarabian question. These hesitations show that in this instance the Allies acted contrary to any rule of international agreement, and from the basest political motives. We must remind them of this again, for they often reproach us with the non-observance of the rules of international law, while the whole policy of Roumania in Bessarabia is a complete negation of any law. The Allies must be reminded that they bear the responsibility not only of the treaty but of encouraging Roumania to seize Bessarabia in the first place. It is true, in official documents they talked of the annexation as being only of a *temporary* character. Baron Fasciotti, the Italian Ambassador,

and *doyen* of Allied representatives in Jassy, for instance, telegraphed to the Allied Consul in Odessa to the effect that the invasion of Bessarabia by Roumanian troops was only temporary, resorted to solely for humane purposes. (This was confirmed by the French representative in Kishinev—M. Sarré—who had recognised the Bessarabian Republic as part of the democratic Federation of Russia.) In fact, the Allies at the time had already recognised the annexation of Bessarabia in order to keep Roumania in their camp.

In this respect the imperialist policy of the Allies coincided with the policy of German imperialism. We know that the annexation of Bessarabia by Roumania took place at a time when Roumanian policy as represented by the Germanophile, Marghiloman, was of German orientation. During the war Roumania very cleverly used the difficulties of the one or other belligerent groups. She was the proverbial docile calf nourished by two mothers. For the space of two years, from the beginning of the war, Roumania blackmailed the Allies, at the same time carrying on conversations with Germany, and she only entered the war at the moment when she calculated on a maximum territorial acquisition with a minimum of sacrifice.

As far back as the first month of Roumania's entering the war it became clear that she was not a help to the Allies but a hindrance. In order to defend Roumania, she being incapable of defending herself, Russia was obliged to extend her front in the south-west from the Carpathians to the Black Sea. Russia had to send three armies and lost over 100,000 peasants and workers from Russia, the Ukraina and other parts. And all the time Roumania did not cease to blackmail the Allies by threatening to conclude a separate peace with Germany. The Roumanian Government had taken all the necessary measures to conclude a separate peace even before her entry into the war. All the leaders of the Germanophile party, headed by Carp and Marghiloman,

remained behind in Bukharest when Averescu and his staff retreated with the Roumanian army to Jassy. Thus Roumania insured and re-insured herself; so that no matter which side came out victorious, she herself would not be a loser.

No one rejoiced so much over the annexation of Bessarabia by Roumania as the German National Party. The Wolf Agency became the semi-official agency of the Roumanian Government. Through the medium of the Wolf Agency the Roumanian Government denied the well-known fact, which it does not now dispute, that in March, 1918, the Roumanian Government had concluded an agreement with the Soviet Government in which Roumania had undertaken to evacuate Bessarabia within two months. Germany reckoned that by helping Roumania to occupy Bessarabia, she was attracting Roumania to the German camp. Thus, the history of the joining of Bessarabia to Roumania is a complete indictment against Roumania and the Allies, and if any one comes out with credit, it is not Roumania and the Allies, but the U.S.S.R.

At this point we must remember the agreement between the Soviet Government and Roumania, signed simultaneously in Odessa and in Jassy by General Averescu, President of the Roumanian Government and Minister of Foreign Affairs on the one side, and the Soviet diplomatic, administrative and military representatives on the other side. In signing this agreement the Roumanian representatives were fully conscious of the ethnology, anthropology and philology of Bessarabia, and yet by appending their signatures they acknowledged that they had no right whatever to Bessarabia.

It is very strange that, in order to prove their right to Bessarabia, Roumanian diplomatists should rely on the authority of my speeches and articles of 1898 and 1912, in which, apart from protests against the aggressive policy of the Russian Government, there is not the slightest suggestion that Bessarabia should be given

to Roumania. The Roumanian diplomatists likewise ignore the agreement of the 5th March, 1918, which is not the opinion of a single individual but a solemn act of the Roumanian Government, by which it undertakes to evacuate its forces from Bessarabia in the course of two months and agrees that the evacuated regions shall be occupied by Soviet troops.

The Italian press has recently published an interview with General Averescu, in which the latter, while acknowledging this agreement, says that negotiations were begun with Rumcherod and that the signatories came upon the scene at the last moment from Leningrad with special instructions. This is not true. As far back as January I was already carrying on negotiations. However, this is a matter of no importance; what is important is the fact that the existence of this agreement is now no longer denied by any one.

By the way, this agreement was the subject of a stormy discussion in the Roumanian Parliament at the time of the Germanophile Government of Marghiloman. On more than one occasion did the Roumanian Germanophiles condemn Averescu for having signed the agreement at that particular moment. This is what the Roumanian Minister of Foreign Affairs says in June, 1918, regarding the negotiations between General Averescu and myself:

"General Averescu referred to the Bessarabian question. I must say that in the causes of the political mistakes which have been committed, it is he and not we who are guilty, for he signed the agreement on Bessarabia with Rakovsky. All Rakovsky's suggestions were adopted. By his signature General Averescu agreed to the evacuation of Bessarabia; the only objection he made was to the immediate evacuation of Bender. General Averescu does not want Bessarabia to be annexed because he is afraid of Russia. He has inherited this fear from Bratiano; but Russia *will never recover*."

This quotation will suffice. It is significant as showing on what calculations the Bessarabian policy of Roumania was based. All those who have thought that the annexation of Bessarabia would be allowed to go

unpunished, not only the Germanophiles but Averescu and Bratiano and others as well, must now be convinced that they were mistaken in their calculations. Russia—not the Russia of the Tsar, but of the peasants and workers—has recovered sooner than the Roumanian administration has been able to change the signs over the Bessarabian shops from the Russian to the Roumanian tongue.

Our diplomatists have not missed an occasion to secure for the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union the right to interest themselves in the fate of the Bessarabian workers and peasants, with whom they are bound by their great struggle for freedom. When the Government of Marghiloman announced to the whole world the annexation of Bessarabia to Roumania, the National Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the R.S.F.S.R., in a short but resolute note, stated that in annexing Bessarabia the Roumanian landlords were acting without authority. The note showed how by arresting and shooting the recognised representatives of the Bessarabian population, Roumania managed to pass the resolution in the Sfatul Tseri, and concluded with the following words:

"The attempt to allow the vote of Bessarabian landlords—the eternal enemies of the Bessarabian people—who rely for protection on Roumanian bayonets—to express the will of the Bessarabian workers and peasants, has no legal or international authority. The forcible annexation of Bessarabia by Roumania has not destroyed the unity and solidarity of the working masses of Bessarabia and Russia."

After this note, in the course of the seven years of absence of diplomatic relations between Roumania and the Soviet Union, many other notes have been sent to the Roumanian Government, both by the R.S.F.S.R. and the Soviet Ukraina, all of which emphasized one and the same idea—that Roumania's assumption of right to Bessarabia is nothing more nor less than usurpation.

THE CAUSES OF THE KHOTIN RISING.

THE Bessarabian students in Vienna in a memorandum presented to the Soviet delegation at the time of the Soviet-Roumanian conference of March, 1924, mention some of the causes of the rebellion in the Khotin region.

The facts given in this document are so characteristic of the practices of the Roumanian military and civil authorities that I consider it necessary to cite a few passages from it :

"Two events had filled the cup of suffering of the population of Northern Bessarabia to overflowing, and these events have been the direct cause of the explosion of the national indignation—the so-called peasant rebellion. On the 25th January, 1919, two years after the occupation,* the third platoon of the 8th Regiment of the Roumanian Army had arranged a dance in the little town of Britchani. When the commander of the town, Major Constantinescu, heard that the inhabitants would have nothing to do with the dance, he ordered patrols of soldiers forcibly to bring the wives and daughters of the citizens to the dance ; with the aid of the whip and the revolver the victims were compelled to dance with the soldiers and the agents of the Roumanian police. When the fathers of the young girls came running up and with tears in their eyes implored the return of their daughters, they were driven out with sword thrusts. Later in the evening the girls were taken to the quarters of Captain Dimitrescu in Stefen—Chelmar Street, where they were violated by the drunken non-commissioned officers. A girl of fourteen, named

* The authors of this memorandum are a little inaccurate in their date. January, 1919, ended the first year of the occupation of the centre and southern regions of Bessarabia, while the occupation of the Khotin region took place some two-and-a-half months later. The Khotin region was seized by Roumania in November, 1918, after the Austrian troops who occupied it, had evacuated. It is also an error to say that the Britchani events were the cause of the rebellion, because the events took place on the 25th January, 1919, when the rebellion had already been crushed. The rebellion broke out on the 6th January, 1919 ; on the 10th the Roumanians fled from Khotin ; on the 21st, after crushing the rebels, they again occupied Khotin and shot 500 of its citizens. However, these inaccuracies are not really important, because the facts given in the memorandum show clearly the kind of régime introduced by the occupying troops and explain the reasons of the rebellion.

Reisen, died the next day in the Women's Hospital from internal hæmorrhage brought on by torture. Anna Khiriliuk, a girl of eighteen, committed suicide a week later because she had contracted venereal disease that night. A delegation of the inhabitants of Britchani, consisting of three persons, complained to the Roumanian commander in Khotin, but was arrested and tried for infringing the law relating to the safety of the realm. The Court condemned them each to three and five years' imprisonment.

"On the 28th January, the inhabitants of Khotin were summoned to the Public Park by a beating of drums to witness the following sight : A cobbler's apprentice, named Vassili Filko, was tied to a tree. He was covered with blood and his clothes hung on him in shreds. He was surrounded by generals and officers ; among them was the commander of the occupying troops—General Broshtianu (the same general who in the Army Orders boasted to the men that in the early days of the occupation he had ordered the drowning of 8,000 Bolsheviks in the Dniester in the region of Soroki), and the commander of the Fourth Division, General Popescu. The latter, together with the officers, was flogging the unhappy apprentice, who kept shrieking wildly. The indignant population was informed that Filko had been condemned to death for his Bolshevism, and to teach the inhabitants a lesson he was to be killed before their eyes. Actually Filko's crime consisted in having dared some two hours before to tell the soldiers that they had no right to take their produce from the population without payment. When the officers observed that Filko was dying under their blows, they arranged a shooting match with Filko as a living target. Every time a shot did not strike the mark it was accompanied by laughter and jests on the part of the generals and officers present. The unfortunate apprentice was killed only by the fifth bullet which hit him in the forehead. The murder was witnessed by the wife and children of the victim, whose body was left hanging on the tree for three days as a warning to the population."

THE PRESENT POSITION OF BESSARABIA.

IN his reply, Mr. Titulesco observes that if in my campaign against Tsarist Russia of 1912 it had been reasonable to say that the régime in Roumania did not differ from that of Russia, it was impossible to say the same now. Roumania is now a "democratic" country. Roumania can boast of universal suffrage, and has introduced the "most radical of agrarian reforms." To this we retort that if the Roumanian Government has introduced such extensive democratic reforms as to have gained it the sympathy of the peasant population, as the Roumanian Government maintains abroad, why is it then that the Roumanian Government is afraid of a plebiscite in Bessarabia? The celebrated reforms are evidently of a kind that have not mitigated in the smallest degree the deep hatred which the Bessarabian population nourished towards the Roumanian authorities.

First of all, we must make a short historic survey. I may say, basing my assertions on a series of documents, (particularly on the correspondence between the Russian representatives in Jassy, Mosolov, and Poklevsky-Kozel, and the Provisional Government during the months of May and June, 1917), that these reforms were granted only in the face of the imminent danger of the Russian revolution spreading to Roumania. It suffices us here to emphasize that the solemn manifesto of the King of Roumania to the Roumanian Army in which he promised the peasants the land and the suffrage was issued four days after my release from the Roumanian prison in Jassy by the Russian garrison, to make clear the fundamental connection between the danger of the revolutionary events and the reform. In the course of the four days I have mentioned, the Roumanian Government was terribly anxious, particularly on

the 23rd of April, the Feast of St. George. It was expecting the entry of the Russian garrison into Jassy against the Roumanian Government. From the secret correspondence referred to, we now know that the Roumanian Government even expected an attempt to be made to arrest the King, an act to which, Take Jonescu assured the Russian Ambassador, Mosolov, the King declared he would raise no resistance.

This is the source of the agrarian reform.

Without the Russian revolution, the Roumanian peasants would again have had to repeat the rising of 1907, which was crushed with such unprecedented cruelty by the Government of Bratiano.

As the agrarian and the suffrage reforms were actually put in force by the worst enemies of the Roumanian people—by those political parties which represent the interest of the landlords—it so happened that the latter were able to secure for themselves on different pretexts large stretches of land. In Bessarabia after the occupation, when the landlords of the Marghiloman Government were still in power, the peasants were deprived of the land they had seized from the Bessarabian landlords. The peasants were compelled, as stated in the documents referred to above, to rebuild the buildings destroyed and pay an indemnity to the landlords for the goods and livestock stolen from them. The next Government, fearing a peasant revolt, had again to placate the peasants, but instead of giving the land to the landless peasants of Bessarabia, they distributed it among the immigrants from old Roumania and Transylvania and amongst its political supporters, such as publicans, civil servants, officers and tradesmen, masses of people who formerly had had no connection with agriculture, hoping thus to create a nucleus of support for themselves in Bessarabia. The agrarian reforms in Roumania met with no better fate. Here, also, the landlords managed to retain large stretches of land, and as a consequence the

Roumanian peasant party had again to place the question of agrarian reform on its programme.

Regarding the suffrage reform, in a country where power is concentrated in the hands of the Secret Police and the 40,000 gendarmes, who are a kind of Egyptian plague to the population, particularly to the peasants, the right to vote is only a pretext for the most unbridled of arbitrary Governments. Evidently, Mr. Titulesco himself does not rely too much on the "democracy" of present-day Roumania, since he carefully excludes the only democratic means of ascertaining the will of the Bessarabian population, that of a plebiscite. I have already observed that in my hands is a fund of material testifying to the deplorably bad conditions in which the Bessarabian population finds itself under Roumanian rule. The peasants are subjected to the most cruel exploitation both on the part of the Roumanian landlords and the Government tax collectors. To this we must add the perpetual daylight robberies carried out by the badly-paid Roumanian officials, who have more than ever reverted to their old tradition of living at the expense of the population.

The extent to which the Bessarabian population has deteriorated, can be judged by a letter from the Kishinev correspondent of the Bukharest newspaper "Lupta," which appeared in the issue of that paper in December, 1924, under the impressive heading "Moral Decline of Bessarabian Peasants." Under this heading were two sub-headings—"Wretched Condition of the Country," "Corruption and Drunkenness Rampant." The correspondent gives an account of a conversation with an influential Bessarabian who does not belong to any political party.

"The news we receive from the villages," said my informant, "is of a most deplorable kind. Our villages are corrupt, demoralised, and have become disintegrated to the worst degree. Never have our quiet Moldavians consumed such vast quantities of spirits as in our time. Old men and young men drink, and women and girls and even minors drink. There are villages in which on a holiday not a

single sober person is to be found. As a result, the peasant population is becoming poorer, their holdings are being sold in the public-houses for a trifling sum, which is spent on drink. This helps to form a so-called rural proletariat from the peasants who have no land. This means that a class is being created, which will be a source of trouble and worry to any government. This readily inflammable material is a danger to the public life of any State, for it aggravates the growing social discontent. The land is gradually falling into the hands of country speculators, who, thanks to their wealth, have become leaders of political power in the country."

The second characteristic of the policy of the Roumanian Government which deserves mention is the persecution of nationalities. Of the policy of the Roumanian Government in relation to what we term national minorities (though the question here relates to populations which form an absolute majority on their territory), I have had more than one occasion to speak in the present survey.

Soon after the defeat of the German Army, when the Roumanian Government was not quite sure how the Allies would regard her unprecedented territorial pretensions exceeding those she had realised under the agreement of August, 1916, after two years of blackmail, in order to allay the protests on the part of the nationalities included in her territory, either directly or indirectly, she hastily concluded with them a series of formal agreements, under which she guaranteed them cultural autonomy and the observance of complete political and civil equality among them all. But when Roumania consolidated herself in her new boundaries, which exceeded the dreams of her boldest Chauvinists, and the ruling cliques saw that there was no one to intercede for these national minorities handed over to the Roumanian bureaucracy, she completely changed her policy towards them. Notwithstanding the Versailles Treaty and all the statutes of the League of Nations, which solemnly upholds the rights of national minorities, the Roumanian Government in the most shameless and blatant way began to

close the schools and churches of her national minorities and to embark on the basest of policies in enforcing Roumanian culture. In this respect the present "Liberal" Government has particularly distinguished itself. When several newspapers protested and pointed out how such a policy would create in Roumania new hostile forces against the State, the semi-official organ of the Roumanian Government "Viitorul," replied in a series of articles, the heading of one of which was "National Schools—the Hot-bed of Irredentism and Bolshevism." In this article the newspaper points to the retrograde policy pursued by the Roumanian Government towards the non-Roumanian nationalities. In the pages of bourgeois newspapers which, without exception, support the national policy of the Roumanian Government, there sometimes appear letters on the deplorable position of the schools of the national minorities in Bessarabia, Transylvania, and Dobruja. Thus, for instance, the journal "Lupta," records the action of a school inspector, named Kumpanitch, in Kishinev, who had prepared a black list of teachers who were to be dismissed for their failure to inculcate Roumanian culture with the necessary speed.

Notwithstanding the suppression of Russian culture in Bessarabia, the young Moldavians openly demonstrate their sympathies with the Soviet Union and Russian culture. In the newspaper "Universul," letters have been published from the Transylvania University centre, Klush, in which the correspondents express their astonishment that the Bessarabian-Moldavian students should still continue to speak Russian amongst themselves. As regards the Bessarabians in Bukharest and Jassy, the latter have been placed under special police supervision.

After what I have said, there is no need to speak here in detail of the practices introduced into Bessarabia by the military and civil authorities. Even in my article in "l'Epoca," which provoked replies from Messrs. Lagovari

and Titulesco, I gave a quotation from a Bukharest newspaper, which spoke of the indignation felt by the Bessarabian population, particularly by the Bessarabian peasantry, against the introduction of the rod and torture, not only in the prisons but wherever the civil and military authorities came in conflict with the population. In this respect, as the Bukharest newspapers state, the Roumanian administration has shown itself to be ten times worse than the old administration of the Tsar, which had abolished the rod and torture, not only legally but in practice.

Here I will give a quotation from the Bukharest newspaper "Lupta" of the 30th December, 1924. In an article under the heading "Horrors of the Kishinev Prisons," it is said :

"The revelations made by our Kishinev correspondent some days ago concerning the horrors which have been perpetrated and are being perpetrated should evoke indignation and anxiety ; indignation because the brutality practised in the military prisons cannot be condoned by the humane conscience of the twentieth century ; anxiety, because tyranny begets tyranny, because these unfortunate persons who are to-day subjected to barbarous torture will to-morrow become the implacable enemies of a society which had thus treated them. A lieutenant and a captain have gone mad as a result of the torture. A third prisoner, who had gone on hunger strike, was beaten unmercifully. A woman prisoner gave premature birth to a child because of the horrible insults she had been subjected to. Lastly, a number of prisoners have literally been eaten up by lice."

Here we must devote some attention to the cruelty shown by the Roumanian authorities during the recent rising in Southern Bessarabia. Filled with fear in face of the unarmed mass of peasants, who only possessed two machine-guns taken from the Roumanian soldiers, one of which was broken and the other had no ammunition, the Roumanian officers knew no bounds to their vengeance. Whole villages were wiped out by artillery fire, hundreds upon hundreds of peasants were shot by machine-guns. For the space of a fortnight this unfortunate region of Bessarabia was subjected to gunfire, incendiarism, and every other kind of outrage.

The bad conscience of the Roumanian ministers sought appeasement in the spreading of false rumours to the effect that the rising had been engineered on Soviet territory. But gradually the truth leaked out ; the Roumanian press was overwhelmed with numbers of reports which showed that the rising was of a fundamental character, provoked by the system of robbery and persecution of the Roumanian authorities. It is significant that the rising broke out simultaneously in Moldavian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian and Russian villages. It was only the German colonists who, though on the side of the rebels at the outbreak, turned against them when they saw that the rising had no chance of success. This treachery is due to their special economic position, as under Mackensen, the German colonists had received large grants of land which the Moldavian and other peasants had not been fortunate enough to get.

Through the Roumanian press and the Roumanian Parliament there filtered some details of the period of the rising. In order to rid themselves of elements which they considered undesirable, the satraps arrested and killed persons on the way to prison like dogs. At this time, a man named Bazaleu, the president of one of the rural co-operative societies in the Akkerman region, adopted this method towards a family of peasants who demanded of him on behalf of his village an account of 35,000 lei, which Bazaleu had spent. Six members of this peasant family were shot when they were being taken to Kishinev. One of these members—Filatov—who had fallen as though dead, managed to reach Bukharest, where he informed the Committee of the Peasant Party of what had occurred. The story was revealed in the press, but the Roumanian Government was unabashed. They basely stated that Filatov was in sympathy with the rebellion and had escaped from a serious charge ; they ordered his immediate arrest, and notwithstanding the condition of his wounds, he was sent back to Bessarabia. It is possible that we shall

hear no more of him, as he may have met with the treatment meted out to his six comrades.

Despite the fact that on the whole the Roumanian press supports the Government, it cannot absolutely close its columns to the horrible revelations which are disclosed from time to time about the systematic murders committed by the military and civil authorities amongst the prisoners.

The actions of the Roumanian administration in Bessarabia have received such wide publicity that even Marshal Foch, in an interview with a Roumanian journalist in Paris, expressed a wish for the speedy establishment of a proper administration in Bessarabia.

As a conclusion to this chapter, I cannot do better than to cite the views of Vassili Stroescu on the Roumanian order in Bessarabia, to which he gave expression in the Roumanian Parliament. Vassili Stroescu is acknowledged by all Roumanian Nationalists to be the founder of the Roumanian Nationalist movement in Bessarabia.

At a sitting of the Roumanian Parliament of the 10th February, 1920, Stroescu made a speech which provoked the displeasure of all parties, because his words fell on the faces of the Roumanian deputies like drops of molten lead. Here is a report of the sitting in the Bukharest newspaper "Adeverul" :

"Vassili Stroescu talked of the alarming position in Bessarabia. The local authorities oppress the population, justice is conducted in a most summary manner, abuse is tolerated even by Ministers, civil liberty has been abolished by the military régime. It is painful to have to admit that the position was better under the old régime of Russia (Uproar.)

"Jorga (the President) : ' I have a great respect for you, but I cannot allow you to say such things.' (Wild applause.)

"Stroescu attempted to continue. (Further protests.)

"Jorga : ' You are disgracing the past and future of our nation. I cannot allow you to go on.' (Continuous applause.) Stroescu attempted to continue.

"There was an uproar, especially among the Liberal benches. The President attempted to restore order without success. The uproar

was continuous. A violent scene ensued ; the President suspended the sitting. (An interval.)

"After the interval. A voice : ' Stop the terror in Bessarabia ! '

"Another voice : ' Shame ! the Bessarabian question is now being settled in Paris ! '

"The proceedings were resumed when order was restored.

"Doctor Chugurian : ' I am sorry to be in opposition to Mr. Vassili Stroescu, a man so great in the past and so small in the present.' (Applause.)

"Vassili Stroescu asked for permission to speak and being denied, left the chamber with an ' Au revoir.' "

The former Russian Ambassador in Bukharest, Poplevsky-Kozeb, when sending the above document to Sazonov in Paris, on the 6th March, 1920, in his accompanying letter said :

"Mr. Stroescu's protest, though interesting in itself as providing a lucid picture of the sad condition of Bessarabian realities, assumes a special significance when we take into consideration the fact that the name of Stroescu is an absolute guarantee of the impartiality of the opinion of the distressing position in Bessarabia which the Government and the entire nationalist press are trying to hide. Unfortunately, the text of Stroescu's speech was not published in the press. Although in his letter to the director of the journal 'Adeverul' Mr. Stroescu talks of publishing his speech, so far this has not been done. He was evidently dissuaded from publishing it, or it may be that the publication was prohibited by the Government."

And these are the expressions of a man who is *persona grata* at the Roumanian Court and with the Roumanian Government, and who did everything in his power to help Roumania in the annexation of Bessarabia.

A word or two more about the economic position of Bessarabia from the time of the Roumanian occupation. Both the Roumanian and the foreign press are unanimous in their opinion of the rapid decline of the economic life of Bessarabia from the moment of the Roumanian occupation. In the journal "Lupta" of the 2nd January, 1925, an article appeared from the Kishinev correspondent, under the heading "Economic and Financial Crisis in Bessarabia." The article shows that the capital of Bessarabia, Kishinev, which had formerly

been a big commercial centre of extensive economic connections with the south of the former Russian Empire, had economically begun to decline from the moment of its union with Roumania. The same may be said of all the other Bessarabian towns, and generally speaking, about the whole economic life of Bessarabia. Formerly Bessarabian products found a big market in Russia, now produce remains unsold and agriculture, the wine industry, market gardening, are in a complete state of decline. Consequently, it is not surprising that a member of the Roumanian Senate, named Sanilevitch, who had been the president of the Kishinev Chamber of Commerce, on the 20th January, 1925, expressed the opinion in the journal "Universul" that the only way to restore the economic life of the country was by a resumption of economic relations with the Soviet Union. A natural outlet for Bessarabian products for the external market was Odessa and the South of Russia, while the present Ukraine is an outlet for the interior market. The violent separation of Bessarabia from her natural economic outlets has on the one side reflected on the trade of a town like Odessa, which has lost a great part of its hinterland, and on the other, on the economic life of Bessarabia itself.

CONCLUSION.

WE have already shown that the treaty signed in October, 1920, concerning the annexation of Bessarabia, comes into force only after ratification by the signatories. As we know, the treaty has not yet been ratified by Italy and Japan. At the moment, the Roumanian Government is making desperate efforts to have the treaty ratified by these two Powers. This, however, does not prevent the Bratianos from declaring in the foreign press that the question of Bessarabia is one of the internal affairs of Roumania. If that is so, why does Roumania make such great endeavours to have the annexation recognised by those Governments, which neither directly nor indirectly have any connection with Bessarabia? As a matter of fact, if the treaty is ratified by either of the above-mentioned States, it would still not give Roumania a valid title to the possession of Bessarabia. At best Roumania would only obtain support in her efforts to secure recognition of the annexation from the genuine owners of Bessarabia, i.e., the Soviet Union, the absence of which recognition deprives Roumania of any title to Bessarabia from the view of international law. And for all the pretensions of the Bratianos, when all is said and done, they know quite well that the question of Bessarabia will be settled not in Tokio or in Rome, but in Moscow.

The Roumanian diplomatists when pressing the Italian and Japanese representatives to have the treaty of October, 1920, ratified, do so on the plea that a Government which has signed the treaty has therefore made a solemn undertaking to Roumania, and cannot retract its signature. Evidently the Roumanian diplomatists attach great importance to this sentimental side of the question, for their articles in the Italian and

other newspapers are full of arguments of this kind, but this view is wrong both legally and politically. It is wrong legally because a signature is not valid until after ratification, otherwise what would be the sense of ratification? Moreover, if the Roumanian Government attaches such great importance to signatures, why does it not consider itself bound by its own signature to the agreement of March, 1918, by which it undertook to commence an immediate evacuation of Bessarabian territory? This signature, moreover, does not require any ratification either by the Roumanian Parliament or the Roumanian King, as the terms of the agreement clearly show.

Since the Roumanians regard the question as one of honour, they should be the first to give us an example of it. Let them show their honour by removing their army and administration beyond the Pruth, and then we shall be prepared to discuss honour with them.

The Roumanian insistence that Italy and Japan should ratify the treaty of 1920 is not based on legal grounds. At the signing of the treaty in 1920, the Soviet Government had not as yet been recognised, and was not, in the language of international law, an international member which could in comity with other nations discuss the settlement of the Bessarabian question. This was the position at the time when England and France ratified the treaty: there were no normal diplomatic relations between these two Governments and the Soviet Union. Of course, this circumstance does not excuse the Governments of these two countries from the grave responsibilities they have assumed by this act, but the responsibility of the Governments of Italy and Japan in the event of their ratification of the treaty would be ten times greater, because Italy and Japan are in normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

In order to solve the question of Bessarabia, resort can no longer be had to juridical lore, nor can the Govern-

ment most directly interested in the question be set aside. One cannot be in normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Government in Moscow while one ignores its existence in Bukharest and, in conjunction with the Roumanian Government, disposes of its territory. Such a position has had no precedent in history. Following a similar precedent we could sign an agreement with the Greek or Turkish Government recognising the right of the one or the other to Dodekanese, or with China recognising the latter's right to Wei-hai-wei. How would Italy and Japan regard such an act? The ratification of the treaty of 1920 on the part of Italy and Japan would be as great a provocation to the Soviet Union. It is necessary to say, plainly and openly, that the time for the ratification of the treaty has gone by.

The terms of the treaty prove that it was signed on the assumption that it would be put into practice prior to the recognition of the Soviet Government. This is borne out by the clause which declares that the boundary commission which was to determine the boundaries between Russia and Roumania was to consist of a representative of the Powers signing the treaty, a representative of Roumania, a representative from the League of Nations, who was to act as "a representative of Russia." Who would at this stage dare to send to our territory a commission so constituted, which, against our will, would determine the boundaries between ourselves and our neighbours? The complete absurdity of this clause proves the complete absurdity of the treaty. The Japanese and Italian Governments must now approach this question fundamentally. They must seriously reckon with the consequences which their act would entail on future relations. They must now realise that the question is not one of mere formality. The annexation of Bessarabia has provoked, and continues to provoke, deep indignation within the Soviet Union. We hope that Italy and Japan will correct the mistake made by two of the Governments

which have signed the treaty. Should they fail to do so, the indignation of the population of the Soviet Union will be increased tenfold. Let the statesmen of Italy and Japan bear in mind the special feelings nourished by the whole population of the Soviet Union, particularly by the peasantry, towards Roumania. Roumania came into existence as a State as a result of many wars which Russia has waged in the past against Turkey. It is true that these wars were waged by the Tsars with definite annexationist aims (there can be no two opinions about this among the representatives of the Soviet Government), but they were paid for by the Russian peasants. There is not a single family in Russia, not a family tradition or memory, which is not bound up with these wars. We must also remember that during the World War the Russian Army fought for a whole year to defend Roumania's existence, for when Roumania entered the war on the side of the Allies, she soon found herself a burden to the Allies instead of a help—a burden which was borne on the shoulders of the Russian peasantry. Yet when the Russian workers and peasants were occupied with their own internal affairs, and owing to Allied intervention, were drawn into a civil war, the Roumanian Government chose that particular moment to seize from the Soviet Union without fighting, by mean deceit, the richest part of her territory, comprising over 40,000 square versts of land, with a population of 3,000,000. The Russian peasants, realising the difficulty in which the Roumanian peasants find themselves are filled with sympathy towards them, but this sympathy does not extend to the Roumanian landlords.

Italy and Japan are confronted with this dilemma: they can either refuse to ratify the treaty and thus compel Roumania to take the only right course to reach a solution of the Bessarabian question by co-operation with the Soviet Government ensuring peace on her

eastern boundary, or they can ratify this unjust agreement and add greater confusion to the complex position created as a result of the illegal action committed by the Allies in signing the convention of 1920.

Moscow,

14th February, 1925.