

Labour Organisations in Roumania

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In Roumania, where industry is still at a low stage of development, and middle-class problems are acute, there was for a long time no clear line of distinction between the history of Labour organisations and that of the craftsmen's guilds, which included both employers and employed. The development of trade unionism accompanied the progress of industry and the spread of Socialist ideas. The Socialist groups, the first of which dates from 1874, increased in numbers after 1892; they aimed largely at influencing the peasants. The first workers' organisation dates from 1886, and from 1894 onwards numerous mutual aid societies were formed, but this movement was disorganised by the agrarian crisis of 1899. In 1904, however, Socialism again gained a hold on the wage-earning craftsmen, and several unions were soon formed; strikes increased in number, and in 1906 the General Committee of Roumanian Trade Unions was set up. The movement lost ground during the war, but reasserted itself in 1918 and renewed the struggle in close connection with the Socialist Party. The latter, however, broke up into three groups; after the general strike of 1920 stern measures were taken against the trade union leaders and for the second time the labour movement, which then counted 200,000 members, was almost completely annihilated. At this point the Trade Union Act of 26 May 1921 was passed, which gives the unions certain privileges but restricts their liberty. Since the passing of the Act the movement has been re-forming round the nucleus of the Transylvanian unions, which had weathered the storm. At the end of 1921, the Central Committee of Trade Unions at Cluj included 168 unions, with a membership of 31,539, which was doubled in 1922. The dangers from outside the movement seem therefore nearly surmounted; today the menace is rather from within, as the unity of the movement is threatened by the struggle between Communists and Social Democrats.

THE tendency to collective action is deep-rooted among the Roumanian people and dates back to an early age. The old idea of the community of labour, though weakened by capitalism and the system of large estates, still lives among the peasants, the shepherds of the Carpathian mountains, the fishermen of the

Black Sea and the Danube. Even in the towns mutual aid societies have long been established and funeral benefit funds exist throughout the country. The evolution of occupational organisations has naturally been conditioned in a great measure by the development of industry and the crafts. The absence of large-scale industries and the acute nature of middle-class problems explain the clash and mutual reactions of the two prominent groups, the craftsmen and the industrial workers, an outstanding feature in the history of the labour movement in Roumania. The evolution of the guild system and that of the labour organisations cannot be considered separately.

ORGANISATION OF CRAFTSMEN

Introduced from other countries at the end of the fourteenth century, the guilds reached the height of their power during the first half of the eighteenth century. As in the West, and for similar reasons, decline followed. From the beginning of modern times the ruling princes encouraged the influx of foreign craftsmen bringing new technical methods, to the detriment of the guilds. Down to 1863, however, they retained certain administrative functions, but were finally abolished on 22 June 1873 by the Council of Ministers. The craftsmen were thus bereft of any form of organisation.

With a rich soil and an antiquated economic system Roumania developed agriculture and neglected industry ; but with political independence, attained in 1877, came the realisation of the danger of dependence on the empires of central Europe for all manufactured goods. Even so, it was not until the Act of 1887 and the customs tariff of 1906 afforded them some protection that Roumanian crafts began to emerge from the state of complete decay into which they had fallen. The number of craftsmen gradually increased and the question of organisation was considered. At the same time, with the development of large-scale industries the class of industrial workers properly so called emerged.

The problems peculiar to the craftsman class were for some time confounded with those of the wage earners, craftsmen putting forward claims which, if granted, would in no way benefit them, such as the institution of benefit funds, legislation on protection against accidents and the dangers of machinery and boilers — matters which had no relation to the problem of the crafts and

the difficulties of the middle classes¹ but which were engaging the attention of labour in Western countries, and so ultimately awakened interest among the workers in Roumania. Among the latter the craftsmen were the most enlightened and progressive; moreover, being few in number they needed the support of the mass of workers.

After the abolition of the guilds in 1873 no further attempt at organisation was made by the craftsmen until 1888. With the impetus given to Roumanian industry by the policy of protection the movement gained strength and, after various schemes had failed to materialise, the grievances and aspirations of the craftsmen from 1900 onwards were more insistently and clearly voiced. Among the demands put forward many were too general in character, others impracticable; hardly one touched the fundamental problems requiring solution. The craftsmen did not realise the true causes of their plight or its real remedy. They attributed unemployment to the freedom of labour and wished to restrict this by limiting the labour supply; the fall in their earnings they held to be due to the excessive number of master-craftsmen, and demanded that a certificate be issued by the craft brotherhoods before a workshop could be opened. Above all they insisted on the re-establishment of the guilds with most of their former privileges².

The movement, increasingly active, led ultimately to the enactment of the law of 5 March 1902 on craft organisations, a hasty measure passed under the pressure of the moment. In addition to some miscellaneous sections this Act included provisions relating to: (a) the exercise of a trade; (b) guilds, their management and organisation; (c) penalties and provisional measures³. It applied to craftsmen and not to industrial workers. It gave the worker unconditional liberty to carry on or abandon a craft. On the other hand, in order to set up on his own account

¹ Congress of Arts and Crafts organised by the General Association of Ex-Pupils of the Schools of Arts and Crafts, 8-10 Sept. 1900. Bukarest, 1900. Principles for the Organisation of Industrial Labour laid down by the Committee at the Congress of Arts and Crafts held at Bukarest, 8-10 Sept. 1900, containing plans for: (1) guild organisation; (2) an artisans' exchange; (3) vocational education. Bukarest, 1901.

² F. Robin BIRON: *Organizarea si nationalizarea meseriilor* (Organisation and Nationalisation of Crafts), in "Convorbiri literare", 1902, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2, p. 4. Bukarest.

³ B. M. MISSIR: *Legea pentru organizarea meseriilor si regulamentul privitor la aplicarea ei, precedate de desbaterile corpurilor legiuitoare si de proiectele de legi anterioare* (Act and administrative regulations on the organisation of crafts, preceded by the parliamentary debates and previous Bills). Bukarest, 1905.

the craftsman must hold a master's certificate, although the old system of formal apprenticeship and journeyman service, which gave rise to so many abuses and stopped the progress of many craftsmen towards independence, was abolished. Technical qualifications were henceforth the sole test for master craftsmen. With a view to promoting craft training, the Act required every worker to have a certificate of efficiency, which could also be obtained by simple examination. The Act established the obligation and right of a craftsman to belong to his guild, provided such a guild existed in his commune. The formation of the guild itself, however, was not compulsory. These organisations from the outset possessed legal personality, but were subject to the authority of the chamber of commerce and industry of the district. The general assembly consisted of all adult members enjoying civil and political rights, whether employers, masters, or workers, and the management committee was composed of a chairman and six members. In each guild an arbitration committee, comprising a government commissioner as president and four members elected for a period of three years (two by the employers and two by the workers), was appointed to conciliate in disputes or, if this failed, to settle them summarily by simple majority.

The results of the 1902 Act were meagre. Apart from indifferent administration, the fact that the guilds were not autonomous rendered them an easy prey to political pressure. The absence of adequate penalties, moreover, gave rise to serious abuses, especially in the issue of certificates and in arbitration. Awaited with such confidence by the workers, the Act of 1902 was soon entirely discredited and the agitation of the craftsmen began once more. Through their congresses and publications¹ they demanded the repeal of the Act and the creation of free unions. Even the craftsmen-employers, who alone benefited by the system, recognised its failure and favoured its revision. A series of claims formulated at the Congress of Bukarest on 7 and 8 November 1904 was again put forward at the congress of 10 and 11 October 1911.²

¹ Cf. C. J. GULIAN: *Studiu critic al legii meseriilor* (Critical study of the Crafts Act). Bukarest, 1907. Gheorghe N. DULCA: *Spicuire din viata muncitorilor de la orase* (The life of the workers in the towns). Valenide-Munte, 1911.

² *Desiderate discutate si votate la congresul meseriasilor romani, tinut in Bucuresti le 10 si 11 Oct. 1911 cu privire la modificarea legii meseriilor si la diferite nevoi de care sufera clasa meseriasilor romani* (Demands discussed and voted at the congress of Roumanian craftsmen held in Bukarest on 10 and 11 October 1911 dealing with the amendment of the Crafts Act and the various disadvantages from which Roumanian craftsmen suffer). Bukarest, 1911.

and pressed in speeches and in the press, a vigorous campaign being conducted by the journal *Meseriasul român* (The Roumanian Artisan). In the spring of 1907 the unfortunate revolt of the peasants absorbed the whole attention of the Government and Parliament in agrarian problems, and it was not until 1911 that the artisans were able to resume their activities, and complete their programme at the congress in October of that year. The movement culminated in the Act of 27 January 1912 on craft organisations, credit, and social insurance, amended by the Acts of 14 February and 28 April 1913.

The underlying principle of the Act is the distinction established between the broader economic interest of the working classes, or social interests, and the narrower economic interests of the craft. To safeguard the latter it created the brotherhood (*breasla*), a guild organisation, membership of which is compulsory for all craftsmen and factory workers in the trade, and for the former the guild, an association of several brotherhoods in the same town, membership being similarly compulsory for all factory workers. The formation of a brotherhood is compulsory if there are 25 craftsmen of the same trade in the district. Its purpose is to protect the trade interests of its members and to ensure professional honesty ; to supervise the instruction given to apprentices and promote further knowledge and efficiency among other workers ; to secure hygienic conditions and good treatment of apprentices ; to hold examinations for apprentices and award prizes ; to encourage craftsmen to submit their differences to the arbitration committee ; to regulate work and sales with a view to preventing slack seasons ; and to assist working-class savings and credit banks. The guild, which is managed by a council, is an association of craftsmen and factory workers, with a membership of at least 1,000. It is the unit for insurance purposes. The Council administers the sums which the health insurance and funeral benefit fund may place at its disposal in accordance with the provisions of the Act, establishes employment exchanges, and opens or assists vocational schools. Brotherhoods and guilds may form federations. They are placed under the control of the Central Office for Crafts, Credit, and Social Insurance.

The Act of 1912 was an improvement on that of 1902. Nevertheless economic facts were again overlooked or misunderstood ; the inclusion of all persons with a knowledge of the craft, from apprentices to masters, under the latter's direction, was imposed by the craftsmen-employers, a great force in elections, since they

possessed the property qualification to vote. Such an organisation, composed of employers and wage earners, craftsmen and industrial workers, and established primarily to safeguard the employers' interests, could yield no good result. The clause relating to compulsory membership was regarded by the mass of wage earners as an oppressive measure¹. If the brotherhoods had been confined to craftsmen-employers only, they might have played a useful part had they been autonomous and not hampered by lack of funds. As it was, lacking autonomy, their activities were reduced to the grant or renewal of certificates of efficiency in circumstances which sometimes gave rise to criticism. Their funds, too, were inadequate for their work; the small fees paid for the certificates were not sufficient to add materially to their financial assets, and these fees were paid into and administered by the Central Fund. The leaders of the craftsmen-employers soon renewed their agitation, but it was cut short by the war². A further congress in 1922 gave little result, and universal suffrage has now abolished the political power of the very small class of craftsmen-employers.

On the other hand, the guilds, also handicapped financially and non-autonomous, found their activities equally restricted. Social insurance remained under the control of the Central Office. Originally conceived as a form of workers' mutual aid, it became a public service in which the workers had no part. In return for contributions levied under threat of fine, if not force, the Central Office dispensed at its discretion the benefits provided for in the Act.

The effects of the Act of 1912 on the organisation of crafts were either of no account or regrettable, as, for instance, lowering to 11 years the age of admittance to apprenticeship, the former minimum age being usually 12 years, or from 15 to 17 in unhealthy occupations.

In short, the law compelled workers to belong to an official institution the aims of which were foreign to most of their interests; no funds were provided for vocational education, employment exchanges, conciliation or arbitration machinery, and labour conditions were in no way improved³.

¹ C. RAKOWSKY : *Jos legea meseriilor* (Down with the Crafts Act). Bukarest, 1912.

² The reports submitted to the congress of craftsmen held at Bukarest on 10 and 11 May 1914 demanded the return to the 1902 system under which the leaders of the craftsmen managed the guilds and the considerable funds at their disposal.

³ D. R. IOANITescu : *Istoricul legislatiei muncii in Romania* (History of Legislation in Roumania), pp. 85-86. Bukarest, 1919.

TRADE UNIONS

The development of trade unionism in Roumania is closely related to the growth of industry and the spread of Socialist ideas. Socialism was introduced by the Roumanians of Bessarabia and by Russian political refugees. The first Socialist group was formed at Issy in 1874 under the leadership of Dr. Znubeu-Cadreano, and published in 1879 the first socialist organ *Bassarabia*¹. A large number of intellectuals were attracted to the movement by its humane character, some merely by curiosity, rather than through conversion to its doctrines. The Government attempted to check its progress by arrests, prosecutions, and expulsions, but only succeeded in giving the movement its martyrs and increasing its influence. In 1884 the Socialist study circle of Bukarest opened a propaganda campaign among the workers.

The first workers' organisation was the Printers' Union of Bukarest, formed in 1886, which at first admitted small employers to membership. The following year at Jassy appeared the *Muncitorul* (The Worker), the organ of the Labour Party². In its initial stages Socialism in Roumania appealed to the workers in rural rather than urban districts. There were at that time few factories and the Socialists believed the bourgeoisie incapable of creating large-scale industries. The mass of the workers in small undertakings were moved by vague aspirations, but generally only to the position of small employers. The first Socialists therefore turned to the peasants, over whom they quickly gained a great influence. The peasant party which emerged, however, could not for long remain strictly faithful to Socialist doctrine³.

Although the activities of the intellectuals, Socialist in name rather than in fact, were not mainly directed to influencing the industrial proletariat which began to appear, they stimulated its first efforts at combined action, as the railwaymen's and printers' strikes in 1888, 1891, and the following years testify. Socialist groups increased in numbers after 1892, and formed a party, the first congress being held in 1893. The Socialist daily paper *Lumea Noua* (The New World) appeared in Bukarest in 1894. The party

¹ DENIS : *The First Roumanian Socialists*, in "Calendarul muncitorului", 1913, pp. 53-55. Bukarest. (In Roumanian.)

² I. STON : *Socialism in Roumania*, in "Viitorul socialist", I, 1907, p. 7.

³ I. C. FRIMU : *A Glance at the Old Socialist Movement in Roumania*, in "Calendarul muncitorului", 1916.

grew steadily until 1899. The industrial workers from 1894 onwards formed new organisations, which were not strictly speaking trade unions — the economic development of Roumania being slow — but rather mutual aid societies (with strike funds) comprising workers of every trade.

The agrarian crisis of 1899 disorganised the first tentative beginnings of industry and provoked bitter attacks on the peasants' political organisations. The whole Socialist movement was ultimately broken up. The intellectuals who formed the bulk of the party passed over to the Liberals who were then in power. The industrial workers, as yet hardly conscious of their strength, turned aside in their turn. A few only, followers of the carpenter I. C. Frimu, a prominent figure in the Roumanian Socialist movement, and a small number of intellectuals remained faithful to Socialist ideals. Their reward was trial and sentence for misappropriation of funds. From 1900 onwards the provincial organisations were gradually suppressed; the Bukarest club reduced its activities. Only a small nucleus of idealists remained and continued to meet in order to complete their Socialist education¹. The workers swelled the ranks of the craftsmen-employers' forces in their struggle for the organisation of craft guilds². The Socialist club, which survived and in 1902 published a new organ, *Romania muncitoare* (Working Roumania), failed to win them from their allegiance.

Attacked by liberal doctrinaires, advocates of the establishment of free trade unions with legal personality, the Act of 1902, which included in the same organisations both craftsmen-employers and their workers, was, on the contrary, upheld by the ex-Socialist liberals through sheer love of state control, notwithstanding the fact that it gave no protection to the workers.

In 1904, however, the discontent of the wage-earning craftsmen and their feeling against the craftsmen-employers found expression. They were won back to Socialism, and began to discuss the formation of trade unions. The unexpected success of the meeting of protest against the persecution of Socialists in Russia, convened at Bukarest by the *Romania muncitoare* Club on the invitation of the International Socialist Bureau, opened a new era for Socialism and the trade union movement. The first trade union formed was that of the carpenters, on 18 June 1905, with fifteen or

¹ T. I.: *The Beginnings of "Working Roumania"*, in "Calendarul muncitorului", 1913.

² I. C. FRIMU: *Guilds and Trade Unions*, in "Calendarul muncitorului", 1907.

twenty members. The shoemakers' union followed, on 5 August, and the tailors' on 18 September. Thirty unions with a total membership of 4,466 were represented at the Socialist conference held from 26 to 28 August 1906, fifty at the conference of November 1906, and fifty-five with a total membership of 8,470 at the conference of 29 and 30 June 1907, not to mention the unions which did not send delegates to these conferences¹.

Trade unionist propaganda was vigorously carried on². A large number of strikes took place in state factories and in public services (the postmen on 25 July 1906, the employees of the Excise Department in August of the same year, and others) with the support of the unions. The force of these movements, the violence of the agitation against the expulsion of Dr. Rakowsky, and, finally, the congress of railwaymen on 10 October 1909, alarmed the Liberal Government. An act was passed on 20 December 1909, prohibiting strikes and associations of civil servants, all employees of the state, departments, and communes, all workers in government establishments of an industrial, economic, or commercial character, and all persons engaged in the public services.

The Socialist and trade union conference of August 1906 set up the General Committee of Roumanian Trade Unions as the central body, and local trade union committees linking up the various unions in the same town. Model rules were framed for adoption by all trade unions, and the following general principles were laid down. The workers should promote trade unionism and destroy the guilds, in which they should not accept office, but use their influence as members to work in favour of trade unionism and to support strikes, especially those of organised workers. They should endeavour to awaken class consciousness among the workers and lead them to join the Social-Democratic party, and to celebrate Labour Day on 1 May with the workers of the whole world or, if this is impossible, on the holiday nearest to this date. They should also urge the enactment of labour legislation guaranteeing a weekly rest in all agricultural and industrial undertakings, regulation of the employment of women and children, abolition of night work wherever possible, and of piece work, the institution of accident, sickness, and old age insurance, and the

¹ M. Gh. BUJOR : *Trade Unions in Roumania*, in "Viitorul Social", 1907, pp. 108-109. Jassy.

² C. RAKOWSKY : *The Trade Unions*. Bukarest, 1906.

recognition of trade unions and the removal of all legal obstacles to their activities¹.

At the same conference it was decided to found a Socialist Publishing Society, which issued propagandist works and a Labour Calendar (*Calendarul muncitorului*).

This first conference was followed by a second held at Galatz in July 1907, three others at Bukarest in January 1908, February 1910, and July 1913, and a sixth at Ploesci in January 1914. The movement grew steadily until 28 August 1916, when Roumania entered the war. At that date there were 69 trade unions with a membership of 14,000².

The Socialist and trade union congress held in February 1910 decided to reconstitute the Socialist Party which had been suppressed ten years before, to reorganise the unions, and to institute separate trade union congresses. One of the factors which contributed to the enactment of legislation adverse to the Roumanian trade union movement was the confusion of this movement with the Socialist Party. The unions have frequently considered the advisability of severing their connection with the Party and taking up a purely industrial position³. At the first exclusively trade union congress Dr. Rakowsky maintained that neither of the two extreme examples of trade union neutrality, i.e. those of the English and the French unions, had proved favourable to the complete development of the trade union movement, and that neither should be followed. The Roumanian unions, in his opinion, should maintain close relations with the Socialist party⁴. Without attempting to criticise this opinion in itself it may be pointed out that

¹ M. Gh. BURJOR: *The Conference*, in "Calendarul muncitorului", 1907, pp. 129-131.

² The influence of the trade unions, even among non-Socialist workers, is evidenced by the fact that the memorandum protesting against the Act of 1912 submitted to Parliament by the trade unions in 1913 bore 30,025 signatures, a high figure for Roumania at that time. In 1909 the Chamber had taken up a decisive attitude towards the trade unions by refusing to consider a memorandum describing the position of the workers and protesting against the expulsion of Dr. Rakowsky, on the ground that it was presented by "organisations without legal personality". This is the ground on which the employers and the Roumanian Government have always opposed the trade unions. Although Article 27 of the Constitution grants the right of association this right has remained fictitious in the absence of a law regulating its exercise. Associations formed under this Article have been imperfect, without legal personality, and consequently unable to collect funds to carry out their social programme. The trade unions have always been looked upon as illegal and anarchical associations and have been attacked by eminent statesmen. Cf. A. ONCUL: *Administrative Law*, p. 120; and BIRON: *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

³ DELAFRAS: *Labour organisation* (Bukarest, 1919); *The Socialist Society* (Bukarest, 1919); *Socialism in Roumania* (Bukarest, 1920).

⁴ *Calendarul muncitorului*, 1915, p. 96.

the confusion between trade union and Socialist activities led to the second defeat of the Roumanian labour movement, and that to-day again Socialist party differences threaten a third catastrophe. At the outset, at least, separation would have been wiser. The trade unions would have suffered less from the violent anti-Socialist campaign, and would have been a haven and rallying-point for the workers.

The activities of the trade unions had few results. Few in number, continually suspected of subversive designs, always under police supervision, the organised workers were unable to extend their movement. Employment exchanges, an 8-hour day, collective agreements, the weekly rest, protection of the life of the workers and of women and children in industry, profit-sharing, works councils — they could achieve none of these. All that could be done was to support a number of strikes, many of which were successful. The *Munca* (Labour) mutual aid society, under the direction of its founder, I.C. Frimu, gave valuable assistance to the labour movement.

The years of war, 1914-1918, were a bad period for the trade union movement. The cost of living and the war menace kept the workers in a state of political agitation which drew their attention from trade union questions. After the war, however the new democratic spirit and recognition of the rights of labour appeared in Roumania as in other countries. At the end of 1918 the country, free once more, with her former natural frontiers restored, developed new life and energy which was shown in all classes of society. The bourgeoisie displayed an unexpected spirit of initiative; the workers by thousands swelled the ranks of the old trade unions and formed new ones. Big movements, sometimes violent in character, fiery articles, extensive strikes, even among state employees, witnessed to the workers' belief that the hour of social transformation had come.

Capitalism's new vitality was equalled by Labour's new strength. But the capitalist at the zenith of his power was not disposed to tolerance. A great labour demonstration from 13 to 26 December 1918 was put down by armed force. The socialist and trade union offices in Bukarest were ransacked, documents and furniture destroyed, and the leaders arrested and involved in legal proceedings which, however, were finally dropped.

Encouraged by the unanimous protest of the press and of democratic opinion throughout the country the workers closed

up their ranks and renewed the struggle. The awakening of class consciousness, the enormous rise in the cost of living, the social revolutions in various European countries, gave an extraordinary impetus to the labour movement. At the beginning of 1920 there were 156 trade unions with 80,000 or 90,000 members¹. A close connection was maintained with the Socialist Party; the two bodies were regarded as inseparable parts of the workers' fighting machine. The autonomists and the revolutionary syndicalists had dropped out of the movement².

But the alliance with the Socialist Party was fatal. After the general conference of 10 October 1920 the latter broke up into three groups: the social democrats, reformists faithful to the original programme; the members of the Centre, opposed to any form of class co-operation; and the Bolsheviks, frankly revolutionary. The leaders vainly endeavoured to maintain a united front, which was essential in view of the disastrous effects of disruption on the trade union movement, the more so as a national organisation to cover the restored provinces was planned for 1921. The force of circumstances was too great. The post-war impetus, the success of the strikes, and the rise in wages had increased the number of organised workers eight or tenfold, but these enthusiastic recruits were neither educated nor disciplined; their very numbers impeded effective organisation. The unions lacked staff to direct them, propagandists to instruct them, means to control the dangerous elements in their midst. Disunited and unable to withstand attack, the labour movement was at the mercy of the first blow and the era of easy success was short. The employers organised, and the attitude of the state towards its employees was influenced, despite former pledges, by the pressure the employees brought to bear. Disregarding the increasingly high cost of living the employers reduced wages, lengthened working hours, and abolished the works' councils, which had often assisted in settling differences, alleging the urgent need of intensive labour for reconstruction. Recourse to a general strike was held by the workers to be the only means of bringing the Government to consider remedial measures and to improve labour conditions in state undertakings. A national deputation

¹ "Even the crossing-sweepers and the policemen wished to organise." N. VITEJESCU: *The Socialist and Trade Union Movement in Our Country*, in "Miscarea socialista" (The Socialist Movement), p. 63. Bukarest, 1919.

² C. POPORRES: *The Trade Union Movement in Roumania*, in "Calendarul muncitorului", 1920.

having failed to secure redress, the railway engine drivers' strike on 18 October was the signal for a general strike throughout the country, on 21 October 1920. General Averesco's government retorted by sentencing the Socialist leaders, arresting workers who had influence over their comrades, dissolving the unions, suspending the Socialist and labour press, and closing or destroying their premises. Disunited, without class consciousness or power to resist, the workers abandoned the movement. The few remaining trade unionists were in prison¹. The ascendancy gained over the Socialist Party by the Communist element and its subsequent affiliation to the third International provoked an action for high treason which sealed the fate of the labour movement.²

Such was the state of affairs when the Act of 26 May 1921 on trade unions was passed, giving them, it is true, a number of privileges, but restricting their liberty. All persons belonging to the same trade or to a similar or connected trade may form a trade union. But no one may be included, rejected, or excluded against his will, even though he be an employer or *agent provocateur*. Anyone may become and remain a member. The right of association which the law of 1909 denied them is extended to the liberal professions, and to employees of the state, departments, communes, and public services. Civil servants alone may not combine except under conditions laid down by regulations still under consideration.

Trade unions conforming to the Act may acquire legal personality. The application for recognition as such must contain : (a) the rules ; (b) the names, occupations, nationalities, and addresses of the officers ; (c) the names, occupations, and addresses of the founders. The persons making the application must guarantee the accuracy of the statements contained therein. The district magistrate to whom the application is made must satisfy himself within ten days : (a) that the declarations made conform to the provisions of the Act ; (b) that the union is not formed for illicit or immoral purposes ; (c) that the officers are adult Roumanian subjects in possession of their full civil rights, that they have exercised their trade or profession during the year preceding their

¹ Ilie Moscovici : *The Problems of the Socialist Movement To-day*, pp. 9-21. Bukarest, 1922.

² An amnesty has since been granted. The Socialist movement has been revived, though divided into three sections, and the Communist wing is conducting a violent campaign.

election, and have not been sentenced for any crime, breach of trust, mismanagement of public funds, fraud, forgery, theft, receiving stolen goods, bribery, counterfeit coining, falsification of seals, or appropriation of sequestered property. The magistrate admits or rejects the application, showing cause. Appeal lies to the courts and ultimately to the Court of Appeal. The union is entered by the clerk of the court in a register showing the name and address of the union and its officers, the date of registration, and any subsequent changes. A copy of the documents is forwarded to the Ministry of Labour.

Under Article 27 of the Constitution a trade union may exist whether or not it has applied for recognition or acquired legal personality. If it is formed for purposes illicit, immoral, or contrary to public order, the civil courts may order its dissolution.

Legal personality is thus acquired at a rather high price; almost the sole object in requiring declaration of the members' names and addresses is to hand them on to the police. To insist on the officers being of Roumanian nationality and in possession of full civil rights, and on the absence of conviction for civil or criminal offence, tends to debar certain valuable persons from sharing in the management of the unions. A mere fine for false information as to the name, occupation, or address of a member, omission to notify an amendment in the rules, or neglect to keep up to date the records of membership or the accounts, is sufficient to disqualify them in this respect; it must be remembered also that the most faithful and upright propagandists of the labour movement have been sentenced for 'misappropriation of funds' or 'fraud', sometimes for the sole reason that they had striven to make the Roumanian Constitution known to their fellow countrymen in rural districts. In addition, the clause requiring officers to have followed their occupation during the previous year excludes men who have, perhaps temporarily, given up their trade to devote themselves to trade union organisation.

Legal personality confers on a union the right to go to law, to hold property (personal or real) which is not liable to distraint for debt by individuals, the right to participate in economic undertakings of a co-operative character or in the nature of mutual aid societies, the right to be represented on advisory and deliberative committees engaged in work affecting trade interests, to make collective agreements, to participate through its delegates in labour inspection, to supervise the enforcement of laws and regu-

lations on vocational education, labour exchanges, and insurance, and to be represented on conciliation or arbitration committees. It will be noted that a part only of these prerogatives are logically implied in legal personality ; the rest should not be connected with it.

The Trade Union Act of 1921 abolished the brotherhoods and guilds instituted by the 1912 Act on craft organisation, but only to replace them by new bodies fulfilling the same legal functions.

The 1921 Act was promulgated at a time when all the trade unions were dissolved. Only the unions in the restored provinces, especially in Transylvania, where trade union organisation was longer and more firmly established, had survived the storm. They submitted to the severe requirements of the law, and, by so doing, saved an active nucleus around which Roumanian labour organisations are re-forming. The headquarters of the Central Committee of Trade Unions have been moved to Cluj ; all new unions affiliate to it and the movement grows daily.

In Transylvania the 1918 revolution, a consequence of a long and bitter war for the reunion of Roumanian populations with their fatherland, took the workers unawares and almost entirely destroyed their organisations. On their return to their homes they attempted to revive them, but after the declaration of Alba-Julia on 1 December 1918, proclaiming the reunion of Transylvania with Roumania, the Roumanian armies entered the province, closed the premises of most of the trade unions, and forbade all labour meetings or activities. The workers were treated as suspects. But their movement, though repressed, could not be killed ; the miners who formed the bulk of the working population of Ardéal were the first to revive it. The Conference of Sibiu on 23 March 1919 brought together delegates from twelve local groups representing 21,500 miners. Various resolutions were passed and the foundations of the big Miners' Union were laid. This example was quickly followed. All the workers' organisations put themselves in touch with the executive council for Transylvania at Sibiu. A general Conference was held there on 10 and 11 May 1919, attended by 142 delegates from 33 districts representing 71 organisations. A declaration of principles was made, the unification and centralisation of the trade union and Socialist movements in Transylvania was decided on, and an executive committee elected. On the occasion of this conference the unions for the various trades held separate meetings and organ-

ised trade federations. A provisional general committee was formed at Sibiu, and at once set to work ; despite every obstacle, it succeeded in calling together trade congresses. The first, that of the printers, in June 1919, definitely organised the " Transylvania and Banat Printers' Federation " which re-established collective bargaining. The organisation of the railwaymen, metal workers, and others followed. The general committee was transferred, like the executive council, to Cluj, and new members were added to it. In December 1919, a conference of trade union delegates decided that the unions should be organised on a craft basis. As a result the commercial workers' congress was held on 1 February 1920 and that of the building workers on 7 March ; others followed. The number of organised workers in the district on 30 June 1920 was 80,309¹.

The number for the whole of Roumania at the time of the general strike of 21 October 1920, which brought about the ruin of the labour movement, was 200,000, which is small compared with the trade union membership in the great industrial countries : the membership of the United Mine Workers of America alone is twice this number. But Roumania is an agricultural country with a population of 18 million, where the new larger industries as yet employ only 140,935 workers². Putting the present number of workers in the smaller industries at 150,000 (58,952 in 1911), in the petroleum industry at 20,000 (7,496 in 1911), in the mines at 80,000, and in state undertakings (railways, government monopolies, etc.), where trade unionism is forbidden, at 500,000, the total number of workers in the enlarged Kingdom did not exceed 900,000 in 1920. The organisation of 200,000 of these workers was therefore an important event testifying to the nascent though rudimentary sense of solidarity.

The task of rallying the discouraged and terrorised workers in Transylvania after the overthrow of the movement in 1920 was at first a difficult one. Nevertheless, on 31 December 1921, the national headquarters at Cluj and eight federations (mining, building, food and drink trades, wood-working, printing, book-binding, metal-working, and chemicals) included 168 unions with a membership of 31,539. During 1922 the membership was doubled. The financial position of the unions is now excellent ; in 1921 the

¹ *Report of the Ardeal General Committee of Trade Unions : The Trade Union Movement in Ardeal from 1 Nov. 1918 to 30 June 1920*. Cluj, 1920. (In Roumanian.)

² *Inquiry into the condition of industry in Roumania in 1920*, in " Buletinul Industriei ", Sept. 1921. Bukarest.

receipts were 3,816,218.70 lei, including a balance of 214,042.90 lei from the preceding financial year, 91,723.20 lei in entrance fees, and 3,024,429.03 lei in subscriptions. Expenses amounted to 3,062,333.82 lei, of which 198,290.35 lei were spent on unemployment benefit, 19,461 lei on travelling allowances, 80,665.08 lei on money grants, 11,010 lei on funeral benefit, 59,806.96 lei on sickness and maternity benefit, 33,430 lei on relieving the disabled, widows, and orphans, 191,790.44 lei on legal assistance, 7,069.50 lei on education, and 203,332.88 lei on printing. On 31 December 1921 the balance amounted to 753,884.88 lei and the total assets to 1,238,702.01 lei.

The Roumanian labour movement will undoubtedly overcome opposition and difficulties. Hardened by the struggle and armed with the rude experience of the past the workers will develop it to the utmost. The task is greater than in other countries, for there is not only capitalism (as everywhere else) to contend with, but Bolshevik propaganda and the nationalist tendencies of minorities within the Roumanian frontiers. Bolsheviks are hostile to the trade unions, which permit the workers to improve their lot even under a capitalist regime, and thus prepare in peace for the time when this regime will be obsolete. The racial minorities are equally hostile, seeing in the trade union movement an appeal to class consciousness and not to racial feeling, and an obstacle to the use of the working classes for political ends and the dismemberment of Roumania. Performing as they do an economic, social, and even a national mission, the Roumanian trade unions deserve something better than the constant hostility of the authorities.

But though they are called upon to overcome external difficulties the internal crisis is a no less serious menace. The dissensions in the Socialist Party, the vehement struggle between the Communists and the Social Democrats threaten the unity of the trade union forces. The first signs of a split appeared at the meeting of the General Council on 28 September 1922 and the conference of the Council of Trade Unions at Cluj on 23 and 24 January 1923. The leaders then repressed them with all their might, but for how long? From all appearances a crisis is imminent and the Roumanian trade union movement runs a serious risk of being destroyed a third time.

The Communist Party, with a view to dominating the trade union movement, proposed a united front. The General Council rejected the suggestion at the meeting of 28 September 1922,

adhering firmly to the principle adopted at the Sibiu congress in June 1922 and embodied in the following resolution : " Considering that the split in the Socialist Party of Roumania is an accomplished fact and that a reconciliation of the two groups is impossible at present ; considering, on the other hand, that the law prohibits political action by trade unions, the trade union congress declares that :

" The trade unions of Roumania, founded on the principle of class war, are independent organisations. They will repulse any attempt on the part of political parties to break them up or annex them. The present resolution does not in any way forbid individual members to belong to a political party or to take part in political activities as they please. It aims only at preventing trade unions from being diverted from the exercise of their true functions, and, instead of working for the good of the proletariat, becoming the instrument of one political group against another.

" (1) All party activity within the unions is strictly forbidden and will be a reason for ejection.

" (2) Trade union activities must strictly conform to the law.

" (3) They are directed only by the national congresses (general or trade congresses). This resolution forms an integral part of the rules. "

Herein lies, indeed, the only basis on which the trade union movement can win through the present crisis.

The Communist Party, displeased at the rejection of their proposal by the Council, opened a campaign within the unions and persuaded or lured them into violating the decisions of the congress and the General Council. Acts of insubordination were committed, particularly by district organisations at Jassy and Timisoara¹.

The question of the united front had been placed on the agenda of the Cluj Trade Union Council in January 1923 by the Communist members, but was deleted by a majority vote to avoid the threatened crisis. It was considered, however, in the discussion which followed the general report, and the critical nature of the situation was then fully revealed. Without funds, without competent propagandists, attacked on all sides, and undermined by party intrigues, the trade union movement is threatened with destruction. Internal struggles and the Communists' violent efforts to obtain power have alienated the workers. The unions are breaking up.

¹ Cf. INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE : *Industrial and Labour Information*, Vol. V, No. 1, 5 Jan. 1923, p. 5.

The waiters' union, which had a membership of 1,200 in June 1922, now has only 300 members. The printers' union has lost half its members. Wherever the Communist element has gained ascendancy the prosperity of the trade unions has waned. The unions at Bukarest, where the working population is a large one, frequently show a membership of from 40 to 60 and the federations one of 200 to 300 ; in the metal industry out of more than 12,000 workers only about 350 are organised. At Targou-Mouresch Communist activity has almost destroyed labour organisation ; on the other hand, where the freedom of the movement has not been impaired no ground has been lost, and increases in the number of organised workers are even recorded in some districts : 60 per cent. among the miners, 40 per cent. among the metal workers, and 50 per cent. among the wood workers.

It is high time that the leaders of the Roumanian trade union movement opened their eyes to its perilous position. The movement may yet be brought back into the right track, for the workers still retain confidence in their unions. The number of organised workers increased from 31,500 on 31 December 1921 to 45,000 at the date of the Sibiu congress in June 1922, and to over 65,700 on 30 December 1922. Further progress may be anticipated since the unions of the former Kingdom (in the ports of Braila and Galatz, where political agitators have been excluded) have not yet been reformed and hardly 20 per cent. of the present unions come from these districts.

Labour in Roumania has not been borne away on the destructive tide of Communism. But unless the trade unions banish from their midst the political agents who seek to gain control over them they will lose all that they have won from the capitalists : improved labour conditions, the eight-hour day, unemployment relief, co-operative institutions ; and the loss will be for a long time, for labour organisation will not be quickly built up again.
