

**Petre Țurlea, *Partidul unui rege: Frontul Renașterii Naționale*,  
București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2006, 310 p.**

In the last years started to appear more and more books and studies that, as it was expected, analyze the period between first and Second World War but not as it seemed, as a fascinating and beautiful world, but mostly regarding the limits that Romanian democracy has had. In this direction is the work of historian Petre Țurlea on the first form of Romanian unique party system.

Most of his sources are at first hand and not published but also he quotes other books on the subject. The author invites us to foray the 1938-1940 period, debating, on some areas almost exhaustive, a subject that is less known in Romanian historiography – the founding and evolution of our first unique party: The National Revival Front. The book we are presenting has *An introduction* (p. 5-10), four chapters, I. *Founding and organizing* (p. 11-132), II. *Attempt to get the power* (p. 133-178), III. *The reorganizing of National Revival Front* (p. 179-230), IV. *Transformation in Nation Party* (p. 231-284) and an *Ending* (p. 285-295), to which it's added a necessary *Index. Names of people* (p. 297-306).

First chapter, *Founding and organizing* begins with few pages on the relations between the king versus P.N.Ț. and Legionnaire Movement and also his position regarding Romanian communists movement, the author noticing the sovereign decision to create a party that will include all political forces of the time. The historian presents the founding decree and the adhesion of the first 53 leaders of the Front, and analyzes, shortly, the rules of the new political organization. Then, maybe with too many details and without adding his own commentaries the *Expunerea de motive* document of Armand Călinescu when the F.R.N. has been founded.

After that it is discussed, with details and clearly, the echo that the press (that was under the law of censorship regime and propaganda) created around the theme of creation of the Front and about the adhesions to it. The author presents, using long quotes, the remarks of the newspapers and the first public meetings of F.N.R. from various cities from entire country. On the next few pages there are remarks about the reactions of the Front's opponents as Iuliu Maniu and the P.N.Ț. but also talks about the way how the censorship and the authorities managed to disunite Maniu party, the waiting position of P.N.L. and the reactions of Legionnaire and Communists movements. Significant pages, that were initially published in the book *Nicolae Iorga între dictatura regală și dictatura legionară*,

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are about Iorga's reaction about F.R.N. and the conflict of this great historian and the officials, especially with Armand Călinescu.

On the rules of F.R.N. the author notices on few pages the improvisations that were made in. Also, the rules on the special wearing, the uniform of F.R.N., is described through the eyes of the people from that time. An interesting point of this chapter is a simple and objective analysis of minorities' integration in this party. If the German, Hungarian and Bulgarian minorities attitude is well presented the position of others as Russians, Ukrainians and neither Polish minority is less mentioned, the last ones being the few that didn't make any troubles to the authorities. An important section is dedicated to election law and to campaign and elections from June 1-2, 1939. Of course, the F.R.N. parliament has been discussed, especially the problems from the Senate, that occurred from the beginning session.

In the second chapter, *Attempt to get the power*, the author tries, with the help of prolix Front's literature, to describe the propagandistic doctrine of the regime in his attempt to "impose itself". It is described the ways they tried to include in the Front not only Romanians but also the minorities' members, in this chapter being shown the details of the 1939 autumn campaign. A special fact for historiography is that are also mentioned the various hymns of F.R.N. with commentaries on their style from that period. There are insertions with series of this unique party's initiatives as the collects for the army, the five-years agricultural plans, the agreements with the Minister of Health, with the Country's Sentinel organization or Orthodox Church; also, the activities of National Guards and their relations with the minorities, the political status of the people that asked for F.R.N. membership or the opposition leaders relations regarding the Front.

Similar as structure, the third chapter, *The reorganizing of National Revival Front*, begins with some pages on the re-organizational rules of the party, with the reactions of its leaders on these changes as Victor Vâlcovici that wasn't satisfied on this new reality and the general situation. More pages are bestowed to minorities situation, the Hungarian and German ones being detailed. It is noticeable the state and party attitude on minorities and the attempt of the party leaders to solve the tensions that appeared between Hungarians, Germans, Bulgarians, Ukrainians and Jews – everyone on its particular way – and Romanian population. The last pages of chapter present the National Guards and their program of cooperation with military authorities while the Second World War begun and the revisionist minorities became actively.

Chapter four, *Transformation in Nation Party* analyses the internal context of transformation on National revival Front into the Nation Party, the first changes that were made by it, as the Decree regarding the totalitarian order in Romanian state. Also, the author studies on an important number of pages the whole propagandistic literature appeared during the beginning period of Nation Party, using the etiquette and the usual registry of that epoch. He suggests that the Nation Party didn't have enough time to organize its activity and analyses the new structures of National Guards that now became of Nation Party. Few pages are dedicated to difficult and controversy days of refugee from Basarabia and Northern Bucovina, to conflicts between Jews and Romanian army members, as it is revealed from the reports of the national guards that were retreated from the occupied territories. The historian analyses with a lot of documents from the F.N.R. archives the Romanian Jews situation, especially after the Decree from August 9, 1940 that seriously deteriorated the Jews minority situation. The chapter ends with the details of territorial losses from Transylvania and Cadrilater and with the position of Hungarian, German and Bulgarian regarding these events.

The last part of the book is dedicated to conclusions and presents in its first part the last days of Carol's regime, even he himself left the country the party and its guards still survived few more days. The last conclusive pages are about the purpose and the failed role of the National Revival Front, about the fact that the Nation Party represented just a tragic sequence to the unique party, with a obvious and constant direction to the right. It is mentioned also the failure of the party to demonstrate for Germany and Italy that Romania is able to run a similar regime.

With an elegant and cursive style, the book of historian Petre Țurlea proves to be a needful and interesting one. In a moment when the future of democracy is shadowed by the remains of the past, these examples have to be claimed, for a better understanding. Analyzing with detach a subject that is not totally studied, Petre Țurlea demonstrates a deep understanding of the first Romanian one-party political system. Even maybe a separate chapter dedicated to the attempt of developing a specific ideology of the National Revival Front the work is valid. The few things that are missing are motivated by the difficulties on the process of documentation on such a subject but also because of the lack of consistence of Front's literature. More that 60 years have passed and the critic and serious studies on the first one-party experiment that failed into tragedy started to be published about this event that was kept in shadow too much.

**Radu Florian Bruja**