No. 15

TRONDHEIM STUDIES
ON EAST EUROPEAN CULTURES & SOCIETIES

Constantin Iordachi

CHARISMA, POLITICS AND VIOLENCE: THE LEGION OF THE "ARCHANGEL MICHAEL" IN INTER-WAR ROMANIA

December 2004

Constantin Iordachi is Assistant Professor of Comparative History at the Central European University (CEU), Budapest. He graduated from the University of Bucharest (BA), and the Institute of International Studies, University of Leeds (MA), and has earned his Ph.D. in history at the CEU. Iordachi is specializing in the comparative social and institutional history of Central and Southeastern Europe, with an emphasis on citizenship studies, fascism and the history of historiography. He published numerous articles in various scholarly journals and edited books, mainly in Romanian, Hungarian and English. His book *The Making of Citizenship in Southeastern Europe during the Long Nineteenth Ceuntry: The Case of Romania*, is forthcoming with the CEU Press.

ISSN 1501-6684
ISBN 82-995792-3-6

Trondheim studies on East European Cultures and Societies
Editor: György Péteri
Editorial board: Trond Berge, Tanja Ellingsen, Knut Andreas Grimstad, Arne Halvorsen, Sabrina P. Ramet

We encourage submission to the *Trondheim Studies on East European Culture and Societies*. Inconclusion in the series will be based on anonymous review. Manuscripts are expected to be in English (exception is made for Norwegian Master`s and Ph.D. thesis) and not exceed 150 double spaced pages. Postal address for submission: Editors, Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, Department of History, NTNU, N-7491 Trondheim, Norway.

For more information regarding the Program on East European Culture and Societies and our paper series, visit our WEB-site at:

http:/hf.ntnu.no/peecs/peecs.htm

Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" in Inter-war Romania

Constantin Iordachi,
Central European University, Budapest

Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies
2004

Table of Contents:

List of Illustrations

List of Tables

Acknowledgements

A shorter and earlier version of this study was published as a book chapter under the title "Charisma, Religion, Ideology: Romania's Interwar Legion of the Archangel Michael," in John R. Lampe, Mark Mazower, eds., *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), p. 19-53. The current working paper is designed as a nucleus of a larger book project in progress on charisma and politics in modern Romania. I am indebted, first and foremost, to Sorin Antohi (CEU, Budapest), for his constant academic support; to John Lampe, Mark Mazower, and the participants to the research project "Between Nationalism, War and Communism: Re-appraising the History of Southeastern Europe in the 20th Century," CEU and Open Society Archives, Budapest, for valuable feedback; to Luisa Passerini and the participants in the research project "Europe and Love: Emotions, Identities, Politics" (Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut, Essen), for underscoring the intimate connextion between emotions and politics; to Roger Griffin for reviewing an earlier version of the paper and making useful suggestions; and, last but not least, to György Péteri for his invitation to take part in a seminar on modern Romania organized by the Program on East European Cultures & Societies, Norwegian University of Science & Technology, Trondheim, and for his generous help in publishing my paper in this series.

"The spontaneous and concomitant appearance of the geniuses of Heroic Europe cannot be rationally explained. The world war generated regeneration movements. The great paths of continental history are affirmed in the biographical parallels of the giants. But the national character (*specificul național*) will find its incarnation, its brilliance distancing itself more and more from earthly laws. […] The *Duce*, the *Fuehrer*, the Captain, transform the nation in a permanent force, in a '*corpus mysticus*' freed from borders. This is the deepest sense of the 'totality,' of the 'consensus,' of 'ecumenicity' which legitimizes and fulfills the form Charisma. For those who have become the most perfect incarnation of the national spirituality, any affinity with the demo-liberal or dictatorial governments of the past disappears. From the march of Rome, from the triumphal entry of the *Führer* through the Brandenburg gate, from the miracle of the Archangel Michael, the Italian people, the German people, and the Romanian people have found their definitive place within Heroic Europe."

Alexandru Randa, "The Wings of the Archangel," *Axa,* 5 December 1940, p. I.

1. Introduction:

1.1. Main Argument

The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" (also known as the Iron Guard[1]) in inter-war Romania has generally been considered as one of the most complex and unusual "varieties of fascism" in East-Central Europe, for several reasons.[2] First, it originated independently of Italian fascism and German National Socialism. Second, it was a vigorous political movement, among the few—along with the Ustaša Movement in Croatia and the Arrow Cross in Hungary—to take a mass character. The Legion was also the only mass fascist movement in an Orthodox country. In 1937, it claimed an estimated 270,000 members; it received 478,000 votes in parliamentary elections, 16 percent of the electorate, earning 66 seats in Parliament.[3] Third, it represented a full-fledged political movement, encompassing all "five stages of fascism" as identified by Robert Paxton.[4] In the case of the Legion, these five stages are: the creation of the movement in 1927; its emergence as a significant political player in 1931-1933; the bid for power facilitated by the breakdown of the democratic regime at the end of 1937 and the subsequent failure of the authoritarian regime of Carol II in 1938-1940; the exercise of power in 1940-1941; and finally, the radicalization of the movement, its

[1] This paper uses the generic name of the Legion for the whole range of successive political movements based on Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's, and later Horia Sima's, leadership. The initial name of the movement was The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" and was founded by a small group of activists led by Codreanu on 24 June 1927 in Iaşi. On 13 April 1930 Codreanu established the Iron Guard, as a political section of the movement. On 3 January 1931, authorities dissolved The Legion of the "Archangel Michael"/the Iron Guard. In April 1931, Codreanu formed the "Corneliu Codreanu Grouping," which participated in the parliamentary elections; in 1932 it gained five seats in the parliament. Dissolved again on 9/10 December 1933, Codreanu founded the "All for the Fatherland" party, which took part in the parliamentary elections of December 1937, and was dissolved on 22 February 1938. The movement was also known under the generic name of the "Legionary Movement" (*Mişcarea Legionară*).

[2] Eugen Weber, "Romania," in Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism. Doctrines of Revolution in the Twentieth Century* (New York, Cincinnati, Toronto, London, Melbourne: D. Van Nstrand Company, 1964), p. 96-105; Stanley G. Payne also judged that the Legion was "probably the most unusual mass movement of interwar Europe." See Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), p. 116. Another prominent scholar of fascism in Romania, Francisco Veiga, concluded that the Legion was "the most representative and popular of a series of similar extreme-right movements in Eastern Europe." See Francisco Veiga, *La Mística del Ultranacionalismo. Historia de la Guardia de Hierron. Rumania, 1919-1941* (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1989). Romanian edition: *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaţionalismului*, Translated by Marian Ştefănescu (Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas, 1993).

[3] See Armin Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien: soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986). Quotations in this paper are from the Romanian edition, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail." Mişcare socială şi organizaţie politică. O contribuţie la problema fascismului internaţional* (Bucureşti: Humanitas**,** 1998). Here, p. 17.

[4] Robert O. Paxton, "Five Stages of Fascism," *The Journal of Modern History* 70 (March 1998), p. 1-23.

rebellion and final ouster from power in 1941 by General Ion Antonescu, with the support of the army. Most importantly, the Legion exhibited many particularities by combining, in a complex syncretism, general fascist characteristics with specific ideological features such as its religious faith and mysticism.

These particularities have generated numerous scholarly controversies. For Ernst Nolte, who regards fascism as a post-1918 European reaction to the strain of modernity and industrialism against a societal background marked by cultural relativism, the history of the Legion raised a legitimate question: "How could a certain kind of subtle cultural critique have become a vital political factor in Romania, at the edge of Europe?"[5] His own answer was that, "It is not fascism itself, but the clear development of certain essential characteristics, which is dependent on the size of the country and the significance of its spiritual traditions."[6] In other words, notwithstanding universal features, the key to understanding fascism is ultimately found in the national history of nations in which it emerged. To this end—together with another prominent student of fascism, Eugen Weber—Nolte called for an intensified study of fascism in East-Central Europe, most notably in Hungary and Romania.[7]

---

[5] Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 462. Was the Legion the only fascist movement in inter-war Romania? Stanley G. Payne argued that Romanian political life encompassed three faces of authoritarian nationalism, respectively the Iron Guard; the radical right of the League for the National Christian Defense led by A. C. Cuza, becoming later the National Christian Party led by A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga; and the authoritarian corporatism of Carol II during the regime of royal dictatorship (1938-1940). Payne, *Fascism. Comparison and Definition,* p. 115. In his authoritative monograph, Armin Heinen asserts that only the Legion had a genuinely fascist character, denying this feature to the National Christian Party, the League for the National Christian Defense and the personal regime of Carol II. See Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail,"* p. 467-468.

[6] Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, p. 462

[7] This call generated a wave of scholarly works on fascism in Romania. See Eugen Weber, "Romania," in *Varieties of Fascism*; "Romania," in Hans Rogger, Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right: A Historical Profile* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965), p. 501-574; "The Man of the Archangel," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (1966), p. 101-126; Stephen Fisher-Galati, "Fascism in Romania" in Peter F. Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism in the Successor States*, 1918-1945 (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1971), p. 112-122; "Romanian nationalism," in Peter F. Sugar, Ivo J. Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1969), p. 373-95; Emanuel Turczynski, "The Background of Romanian Fascism," in *Native Fascism*, p. 101-111; Francis L. Carsten, "Anti-Semitism and Anti-Communism: The Iron Guard," in *The Rise of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 181-193; Zeev Barbu, "Rumania," in S. J. Woolf, ed., *European Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 146-166; Zeev Barbu, "Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Iron Guard, the Fascist Movement of Romania," in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, Jan Petter Myklebust, eds., *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget; Irvington-on-Hudson: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 379-394; and Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990). Romanian edition: *Sabia Arhanghelului Mihail. Ideologia fascistă în România* (Bucuresti: Editura Diogene, 1995). For the most complete monograph up to date, see Heinen, *Die Legion* "*Erzengel Michael.*" For a comparative view of fascism in Romania and Hungary, see Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary*

Building on Max Weber's theory regarding the charismatic type of legitimacy, and on its numerous additions, corrections and reformulations, this paper aims to reinterpret the Legion as a reactive regional movement of change based on the violent counterculture of a radical youth. It argues that the Legionary ideology combined, in a heterogeneous but powerful synthesis, three main strategies of political mobilization. These include a charismatic type of legitimacy based on the millennialist cult of the Archangel Michael and the leadership of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu; the messianic mission of the inter-war "new generation"; and integral nationalism, including calls for "cultural purification" and "national regeneration" modeled on the French pattern of Charles Maurras (1868-1952) and Maurice Barrès (1862-1923), and coupled with a virulent anti-Semitism.[8] Among these elements, the charismatic component of Legionary ideology was the most integrative, shaping its message and accounting for its genesis, structure and political evolution.[9]

Weber's perspective on charisma illuminates a pivotal feature of the Legion, which has remained to date under-researched. To be sure, there seems to be an implicit consensus among students of Romanian fascism that Codreanu was a charismatic political leader. However, virtually all works on the topic have approached it from the narrow perspective of Codreanu's personal qualities, ascribing his charisma to his striking physical appearance, or—in laudatory terms—to his allegedly "exceptional" personality. Although the case study evidently requires a more elaborate theoretical interpretation, no scholarly work has yet attempted to link the study of Codreanu's leadership to Weber's theory on charismatic authority, and to extend this conceptual framework to the study of the movement itself, its structure and organization.

In addition, by employing a "value-free" definition of charisma—detached from any normative connotations—the study is also able to unify two main features of Legionary ideology that stood in apparent contradiction and have consequently been analyzed separately: its alleged Christian character and its inherent violence and criminality.

---

and Rumania (Berkeley: California University Press, 1967). For comparative analysis of the Jewish question and the rise of anti-Semitism in inter-war Romania, Hungary and Czekoslovakia, based on documents of the British Foreign Office, see Bela Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936-1939* (Farnborough, Hants: Saxon House for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1975).

[8] On interwar movements of "cultural purification," with direct reference to the Legion, see Anthony D. Smith, "Culture, Community, and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs* 72 (July 1996) 3, p. 445-458.

[9] The usage of the term "ideology" for describing Legionary propaganda may seem intriguing, given its heterogeneous nature, its contradictions, and its numerous intellectual borrowings. The essay does not define the Legionary ideology as an "ism" comparable to other, more coherent and elaborated "isms," such as communism or nationalism, but uses the term "ideology" for describing the Legionary worldview based on the writings of the main ideologues of the movement, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ion I. Moţa and Horia Sima, and of other Legionary intellectuals such as Vasile Marin, Mihail Polihroniade, Ion Banea, Ilie Imbrescu, Constantin Papanace, etc. For minimal versus enlarged definitions of Legionary doctrine, see Dan Pavel, "Legionarismul" in Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, ed., *Doctrine politice. Concepte universale şi realităţi româneşti* (Iaşi: Polirom, 1998), p. 212-228. For a discussion of the ideological status of fascism, see Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism,* p. 14-19. For an attempt to grant fascism "full ideological status" without the intention of elevating its political standing, see Roger Griffin, "General Introduction," in *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 1-12. The latter work also provides representative samples of fascist ideology in a comparative perspective.

Due to the lack of an overarching analytical concept able to encapsulate these dichotic discourses, the contradictory nature of Legionary ideology has puzzled many scholars. For example, the historian and literary critic Sorin Alexandrescu suggested that "Legionarism encompassed three different levels of existence, logically incongruent, if not completely incompatible, in which the movement's members nevertheless lived simultaneously, apparently without realizing it," namely "the Legionary ideology, the program ('the word') and the legionary action ('the deed')."[10] Alexandrescu diagnosed this "fading away of the limit and differentiation between word and deed" as "schizophrenia, psychosis characterized by internal rupture (*Spaltung*), incoherence in thought, action and affections (or among them), and the loss of touch with reality, etc."[11] In the same vein, Eugen Weber emphasized "the fracture between dream and deed" characterizing "intransigent and 'pure' movements," such as the Legion. He attributed it to the gap between "the highly moralistic and patriotic education" of the youth, and the "corruption and opportunism of urban or public life."[12]

This paper argues that the concept of charisma offers a conceptual umbrella unifying the apparently incompatible aspects of Legionary ideology and practice, shedding light upon the relationship between religion, violence and politics, and thus avoiding the "medicalization" of this radical social and political phenomenon.[13] By exposing the movement's built-in violent character, this theoretical perspective also refutes the main claims of Legionary propaganda, which emphasized the Legion's religious character while downplaying its crimes as accidental or foreign to its spirit.[14] The paper also addresses the reception of Weber's theory of charismatic authority, reasserting its analytical usefulness in studying personalized movements of change.

The paper is made up of introduction, seven main chapters, conclusions, bibliography and annexes. The introduction reviews Weber's theory of charisma, and explores its scholarly reception, with an emphasis on fascist studies and inter-war mass politics. Chapter two provides an introduction into social, political, ethno-religious and generational cleavages in Greater Romania; special attention is paid to an emerging violent youth subculture and its confrontation with the "hegemonic" official culture. Chapter three explores the interaction

---

[10] Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul Român* (Bucharest: Univers, 1998), p. 201.

[11] Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul Român*, p. 209. The definition of the Iron Guard as "a collective psychosis" had a large circulation in the epoch. It was first coined by the interwar sociologist Mircea Vulcănescu, who asserted that: "Through these youngsters [the Legionaries], Romanian society was diverted from its constructive efforts, *through a real psychosis*, tempting in its idealist beginnings, but frightening in its subsequent gloomy and criminal consequences." Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu aşa cum l-am cunoscut* (Nae Ionescu as I have known him) (Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas, 1992), p. 81.

[12] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 122, 123.

[13] For the tendency to "medicalize" rather than explain certain social phenomena in Eastern European, see Sorin Antohi in "Cioran şi stigmatul românesc. Mecanisme identitare şi definiţii radicale ale etnicităţii," in *Civitas Imaginalis. Istorie şi utopie în cultura română* (Bucureşti: Editura Litera, 1994), p. 234-36, 283-84.

[14] Leading émigré Legionaries, such as Constantin Papanace and Ştefan Palaghiţă, claim the virtuous charismatic "purity" of the Legion's initial leadership, as represented by the duo Codreanu-Moţa, denouncing the wartime leadership of Horia Sima as an illegitimate succession that distorted the spirit of the Legion and was responsible for its abominable crimes. See Constantin Papanace, *Destinul unei generaţii* (Rome: Biblioteca Verde, 1952); and Ştefan Palaghiţă, *Garda de Fier. Spre reînvierea României* (Buenos Aires: S. Palaghiţă, 1951). Quotation in this paper are from the 2nd ed.: (Bucharest: Editura Roza Vânturilor, 1993).

between charisma and politics in inter-war Romania; it also presents an overview of the main phases in the Legion's history, from its creation in 1927 until 1937. Chapter four focuses on the main features of the Legion of the Archangel Michael as a charismatic movement, at the following levels: the cult of the Archangel, the "salvational formula" of the movement, Codreanu's leadership, the social structure and organization of the movement and its political trajectory. Chapter five explores the sacralization of politics in inter-war Romania, and the relationship between the Legion and the Orthodox Church. Chapter six and seven analyze the evolution of the Legion during King Carol II's personal regime (1938-1940) and during its short experiment in exercising political power (1940-1941). The last chapter explores the long-term impact of the Legionary ideology on the Romanian political culture and the revival of the charismatic cult of personality under the communist regime. The conclusions evaluate the usefulness of the concept of charisma for the study of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, and its relevance for the more general debate on "generic fascism."

The aim of the paper is not to reconstruct the history of the movement, but to provide an alternative interpretation of its nature and main features from the perspective of Weber's theory of charismatic authority. To this end, the paper focuses on a number of under-researched aspects such as: postwar disorganization and breakdown of traditional institutions and the collapse of normative patterns regulating interpersonal and communal relations, followed by state-building and institutional reorganization; issues of youth deviance and social control; religious crisis and inter-confessional conflicts; the content of the Legionary belief system; the Legion's leadership and party organization; demographic characteristics of membership and its geographic dispersion; gender roles within the Legion; commitments and sacrifices required of Legionaries and main socialization techniques; recruitment strategies and defection patterns; the breakdown of the charismatic community; the routinization of charisma and post-movement dynamics, marked by factionalism and claims of exclusivity based on the monopoly of charismatic authority; and the connection between charisma, conflict and violence.

The paper is also conceived as a collection of primary sources on the Legion's ideology, enabling further comparative studies. It contains numerous citations of representative Legionary writings in the main text; in addition, the Annexes include seven long extracts from cult Legionary articles or witness accounts (all materials in my translation).

1.2. Charismatic Leadership: A Theoretical Mapping

In his sociological writings, Max Weber theorized three forms of political legitimacy: 1) legal/rational authority, based on belief in the legality of certified rules and in the legitimization of leaders invested with authority under those particular rules (i.e. elected representatives, civil servants, etc.); 2) traditional authority, based on belief in the sanctity of customs (i.e. royal authority); and 3) charismatic authority, based on devotion to an exceptional leader and on normative rules ordained by him (i.e. prophets, warlords, etc.).[15]

---

[15] Max Weber, "The Pure Types of Legitimate Authority," in S. N. Eisenstadt, (ed.), *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1968), p. 46. See also Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, translated and with an introduction by H. P. Secher (New York: Citadel Press, 1990); Max Weber, *The city*, translated and edited by Don Martindale and Gertrud Neuwirth (New York: Free Press, 1966); and *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by H. H. Gerth and

In analyzing these three forms of legitimacy, Weber created or reinterpreted certain sociological concepts. "Bureaucracy" designated an organization based on a hierarchy of specialized offices structured according to written rules, recruitment based upon formally acquired qualifications, and an impersonal relationship between an office and its incumbents. "Rationalization" was defined by Weber as a process of "demagicification" of the world, in which human action is dominated by calculation, routine administration and a specialized division of labor.

Central to the third type of authority is the concept of charisma ("gift of grace"), defined by Weber as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional qualities."[16] In contrast with the first two forms, charismatic legitimacy is based strictly on an exceptional individual's personal qualifications. The act of leader's recognition doesn't originate from the "will" of the followers. It is rather "the duty of those to whom he addresses his mission to recognize him as their charismatically qualified leader."[17]

Unlike the other two types of legitimacy, the charismatic bond has, in Weber's view, an exceptional, highly intense and emotional nature. It rises "out of suffering, conflict," from "enthusiasm, or of despair and hope," "in times of psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, or political distress."[18] A charismatic leader's authority is based on effectual or emotional commitment, as well as on a belief in his extraordinary personal qualities. Charisma thus has a double foundation: "the highly personal experience of heavenly grace," and "the god-like strengths of the hero."

Charisma also involves a social structure: a staff and an apparatus of service and resources adapted to the leader's mission.[19] Those who have a share in charisma form a personal staff (*cleros*), a charismatic aristocracy composed of a group of adherents united by loyalty and selected according to personal charismatic qualification.[20] They claim to be fed at the common table, to be provided with services and to be granted honorific gifts, to share the social, political or religious esteem in which the leader himself is held.[21] Although charisma rejects material acquisition, members of the personal staff live from sponsorship or honorific gifts provided by the voluntary contribution of the followers. Weber thus regarded charismatic communities as historical examples of communism, in the sense of absence of private property and formal liability in the consumption sphere.

Charisma has a revolutionary nature.[22] Based on the "genuine glorification of the mentality of the prophet and hero,"[23] it rejects all external orders, transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms.[24] Furthermore, Weber pointed out that, in fulfilling

---

C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1998). On the sociology of Max Weber, see Julien Freund, *Sociologie de Max Weber* (Paris: PUF, 1966).

[16] Max Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and Its Routinization," in Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma*, p. 48.

[17] Max Weber, "Sociology of Charismatic Authority," in Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma*, p. 20.

[18] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," in *Economy and Society*, vol. 2, p. 1116.

[19] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1119.

[20] Max Weber, "The Social Structure of Charismatic Domination," p. 1119.

[21] Max Weber, "The Social Structure of Charismatic Domination," p. 1119.

[22] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1115.

[23] Max Weber, "Sociology of Charismatic Authority," p. 25.

[24] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1115-1116.

their mission, the master and his apostles must inevitably turn away from the world to free themselves from the ordinary attachments and duties of occupation and family life.[25]

Unlike bureaucracy, charisma is self-determined and sets its own limits, from within, the bearer claiming the task for which he is destined and demanding that other obey and follow him by virtue of his mission. This is why Weber considered bureaucracy and charisma as opposed. The former is oriented toward satisfaction of the routine necessities of daily life, with rational, ordinary means.[26] In contrast, charisma deals with all extraordinary needs, which transcend the sphere of the everyday economic routine and can be satisfied only in a heterogeneous manner.[27] In other words, bureaucracy changes the social and material order of society through the people, while charisma changes the people from within, through a transformation, a mutation in the proselytes' attitude.[28]

Weber appreciated charisma as a necessarily non-economic power: its vitality is immediately endangered when everyday financial interests become predominant.[29] Charisma is therefore "specifically unstable," remaining only as long as the leader can effectively prove that he is "the master willed by God."[30] In order to gain and then retain authority over his followers, the charismatic leader needs to prove his exceptional qualities by performing miracles, to execute exceptional deeds of heroism, and to assure the well being of his followers.[31] As a personal quality, charisma is thus a transitory phenomenon; taken in its "pure form," it ceases to exist with the disappearance of its bearer. This raises the problem of succession. Motivated by underlying idealistic and material interests, the charismatic staff and followers often oppose the temporary nature of charisma. They strive to transform its character of unique, exceptional power into a transferable and permanent social quality attached to an office or institutional structure regardless of the qualities of the persons involved.[32]

The succession to charismatic leadership is nevertheless subject to peculiar rules. As Weber pointed out, "Given the nature of charisma, a free election of a successor is originally not possible, only the acknowledgement that the pretender actually *has* charisma. Hence the followers may have to wait for the epiphany of a personally qualified successor, temporal representative or prophet."[33] The process of succession has to reach the approval of both charismatic staff and followers. First, the *cleros* and the disciples always have a major say, since they control the instrument of power and tend to appropriate the right of designation.[34] In addition, since "the effectiveness of charisma rests on the faith of the ruled, their approval of the designated successor is indispensable."[35] Charisma may thus suffer a process of routinization, which, according to Weber, can take place in the following forms: designation of a new charismatic leader (traditionalization); selection according to a specific technique

---

[25] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1112.
[26] Max Weber, "Sociology of Charismatic Authority," and "The Nature of Charismatic Authority," in Eisenstadt, ed., M*ax Weber on Charisma,* 18, 49.
[27] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1112.
[28] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1116.
[29] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1111.
[30] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1114.
[31] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1114.
[32] Max Weber, "The Genesis and Transformation of Charismatic Authority," in *Economy and Society,* Vol. 2, p. 1121-1122.
[33] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1123.
[34] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1125.
[35] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1125

(legalization); hereditary transmission; transmission by ritual means; "charisma of the office;" and charisma of kinship.[36]

Weber's original perspective on charisma introduced three main innovations. First, he borrowed the concept from the realm of religious studies and applied it to the realm of politics.[37] Second, he deprived charisma of its original positive connotations, attempting to transform it into a "completely value-free" analytical concept.[38] To this end, Weber extended the usage of charisma from exclusively normative social figures (i.e. Christian saints) to a wide range of controversial characters, including mythical figures (i.e. the Irish hero Cuchulain, the Homeric hero Achilles), religiously gifted individuals (prophets, Shamans), historical personalities (i.e. Pericles, Napoleon), diverse professional categories (i.e. "doctors, […] judges and military leaders, or leaders of big hunting expeditions"[39]), and contemporary religious or political personalities (i.e. Mormonism founder Joseph Smith, Bavarian leader Kurt Eisner).

Finally, Weber associated the concept of charisma with the creative potential of human nature, and integrated it into the dialectic of a larger historical development. In his view, the modern process of rationalization and bureaucratization endangers human freedom and creativity, and are therefore accompanied by recurrent charismatic eruptions, seen by Weber as essential for preserving social freedom and for triggering institutional change.

Among the three types of legitimacy defined by Weber, the concept of charisma became from the outset one of the most influential but controversial and debated concepts in Western social science, being subject to a wide range of heterogeneous inter-disciplinary applications. Scholars specializing in the history of antiquity employed the concept of charisma to study forms of political legitimization in the Roman Empire.[40] Others have applied the concept to the study of the Christian Church[41], especially in its early stages,[42]

---

[36] Max Weber, "Theory of Social and Economic Organization," in Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma*, p. 334-342.

[37] Max Weber acknowledged two main theoretical sources for his work on charisma: Rudolph Sohm, *Kirchenrecht* (1892), and Hollin, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewal*. See Guenther Roth, "Introduction," in *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. XCVI.

[38] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1112; Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," p. 19.

[39] Max Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," p. 19.

[40] Gebhardt, Winfried, Arnold Zingerle, Christoph R. Hatscher, *Charisma und Res publica: Max Webers Herrschaftssoziologie und die Römische Republik* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000); Fritz Taeger, *Charisma. Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscherkultes*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1957-1960).

[41] Francis A. Sullivan, *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Nouan-le-Fuzelier: Pneumatique, 1988); Alfred Gugolz, *Charisma und Rationalität in der Gesellschaft: die Religionssoziologie* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1984); Gotthold Hasenhüttl, *Charisma: Ordnungsprinzip der Kirche* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1969); Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton, Tony Walter, eds. *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Peter Zimmerling, *Die charismatischen Bewegungen: Theologie, Spiritualität, Anstösse zum Gespräch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

[42] Jack T. Sanders, *Charisma, Converts, Competitors: Societal and Sociological Factors in the Success of Early Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 2000); Adolf Martin Ritter, *Charisma im Verständnis des Joannes Chrysostomos und seiner Zeit: ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der griechischorientalischen Ekklesiologie in der Frühzeit der Reichskirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1972).

even extending its usage to Islam[43] and modern neo-protestant religions such as the interdenominational Christian revivalist movement generally referred to as Neo-Pentecostalism that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century.[44]

Numerous scholars have explored the relevance of charisma in the study of early modern and modern societies.[45] In a revolutionary book entitled *Primitive Rebels,* Eric Hobsbawm applied charisma to social movements characterized by a syncretism of political and religious/millenarian aspects.[46] This innovation stimulated research on the history of millenarian movements in Western Europe. Following this line of interpretation, Norman Cohn concluded that totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century, such as fascism and communism, were millennial movements of poor, deprived and *déclassé*.[47] Edward Shils, David Apter, Dorothy Willner, Ann Ruth Willner and a number of other scholars employed charisma for the study of political developments in ex-colonial Third World countries in Asia, Africa, or Latin America.[48]

---

[43] Donald Cruise, Bryan O'Brien, Christian Coulon, eds., *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

[44] See Michael P. Hamilton, *The Charismatic movement* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1975). Hamilton points out that charismatic groups have recently emerged within non-Pentecostal denominations such as Roman-Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and Episcopalian. According to Hamilton, "The term *charismatic* applies to those who have experienced a 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' that involves receiving certain spiritual gifts. This event, sometimes as important as conversion, usually leads to a new style of living for the recipient, and public witness to the benefits of baptism in the Spirit becomes a central and joyous aspect of his life. Tongue-speaking, technically known as *glossolalia*, is the distinctive, though not necessarily the most important, gift received at the baptism of the spirit." Among the gifts received by charismatics, Hamilton mentions "the interpretation of tongues, prophecy, healing powers, and a desire for an active style of participatory workshop in which these gifts are practices." Hamilton, *The Charismatic movement,* p. 5. For a bibliographical survey of Neo-Protestant charismatic movements, see Charles Edwin Jones, *The Charismatic Movement: A Guide to the Study of Neo-Pentecostalism with Emphasis on Anglo-American Source*s. 2 vols. (Metuchen, London: The Scarecrow Press, 1995).

[45] Irvine Schiffer, *Charisma: A Psychoanalytic Look at Mass Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

[46] Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th centuries* (New York: Norton, 1959).

[47] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (London: Pimlico, 1993). See also Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs Through the Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[48] Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Edward Shils, "Charisma, Order, and Status," *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965) 2, p. 199-213; Edward Shils, "The Concentration and Dispersion of Charisma: Their Bearing on Economic Policy in Underdeveloped Countries," *World Politics* 11 (Oct., 1958) 1, p. 1-19; and Ann Ruth Willner, Dorothy Willner, "The Rise and Role of Charismatic Leaders," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 358 (March 1965), p. 77-88. On India, see Lewis Ferrell Carter, *Charisma and Control in Rajneeshpuram: The Role of Shared Values in the Creation of a Community* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Daler Deol, *Charisma and Commitment: The Mind and Political Thinking of Indira Ghandi* (New Delhi, Bangalore, Jullundur: Sterling, 1981). On Latin America, see Georg Eickhoff, *Das*

Robert Michels applied the concept to political life in modern Western Europe, and Rodney R. Hutton to research on the Israeli society,[49] while Jay H. Conger applied it to leadership in managerial organizations.[50] Samuel Eisenstadt attempted to close the gap between the extraordinary nature of charisma and the everyday routine, defining the concept as a permanent and essential component of the process of institution building.[51]

Given these wide-ranging applications, Weber's theory of charisma has met intensive criticism and reformulation on various grounds. K. J. Ratnam claimed that Weber's perspective lacked a more detailed analysis of the personal qualities characterizing a charismatic leader, and as such fails to offer a methodological apparatus for distinguishing between genuine charismatic leaderships, unsuccessful attempts and charismatic "frauds."[52] Carl Friedrich objected to the conceptual overreaching of charisma from its original scope of divinely inspired "missions" to lay and non-transcendental types of callings, such as military leadership, political demagogy, etc. Freidrich also pointed out the inherent contradictions encompassed by Weber's discussion of the "routinization of charisma."[53]

Finally, in a most radical criticism of the concept, Karl Loewenstein asserted that, in spite of its persuasive terminology—a genuine "stroke of genius"—Weber's perspective on charisma conceals basic theoretical and methodological inconsistencies.[54] Among them, he mentioned the impossibility of analyzing scientifically historical examples of charisma, and of discerning between "demonic" and "charismatic," as well as charisma's underlying irrelevance in the study of the contemporary era of advanced technology and democratic parliamentary political regimes. Doubting the theoretical viability and universal applicability of charisma as a type of political legitimacy, Loewenstein suggested that the concept should be confined to the narrower study of "mass and social psychology" in developing nations. He therefore pleaded for an overall rethinking of Weber's threefold categorization of ideal types of legitimate authority.

In sum, one can distinguish between two main interpretations of charisma: a "modernizing" interpretation, which has approached the concept in relation to the process of modernization and political transition in developing countries; and a more neutral interpretation regarding charisma as a permanent and universal side effect of modernization in East and West alike.[55]

Charisma der Caudillos: Cárdenas, Franco, Perón (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert Verl, 1999).

[49] Robert Michels, *Political Parties* (New York, 1959); Rodney R. Hutton, *Charisma and Authority in Israelite Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

[50] Robert C. Tucker, "The Theory of Charismatic Leadership," *Daedalus* 97 (1968) 3, p. 731-756; and Jay A. Conger, *The Charismatic Leader. Bedind the Mystique of Exceptional Leadership* (San Franisco, London: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989).

[51] S. N. Eisenstadt, "Introduction," in Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma*, p. *ix-lvi*.

[52] K. J. Ratnam, "Charisma and Political Leadership," *Political Studies* 12 (1964) 3, p. 344, 354.

[53] Carl J. Friedrich, "Political Leadership and Charismatic Power," *The Journal of Politics* 23 (February, 1961) 2, p. 14-16.

[54] Karl Loewenstein, *Max Weber's Political Ideas in the Perspective of Our Time* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966), p. 74-88.

[55] For elaboration on this point, see Tucker, "The Theory of Charismatic Leadership," p. 731-756.

1.3. Charisma and Generic Fascism

Charismatic leadership has been defined as a feature of "generic fascism"[56] in all major typologies of fascism authored by Stanley G. Payne, George L. Mosse, Roger Eatwell, Roger Griffin, etc.[57] In one of the most influential such typologies, Payne argued that the common features of fascist movements in Europe encompassed "a new functional relationship for the social and economic systems, eliminating the autonomy [...] of large-scale capitalism," "a new order in foreign affairs," and "highly ethnicist as well as extremely nationalist" priorities. A second set of common characteristics was found in fascist negations: anti-fascism, anti-communism, and anti-conservatorism. Last but not least, fascist movements also exhibited important features of style and organization, such as "authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command."[58]

Arguing that fascism can be defined "in terms not of a common ideological component, but of a common mythic core,"[59] Roger Griffin criticized the "check-list approach" based on artificially established criteria. Instead, he defined fascism as "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of popular ultra-nationalism."[60] Griffin's analysis of "the nature of fascism," conceived as an exercise in the history of ideas based on secondary sources, focused on the paradigmatic cases of Italian fascism and German National Socialism, as well as on European and non-European movements emulating them.

---

[56] For a pioneering attempt at defining "minimal Fascism," see cf. Ernst Nolte, *Die faschistischen Bewegungen. Die Krise des liberalen System und die Entwicklung der Faschismen* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1968); and Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascis m*. Two prominent students of the mainstream cases of Italian fascism and German Nazism, Karl Dietrich Bracher in *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structures, and Effects of National Socialism* (New York, 1970), and Renzo de Felice in *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to Its Theory and Practice* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1976), spoke of a "minimum common denominator" of fascist movements, while Eugen Weber spoke of *Varieties of Fascism*. Roger Eatweell defines fascism within "a flexible 'matrix'" rather than as an essentialist and static minimum. See Roger Eatwell, "Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4 (1992) 4, p. 161-194. Arguing that fascism "cannot be given an absolute definition by social scientists because it is an ideal type," Roger Griffin pointed out that the concept of fascism is nevertheless "a valuable heuristic and taxonomic device." He built an ideal-type model of "generic fascism" in view of its core ideological principles and in terms of "reborn nation and post-liberal society." See Roger Griffin, "A New Ideal Type of Generic Fascism," in *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 26. The existence of universal features of fascism remains nevertheless a matter of academic controversy. For a refutation of the concept of "generic fascism" and an attempt to limit its universality, see Gilbert Allardyce, "What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," *The American Historical Review* 84 (1979) 2, p. 367-388.

[57] See for example Roger Eatwell, "Fascism," in Roger Eatwell, Anthony Wright, eds., *Contemporary Political Ideologies* (London, New York: Continuum, 1999), p. 180-205, here p. 186-187.

[58] See Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 6-8.

[59] Griffin, *Fascism*, p. 2.

[60] See Roger Griffin, "A New Ideal Type of Generic Fascism," in *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 26.

Griffin also pointed out that, as a revolutionary force opposed to both traditional and legal-rational forms of authority, "fascism tends to operate as a charismatic form of politics."[61] This predisposition does not necessarily presuppose that all forms of fascism develop into the direction of the leader cult. However, even if the leader cult "is not a core component of generic fascism" it is nevertheless "a pragmatic necessity if any organization is to become what its palingenetic ultra-nationalism dictates it must be, namely a movement."[62] The leader cult proves also important in the political dynamic of fascist regimes. It is highly significant in this respect that in the two historical cases where fascism managed to install itself as a political regime—namely Germany and Italy—it "remained a charismatic form of politics."[63]

These conclusions are confirmed by major monographs on the nature of Hitler's and Mussolini's leadership in Germany and Italy respectively.[64] Ian Kershaw, a leading scholar specializing in the history of the Third Reich, argued that Weber's concept of "charismatic rule" provides "a key to an understanding of the gradual expansion of Hitler's power."[65] Unlike authors who restrict charisma to the study of contemporary politics in developing countries, Kershaw asserted its relevance for "capitalist state systems in crisis" marked by the erosion of impersonal forms of bureaucratic or legal/rational power and the emergence of personalized forms of politics. Although charismatic forms of authority are by their very nature temporary and unstable, they could attain dominance in societies marked by "the most severe crisis conditions imaginable" as in Germany during the Weimar Republic. Kershaw described the Nazi political system as a regime of "charismatic dominance" grounded in a "widespread (if far from all-pervasive) readiness to accept an entirely different system of government based upon the exercise of personal power associated with personal responsibility."[66] On this basis, he argued that, while the concept of "charismatic dominance" has universal applications, its specific content and motivations "vary according to circumstances, background and the particular form of 'political culture.'"[67] Kershaw accounted for the powerful emergence of Hitler's charismatic authority in view of the interaction among multiple crises of German society and specific traits of its political culture.

Concerning the Italian fascism, aspects of Mussolini's charisma and the cult of the *Duce*—called *Mussolinianism*—as a form of societal consensus were explored, among others, by Renzo de Felice, Emilio Gentile and Piero Melograni, while Maurizio Bach approached it in comparison to Nazi Germany.[68]

---

[61] Griffin, *Fascism*, p. 5.
[62] Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, p. 42.
[63] Griffin, *Fascism*, p. 5.
[64] See Joseph Nyomarkay, *Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party* (Minneapolis, 1967); and Dietrich Orlow*, The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1945,* 2 vols. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969, 1973).
[65] Ian Kershaw, *Hitler* (London, New York: Longman, 1991), p. 10.
[66] Kershaw, *Hitler*, p. 11. See also André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Esssay on Post-Industrial Socialism* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), p. 58-59, 62-63. For the construction of Hitler's myth, see Ian Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth." Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
[67] Kershaw, *Hitler*, p. 11.
[68] See Renzo de Feile, *Mussolini* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1961); Emilio Gentile, "Mussolini's Charisma," *Modern Italy* 3 (1998) 2, p. 219-235; Piero Melograni, "The Cult of the Duce in Mussolini's Italy," Journal of Contemporary History, 11 (October 1976) 4, p. 221-237; Maurizio Bach, *Die charismatischen Führerdiktaturen: Drittes Reich*

The charismatic nature of generic fascism challenges historians of Italy and Germany to employ a wider historical comparative perspective. However, until now the application of charisma has been confined almost exclusively to these two case studies. Students of what has been generally called "peripheral" or "minor" fascisms in East-Central Europe have not employed the concept of charisma in a systematic manner; instead, they have proved more receptive to the view of fascism as a millenarian movement, approaching it from the perspective of teleological modernization.

The historiography on fascism in Romania is illustrative in this respect. Writing in early 1950s, Henry Roberts, a prominent student of agrarian relations in Romania, argued that the Legion was an "emotional and evangelical reaction against the existing order," warning that its history "cannot be written off as a superficial phenomenon."[69] In a series of pioneering studies, Eugen Weber provided a preliminary sociological overview of the organizational and membership structure of the Legion. Arguing that Codreanu's doctrine and nationalism "were of a completely different essence than that which we discover in other social movements of our time," Weber compared them to Christian chiliastic movements "the West had known in the 14th and 16th century but forgotten since."[70] Suggesting comparison with revivalist movements triggered by sudden modernization in contemporary African societies, Weber concluded: "in Eastern Europe, movements like Codreanu's are closer to cargo cults than they are to fascism."[71]

Zeev Barbu added a very useful physiological dimension to the study of the Legion, arguing that "the *legionari* constituted a psychological rather than a political group," a form of "messianic salvationist movement."[72] In a similar vein with Eugen Weber, Barbu adopted a "modernizing" perspective, asserting that the Legion "represents, in a highly compressed yet well differentiated form, what is normally known as a two-phase phenomenon, that is, the transition from a religious to a political movement in a developing country."[73]

While contributing essential aspects to our understanding of the Legion, the most important works on the subject published in the 1980s did not elaborate on charisma as a form of political legitimacy and mass mobilization in inter-war Romania. In *La Mística del Ultranacionalismo*, Francisco Veiga used mainly diplomatic sources and oral interviews with former Legionaries to provide a first comprehensive monograph on the nature of the Legionary ideology and social profile. Veiga defined the Legion as "a political chameleon, able to paint itself in the colors of the background on which it activated."[74] He emphasized Codreanu's revolutionary rhetoric of mysticism and religious faith and its role in generating political consensus among followers of heterogeneous social origins, but did not conceptualize it in terms of a charismatic type of legitimacy.

Armin Heinen provided the most complete monograph to date on the Legion. Without conceptualizing Codreanu's type of leadership in terms of charismatic authority, Heinen alludes nevertheless to the favorable "mental" climate for the emergence of charismatic claims, attributing it to the lack of democratic tradition and political education in a

---

und italienischer Faschismus im Vergleich ihrer Herrschaftsstrukturen (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990).

[69] Henry Roberts, *Rumania, Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1969), p. 231-232.

[70] Eugen Weber, "Romania," in *Varieties of Fascism*, p. 96

[71] Eugen Weber, "Romania," in *The European Right,* p. 523-524.

[72] Barbu, "Rumania," p. 156, 160. Barbu further elaborated on this psycological analysis in his later article, "Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives," p. 379-394.

[73] Barbu, "Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives," p. 393.

[74] Veiga, *Istoria Garzii de Fier,* p. 10

developing nation.[75] In line with the "modernizing" approach to the Legion outlined above, Heinen pointed to the insufficient "mental modernization" of the Romanian peasantry, who were unable of "a conscious action against nature" and could not understand "social-political realities."[76] This situation, combined with anti-urban and fatalist attitudes, "encouraged mystical conceptions, a mixture of superstition and Christian elements," thereby creating conditions for the emergence of different types of charismatic leaders.

As for Romanian historiography, excepting an early but still insightful study by Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu,[77] it has devoted only limited attention to fascism's capa**city** of mass mobilization, due mainly to political restrictions. When attention was paid, dogmatic Marxism unavoidably influenced the prevailing theoretical perspectives. At a time when Western scholars were experimenting with alternative Marxist interpretations of fascism, such as those put forward by August Thalheimer or Antonio Gramsci, Romanian historians employed Stalin's interpretation of fascism as a political instrument of the great capital and a fifth column of revisionist powers. Official communist historiography argued that the Legion had neither an ideology of its own, nor vitality and mass support, being nothing more than a terrorist organization.[78]

After 1989, there has been a new wave of academic interest in the history of the Legion's history. Much of this effort has been directed towards revealing the intimate connection between Legionary ideology and contemporary intellectual debates about national ideology; fascism and political culture; fascism and generational messianism; and fascism and the process of nation- and state-building.[79] Despite this rich agenda of research, the concept of charisma has not been employed as an analytical tool to illuminate the Legion's mass appeal.

The sole author that explicitly used the term charisma for describing Codreanu's type of political legitimacy was Zigu Ornea in his insightful and well-documented intellectual monograph on the extreme right in inter-war Romania. While arguing that Codreanu's "winning charisma" was due to the intersection of skillful political propaganda and political confusion of numerous young intellectuals in search of a radical alternative to the existing political order, Ornea nevertheless set the analytical emphasis on Codreanu's physical appearance: "A tall, handsome young man, fair, with blue eyes, always wearing a folk

---

[75] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail,"* p. 38.

[76] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail,"* p. 38.

[77] See Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi* [Under Three Dictatorships] (Bucureşti: Editura Politică, 1970).

[78] For this view, see Mihai Fătu and Ion Spălăţelu, *Garda de Fier: Organizaţie teroristă de tip fascist* (Bucureşti: Editura Politică, 1971).

[79] If before 1989, the Legion was studies mostly by Western scholars with little Romanian correspondence (due mainly to political restrictions), after 1989 there has been a renewed interest in the study of the Legion in Romania, as well. See Alexandru Florian, Constantin Petculescu, *Ideea care ucide: dimensiunile ideologiei legionare* (Bucureşti: Noua Alternativă, 1994): Ornea, *Anii treizeci: extrema dreaptă românească* (Bucureşti: Editura Fundatiei Culturale Române, 1995); English edition: *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999); Constantin Petculescu, *Mişcarea legionară: mit şi realitate* (Bucureşti: Editura Noua Alternativă, 1997); and *Totalitarismul de dreapta în România: origini, manifestări, evoluţie, 1919-1927* (Bucureşti: Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 1996); Dragoş Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhangelului Mihail. De la mit la realitate* (Bucureşti: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997); Ioan Constantinescu, *Despre exegeza extremei drepte româneşti. Însemnări polemice*, 2nd ed. (Iaşi: Junimea, 1999).

costume,—with fur cap, a long course—stuff peasant coat, hobnailed boots or high boots in winter,—temperate and silent. His appearance commanded respect. Not only to his supporters."[80] However, Ornea's work completely lacks any theoretical or methodological reference to the conceptual definition, methodological implications or the scholarly debates over charismatic legitimacy.

1.4. Charisma and Inter-war Mass Politics: New Approaches

Recent studies have integrated the connection between fascism and charismatic authority within the larger framework of mass politics in inter-war Europe. They pointed out that the charismatic dimension of mass movements in inter-war Europe challenges social scientists to rethink the question of legitimization, consensus and resistance in the context of totalitarian movements and regimes, often comparing fascism and communism. Building on a school of thoughts originating in inter-war Europe, Emilio Gentile highlighted the tendency of totalitarian-revolutionary movements to sacralize politics and create political religions.[81] He put forward a comprehensive framework for analyzing "the sacralization of politics," defined as a form of politics that "confers a sacred status on an earthly entity (nation, country, state, humanity, society, race, proletariat, history, liberty or revolution) and renders it an absolute principle of collective existence, considers it the main source of values for individual and mass behavior, and exalts it as the supreme ethical precept of public life. It becomes an object for veneration and dedication, even to the point of self-sacrifice."[82] Gentile differentiated between *civil religion*, defined as a "common civic creed" based on the sacralization of a collective political entity that is not attached to a particular ideology, accepts the separation between Church and State, and tolerates the existence of traditional religious; and *political religion*, with an "exclusive and integralist" character, denying individual autonomy, subordinating traditional religions and eliminating rival movements.[83] He provided a typology of political religions, as a function of their relationship to traditional religion, made up of *mimetic*, s*yncretic*, or e*phemeral* categories.

Gentile also pointed out the close relationship between political religions and totalitarianism, defined as "an *experiment in political domination* undertaken by a *revolutionary movement* with an *integralist conception* of politics that aspires toward a *monopoly of power* and that, after having secured power whether by legal or illegal means, destroys or transforms the previous regime and constructs a new state based on a *single-party*

---

[80] Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right,* p. 354

[81] See the following works by Emilio Gentile: "Fascism as Political Religion," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25 (May-June 1990) 2/3, p. 229-251; *Le religioni della politica: Fra democrazie e totalitarismi* (Bari: Laterza, 2001); *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); and "The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion* 1 (Summer 2000) 1, p. 18-55. For previous works on the intimate links between politics and religion in the modern period, see Eric Voegelin: *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1938); and *Les religions politiques*, translated by Jacob Schmutz (Paris: Humanites, Les editions du cerf, 1994).

[82] Gentile, "The Sacralisation of Politics," p. 19.

[83] The term "civil religion" was first coined by Durkheim, to denote the incorporation of religious symbols and practices in laic ceremonies, different from the institutionalized church-based religion. See Emil Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Macmillian, 1915).

regime, with the chief objective of *conquering society*."[84] In his view, a totalitarian movement "seeks the subordination, integration and homogenization of the governed on the basis of the *integral politicization of existence*, whether collective or individual, interpreted according to the categories, myths and values of a *palingenetic ideology*, institutionalized in the form of a *political religion*, that aims to shape the individual and the masses through an *anthropological revolution* in order to regenerate the human being and create the *new man*, who is dedicated in body and soul to the realization of the revolutionary and imperialistic policies of the totalitarian party."[85] Its ultimate aim is to create the "*unitary and homogenous body politic* morally united in their totalitarian religion."[86] Significantly, for Gentile totalitarianism denotes an experiment, rather than a regime, a complex outcome of the continuous interaction of several elements: the party, the regime, the political religion and the anthropological revolution.

Roger Griffin emphasized the usefulness of Gentile's framework for revisiting the question of the legitimization of totalitarian regimes in inter-war Europe. Based on a number of historical case studies, Griffin pleads for redirecting the research agenda of totalitarianism from the issue of coercion to mechanisms of charismatic consensus-building, based on a vision of a "palingenetic community."[87] The ultimate aim of Griffin's article is "to stimulate a new area of research into the phenomenon of non-rational, supra-individual legitimacy as a blend of authentic and inauthentic consensus generated by totalitarian movements and regimes in pursuit of palingenetic goals."[88]

The analytical usefulness of the concept of charisma has been also enhanced by combining it with other key social science concepts that have relevance for the study of inter-war mass politics, such as clientelism, cleavage, and conflict. In a rare application of the concept to Balkan history, George Th. Mavrogordatos associated charisma with the concepts of clientelism and cleavage, applying this triadic framework to the study of mass politics in inter-war Greece.[89] Mavrogordatos focused his analysis on three under-developed directions: the conditions under which charismatic movements are likely to emerge; the relationship between the leader and his mass of followers; and the capacity of charisma to generate not only integration and consensus, but also conflicts "of the most severe kind," an aspect largely ignored by academic research.[90]

Other works have supplemented Weber's theory with psychological methods of researching repression, stigma and vengeance, their relation with individual and collective forms of deviance, and mechanisms of charismatic sublimation. Erving Goffman reviewed social psychological works on stigma, defined as "the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance."[91] Goffman classified stigmas into bodily, moral, and tribal types, and provided a sociological treatment of the ways in which stigma affects

---

[84] Gentile, "The Sacralisation of Politics," p. 19.
[85] Gentile, "The Sacralisation of Politics," p. 19.
[86] Gentile, "The Sacralisation of Politics," p. 21.
[87] Roger Griffin, "The Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimization of Totalitarian Regimes in Inter-War Europe," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3 (Winter 2002) 3, p. 24-43.
[88] Griffin, "The Palingenetic Political Community," p. 35.
[89] George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic. Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983).
[90] Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, p. 2, 4.
[91] Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (London: Pelican Books, 1968; Reprinted by Penguin Books, 1990), p. 9.

human interactions, approached from "a single conceptual scheme."[92] Wolfgang Lipp explored the links between stigma and charisma.[93] Sorin Antohi tested the relevance of the concept of stigma to the study of radical definitions of identity in inter-war Romania, focusing on Emil Cioran's early works.[94]

In conclusion, while focusing on charisma as a central concept of analytical inquiry, the current study dissociates from those theoretical perspectives regarding charismatic movements as "pre-political" manifestations in peripheral or post-colonial countries. Instead, it builds on sociological and political science approaches that—based largely on Weber's theory—attempted an "independent reformulation" of the concept of charisma in order to concomitantly preserve its universality and to offer a more workable methodological apparatus for its application to the realm of politics. Among the most important authors and approaches that have proven useful for the current case study, I would like tomention William Friedland, who shifted the analytical emphasis from "charisma and charismatics" to the "followers and their needs";[95] Edward Shils, who explored the emergence of the "charismatic sensibility" and its propensity to both destroy and create order;[96] Robert C. Tucker, who associated closely charismatic leaders and social movements of change, devised comprehensive tests for identifying charismatic leaders, and constructed a typology of growth phases in charismatic movements;[97] and Reinhard Bendix, who redirected the analytical focus from charismatic *authority* to charismatic *leadership*, and explored the relationship between leaders and followers using case studies of four Asian leaders: Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kim Il-Sŏng of North Korea and Mao Tse-Tung of China.[98] Arthur Schweitzer systematized Weber's theory of charisma "making use of all parts of his writing on this theme;" he underscored the relevance of charisma to modern politics, and distinguished among "Value," "Faith," "Caesarist" and "Party" types of charisma.[99] Ronald M. Glassman reconstructed "a consistent Weberian conception of social structure and social change," linking together charismatic authority with economic classes, status groups and ethnic groups.[100]

The following section tests Weber's conceptual framework and this sum of related theories to the case of the Legionary movement.

---

[92] Goffman, *Stigma*, p. 9-10.

[93] Wolfgang Lipp, *Stigma und Charisma: über soziales Grenzverhalten* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1985).

[94] Cf. Antohi, "Cioran şi stigmatul românesc." See also Sorin Antohi's erudit work *Utopica. Studii asupra imaginarului social* (Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1991) especially the chapter "Principliul Făgăduinţă. Milenarism, profetism, monahism, teocraţie" p. 82-136, on the relationship between millenarism, profetism and social protest.

[95] William Friedland, "For a Sociological Concept of Charisma," *Social Forces* 43 (October 1964) 1, p. 18-26.

[96] Shils, "Charisma, Status, and Order," p. 199-213.

[97] Tucker, "The Theory of Charismatic Leadership" p. 731-756.

[98] Reinhard Bendix, "Charismatic Leadership," in Reinhard Bendix, Guenther Roth, eds., *Scholarship and Partisanship: Essays on Max Weber* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 170-187.

[99] Arthur Schweitzer, "Theory and Political Charisma," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (March 1974) 2, p. 150-181, here 151.

[100] Ronald M. Glassman, "Epilogue: Charisma and Social Structure—The Success or Failure of Charismatic Leadership," in Ronald M. Glassman, William H. Swatos, eds. *Charisma, History and Social Structure* (New York, Wesport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 180-203.

2. Charisma and Cleavages in Inter-war Romania: The Origins of Codreanu's Charismatic Cult

2.1. Nation-Building and Student Rebellion

At a first glance, the development of a strong fascist movement in Romania comes at a surprise. The country emerged from World War I a winner. The incorporation of the historical provinces of Transylvania, the Banat and Bukovina from Austria-Hungary, and of Bessarabia from the former Russian Empire into the Old Kingdom doubled Romania's size (from 130,177 km^2 in 1914 to 295,049 km^2 in 1919) and population (from 7,771,341 inhabitants in 1914 to 14,669,841 in 1919), considerably strengthening its economic potential. Thus, while Germans and Hungarians experienced the bitterness of defeat, and Italians obtained a "frustrated" victory, the creation of Greater Romania fulfilled the highest ambitions of the national program: the union of all ethnic Romanians within a single state. In addition, following the great socio-political upheaval of the war, comprehensive reforms such as universal male suffrage (1919), massive land redistribution (1921), and a new liberal constitution (1923) remodeled it into a parliamentary democracy, granting full citizenship rights to Jews and other ethno-religious minorities. Apparently, the "new" generation's prospects therefore looked brighter than ever. While universal male suffrage abolished class barriers to political participation, the administrative imperatives of the unified Romanian state required an expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus with young cadres.

Despite these political achievements, the new state was in fact dominated by numerous regional, ethno-religious and socio-political cleavages, favoring the emergence of charismatic movements of change.[101] Some of them, such as "the Jewish Question" or the conflict between the state and the corporate privileges of the Church, were inherited from the Old Kingdom; other, more latent or incipient cleavages, such as regional or generational conflicts, were either newly created or greatly exacerbated in the postwar socio-political context. Since Romania experienced successive waves of nation- and state-building over a short period of time, these cleavages were mutually reinforcing each-other, a situation that aggravated political and ethno-national conflicts. The following analysis highlights the interaction among these cleavages and their political impact.

First, Greater Romania (1918-1940) came into being as an aggregate of different historical provinces: the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (unified in 1859), the former Ottoman province of Dobrudja (annexed in 1878), the province of Bessarabia occupied by Russia in the period 1812-1918, and territories such as Bukovina, Transylvania, the Banat, Maramureş, and the Partium that had been part of Austria-Hungary (see the map at the end of this paper!). The first two stages of the state-building process, the union of the two principalities and the annexation of Dobrudja, generated "structural crises" relating to the establishment and legitimization of a new political order, conflicts among regional political

[101] In their behavioral approach to comparative politics, Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan provided a typology of possible cleavages within national political communities, based on region, class, religious denomination and ethnicity, and relating to the particularities of the national and industrial revolutions. See Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction" in Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 14. For the link between these types of cleavages and the emergence of charismatic movements in inter-war Greece, see Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic,* p. 14-15.

groupings in the process of state unification, the expansion of a bureaucratized state-administration, the integration and assimilation of ethnic minorities, and dilemmas of collective identity.[102] These crises could be only gradually overcome. After a period of socio-political turmoil (1858-1866), Romania was organized as a constitutional monarchy under a foreign dynasty (Hohenzollern-Siegmaringen), and a multi-party parliamentary system based on restricted male franchise. The country won its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 and reached progress towards internal integration, economic development and political stability.

The challenges of integration faced by the Romanian state in the prewar period extended—and even amplified—at the level of Greater Romania. After succeeding in political unification, Romanian political elites were still facing the difficult challenge of fostering administrative integration, cultural assimilation, and legislative harmonization within this heterogeneous assembly.[103] As in the case of other East-Central European states (examples include Greece and Serbia before War World I, or Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the inter-war period), the newly acquired historical provinces had all been shaped by radically different socio-political systems. Such unions occasioned an arduous process of elite bargaining, administrative unification, and advancement toward cultural homogenization.

Second, ethnic diversity added to the problems of administrative and cultural integration. Prewar Romania was a homogeneous country, both in ethnic and religious terms. In 1899, even after the incorporation of the multiethnic province of Dobrudja, ethnic Romanians formed 92.1 percent of the country's general population of 5,956,690 inhabitants, while Orthodox believers represented 91.5 percent.[104] The Jews were the most important ethnic and religious minority, representing 4.45 percent of the general population.[105] They were concentrated mostly in Moldova (making up 9.71 percent of its population), but were less present in the Wallachian provinces of Muntenia and Oltenia (2.26 percent, and respectively, 0.41 percent of the population), lived in cities, and were predominantly engaged

---

[102] On the union of Moldova and Wallachia, see Paul E. Michelson, *Conflict and Crisis. Romanian Political Development, 1861-1871* (New York and London: Garland, 1987). See also the second, enlarged and revised edition, *Romanian Politics, 1859-1871: From Prince Cuza to Prince Carol* (Iaşi, Oxford, Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1998). In his treatment of the "structural crisis" experienced by the united principalities, Michelson followed Raymond C. Grew's approach to the crisis of "identity, legitimization, participation, penetration and distribution." See Raymond C. Grew, ed., *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United State*s (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). For a case study of the prewar integration of Dobrogea into Romania and its impact on the post-1918 debates on unification, see Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878-1913*. Carl Back Papers in Russian and East European Studies, No. 1607, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2002.

[103] For a comprehensive analysis of the process of unification in Greater Romania, see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1995). For case studies on Bessarabia and Bukovina, see Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000); and Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung der Bukowina 1918-1944. Die Durchsetzung des nationalstaatlichen Anspruchs Großrumäniens* (München: Oldenbourg, 2001).

[104] Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 164.

[105] Leonida Colescu, *Analiza rezultatelor recensământului general al populației României din 1899* (Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1944), p. 24-25.

in trade and liberal professions. In Wallachia, urban Jews formed 98.5 percent of the total number of Jews in Muntenia, and 96.2 percent of the total number of Jews in Oltenia. In Moldova, urban Jews made up 73.9 percent of the total number of Moldovan Jews, and 8.9 percent of the general urban population of the province.[106]

Romanian politicians regarded the demographic growth of Jews in Northern Moldova, their religious and linguistic dissimilarity, and their concentration in certain professional domains as a challenge to the economic dominance of ethnic Romanians. In reaction, over 250 laws and ordinances passed in the period 1866-1918 excluded Jews from full citizenship rights, from residing in rural areas, from practicing certain professions, and from the right to free state education, thus further contributing to the socio-economic distinctiveness of the Jewish communities.[107] This hostile policy forced Jews to emigrate, their share in Romania's general population dropping to 3.3 in 1912. The proportion of Jews out of Moldova's population also diminished from 9.71 percent to 7.8 percent.[108] Through restrictive policies based on citizenship legislation, Romanian elites were thus successful in holding back the demographic and socio-economic growth of the Jewish community.[109]

On its turn, although numerically dominated by ethnic Romanians, Greater Romania encompassed a relatively high ratio of minorities as compared to the Old Kingdom: up to 28.1 percent of the total population. The first official census of Greater Romania taken in December 1930 registered 20 major ethnic groups, representing Romanians (12,981,324 inhabitants or 71.9 percent of the general population), Hungarians (1,425,507 or 7.9 percent), Germans (745,421 or 4.1 percent), Jews (728,151 or 4.0 percent), Ruthenians (582,115 or 3.2 percent), Russians (409,150 or 2.3 percent), Bulgarians (366,384 or 2.0 percent), Gypsies (263,501 or 1.5 percent), Turks (154,772 or 0.9 percent) and Tartars (22,141 or 0.1 percent) out of a total population of 18,057,028, etc.[110]

Third, socio-political cleavages among ethnic groups amplified within Greater Romania. Having been given advantages by the former imperial order, Jews, Hungarians, and Germans, fell into the category of "imperial" or "high-status minorities." Members of these groups generally lived in compact territorial areas where they dominated the cities, liberal

---

[106] Colescu, *Analiza rezultatelor*, p. 24-25.

[107] For the legal status of Romanian Jews until World War I and in the inter-war period, see mainly works by Carol Iancu: *Les Juifs en Roumanie, 1866-1919. De l'exlcusion a l'emancipation* (Provence: Editions de l'Université de Provence, 1978). English edition: *Jews in Romania, 1866-1919: From Exclusion to Emancipation* (Boulder: East European Monographs. Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1996); *L'émancipation des juifs de Roumanie (1913-1919): de l'inégalité civique aux droits de minorité: l'originalité d'un combat á partir des guerres balkaniques et jusqu'á la Conférence de paix de Paris* (Montpellier: Centre de recherches et d'études juives et hébraďques, Université Paul Valéry, 1992); *Les Juifs en Roumanie, 1919-1938: de l'émancipation à la marginalisation* (Paris: Peeters, 1996). On Romania's anti-Jewish policy in the general context of its citizenship legislation, see also Constantin Iordachi, *From the "Right of the Natives" to "Constitutional Nationalism:" The Making of the Romanian Citizenship, 1817-1919.* Ph.D. Dissertation, CEU Budapest.

[108] Leonida Colescu, *La Population de Religion Mosaïque en Roumanie. Etude Statistique* (Bucharest: Imprimerie Independența, 1915), p. 16.

[109] For an ample presentation of these policies, see Iordachi, *From the "Right of the Natives" to "Constitutional Nationalism."*

[110] *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1939 şi 1940*, p. 44-45.

professions and state bureaucracy.[111] Ethno-religious diversity made imperious the adoption of a new understanding of citizenship as a political contract between state and citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, supported by forms of "constitutional patriotism."[112] But the emergence of civic nationalism was undermined by the political instrumentalization of socio-political cleavages among ethnic groups within Greater Romania.

Table One highlights the level of ethnic mixing of Romania's historical provinces in 1930, ranging from the homogeneous Old Kingdom (where ethnic Romanians formed 88.5 percent of the population) to the multi-ethnic Bukovina (where ethnic Romanian formed only a relative majority of the population, representing a share of 44.5 percent). It also points out Romania's low level of urbanization, with about one quarter of the general population living in urban areas in Bukovina and in the Old Kingdom, but with only 17.4 percent in Transylvania, and 13.0 percent in Bessarabia. Most significantly, urban Romanians numerically dominated cities in the Old Kindgom (forming 74.3 percent of the urban population), but were in minority in urban areas in all the other historical provinces, forming 31.0 percent of the total urban inhabitants in Bessarabia, 33.0 percent in Bukovina, and 34.7 percent in Transylvania:

Table One. Proportion of Ethnic Romanians in the General and Urban Population; Level of Urbanization; and Literacy Rates in Greater Romania by Historical Provinces, in 1930

Province:	Greater Romania	Old Kingdom	Transylvania	Bessarabia	Bukovina
Ethnic Romanians[1]	71.9%	88.5%	57.8%	56.2%	44.5%
Total Urban Population[2]	20.2%	23.8%	17.4%	13%	26.7%
Urban Romanians[3]	58.6%	74.3%	34.7%	31%	33%
Literacy Rates[4]	57%	54.7%	67%	38.2%	65.7%

Source: 1-3. *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1939 şi 1940*, p. 44-45, 58-65, 92-99; 4: *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1, pp. 142-143, cited in Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics,* p. 9-10, 36.

Romanian political elites perceived the domination of urban socio-economic life in the annexed territories by ethnic minorities as a major stumbling block in the process of national consolidation, a situation that brought the "nationalizing nationalism" of the ethnic majority to the forefront of political life.[113] In spite of the nationalist consensus uniting the post-1918 Romanian political elites, the process of "nationalizing the state" was nevertheless

[111] See Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, especially her chapters on Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transylvania, p. 49-188.

[112] On the concept of "constitutional patriotism" see Jürgen Habermas, "Citizenship and National Identity. Some Reflections on the Future of Europe," *Praxis International* 12 (1992) 1, p. 1-19.

[113] On the concept of "nationalizing nationalism," see Rogers W. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 4-5.

hampered by a fourth socio-political cleavage, among regional elite groupings. If the Moldavian and Wallachian elites in the former Old Kingdom had a long history of common political socialization and integration, in the first inter-war decade political elites of Greater Romania were still regionally segregated in historical provinces. Although these elites were all animated by common nationalist goals, they differed greatly with regard to the means chosen to achieve national integration and unification. They were also divided over competing liberal, populist, socialist or integral nationalist "models of development."[114]

By and large, one can identify two competing views on national integration: A first one, promoted by political elites from Bucharest, demanded a state continuity between the Old Kingdom and Greater Romania and advocated extending Romania's pre-World War I laws and institutions into the newly united provinces. An alternative view, promoted mostly by regional political elites in the newly–annexed territories, argued that Greater Romania was a radically new state that had to establish its new socio-political organization through negotiations among the political elites of all historical regions. The most powerful proponent of this latter view was the National Party in Transylvania, which fused in 1926 with the Peasant Party of the Old Kingdom to constitute the National Peasant Party. The political terminology employed by proponents of these competing perspectives on national unification was also different: while regional political elites spoke of "unification," political elites of the Old Kingdom demanded the "integration" of the new provinces through a "legislative extension."[115]

After a short interregnum of political upheaval and confrontation, the Bucharest's view on national integration within Greater Romania ultimately prevailed. The process of "nationalizing the state" by the Romanian ethnic majority was shaped by the vision put forward by the National Liberal Party of the Old Kingdom. Benefiting from the strong personality of its leader, Ion I. C. Brătianu, his influence over King Ferdinand, and the patterns of state continuity between the Old Kingdom and Greater Romania, the Liberal Party dominated political life in the first postwar decade (1918-1928); it was therefore able to implement its view in the process of administrative and cultural homogenization. Its strategy was to compensate for the lack of a substantive Romanian middle class in the new provinces by launching a strong cultural offensive meant to rapidly produce a unified national elite. A central component of this process was building a national educational system. An unprecedented revolution in education increased the number of students to a record level, from 8,632 enrolled in 1913-1914 to 22,379 in 1924-1925, and to 37,314 in 1929-1930.[116] Students became the allies of the Romanian political elites in their efforts directed at

---

[114] For an overview of the sharp inter-war debates over competing strategies of developments, see Keith Hitchins, "Models of Development," in *Rumania*, p. 55-89, 292-334. Unlike other treatments of the period that concentrated unilaterally on the passionate intellectual controversies over alternative philosophies of culture, Hitchins adds to these cultural disputes the intense economic debates between "agrarianists" and "industrialists" over free trade versus sheltered industrialization. In Hitchins' view, the pre-1918 debates over models of development culminated in the "Great Debate" in the inter-war period. For the wider intellectual relevance and impact of these debates, see Joseph L. Love, *Crafting the third world: theorizing underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[115] See Petre Marcu-Balş, "Autohtonia ordinei juridice (Concepţia raţionalistă şi concepţia istorică a codificaţiilor)" *Gândirea* 6-7 (1928), in Iordan Chimet, ed., *Dreptul la memorie* 4 vols. (Cluj: Dacia, 1992), vol. 3, p. 142-143.

[116] Iosif I. Gabrea, "Statistică şi politică şcolară," *Buletinul oficial al ministerului instucţiunii, cultelor şi artelor* 2 (April 1932) 1, p. 28, cited in Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, p. 234.

nationalizing the state, since they represented the desired pan-Romanian and anti-regional national elite, the "agents" of the state in urban environments.

But the prospective alliance very soon turned against the political establishment, generating an additional cleavage between old elites and the "new generation." Romanian students were the first compact "Romanian contingent" sent from the rural world to the still "foreign" urban environment in the annexed territories. They strove to use the unprecedented opportunities provided by postwar political reorganization for upward social mobility. As specific products of the state-sponsored educational system, students depended on positions in the bureaucratic apparatus, and considered their diplomas as "certificates" of social success. However, the state administration had a limited capacity of absorption, which shrunk even further under the impact of the postwar economic hardship. Material deprivation of student life, accompanied by the prospects of job scarcity and intellectual unemployment caused frustration and alienation and generated strong nationalist student movements of protest. In an "eyewitness" account, Zvi Yavetz, a professor at the University of Cernăuți, pointed out the social cleavage between urban Jewish students and ethnic Romanian students of rural extraction, and its role in fostering anti-Semitic attitudes:

> "Any academic degree could guarantee some government job and would satisfy most Rumanian students, who came from primitive villages, were poor, and hoped to be absorbed into the growing city. However, the number of places in the student dormitories was limited, rents were high, and government scholarship few. Jewish students, however, came from urban areas, lived at home with their parents, and even if they were not rich, appeared as such in comparison to Rumanian students. Any anti-semitic propaganda thus fell on fertile ground."[117]

Discontent was thus directed against ethnic minorities, whose superior social status was found responsible for the pauperization of Romanian students and university graduates. Moreover, while prior to 1918, the superior social status of Jews in the Old Kingdom was "compensated" by their denial of state citizenship and of substantive economic and political rights, in Greater Romania the citizenship emancipation of ethnic minorities by the 1919 Minority Convention granted Jews access to state jobs and resources, allegedly opening the way to their political domination.[118] In response, radical student organizations populating Romanian universities in the period 1919-1923 blamed the international community for the "forceful" and "premature" citizenship emancipation of ethnic minorities, criticized the slow pace of nationalizing the state promoted by the traditional Romanian political elites, and agitated for the implementation of a policy of *numerus clausus* in education, aimed at curbing job competition from intellectual elites of ethnic minorities.[119] As a result, inter-war political life was dominated by radical definitions of national identity that discriminated between Romanian citizens "by blood" and "by papers," and attempted to exclude the latter from substantive socio-political rights.

---

[117] Zvi Yavetz, "An Eyewitness Note: Reflections on the Rumanian Iron Guard," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (September 1991) 3/4, p. 599.

[118] For a comprehensive analysis of citizenship legislation in the Old Kingdom, with an emphasis on the legal status of Jews, women and the inhabitants of the province of Dobrudja, see Constantin Iordachi, "The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of 'Non-Citizens' in Romania, 1866-1918," *European Review of History* 8 (August 2001) 2, p. 157-186.

[119] Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics,* p. 243, 270-276.

2.2. Charisma as Counterculture: From Student Rebellion to Charismatic Nationalism

Studies of charismatic movements invariably begin with an analysis of the emergence of the charismatic leadership and the subsequent grouping generated. The origins of Codreanu's charismatic cult are to be found in the nationalist student movements sweeping Romanian universities in the period 1919-1923.[120] Surely, postwar student rebellion was not a peculiarity of Romanian history. Generational conflicts were pan-European inter-war cultural phenomena, inspired by general historical factors, such as the emergence and development of youth as a distinct social group, its growing sense of collective consciousness based on a new concept of time, a new attitude toward accelerated social change and patterns of political rebellion.[121] Another important factor in rising generational consciousness was the experience of World War I, with its bitterness and disappointments, and its search for cultural and political renewal. The main ideas of the new "ideology of the youth"—as coined by a narrow group of elite literary intellectuals, most notably Mentré, Barrés, and Ortega—were composed of the revolt against bourgeois morality and materialist value system, on the one hand, and the belief in biological determinism and cultural and spiritual revival, on the other hand.

While sharing general European features, student rebellion in Romania nevertheless exhibited certain particular features due to the deep cleavages described above, favoring the emergence of charismatic movements of change. The nucleus of the nationalist student movement was located in regional universities, where the new "Romanian order" was unconsolidated, and the student body still dominated by ethnic minorities. Its main centers were Iaşi, the former capital of Moldova; Cernăuţi (Czernowitz), the capital of Bukovina; and Cluj, where the formerly Hungarian university had just been taken over by the Romanian administration. Eugen Weber pertinently pointed out that the location of political radicalism in universities is "highly symptomatic:" "Where representative institutions do not exist or, existing, do not really function, schools and universities provide almost the only and certainly the most convenient platform for public discussion of national and international issues, and students are bound to form the vanguard of all radical movements."[122] In Greater Romania, regional universities were sensible barometers of social cleavages and inter-ethnic tensions.

The most combative leaders were Ion I. Moţa (1902-1937), a law-student at the University of Cluj, and the son of Ion Moţa, an Orthodox priest who had been active in the Romanian national movement in Transylvania under Hungarian rule; and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1898-1939), a law-student at the University of Iaşi, and the son of Iohan Zilinschi,

---

[120] For this claim, see Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, "The Generation of 1922: From Student Movement to Iron Guard," p. 245-297. Livezeanu focuses on the genesis of the Legion in the 1920s, placing it within the context of the nation-building process within Greater Romania and linking it with inter-ethnic rural/urban social cleavage most manifest in the educational system. The current study builds on the ethno-cultural cleavage between urban and rural areas Livezeanu advanced in *Cultural Politics*, but integrates it into the larger spectrum of additional social-political, religious and regional cleavages within Greater Romania. The study also focuses on the intrinsic relationship between the social position and charismatic ideological views of the main Legionary ideologues.

[121] See Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) p. 203. Wohl distinguishes between "the notion of generation as thirty-year intervals of genealogical time," and "historical generations" encompassing people united by common beliefs and shared history. Unfortunately, Wohl's comprehensive analysis of discourses on the "new generation" in post-war Europe does not cover the experience of Romania.

[122] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 106.

a secondary-school teacher, and of the Bavarian immigrant Eliza Brauner. Originating in the Austrian Bukovina, Iohan moved in 1889 to the Romanian Moldavia, obtained Romanian citizenship and changed his name into Ion Zelea Codreanu. Father of seven children, Ion Zelea was animated by a militant nationalism, with powerful religious and mystical overtones.

Ion I. and Corneliu had numerous things in common. Their families lived in the prewar period outside Romania, in multiethnic areas experiencing acute ethnic conflicts and high levels of nationalist mobilization. Their fathers were actively engaged in Romanian nationalist movements and gave them strong religious-nationalist education. Ion and Corneliu exhibited very radical militant attitudes, obsessively centered on the Jewish question. No wonder therefore that, after their first encounter, the two set the basis of a life-long friendship and political partnership.

The various regional factions of the postwar nationalist student movement came together on 10 December 1922, when a national congress spelled out students' demands in ten points, including a policy of *numerus clausus*, restrictions against admission of foreigners in university, respect for Orthodoxy, and improved material conditions. The conciliatory response of the government, which tried to address some of the students' material grievances, led to a split within the movement between radicals and moderates. In contrast to leaders who wanted to confine student protest to the university campus, Moţa and Codreanu intended to transform the student movement into a radical nationalist party. By 1923, when student mobilization began to fall off, Moţa initiated a desperate plot in order to revitalize the movement and to channel it into political practice. He argued that:

> "In the fall, students cannot resist anymore and, instead of a shameful capitulation of us all after a year of fighting, better to encourage them to attend classes, and we, those who have led them, to finish the movement in a beautiful way by sacrificing ourselves while taking with us all those whom we find guilty of betrayal of the Romanian interests. Let us procure ourselves pistols and shoot them, in order to give a terrible example, which will be remembered throughout our Romanian history. What will happen to us afterwards, whether we die or remain imprisoned for life, it does not matter any more."[123]

His proposal received enthusiastic support from a group of close collaborators within various university centers, composed of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ilie Gârneatã, Radu Mironovici and Leonida Bandac from Iaşi, Corneliu Georgescu and Alexandru Vernicescu from Cluj, and Tudose Popescu from Cernăuţi. But the group was arrested before turning their criminal plans into action and imprisoned in a penitentiary of the Văcăreşti Monastery. Following a wave of public sympathy and media support, they were released soon afterwards, except for Moţa, who remained in prison an additional six months for shooting his comrade Vernicescu for his alleged betrayal.

Although unmasked, the plot was ultimately instrumental in channeling the student movement into a radical nationalist organization. Benefiting from national press coverage, the group of nationalist leaders, subsequently called the *Văcăreşteni*, became notorious and served as the nucleus of the future movement. Ten years later, Ion Moţa acknowledged the important role of the plot in shaping the future movement by pointing out that "The Student Plot from the Fall of 1923 is the first manifestation of our great separation from the old, alienated world. It sets us at a considerable distance from our nationalist parents and

[123] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 3rd ed, (Bucharest, 1940) 1, p. 162.

professors (A. C. Cuza). In the beginning, they regarded the students' gesture with reservation."[124]

The founding members of the Legion, generically called the "Văcăreşteni," soon after their acquittal by the Jury of Turnu Severin in 1924. Later named "The Knights of the Annunciation," they formed the charismatic nucleus of the movement, preserved an influence on the decision-making process, and were kept in high esteem by the legionaries. At center is Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, with Tudose Popescu on his right and Corneliu Georgescu on his left. In the upper row is Ilie Gârneaţă on the left, Radu Mironovici in the center and Ion I. Moţa on the right. The "Văcăreşteni" wore traditional Romanian folk costumes and long hair, reminiscent of the Romantic tradition of popular haiducs. These garments were later exchanged for party uniforms, first the "green shirts" and eventually leathers outfits.

The experience of common detention was also instrumental in strengthening group ties and in catalyzing their political goals. As Codreanu later recalled, the mystical atmosphere of the monastery inspired their first common plans for creating an "army of youngsters educated in the love for the country and fatherland" following the example of the *Action Française*. The new organization had to fulfill three roles: "1. To educate the entire Romanian youth in a military spirit. 2. To be an army of propagandists of the League. 3. To be the fanatical element of sacrifice for the national movement, towards the solving of the

[124] Ion I. Moţa, *Axa,* I (1933) 4, p. 5.

Jewish Question! This army was to be dedicated to Archangel Michael—the one with the fire sword."[125]

The fascination of the young students with the principles of "integral nationalism" preached by Charles Maurras was not simply due to the general orientation of Romanian intellectuals towards French culture and politics—to which they looked for inspiration—but also to their sincere adherence to the leading principles of the *Action Française*, most notably anti-Semitism and xenophobia. The Catholic militantism of the *Action* also had a strong influence on the Legion, partially accounting for the emergence of a political movement of religious inspiration in a predominantly Orthodox country.[126]

The events following the student trial also established the basis of Codreanu's cult, projecting him as the leader of this integral nationalism. On 25 October 1924, several months after his acquittal, Codreanu assassinated Constantin Manciu, the police prefect of Iaşi, as revenge for acts of repression against the student movement. After another controversial trial, he was yet again discharged. Moreover, his "heroic" deeds, as well as his acquittal, assured Codreanu immediate popularity and transformed him from a regional to a national leader. On 13 June 1925, Codreanu's wedding ceremony took the form of a mass celebration, paving the way for his charismatic cult. A month later, Codreanu became the godfather to more than 100 children born on the day of his marriage.[127]

---

[125] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pământul Strămoşesc* (Iaşi) II (15 May 1928) 10, p. 4.

[126] For the great popularity and influence of the *Action Française* in inter-war Romania across a large political spectrum, ranging from more "conservative" figures such as Nicolae Iorga and Alexandru Averescu to obsessive anti-Semitic politicians as A. C. Cuza, and Orthodoxist and mystical nationalists as Nichifor Crainic and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, see Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), published in French as *L'Action Française* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), p. 530-531. See also Eugen Weber, *France: Fin de siècle* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1986). Weber points out that numerous Romanian émigrés were also active in the *Action Française* on French territory. For the influence of the *Action Française* in other European countries, this time mostly in Catholic and partially French-speaking neighboring countries such as Switzerland and Belgium, see also Catherine Pomeyrols, Claude Hauser, eds., *L'Action Française et L'Etranger. Usages, réseaux et représentations de la droite nationaliste française* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2001). For the intellectual roots of fascism in the *fin de siècle* revolt against positivism and for the influential role of French fascist movements in Europe, see Zeev Sternhell, "Fascist ideology," in Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: A Reader's Guide: Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 315-376. For a critique of Sternhell's approach to fascism, see Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, p. 6-7.

[127] As Max Weber pointed out, the practice of lay/political patronizing of religious ceremonies such as baptism or marriage originates directly from a charismatic type of authority. The practice has a long tradition in the Romanian political life. It also held a central role in Legionary ritualism. According to the statute of the Legion, each male member had the obligation to become, in a maximum of five months after his enrollment, the Godfather of five young couples and to subsequently attract them into the Legion. See "Organizarea Legiunii 'Archanghelul Mihail,'" *Pământul Strămoşesc* (Iaşi) I (15 September 1927) 4, p. 1.

Wedding photograph of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Elena Ilinoiu, at Crâng, near Focşani, 13 June 1925. The ceremony was filmed, but the police destroyed all copies, on the gournd that the movie was a sensitive propaganda material.

The process of nationalizing the state in Greater Romania thus generated as a side effect the confrontation between the hegemonic official culture and the radicalized student counterculture. The main promoter of this counterculture was the nucleus of the Văcăreşteni, which had been formed by plans of criminal plots, the common experience of prison, and assassinations. Its main founders, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Ion I. Moţa, spelled out students' frustrations and put forward a mystical sublimation of their experience.

In his fictive spiritual autobiography, Moţa voiced the feelings of social inadequacy experienced by Romanian students of rural extraction. His gloomy depiction of student life in Cluj, emphasizing the contrast between the modest material condition of ethnic Romanian students as compared to that of privileged "foreigners" (meaning, in his acceptation, all students of non-Romanian ethnic origin, irrespective of their citizenship) is revealing in this respect:

> "Misery, dampness, housing shortage, and overcrowded dormitories for the Romanians. Carefree leisure, terrible increase in their number, lack of worries for the

> foreigners who had become defiant. On street corners one heard that that year, in the first year of the medical school, there were enrolled four times as many Kikes as Romanians. And ours, no matter how few they were, could not find their place and their peace. […]
>
> And, as if we had not had enough with the mud, the cold, the lack of shelter, and all the rest of the material and especially moral miseries affecting our clean Romanian souls, one day we were strangled by the terrible news of the suicide of a female student, obviously a Romanian, a woman from Oltenia [a province in Wallachia, within the former Old Kingdom], brought to the University of Cluj by her love for Transylvania. Dear regionalist student (if he/she still exists), believe me, she was brought here by nothing else but her love for Transylvania. She had neither a scholarship, nor a place in the dorm, nor relatives. For she had left a note that she was taking her own life, no longer able to endure that misery. When we climbed the Feleac with the funeral convoy (the whole university attended the funeral), above our heads triumphed all the frightening ghosts of our nightmares. They had beaten us again, and more cruelly."[128]

Moța internalized the (socially constructed) conflict between the urban and rural worlds; he was portraying himself as suspended between "the Old World" of idyllic village life and "the New World, alienated from ancient mores and invaded by pagans."[129] His fictitious hero, Nuțu Doncii, had been forced to sever his ties with the village community and to move to the city (See **Document 1**): "I have found somewhere else another youth, and have plunged into another life. […] I thus became a city dweller." This experience was the source of great frustration and alienation, a form of *anomie* generated by the loss of the traditional community: "I could not find peace in this world; I hated it and, on its turn, it hated me deadly."[130] Moța thus underwent a process of self-stigmatization by dramatizing students' situation through victimization. The tension between self-stigmatization and the sense of guilt generated by the *Văcăreşteni*'s violent and unlawful response gave birth to charismatic claims. In the process of charismatization, negative features were sublimated and declared positive: students' material misery was portrayed as emblematic for the state of the Romanian nation, while their marginality was compensated by their belief in being the "chosen ones" and making up an alternative elite.[131]

This charismatic message appealed to a stratum of destitute students of rural extraction. According to Mircea Vulcănescu, the social-psychological prototype of the nationalist student was

> "Sile Constantinescu, a poor boy, taken out of his worldly preoccupation by his studies, [...] raised without proper manners at home (*crescut fără şapte ani de acasă*), forcefully removed from his familiar circle and getting to the point of despising his

[128] Moța, "Autobiografie (în loc de introducere)" (Autobiography. Instead of an introduction) in *Cranii de Lemn*, p. 227-228.
[129] See Ion I. Moța, *Cranii de Lemn. Articole 1922-1936* (Wooden Skulls. Articles, 1922-1936) (Bucharest: Editura Mişcării Legionare, 1940), , 4th ed.
[130] Moța, "Autobiografie (în loc de introducere)" (Autobiography. Instead of an introduction) in *Cranii de Lemn*, p. 9-11.
[131] For the main stages of the process of charismatization based on stigma, see Guenther Roth, "Socio-Historical Model and Developmental Theory: Charismatic Community, Charisma of Reason, and the Counterculture," *American Sociological Review* 40 (April 1975), p. 148-157.

> parents who had sacrificed for him (*să-l facă om*), the teenager who has nothing sacred, who believes in nothing and who respects nobody and who, taken to a medium where he faced all kinds of temptations without the ability to fulfill them, believes that he deserves everything and is ready to do whatever it takes!"[132]

As a result, "a special enthusiasm, a kind of fanaticism, a strange amalgam of hatred and death took over this youth, who thought of himself as being taken under the wing of the archangel."[133]

After the cooling down of the wave of student mobilization in 1922-1923, the radical group of activists led by Codreanu and Moța participated in the creation of the League for the National Christian Defense (LNCD) led by A. C. Cuza and based in Northern Moldova. This experiment was short-lived. Although sharing its nationalism and anti-Semitism, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu denounced the "moderate" discourse and old-fashioned methods of the LNCD. In 1927, the group decided to leave the party and to establish their own organization called The Legion of the "Archangel Michael." In this way, they distanced themselves from the previous generation's "mainstream" nationalism and put forward a messianic call to generational solidarity under the banner of charismatic nationalism. We now turn to the charismatic genesis and nature of Legionary ideology, on the background of Romanian post-war politics, and its success in channeling youth protest and appropriating the discourse of the "new generation."

[132] Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu așa cum l-am cunoscut*, p. 81.
[133] Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu așa cum l-am cunoscut*, p.81.

3. Charisma and Mass Politics in Inter-war Romania

3.1. Old Structures, New Challenges: Charisma versus Political Clientelism

In accounting for the emergence of charismatic bondage, Erick H. Erikson pointed out in a psycho-analytical biography of the young Martin Luther that "charisma hunger" is generally due to an "identity vacuum" triggered by a combination of socio-political upheaval and decline of traditional forms of religion on the one hand, and psychological trends such as "fear" and "anxiety" on the other.[134] Rapid societal change in Greater Romania favored the emergence of charismatic types of authority on both grounds. Although Romania developed after 1918 as a "rationalized" mass parliamentary democracy based on a liberal constitution and a multi-party system, the lack of democratic practice favored the emergence of personalized movements. In addition, the process of institutional upheaval and reorganization generated the waning of traditional forms of religion, adding to charismatic sensitivity. In this section, I explore the emergence of charismatic mass politics in Greater Romania and its impact on party politics. I focus on the establishment and evolution of the Legion of the Archangel "Michael", its ideology and program, and its relation to the "new" generation.

Components of charismatic authority were not unknown in Romanian politics. The roots of the modern parliamentary electoral process can be traced back to 1858, when the Great Powers reorganized the internal structure and international status of the principalities of Moldova and Wallachia following the Crimean War (1854-1856). The 1858 Convention of Paris, which functioned as a constitution in the period of 1858-1864, endorsed the union of the principalities under a common prince, abolished aristocratic privileges and established an elected parliament. Initially, electoral rights were granted to a thin stratum of the population, the majority of which were owners of large estates who monopolized political representation.

In countering the conservative attitude of this oligarchy, the newly elected Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866) modeled his rule on the charismatic tradition of French Caesarism embodied by Napoleon III. In 1864, he established a regime of personal rule, based on plebiscitarianism and a mass franchise under a new constitution and electoral law.[135] Although Prince Cuza initiated sweeping political and institutional reforms, his personal regime alienated leading political factions, who united against him in a heterogeneous alliance called by contemporaries "the monstrous coalition," and managed to force his abdication on 11 February 1866. In the process of legislative and institutional renewal that followed this political change, Romania was reorganized as a constitutional monarchy based on a multi-party parliamentary system.

The system of political representation functioning in the period 1866-1918 combined a "universalistic" framework of civil rights and liberties with an evolutionary census-based electoral system. It resulted in a system of "capacity liberalism," based on the division of the electorate in socio-professional colleges and the differentiation between unequal "direct" and "indirect" voting according to gender, education and property qualifications.

Until World War I, despite the progressive enlargement of the electorate with new social categories reaching the electoral threshold, the two major parties, the Liberal and the Conservative, relied primarily on the bureaucratic apparatus in order to dominate political life. This policy was favored by a specific feature of the political system. In case of political crisis, the King, as the representative of executive power, could dissolve the parliament and

---

[134] Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther. A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (London: Faber, 1959).

[135] For the charismatic roots of this tradition, see Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," in *Economy and Society*, Vol. 2, p. 1126.

appoint a new government for organizing elections. Through effective administrative pressure exercised over the electorate at local level by a centrally-controlled network of prefects and sub-prefects, the new ruling party was always able to win a majority in national elections, which varied between 51 and 97 percent in the period 1866-1914.[136] Making use of their comfortable parliamentary majority, the government was thus able to exert control over the legislative power, so that according to one deputy, in Parliament "we do not deliberate, we just follow the government."[137] The result was a *de facto* pre-eminence of the executive apparatus over elected institutions.

This practice shifted the source of power from influence over public opinion to control over the bureaucracy and ascendancy upon the King. The state administration acquired an important role in the political life of the country, and the Ministry of the Interior became the most influential governmental position, given its control over the centralized network of prefects, sub-prefects and mayors at local level. The political scene became a back-stage competition between successive Conservative and Liberal administrations "the Sodom and Gomorrah of Romanian politics."[138]

Party clientele thus functioned as an instrument of domination, regulating selective access to state resources. Surely, despite the fact that the bicameral parliament was elected through very restrictive suffrage, its gradual democratization through reforms in 1884 and 1909 stimulated the emergence of direct political bonds between deputies and their voters. This phenomenon was marked by the emergence of populist ideologies based on a blend of nationalism and anti-Semitism, as in the program of the Nationalist Democratic Party, established in 1910 and led by Nicolae Iorga and A. C. Cuza. At the same time, the political system proved unreceptive to the campaigns for emancipation conducted by representatives of subordinated legal groups, such as Jews, peasants, and women.

The upheaval of World War I, anticipated in Romania by the country's military participation in the Second Balkan war against Bulgaria (1913), led to the extension of the franchise to universal male suffrage, paving the way for the emergence of personality-centered politics. But the transition from "machine politics" to mass politics was hampered by several factors.[139] Although it emancipated sharecropper peasantry, transforming them into independent farmers, the agrarian reform implemented in 1921 did not radically improve the economic situation and political status of the peasantry. While former onerous contractual relations between peasants and large landowners had been abolished, new modern institutions, such as credit institutes and saving banks, professional associations and inclusive and internally democratized political parties were slow to develop. Independent peasant

---

[136] Andrew Janos, "Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective," in Kenneth Jowitt ed., *Social Change in Romania 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley: University of California, 1978), p. 87; and Philip Gabriel Eidelberg, *The Great Romanian Peasant Revolt of 1907: Origins of a Modern Jaquerie* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), p. 18. This characteristic of the Romanian political system—which would remain valid for the inter-war period, as well—was suggestively expressed by the Conservative politician Petre P. Carp: "Give me the government and I will deliver you the Parliament."

[137] Deputy Nicolae Enăşescu, quoted in Paraschiva Cîncea, Mircea Iosa, Apostol Stan, *Istoria parlamentului şi a vieţii parlamentare din România pînă la 1918* [The History of the parliament and of the parliamentary Life in Romania until 1918] (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1983), p. 460.

[138] Metaphor coined by Nicolae Iorga in *Neamul Românesc* (25 June 1906): "Now Sodom is out of power; but when Gomorrah governs again…"

[139] For the concepts of "clientelism," "machine politics," and the relationship between clientelism and charisma, see Mavrogordatos, "Introduction", in *Stillborn Republic,* p. 14-18.

households disposed of insufficient land and inadequate technology, and faced an acute lack of credit and resources. While the number of rural voters overwhelmingly dominated the electorate, the emancipation of the peasantry did not result in their genuine political participation. Unable to sustain themselves economically, peasants entered local patron-client networks in search for protection.[140] The gap between peasantry and the institutions of political representations was thus filled by networks of patronage headed by *brokers*, as intermediaries between regional and national centers of power. An even more acute alienation was experienced and resented by rural elements immigrating to cities, who lacked effective social integration and representation. Moreover, despite new challenges, Bucharest-based elites did not adapt their methods to mass politics. Universal male suffrage did not seem to change the rules of the game: traditional parties remained the means of machine politics, based not on fair elections, but on bureaucratic mechanisms of domination and control of the electorate. As in the prewar period, parties in power benefited from what was euphemistically called "the government's dowry," namely that part of the electorate which, due to administrative pressures or lack of political education, always voted with the ruling party.[141] In addition, an electoral law, adopted in 1926 in order to further consolidate executive control over the parliament (and to favor stable governments), granted parties that won the elections with at least 40 percent of the total number of votes an electoral bonus (*prima electorală*), thus awarding them the absolute majority of parliamentary seats. This system of clientelist party politics, derogatorily called *politicianism,* was defined by the philosopher Constantin Rădulescu-Motru as "a type of political activity through which some citizens of a state attempt and sometimes succeed in transforming public institutions and services from means for realizing the public good, as they are intended to be, into means for fulfilling personal interests."[142]

The political continuity between the Old Kingdom and Greater Romania was assured by the ruling National Liberal Party. Its powerful leader Ion I. C. Brătianu (1864-1927)—the son of the former Prime Minister Ion C. Brătianu (1821-1891)—dominated Romanian politics with authority during the period of 1914-1927. Ion I. C. Brătianu's career resembles that of another prominent Southeast European politician, Elefterias Venizelos of Greece.[143]

---

[140] A relevant example in this respect is the religious institution of *năşia* greatly proliferating in inter-war Romania: peasants had their children baptized by larger landowners, in order to place themselves under the economic and political protection of the latter. At times, such "patrons" were godfathers of dozens of children, thus building effective patron-client networks.

[141] This practice explains the great fluctuations in the electoral results of major parties in the inter-war period, which obtained very low scores in opposition and unusually high scores when they were in power. The electoral results of the Liberal Party during the period 1926-1932, a main beneficiary of "the government's dowry," is revealing in this respect: 7.34 percent of the votes in 1926; 61.69 percent in 1927; 6.55 percent in 1928; 47.49 percent in 1931; and 13.62 percent in 1932. The results of the National-Peasant Party are less contrasting, due to its more stabile electoral basis: 27.73 percent in 1926; 22.09 percent in 1927; 77.76 percent in 1928; 14.99 percent in 1931; and 40.30 percent in 1932. See Marcel Ivan, *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice, 1919-1932* [The evolution of our political parties, 1919-1932] (Sibiu: Krafft & Drotleff, 1933), Tabloul V, and Tabloul Va.

[142] Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Cultura română şi politicianismul* (Bucureşti: Librăria Socecu, 1904), p. *iii*.

[143] On the personality and political activity of Venizelos, see Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic;* and Mark Mazower, "The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie: Venizelos and Politics in Greece, 1909-1912," *The Historical Journal* 35 (1992) 4, p. 885-994.

Both leaders reached prominence in the early 1910s as representatives of a new generation of populist politicians; both advocated sweeping reformation, which, in the Romanian case, meant universal male franchise and land reform. Although Brătianu and Venizelos were leaders of left-wing parties, they were both animated by militant nationalism, leading their countries through the Great War and winning fame as fine but stubborn diplomatists during the Paris Peace Conference of 1918-1919.

However, debuting in politics at a time of restrictive franchise, Brătianu was not a populist, but a party leader by excellence, personifying the type of "party charisma" described by Arthur Schweitzer.[144] His dominance was based on his strong personal influence over King Ferdinand and on his family's prestige, while his firm control over the Liberal Party was dependent on providing material incentives to the Liberal clientele. Politician Constantin Argetoianu, at the time an intimate of Brătianu, provided in his memoirs a suggestive description of the Liberal clientelist "machine politics." He stated that "Ionel Brătianu was almighty only because he 'satisfied' the party, led in reality by businessmen represented by Vintilă and Dinu Brătianu."[145]

Within Greater Romania, despite the extension of the franchise to male universal suffrage, Brătianu was not concerned with building a mass following or deepening democratic reforms, but with assuring the continuity of political dominance by elites from the Old Kingdom. In contrast to Brătianu's vision of controlled socio-political change "from above," Venizelos accepted ruptures and revolutions as instruments of mass politics and consciously utilized innovative forms of propaganda in order to build a body of devoted followers.[146] He took advantage of the new nationalist-messianic fervor, presenting himself as an "agent of nationalist regeneration" and being subject to a strong charismatic cult.[147]

Although widely acknowledged as the country's leading politician and credited as a main creator of Greater Romania, Brătianu was not subject to a charismatic cult of personality. Moreover, according to Argetoianu, while resented as a great political shock by his collaborators, Brătianu's sudden death in 1927 was rarely regretted on a personal note.[148] While Venizelos had the chance to shape Greek political life until the 1930s, Brătianu's death left behind a vacuum in Romanian politics that could be filled by messianic politicians advocating new forms of "regeneration" based on populist strategies.

A more relevant example of a charismatic postwar leader was offered by the career of General Alexandru Averescu in the early 1920s. Emerging from the war as a military hero and celebrated as a savior of the country following his successful resistance to German troops in 1917-1918, Averescu engaged in politics as leader of the newly formed Popular Party. The general, elevated in 1926 to the rank of Marshall, was venerated by the peasantry as a messianic savior. His tournaments in the countryside raised "waves of pagan mysticism," suggestively described by Argetoianu in his memoirs:

> "Men kneeled, kissed his blue mantle, shook their heads, sighed deeply and whispered, 'God, keep him well for our salvation!' […] Women did not dare to get closer, but they were all sobbing, pushing their children ahead to touch their savior!"[149]

---

[144] Arthur Schweitzer, "Theory and Political Charisma," p. 150-181.
[145] Constantin Argetoianu, *Memorii* (Bucureşti: Machiavelli, 1996), vol. 8, Part VII (1926-1930), p. 157.
[146] Mazower, "The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie," p. 898.
[147] Mazower, "The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie," p. 898.
[148] Argetoianu, *Memorii*, vol. 8, Part VII, p. 171-172.
[149] Argetoianu, *Memorii*, vol 6, Part VI (1919-1922), p. 46.

The new party attracted numerous public personalities and sympathizers in urban areas as well. In 1919, the newly formed party won only 1.2 percent of the total number of votes and seven parliamentary mandates; only one year later, it obtained no less than 42.41 percent of the electorate and 155 mandates.[150] But Averescu's charisma was short-lived: After the landslide victory of the People's Party in the general elections of 1920, Averescu proved unable to manage his popularity and evolved in a clientelist direction by becoming a peon of the Liberal Party. In 1922, the People's Party got a mere 6.34 percent of votes and seven parliamentary mandates. The party once again rose to power in 1926-1927, receiving 52.09 percent of votes and 292 mandates, this time with strong backing from the Liberal Party.[151]

While political support for the People's Party was highly inconsistent, the Old Kingdom remained its main electoral basis—especially in predominantly rural counties in Southern Wallachia such as Ialomița, Vlașca and Teleorman—coupled with significant progress in Dobrogea (5.75 percent of the votes in 1927) and in Bukovina; progress was also seen partially in Transylvania, in mountainous counties such as Făgăraș (where the party reached a peak popularity of 12 percent in 1931), Ciuc (9.5 percent in 1930) and Năsăud (17 percent in 1931).[152] After the failure of its one-year rule, the People's Party electoral share decreased constantly to 5 percent of the total in 1931 and only 2.2 percent in 1932.[153] The defection of the faction led by Octavian Goga in 1932 marked a final demise of its electoral fortune.

The main challenge to the Liberal's dominance and style of party politics was posed by the National Peasant Party (NPP) led by the Transylvanian politician Iuliu Maniu. Having a strong electoral basis in Translylvania and the Banat, and gradually increasing its popularity in other regions of the country, NPP channeled regional elites' resistance against Bucharest-based centralization. The Liberals and the NPP were also divided over Romania's economic policy and the role of the state in fostering development. The former put the emphasis on sheltered industrialization; under the motto "by our own means," they favored local capital and initiatives over foreign financial capital.[154] In contrast, the latter promoted the idea of a "peasant state" based on independent farmers, and pleaded for a policy of "open gates" to foreign investments.

In the late 1920s, the NPP evolved as Romania's most popular political party. On 6 May 1928, a public demonstration organized by NPP in Alba Iulia (the city where the union of Transylvania with Romania was proclaimed on 1st December 1918) against the domination of the Liberals, reportedly attended by circa 100,000 people, signaled the impatience of regional elites vying for political power at the national level. In the same year, the NPP gained national elections with a crashing victory over the Liberals, obtaining 77.76 percent of the total number of votes. As long as the NPP channeled anti-Liberal feelings, the Legion disposed of a narrow space for entering mainstream politics and channeling popular protest. It could do so only after 1932, when it became obvious that, while in power (1928-1931,

---

[150] Ivan, *Evoluția partidelor noastre politice*, p. 19 and table XIII.
[151] Ivan, *Evoluția partidelor noastre politice*, Table XIII.
[152] Ivan, *Evoluția partidelor noastre politice,* p. 19.
[153] Ivan, *Evoluția partidelor noastre politice*, Table XIII.
[154] The chief artisan of this policy was Vintilă I. C. Brătianu. See his *Scrieri şi cuvântări*, Vol I., 1899-1906 (Bucureşti: Imprimeria Independența, 1937). See also Ştefan Zeletin's defense of the political and economic dominance of the Liberal Party in Romania, in *Burghezia Română. Orginea şi rolul ei istoric* (Bucureşti: Nemira, 1997).

1932-1933), the NPP failed to provide a valid political alternative to the Liberals' domination.

Entering politics in 1927 as the head of the Legion, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu was to be the most successful charismatic leader from the plethora of "saviors" that mushroomed in postwar Romania, until his execution by the King in November 1938. His success can be explained by the fact that, while Brătianu and Averescu were part of the political establishment, Codreanu had never filled a position of power in the state apparatus. Unlike Averescu, Codreanu's image building placed charisma at the very center of his propaganda. Moreover, while Averescu was ultimately interested in perpetuating the dominance of the political elites of the Old Kingdom, Codreanu developed his charismatic claims into an anti-establishment and anti-democratic direction. His counter-ideology united two central dimensions of Romanian national ideology, religion and nationalism, under the form of charismatic nationalism. He directed his efforts at building a movement of devoted followers and specifically targeted certain age or socio-professional categories such as secondary-school pupils, students and priests. In this way, he was able to take advantage of—and to directly contribute to—the crisis of the parliamentary system. The powerful ideological combination of religion and messianic nationalism accounts for the Legion's proselytizing power and heterogeneous social composition.

Codreanu's charismatic type of legitimization was disruptive of patronage politics based on party clientelism (*politicianism*), and as such, highly subversive of the existing order. The Legion's unrivaled degree of commitment and fanaticism challenged conventional politics, obstructing patrons' freedom of movement and forcing them to take sides in the conflict between the formal legal-rational and charismatic authority. Until 1936, Romanian elites attempted to disrupt charismatic cohesiveness by channeling the Legion into a privileged patron-client relation. The failure of this strategy led to an open and violent confrontation. In the following, I delineate the main stages in the growth of the Legion, paying special attention to the evolution of its conflict with the political establishment.

3.2. The Charismatic Genesis of the Legion of the "Archangel Michael"

The Legion of the Archangel Michael was founded on 10 July 1927 by a nucleus of initiates led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and followed the typical scenario of a charismatic movement's genesis (see **Document 3**). According to Codreanu, the creation of the Legion was the accomplishment of a vision he had had on 8 November 1923 while imprisoned—his sentence ran from October 1923 to March 1924—due to his participation in the "Student Plot." He claimed that Archangel Michael had appeared to him, urging him to dedicate his life to God. In the spirit of his vision, Codreanu proclaimed as patron and symbol of the new movement Saint Michael (in Hebrew the name means "he who is like God"), one of the seven archangels who defeated Lucifer and his followers, expelling them to Hell.

Reportedly, the cult of the Archangel Michael and of its icon originated from the Văcăreşti monastery, which served as a prison. Codreanu's own account of his "revelation," put forward in his autobiographical work *Pentru legionari* (For My Legionaries), also highlighted the role of Codreanu's father Ion Zelea in inspiring his charismatic vision:[155]

[155] In his writings, Codreanu documents the deep influence his father had upon his political vision and career. Ion Zelea thus appears as one of the main creators and supporters of Corneliu's charismatic cult, in which he saw the fulfillment of his own political ambitions and charismatic vocation. Suggestively, in his memoirs, historian Nicolae Iorga portrays Ion Zelea Codreanu as a religious fanatic, convinced of his role as the *chosen* one: "This interesting man, now alienated from Mr. Cuza, as well, saw himself as being of a superhuman

> "On 8 November [1923], the day of archangels Michael and Gabriel, we discussed what name to give to this organization. I suggested 'The Archangel Michael.' My father replied, 'There is an icon of Saint Michael in the church, on the door on the left side of the altar. Let's see it!'
>
> I went there with Moța, Gârneață, Corneliu Georgescu, Radu Mironovici and Tudose Popescu. We looked at it, and indeed, we were amazed. The icon seemed to us all to be of a unique beauty. The beauty of an icon has never attracted me. But then I felt myself tied to this one with my entire soul, and it gave me the impression that Saint Michael was alive. From that time I began loving icons. Whenever we found the church open we entered and venerated the icons. Our souls were then filled with quietude and happiness."[156]

The icon of the Archangel was subsequently proclaimed a sacred relic of the Legion and was permanently guarded by a Legionary team.

---

essence; he told as how, in Kishinew, he held such a 'remarkable' conference, that at the end of it, the crowd, fascinated, asked itself who spoke in reality: his earthly mouth or the wall portrait of Our Saviour Jesus Christ and, what was even more worrying, this messianic mission that he was to later transmit to his violent and mediocre son, he *saw it* in truth." See Nicolae Iorga, *Orizonturile mele. O viața de om așa cum a fost,* edited by Valeriu Râpeanu and Sanda Râpeanu, introduction by Valeriu Râpeanu (Bucureşti: Minerva, 1972), p. 535.

[156] See Corneliu Zelea Coreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, vol. 1 (Sibiu: Editura Totul Pentru Țară, 1936). Published in German as *Die Eiserne Garde* (Berlin, Vienna: Deutscher Techtsverlag, 1939). Quotations in this paper are from Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*. Vol. 1, 3rd Ed. (Bucureşti: Editura Mişcării Legionare, 1940), here p. 172.

The icon of Saint Michael from the Văcăreşti monastery, which allegedly inspired Codreanu's charismatic "revelation." Saint Michael is depicted holding the sword in one hand and the scale of justice in the other.

The cult of the punitive figure of Saint Michael thus became the main source of the Legion's doctrine and the object of a fanatic Legionary cult: Michael's observance on 8 November was proclaimed the official celebration of the movement. Legionaries adopted an apocalyptic, Manichaean vision of the world, portraying themselves as an earthly Christian army, as knights of the light in perpetual fight with the devil, a feature that accounts for the inherent violent and revengeful character of the movement. A quotation from the Bible eloquently speaks for the militant character of Saint Michael:

> "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him."[157]

The cult of the archangel was not unusual in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, where Michael was venerated as a saint and was often represented in Orthodox icons, usually hoisting a banner and attacking a dragon with a sword. Nor was the political utilization of Saint Michael's cult totally unknown in the larger Orthodox world. It had a precursor in the League of the Archangel Michael led by Purishkevich (also called the Union of the Russian People of the Archangel Michael), which split in 1907 from the Union of Russian People, a

[157] *The Bible*, "The Revelation," 12: 7, 8.

movement regarded by certain scholars as "Europe's first fascist organization."[158] The imagery and symbolism of the Archangel Michael could also be a Western Christian influence, where the saint was known as the patron of the sick, of grocers, sailors and soldiers.

In addition, many of the cult's fundamental beliefs resembles a central component of Rudolf Steiner's (1861-1925) philosophy known as Michaelism, featuring the figure of the archangel at its locus. Steiner propagated his anthroposophic view during numerous lectures, and his philosophy was very popular, especially after World War I.[159] Although the Legion greatly differed from an anthroposophic organization, it is possible that its use of Saint Michael's symbolism, including the idea of a Legion of Archangel's followers, influenced Codreanu.

As a charismatic movement, the Legion of the Archangel Michael put forward a salvational formula, based on the imminence of the apocalypse and encompassing strong messianic and millenariannist overtones. In July 1927, Codreanu defined the main leading principles of the Legion to be "faith in God," "faith in our mission," "love for one another," and "song as the chief manifestation of our state of mind."[160]

The first two principles referred to the Legionary belief in divine intervention in history, and in the *Văcăreşteni* as being invested with a messianic mission. The third principle was regarded as the basis for the Legion's organization. The concept of love was regularly employed in leading Legionary manifestos to stand for a wide range of social relations, from love for the fatherland to love for the Legionary death, from male fellowship (*camaraderie*) on the battlefield to a description of the charismatic leader's authority over his followers and the mysterious attraction it exercised upon them. The discourse on love as a leading principle of social organization drew on the Orthodox theological discourse of Platonic love as a basis for the community of believers.[161] While revealing the charismatic nature of the Legion, the emphasis on love also exposed the utopian character of its program, which lacked real social and political alternatives. The declarative attachment to "love" stood in sharp contrast with the violent and revengeful character of the movement.

Finally, the employment of music as a way of socialization and expression was also directly linked to the charismatic nature of the Legion. As Legionary Ion Banea pointed out,

---

[158] See Geoffrey Brunn and Victor S. Mamatey, *The World in the Twentieth Century*, 4th ed., (Boston: Hearth, 1962), p. 891.

[159] See Rudolf Steiner, *The Archangel Michael: His Mission and Ours. Selected Lectures and Writing.* Edited by Christopher Bamford (Hudson, N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1994); and *The mission of the Archangel Michael: Eight Lectures Delivered in 1918 and 1919* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1961).

[160] Codreanu, "Primele începuturi de viaţă legionară," in *Pentru legionari*, p. 281-283.

[161] See the discourse on love of Dumitru Stăniloaie, a highly erudite and influential Orthodox theologist born in Transylvania in 1903, educated in Brasov, Cernăuţi and Athens, and a professor of theology in Sibiu and later in Bucharest. Stăniloaie conducted stages of research in Paris, Munich and Berlin, and was a temporary collaborator of the inter-war magazine *Gândirea*. In his writings, he provides an eulogy of the Christian principle of love. He stated that "Dans l'amour, l'homme est bon; dans l'amour, l'homme se dévoile. En face de mon amour, il s'ouvre, il s'apaise, il devient calme. Il y a maintenant quelqu'un qui l'aime, qui a de l'attention a son égard: il se calme, il se couvre tel qu'il est; il découvre son fondement véritable. Je connais alors l'être humain par l'amour." M. A. Costa de Beauregard, ed. Dumitru Stăniloaie. *Ose comprendre que Je t'aime. Témoin spirituel d'aujourd'hui.* Preface de A.M. Allchin, (Paris: Cerf, 1983), p. 216. See also Chapitre XII, "Amour et Temps," p. 169-180.

> "Under the magic of song, any earthly link and concern disappear: Souls are uniting in a divine feeling. [...] Since the Legion is a great and rummaging spiritual movement, with a direct educational activity over the soul, it is natural that the first manifestation externalizing this faith will find its voice in song. Song is only the word of the soul. Through it, souls embrace one another. Appealing to feelings and stemming from feelings, song elevates, enthuses, and creates a certain predisposition. It is the invisible thread on which man raises himself from the earth toward the high horizons of serenity, of spiritual life, toward God."[162]

Legionary songs written by poets recruited to the Legion such as Radu Gyr, Stefan Curcă, Constantin Savin, Bartolomeu Livezeanu, Simion Lefter, Mişu Găftoiu, Ilie Nițu, Iustin Ilieşu, and Horațiu Comăniciu and composed by musicians such as Ion Mânzatu glorified Codreanu's leadership, called for sacrifice, and commemorated the Legionary martyrs or important moments in the movement's short history: "The Legionaries' Anthem," "The Workers' Anthem," "The Ballad of the Prisons," "The Anthem of the Legionaries," "The Anthem of the Legionary Youth," "The Young Legionary Transylvania," "The Song of A Fallen Legionary," "The Call of the Sacrifice," "The Ballad of the Commander," "The Anthem of the Heroes Moța-Marin," "In Your Creed," etc.

Song was also an element of the military life and discipline instilled in Codreanu during his studies at the military secondary school at Dealu Monastery in Târgoviște. In his autobiography, Codreanu emphasized the role military formation had played in his education: "The military education at the [Dealu] Monastery had a life-long impact on me. The order, the discipline, the hierarchy inculcated into my blood at a tender age, constituted, alongside the feeling of soldierly dignity, the guideline for my whole existence." Codreanu's education shaped the Legion's organization and internal relations. Significantly, the Legionaries addressed each other with the term *camarazi* (comrades), a military term.

In contrast with traditional political parties, the Legion had no concretely defined political program.[163] In *Pământul Stămoşesc* (The Fatherland) Codreanu remained ambiguous about the exact content of the Legion's program, stating that this was his deliberate choice, dictated by strategic purposes: "I avoided developing a complete program. Its major lines are drawn and well known (naturally, with the risk of seeing them stolen)."[164] Those major lines were defined only in general terms, as follows: 1) To achieve force; 2) To moderate this force to defeat all hostile forces; 3) and then, to apply the measures of our proper program. The latter measures were nevertheless "kept for their time," since they were "part of the operational secrets of the fighting forces."

Neglecting a concrete program was in fact another indication of the charismatic nature of the Legionary movement. Significantly, Codreanu differentiated between political parties and messianic movements, such as the Legion itself (see also Document 5):

> "There are movements that have no program. They live from speculating about diverse problems that appear in life. For example: usury. They devour this and then die. But they do not find more prayers in front of them.
>
> There are other movements that have a program. There are others that have more than a program, they have a doctrine, and there are still others that have more then a

[162] Ion Banea, *Căpitanul* (Sibiu: Totul pentru țară, 1936), p. 109, 110.
[163] See Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Rațiunea," in *Pentru legionari*, p. 278.
[164] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Programul şi sufletul," (The Program and the Soul) *Pământul Strămoşesc*, V (1 February 1933) 2, p. 2-3.

> doctrine, they have a religion. It is something of a superior spiritual kind, which mysteriously collects thousands of people determined to create another fate for themselves. If the man of the program or of the doctrine serves with inner conviction, the Legionaries are people of a great faith and they are ready to die for it at any time. They will serve this faith until the end."[165]

Consequently, the Legion did not focus on devising new programs, but on changing people from within: "Because at night anyone can make a program, but we do not feel the need for them in this country, but for people and for the will to implement them." It concentrated on "souls" and not on voters:

> "Our Legionary movement has the character of a great spiritual school. It tends to illuminate unknown faiths, to transform, to revolutionize the Romanian soul. Announce in all corners that the evil, the ruin, originates from the soul. The soul is the cardinal point on which we have to work at this moment. The soul of the individual and the soul of the mass. Lies are all new programs and social systems pompously displayed to the people, if in their shadow laughs that soul of a thief, that lack of a sense of duty, that spirit of betrayal of everything that is Romanian, the same immorality, the waste and luxury. Call the soul of the people to a new life. Do not look for electoral success if they do not mean at the same time the victory of the organized forces of the renewed soul."[166]

Instead of drafting and pursuing a concrete plan of action, the Legion defined as its goal the salvation of the Romanian nation. In his doctrinaire article "La Icoană" (To the Icon) Moța suggestively spelled out the Legion's endeavor for national salvation of the Romanian people, under the charismatic leadership of Codreanu and through the sacrifice of the Legionaries as the "recipients of the salvaging force" (see **Document 2**). This feature was regarded as differentiating the Legion from a political party. According to Moța: "We don't do politics and at no time have we done politics. […] We have a religion, we are the slaves of faith. Its flame consumes us."[167] This emphasis on salvation differentiated the Legion from both Italian fascism and German Nazism. In 1933, the leading Legionary ideologue Alexandru Polihroniade pointed out that "Fascism venerates the state, Nazism the race and the nation. Our movement strives to fulfill the destiny of the Romanian people through salvation."[168]

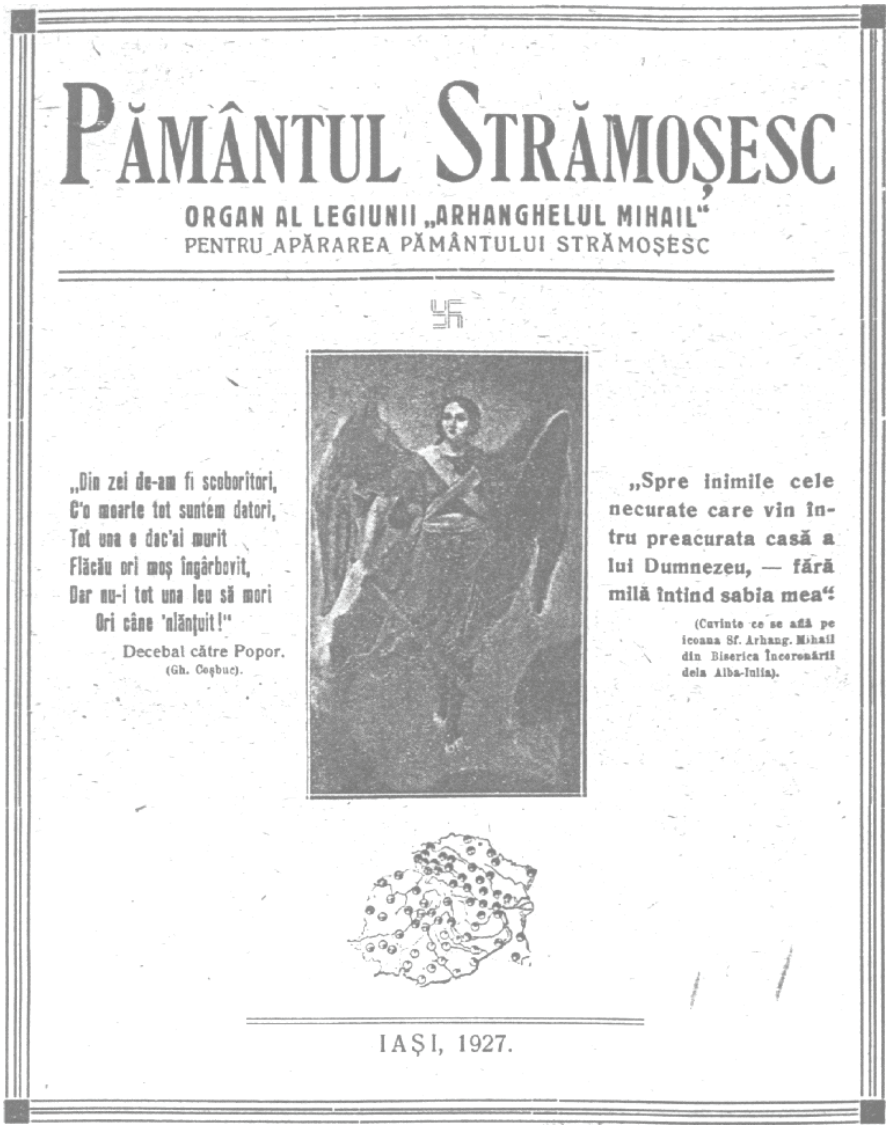
What were the main features of the salvational formula preached by the Legion? In his analysis of millenarian movements, Norman Cohn argued that, although based on Bible, proponents of millenarianism interpret Biblical texts in a personal manner, regarding the Second Coming of Christ as imminent and placing it during their lifetime, while identifying themselves with Christian martyrs as future citizens of the messianic kingdom. Millenarianists thus make significant changes to Biblical texts by regarding religious salvation as collective (individual redemption of the believer is transferred to the Christian community, becoming collective salvation), terrestrial (the redemption will occur in this world and not in the "other"), imminent (impending, sudden and unexpected), total (the messianic kingdom will radically transform the believer's life) and miraculous (this

---

[165] Zelea-Codreanu, "Programul şi sufletul", p. 2-3.
[166] Zelea-Codreanu, "Programul şi sufletul", p. 2-3.
[167] Ion I. Moța, *Cranii de Lemn. Articole, 1922-1936* (Sibiu: Editura Totul Pentru Țară, 1936), p. 53.
[168] Mihail Polihroniade, *Axa*, 15 January 1933, p. I.

transformation will occur through the intervention of supernatural agents, either Christ himself, or God's messengers on Earth).[169] The Legionary salvational formula shared most of the features of a millenarian salvation, but reinterpreted them in view of Romanian national symbols and a specific socio-political context.

[169] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (London: Pimlico, 1993).



The cover of the official journal of the Legion, Pământul Strămoşesc (The Fatherland), illustrates Legionary symbolism. In the center is the venerated icon of Saint Michael. Underneath is a map of Greater Romania indicating major Romanian cities; the black spots show the proportion of Jews to the total population of each city, in an attempt to document the alleged "Jewish invasion" of Greater Romania. On the left side of the picture runs a quotation from the Bible attributed to Saint Michael, and is also written on his icon in the Cathedral of the Coronation in Alba Iulia (where Greater Romania was proclaimed): "I mercilessly direct my sword toward the filthy hearts who come into the immaculate house of God." On the right side is a quotation from Romanian poet George Coşbuc glorifying the sacrifice: "Gods if we were descending from / A death we are still owing / It makes no difference if you die / Young men or hunchbacked old / But it is not the same to die / A lion or a chained slave."

Legionary writings were dominated by the effort of identifying, defaming and fighting the enemy. According to the Legion's ideologues, the main threat to Romania's national security was posed by the socio-economic domination of ethnic minorities. In an analysis of the minority question in Romania, Ion I. Moța established a hierarchy among the country's ethnic minorities in view of their attitude toward Greater Romania. In a first category, he placed revisionist ethnic groups such as Bulgarians, Russians, and Hungarians who militated for the dismemberment of the Romanian national state. In a second category, Moța placed those minority groups that were not animated by competing nationalist projects at the expense of Greater Romania but were open to collaboration with the Romanian state, such as Germans, Slovaks, and Poles. The third category, and the main danger to the Romanian state, was represented by Jews, who occupied "a special position," given their socio-political domination and their tendency to monopolize liberal professions, and thus the country's political leadership.[170] Moța criticized the Minority Convention signed by Romania in 1919, arguing that "minority status" was nothing else but the legal consecration of privilege."[171]

Major Legionary journals such as *Pământul Strămoşesc*, *Biruința*, and *Sfarmă Piatră* were dominated by virulent anti-Semitic manifestos. In these writings, the imminent "Jewish danger" allegedly threatening the national community was transformed into an apocalyptic image and closely associated with the theory of universal conspiracy. In an analysis of the "conspiracy theory of history," Franz Neumann distinguished among five main variations: the Jesuit conspiracy, the Freemason conspiracy, the communist conspiracy, the capitalist conspiracy and the Jewish conspiracy.[172]

The salvationist formula proposed by the Legion was based on a "double" conspiracy theory, since it joined, in a powerful syncretism, the Jewish and communist dangers, a feature that accounted for its proselytizing power. According to Legionary ideologues, the contemporary world had to confront Lucifer once more: "defeated several times, the leader of the revolted angels attacked again, creating that social flagella of our epoch, called communism."[173] The concrete form of this apocalyptic danger was communism, seen as "a satanic enterprise," "the work of Lucifer," and "a new attempt to destroy the kingdom of God."[174] An important component of this apocalyptic vision was anti-Semitism, based especially on *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* considered as comprising, in thirty-two treatises, "the concrete plans devised over centuries by Jews, for realizing their dream of conquering the world."[175] Published for the first time in Russia in 1905 and proven to be a forgery of the Russian police, the book was translated into Romanian by Ion I. Moța and

---

[170] Ion I. Moța (alias Zyrax), "Problema minoritară în România," *Axa* II (22 January 1933) 5, p. II.

[171] Moța, "Problema minoritară în România," p. II.

[172] Franz Neumann, "Anxiety and Politics," in *The Democratic and the Authoritarian State: Essay in Political and Legal Theory* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957), p. 279; see also Tucker, "The Theory of Charismatic Leadership," p. 752.

[173] Popescu Marin, "Protocoalele Înțelepților Sionului. Politica Secretă a ovreilor pentru cucerirea lumii creştine," in Nicu Crăcea, ed., *Dezvăluiri legionare* (Bucharest: Buna Vestire, 1997), Vol. II, p. 96-98.

[174] The Legionary anti-Semitism thus resembled the type of "demonologic anti-Semitism" analyzed by Norman Cohn in *Histoire d'un mythe. La "conspiration" juive et les Protocoles des Sages de Sion*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).

[175] Horia Sima, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. II, p. 209.

published in 1923.[176] Francisco Veiga argued that Moța had an important role in inducing Codreanu's belief in "the world Jewish plot," the two thus becoming "fanatics of universal distrust."[177]

The Legion's conspiracy theory provided a psychologically acceptable explanation for the perceived precarious social status of urban Romanians, allegedly caused by the activities of "privileged" minority groups, most notably the Jews or the Freemasons, who were able to influence—in an occult way—the political decision-making process. The highly exaggerated nature of the claims advanced and the slander evidence provided in their support reveal the irrational nature of the Legionary theory of conspiracy; their sources and content shed light upon mechanisms of charismatising stigmatic identity.

3.3. From Regional to National Movement: The Legion and Mainstream Politics, 1927-1932

Upon its establishment, the Legion functioned as a small fraternity of males, in 1929 boasting an estimated 400 to 1,000 members, the great majority youths between twenty and twenty-five years old.[178] The Legion was based in two rooms in the Iaşi Cultural House and a chapel where legionaries venerated the icon of the Archangel Michael. The warlike charismatic sect was often ridiculed for its religious bigotism, Legionary being pejoratively named "Christians of the wood" due to their cult of the icon.

The Legion was originally designed as an alternative elite organization, and not as a mass political party. Its 1927 Statute stipulated that the organization could not take part in parliamentary elections, and set a limit to the total number of legionaries at 3,000 and a maximum of 100 members per one county. [179] This threshold was regarded not only as "the actual limit of our organizational powers," but also as "sufficient for creating a healthy movement in our country."[180]

Although Codreanu demanded the abolition of the "corrupt" and "unrepresentative" parliamentary system, in July 1927 he nevertheless decided to run in national parliamentary elections, thus taking advantage of the multi-party political regime he demagogically criticized. The Legion obtained only 10,761 votes representing 0.39 percent of the electorate, distributed in several regional centers, such as Northern Moldova, the Banat, central Transylvania and Southern Bessarabia (see **Table 1**, in Annexes).

After a period of political passivity caused mainly by financial problems, in 1929 Codreanu set as the Legion's strategic goal its "going to the masses," mostly through electoral marches organized in Moldova and Bessarabia.[181] In the first years, electoral gains remained rather modest, due mainly to the hostile attitude of the state administration. In order to divert the repression against the Legion, on 13 April 1930 Codreanu established the Iron Guard, as a new political section of the movement. In *Pentru legionari*, he confessed:

---

[176] Ion I. Moța, *Protocoalele înțelepților sionului de Roger Lambelin*. Traducere însoțită de numeroase comentarii şi adăugiri din autori români (Orăştie: Tipografia şi editura Libertatea, 1923).
[177] Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, p. 75.
[178] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail,"* p. 139.
[179] "Organizarea Legiunii 'Arhanghelul Mihail,'" *Pământul Strămoşesc* 1 (1 October 1927) 5, p. 5.
[180] "Organizarea Legiunii 'Arhanghelul Mihail,'" p. 5.
[181] Codreanu, "Spre masele populare," in *Pentru legionari*, p. 331-378.

> "A single problem is particularly difficult: How could I operate in such a way as to avoid the hostility of the authorities and the open confrontation with the state and the army? I then intended to launch a new national organization for fighting the Jewish communism, which was to include the 'Legion of Archangel Michael' and other youth organizations, irrespective of their party affiliation. In this way, we hoped to penetrate Bessarabia. What name to give to this organization? I debated it with Legionaries in the Hall of the Cultural Center. Some suggested 'The Anti-Communist Phalange,' others various other names. Crânganu said: The Iron Guard. So be it."[182]

The Iron Guard enrolled the most combative Legionaries in a militarist structure. Soon, however, the Legion and the Iron Guard became interchangeable labels for the same movement, and even their organizational distinctiveness faded away.[183]

Codreanu's strategy did not pay off: On 3 January 1931, invoking clashes between authorities and Iron Guard propagandists in the territory, the government led by Prime Minister G. G. Mironescu issued a first decree outlawing the Legion of Archangel Michael/the Iron Guard. Codreanu and other Legionary leaders were arrested and brought to justice. At the end of February, however, they were acquitted by the court, against governmental will, and then released from prison. Soon, despite the hostile attitude of authorities, the Iron Guard succeeded in reorganizing its political activity under a new name, "Gruparea Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," in fact another camouflage label. As Codreanu pointed out, "Naturally, the new name did not appeal to the public. People, the press, our enemies and the government, continued to name it Iron Guard."[184]

"Gruparea Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," could attain limited political gains. In the general elections held in June 1931, it managed to triple its vote total but did not obtain any parliamentary mandate. On 31 August 1931, the party obtained its first major political success: Codreanu was elected deputy in by-elections organized in Neamț county, against a Liberal candidate, an event greatly increasing the movement's visibility. Although he was a rather poor speaker lacking oratorical skills, once in parliament, Corneliu Codreanu increased his public notoriety by attacking prominent members of the elite, publicizing massive loans they had received from the country's major banks and calling for the death sentence in cases of abuse of government funds. Argetoianu, at the time Minister of Interior, describes the political ascension of the Legion, following Codreanu's election:

> "In the Chamber, Zelea Codreanu was weak, but his election in Neamț had a great impact, and Legionary 'nests' were more and more numerous, in areas where one would not expect them. A Legionary or Guardist mystique was about to penetrate the heart of the peasantry. All kinds of legends were being created around Zelea Codreanu, 'The Captain', to whom his assassination of the prefect Manciu in Iaşi, his triumphal acquittal by the jury in Mehedinți and his resounding wedding near Focşani created an aura of *haiduc* and set him on a pedestal, in everybody's sight."[185]

Corneliu was soon joined in parliament by his father, Ion Zelea, who was elected deputy in Tutova country on 17 April 1932, after a "terrible" electoral fight, during which the

---

[182] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 366.
[183] Heinen, *Legiunea Arhangelul Mihail*, p. 187.
[184] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 376.
[185] Argetoianu, *Memorii*, vol. 9, Part. VIII (1930-1931), p. 428.

Liberals committed—according to Argetoianu—"horrifying abuses" in order to avoid yet another defeat.[186]

The Legion experienced its major electoral breakthrough in 1932, when it received 70,674 votes, representing a share of 2.37 percent of the electorate and five parliamentary mandates. Following its election into parliament, the Legion shifted its focus from rural to urban areas and transferred its political center to Bucharest, where it built a new center called *Casa Verde* (The Green House), inaugurated on 8 November 1936. Legionary deputies abandoned their folk national costumes for politicians' suits, a sign of their entering mainstream politics.

Although remaining largely dependent upon its regional bases in Moldova, Bessarabia and Bukovina, the Legion gradually penetrated or consolidated in other historical regions as well, such as the Banat, central Wallachia and parts of Transylvania. In his memoirs, Argetoianu highlighted the innovative forms of political propaganda conducted by Legionaries, and the mixture of ignorant, curious or indifferent responses to the new movement:

> "All kinds of things were being said about the Guardists' goals, actions and propaganda. They were well received by some, with skepticism by others, or simply ignored by most people. It was thus said that groups of students spread into villages, silently helped peasants in their work, repaired roads and bridges, spaded channels for still waters and sprang wells in dry areas, then left announcing that in the following days 'the One who had to come would come to the village.' Indeed, 'the Captain' came: riding a white horse, accompanied by several lads, he used to stop in the center of the village, get off the horse, kiss the earth, and then go away without a word. People watched with their eyes wide-open, shook their heads and whispered: 'Was this the Saint?' Some legionary agents then spread into the 'visited' villages and, hiding their real identity under all kinds of pretexts, completed the action of conquering the souls."[187]

But the electoral growth of the Legion was not due simply to its innovative propaganda. It was also a symptom of the political system's structural crisis after the economic recession, which coincided with the failure of the democratic opposition led by the National Peasant Party. In an analysis of Romania's postwar electoral system, Marcel Ivan pointed out that in 1931-1932, Romanian politics was at the crossroads. On the one hand, popular support for major "old" parties began eroding gradually and the number of active voters systematically decreased from 77.5 percent in 1928 to 71.0 percent in 1932. On the other hand, a multitude of new political factions and groupings emerged, most of them with similar regional backgrounds and programs: there were seven major parties in 1928, twelve in 1931 and seventeen in 1932. During the same period (1928-1932), old parties lost circa 38.5 percent of their electoral support, which was absorbed in a proportion of 74.0 percent by new political parties.[188]

Ivan compared the situation prevalent in 1932 with the 1919-1922 transition period, when the electorate was divided among a multitude of parties that were trying to reshape the nature of the political system. Writing in 1932, Ivan interpreted this change—correctly regarded as "the prelude to a new direction in our political life"— as proof of the consolidation of the Romanian parliamentary system, marked by an increasing maturity of

---

[186] Argetoianu, *Memorii*, vol. 9, Part. VIII (1930-1931), p. 428.
[187] Argetoianu, *Memorii*, vol. 9, Part. VIII (1930-1931), p. 428.
[188] Ivan, *Evoluția partidelor noastre politice*, p. 32-33.

the electorate, which sanctioned ruling parties and looked for alternative solutions.[189] Seen in retrospect, the change was indicative of the growing crisis of the legal-rational parliamentary system's legitimacy and the emergence of new personalized and radical forms of politics. The Legion was to prove itself one of the most successful forces among the plethora of new parties.

3.4. The Legion and the "New" Generation

French historian Catherine Durandin made the pertinent remark that, starting with the Romantic Era, every generation of Romanian intellectuals attempted to produce a discourse on Romanian national identity as a strategy of penetrating the political life of the country.[190] In the last quarter of the 19th century, several intellectuals educated mainly in Germany established a discussion circle called *Junimea* (The Youth), led by Titu Maiorescu, which virulently criticized the modernizing 1848 revolutionary project in Romania. Expressed initially through a series of conferences and later in a leading literary magazine, *Convorbiri Literare* (Literary Dialogues), their highly elevated cultural discourse succeeded in dominating Romanian cultural life. Furthermore, at a time of an intensive nation- and state-building activity, *Junimea*'s prestige could be easily converted into political capital, assuring its members political preeminence within the Conservative Party and quick integration into leading cultural-institutional positions.

At the turn of the century, the "critical school" offered another example of generational discourses, having Nicolae Iorga and Dimitrie Onciul as main representatives and spokesmen.[191] Zeev Barbu pointed out that the *fin-de-siècle* intellectual crisis in Romania provoked a mutation in the political culture from "from mechanisms of withdrawal and avoidance, to a mental structure dominated by mechanisms of attack, and a moral system based on aggressive assertion and power."[192] Historian Nicolae Iorga embedded this new militancy in his formula of *Semănătorist* cultural nationalism. Iorga began his political struggle in his early thirties, with the article "Struggle for the Romanian Language," (1906) which denounced the cosmopolitan culture of the elites and their neglect of national values. His article inspired a major student riot in front of the National Theater, demanding representations in Romanian language. This manifestation launched Iorga into politics: for decades, he was at the heart of all the major debates in Romanian society. Iorga became the idol of university students and the champion of Romanian nationalism and irredentism. His romantic interpretation of history dominated Romanian historiography, while his campaign for the emancipation of peasantry and his denunciation of *politicianism* transformed Iorga into an "Apostle of the Nation."

Following the successful example of the prewar discussion circle *Junimea* and of the "critical school," a group of active intellectuals in the inter-war period developed the political myth of the "new" generation. At a cultural level, the young writer and assistant professor Mircea Eliade first coined the term. In his novel *The Fall from Paradise* (1922), Eliade

---

[189] Ivan, *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice*, p. 34.

[190] Catherine Durandin, *Istoria Românilor* (History of Romanians) (Iaşi: Institutul European, 1998), p. 9.

[191] For the successful generational strategy of institutional integration employed by the historiographical "critical school" at the turn of the century see Lucian Nastasă, *Generaţie şi schimbare în istoriografia română (Sfîrşitul secolului XIX şi începutul secolului XX)* (Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujană, 1999).

[192] Barbu, "Psyco-Historical and Sociological Perspectives", p. 385.

pointed out that with the achievement of Greater Romania, the new generation was the first in Romanian history without a defined national ideal to serve as a generational catalyst.

In the early 1930s, Eliade, together with a group of young intellectuals made up of—among others—Constantin Noica, Lucian Blaga, Emil Cioran, Mircea Vulcănescu, Eugene Ionesco, Mihail Sebastian, and Mihail Polihroniade developed the myth of the "new" generation united by exceptional qualities given by common formative events (such as the war with its traumatic experience of death) and a special historical mission (to revitalize Romanian national values). The movement debuted with a programmatic manifesto from Eliade (*Spiritual Itinerary*, 1927), continued with a series of intellectual conferences passionately debating contemporary political idols or scientific personalities such as Vladimir I. Lenin, Benito Mussolini and Sigmund Freud (the *Criterion* Circle, 1932-1933) and was later expressed through remarkable literary, philosophical and historical works.[193]

While the *Criterion* Circle gained certain cultural visibility, the political options of its members suffered a growing polarization. The activation of young intellectuals was linked to the deep socio-political crisis experienced by Romania in 1929-1932, which in turn led to the collapse of the long-term cultural strategies put forward by the Liberal Party in the first postwar decade. The overproduction of young bureaucratic cadres coincided with a dramatic shrinking in opportunities to find state employment. If, in the last quarter of the 19th century the young generation was soon integrated into mainstream cultural institutions, in the 1930s it accused a prolonged socio-political marginalization that would eventually lead to political radicalism.

Another factor that contributed to the dissolution of *Criterion* was external intrusion and manipulation by rival and anti-establishment (would-be) politicians. In the early 1930's, there were already several attempts at utilizing *Criterion*'s prestige and transforming it into political capital. The first one came from the theologian Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972), editor-in chief of *Gândirea* and a professor of theology in Chişinău (Kishinev) and Bucharest. The animator of the religious-nationalist trend generically called *Orthodoxism*, Crainic intended to channel Codreanu's movement into a nationalist party under his own direction. The salient feature of Orthodoxism was the reevaluation of the relationship between religion and nationality under the form of religious nationalism (significantly, Orthodoxy was transformed into an *ism*, an ideology).

In a polemical article, Crainic provided a political account of the religious-nationalist orientation of the Romanian youth:

> "If we were to look for an explanation of this truly wonderful fact of the spontaneous and autonomous orientation of the youth, to me at least it would seem easy to find: In their great majority, our students, and especially those who set the tone […] of collective life, are countryside kids. They are sons of peasants or, when they are townsfolk, they are peasants' grandsons. Through their soul, in spite of all the

[193] Eliade's conceptualization of the "new" generation was almost simultaneous with Karl Mannheim's pioneering essay *The Problems of Generations* (1928)), re-published in Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, (London: Routledge and Kegal Paul, 1952), pp. 276-322. Himself a member of a prestigious prewar discussion circle of a "generation," the *Sunday Circle* in Budapest, Mannheim argued that generations come into being when birth cohorts (individuals born in the same year) experience striking historical events or abrupt changes in their formative years (late adolescence or early adulthood). He spoke of a "generational consciousness" able to compete with other forms of social identity such as class conscience. On the activities of the *Sunday Circle,* see Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

> temptations of high culture and urban civilization, gushes forth the moral health of our people. This mysterious patrimony is today the support for their entire collective life. It is not hard to discover through a summary analysis the peasant character of this patrimony."[194]

Crainic's attempt of inoculating his ideas to the Legion's program was partially successful. At the beginning of the 1930's, he convinced Codreanu to collaborate on a common political platform, and acted as a "hidden" ideologue of the Legion. In December 1931, Crainic authored Codreanu's first speech in the Romanian Parliament. The discourse contained all the ideas previously put forward by Crainic. In a powerful apocalyptic writing entitled *Punctele cardinale în haos* (Cardinal Points in Chaos), Crainic portrayed the modern world as "brought to chaos by sin," "panic" and "uncertainty," and announced a "terrible crisis, of unimaginable proportions, of a forthcoming catastrophe" a genuine "breaking up of the world" in face of the "terrifying cataclysm of our epoch," having "a demonic power." In Crainic's view, the post-war socio-political upheaval marked the end of an era: "the social, economic and political systems are agonizing," "continental empires are falling apart" and "the pillars of the world are shaking." This generalized political crisis had a powerful impact at individual level: "The crisis which fills this apocalyptic Universe has great repercussions on the drama of the individual. An ontological crisis raises yet again the question of the origin of the human life and of therefore of the human destiny." From here the questions: "Where is the salvation?" "Where are we heading to?"[195]

Crainic metaphor, that of the "cardinal points in chaos," was repeated in Codreanu's first speech in the parliament. He denounced "the foreign invasion of Romania" and proclaimed the beginning of "a life and death struggle," in a country "threatened by the storm" and "whose altars are being destroyed." Codreanu's discourse also provided a political answer to the questions previously raised by Crainic: "I set the cardinal points in God, Fatherland, King, Family, Property and the Army."[196] It also advocated the idea of the messianic mission of the new generation: "I hope that the actual leaders of Great Romania will make the effort of listening to me, too, the one who is an exponent of the young generation, a tortured generation—about which so much has been said—a *martyred*, in fact, I could say, a *crucified* generation."[197]

Most importantly, at Crainic's own initiative, young intellectuals grouped around the journal *Axa* (the Axis), made up of Mihail Polihroniade, Vasile Marin, Alexandru Constant, and Victor Ion Vojen, soem of them part of *Criterion*, enrolled into the Legion. As Crainic recalled, the merger between Codreanu's nucleus and the *Axa* group was at first a difficult enterprise, since those intellectuals despised Codreanu:

> "Several months I have discussed with them, trying to convince them to enroll. The stereotypical objection was that the chief of the movement is 'criminal and ignorant.' I could hardly manage to initiate their discussion with him. After that, they all

---

[194] Nichifor Crainic, "Tineretul şi creştinismul," in *Puncte cardinale în haos* (Iaşi: Editura Timpul, 1996) Ediție îngrijită şi note de Magda Ursache şi Petru Ursache; Prefață de Petru Ursache**,** pp. 20-21.
[195] Crainic, *Punctele cardinale*, p. 21.
[196] Codreanu, *Discurse la Mesaj*, 3 December 1931.
[197] Codreanu, *Discurse la Mesaj,* 3 December 1931.

> embraced him and opened the large gate through which were to enter tens of thousand of young intellectuals." [198]

Once converted to the Legion, the *Axa* group abandoned their reservation, experiencing a charismatic "emotional seizure." As Alexandru Constant confessed in 1937, "for many of us, the enrollment into the Legion put an end to an severe spiritual crisis."[199] They became devoted Legionaries and engaged in an assiduous propaganda in intellectual circles.

The infusion of young intellectuals strengthened considerably the Legion's public image and political visibility. However, Crainic was unable to take advantage of that development. His paramount influence over the Legion was soon lost in favor of another recognized *guru* of the new generation, Nae Ionescu (1890-1940). One of Romania's most popular and influential inter-war journalists and university professors, Ionescu played an important role in the negotiations that brought Carol to Romania's throne in 1930. After "restoration," he became a prominent member of the royal *camarilla*, an informal and heterogeneous counseling body made up of dubious and opportunistic figures gathered around the King, lobbying for the establishment of an authoritarian political regime. Although Ionescu hoped to play a central political role, as a reward for his devotion to the king, his plans suffered a bitter disappointment. In 1931, the king wasted an opportunity to establish an authoritarian regime occasioned by the political failure of the National Peasant Party. Moreover, instead of appealing to Ionescu for leadership, Carol opted for a government dominated by Constantin Argetoianu and Nicolae Iorga (1931-1932).

Failing to fulfill his personal ambition and feeling that his loyalty had been betrayed Ionescu soon became an enemy of the King, looking for allies to undermine his authority. To this end, he took advantage of his ascendancy over his students, and acquired a strong influence over the emerging right-wing political movement, being unanimously acknowledged as one of its leading spiritual patrons and ideologues. In his writings, Ionescu promoted an authoritarian political regime, based on a charismatic type of legitimization:

> "The man of the masses is the man who is. He whom the masses recognize as such. By what method do they recognize him? By their faith in him. Electoral processes also exist, of course. But beyond electoral votes, there is the act of faith, of faith and not of confidence."[200]

Under Ionescu's spiritual patronage, the Legion benefited from a new wave of intellectual sympathizers, followers of the controversial but adulated professor, the most representative examples being Mircea Eliade, and the young Emil Cioran. How can one account for the enrollment of these intellectuals into the Legion? Besides Ionescu's influence, it is probable that they fell into a state of "epileptical ecstasy"[201] in the face of Codreanu's charismatic persona. Henri H. Stahl, a member of the prestigious sociological school established by Professor Dimitrie Gusti and one of the few members of "Criterion" who did not sympathize with the extreme right, explained Mircea Eliade's enrollment in the Legion

---

[198] Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe, zile negre. Memorii (I)* [White Days, Black Days. Memoirs I] Edited by Nedic Lemnaru (Bucureşti: Gândirea, 1991), p. 237.

[199] *Cuvântul Argeşului*, II (1 February 1937) 28-30, apud Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail,"* p. 222.

[200] Nae Ionescu, *Cuvântul*, 27 January 1938.

[201] For this expression, see Arthur Schweitzer, „Hitler's Dictatorial Charisma," in Glassman, Swatos, eds., *Charisma, History and Social Structure*, p. 147-162, here, p. 148.

through the powerful attraction exercised upon him by Codreanu. Stahl pointed out that, although Codreanu was of a "catastrophic stupidity" and lacked oratorical abilities, he was nevertheless "a strong man, a mountain of a man, big, impressive," Eliade being simply "subjugated by the physical presence of the Captain."[202] In Stahl's view, Codreanu was the most charismatic personality of modern Romania, the only one "able to generate a movement of political mysticism."[203] In contrast to the Captain, communist activists lacked the ability to mobilize the masses; therefore, despite their fanaticism, the Communist Party remained throughout the inter-war period a small clandestine political grouping, largely controlled by the secret police.[204]

But Eliade's sympathy for the Legion should not in fact be reduced to his fascination with Codreanu's physical magnetism. A student of comparative religion, Eliade was attracted by the Legion's self-professed spiritual and messianic character.[205] In 1937, he suggestively summarized its charismatic character, arguing that,

> "The Legionary movement has a spiritual and Christian meaning. If all the contemporary revolutions set as their goal the conquest of power by a social class or by a man, the Legionary revolution aims, on the contrary, at the supreme redemption of the nation, the reconciliation of the Romanian nation with God, as the Captain said."[206]

As for Cioran, recent scholarly accounts of his political affiliation indicate his psychological "predisposition" for fascist sympathy.[207] Building on Goffman's theoretical perspective on stigma, Sorin Antohi analyses Cioran's identity dilemmas from the perspective of traditional Romanian political attitudes.[208] Antohi argues that, beginning in the first part of the 19th century, under the impact of intensified contacts with Western Europe, an inferiority complex, even in radical variants of stigmatic identity, had become an integral part of Romanian self-definition. On this basis, Antohi identifies a stigmatic collective psychological character, which influenced the decision-making process and thus the collective destiny of the community. He provides an insightful account of Cioran's philosophical dilemmas, seen as representative not only of his own generation but also for deeper Romanian cultural patterns, corresponding to a more general model of Eastern European crises of cultural and national identity.

---

[202] Zoltán Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie. Inverviuri cu Henri H. Stahl (1985-1987)* (Bucureşti: Paideia, 2000), p. 162.
[203] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, p. 162.
[204] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, p. 229.

[205] For the most complete biography of Mircea Eliade to date, see Florin Ţurcanu. *Mircea Eliade. Le prisonnier de l'histoire.* Préface de Jacques Julliard (Paris: La Découverte, 2004).
[206] See Mircea Eliade, "De ce cred în biruinţa mişcării legionare?" in *Texte "Legionare" şi despre "Românism"* (Cluj: Dacia, 2001), p. 64, my translation. For a critical assessment of the scholarly and ethical controversies surrounding Eliade's case, in particular, and the affiliation of young intellectuals to the Legion, in general, see Constantin Iordachi, Balázs Trencsényi: "In Search of a Usable Past: The Question of National Identity in Romanian Studies, 1990-2000," *East European Politics and Societies* 18 (Summer 2003) 3, p. 415-453.
[207] On Cioran's personality and political attitudes, see Marta Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat sau "Schimbarea la faţă a României*" (Cluj: Biblioteca Apostrof, 1999).
[208] Cf. Goffman, *Stigma*; Sorin Antohi "Cioran şi stigmatul românesc," p. 232-288.

Surely, the new generation was far from unitary in its political orientation. It was rather polarized between two leading tendencies, one nationalist and xenophobic, the other democratic and cosmopolitan. In an article written in 1934, philosopher Mircea Vulcănescu—himself a Legionary sympathizer—suggestively synthesized the post-1918 experience of the new generation. He delineated seven acceptations of the term generation, denoting a biological, sociological, statistical, historical, psychological, cultural-political or economic phenomenon. Based on a thorough analysis of each of these meanings, he defined a generation as "a bio-psycho-historical social group dominated by people of the same age who concomitantly and spontaneously manifest age solidarity."[209] The main features of a generation are shaped, in Vulcănescu's view, by people's "participation to a certain historical event influencing their intellectual formation," by the manner in which they take part "in the activity of the community," and by "their inclusion or exclusion from the existing social hierarchy."

Vulcănescu argued that the inter-war "new generation" was the sixth in the history of modern Romania. It succeeded the post-war "generation of fire" animated by its belief in monarchism, orthodoxy, realism and authochtonism and led by Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic. The "new generation" was made up of individuals aged between 25 and 35 who were either too young to take part in the World War or experienced its last year (1918). It was shaped by three main factors: the experience and legacy of the war; the intellectual ascendancy of Nae Ionescu and Vasile Pârvan; and heterogeneous foreign influences, among which Vulcănescu mentioned German and Russian mysticism, the political thought of Charles Maurras, Italian Fascism, German National Socialism, German Marxism and Russian Communism. The new generation debuted spectacularly in the cultural life with a spiritual formative moment (1925-1929), followed by a spiritual crisis and decline (1929-1932), marked mainly by political divergences.[210] Although members of the new generations had certain features in common, the most important being an acute feeling of crisis and a "need for spirituality," in the political field they were strongly polarized between two leading orientations, one nationalist and xenophobic, the other democratic and cosmopolitan. The former valued folk culture and autochthonous ethno-religious roots, the latter modernization, urbanization and cultural exchange with the West. Vulcănescu presented this conflict over social and political values as a rural/urban cleavage:

> "As the young people grow up and become integrated into Romanian civilization and culture, the opposition between the two Romanias is transformed, from one generation to another, into a struggle within the young generation. On the one hand, the modern Romania of the cities, of comfort and well being, of material civilization, of the west, of industry and the machine, of the opposition between bourgeois and proletariat, is at base a foreign Romania. On the other hand, there is the Romania of the villages, the Romania of the Romanians, the Romania of spiritual, autochthonous configuration that has preserved this nation on its land in forms that have remain almost unchanged from the time of [the Persian King] Darius of Histaspe."[211]

---

[209] Mircea Vulcănescu, "Generație," Criterion I (1934) 3-4, p. 3-6, republished in Mircea Vulcănescu, *Tînăra generație. Crize vechi în haine noi. Cine sunt şi ce vor tinerii români?* (Bucureşti: Compania, 2004), p. 61.

[210] Vulcănescu, "Generație," p. 66.

[211] Mircea Vulcănescu, *Tendințele tinerei generații* (Bucureşti: Editura Țara Nouă, 1936), p. 18.

Gradually, those members of the discussion circle who did not share the ideological views of the nationalists were marginalized. The most relevant examples are noted playwrights Eugene Ionesco and Mihail Sebastian. Although not as well known as Ionesco, the case of Sebastian, a talented Romanian writer of Jewish origin, is particularly interesting. Intellectually and emotionally tied to *Criterion*, Sebastian provides in his recently published *Journal* a dramatic account of the identity crisis he suffered in the 1930s, when was faced with the growing fascism and anti-Semitism of his closest friends. His book is a dramatic illustration of his internal confrontation between ideological commitment and generational solidarity.[212]

3.5. The Legion and the Intellectuals: The Axa Group

The infusion of intellectuals marked a turning point in the Legion's history, preparing it for political prominence. The magazine *Axa* became a leading forum for Legionary propaganda. Its team of constant and devoted collaborators systematized the Legion's ideas into a comprehensive ideology; they also spelled out the Legion's similarities to and differences with Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. In a programmatic editorial entitled "*Sensul revoluţiei naţionale*" (The Sense of National Revolution), Mihail Polihroniade pointed out that "Until now, the Iron Guard was in the phase of childhood and organizational empiricism."[213] Although, like every rightist movement, it was the result of an "instinctive reaction," the time was ripe for "its goal to be clearly defined and its target more distinctly contoured. *It is the moment of maturing, the moment in which rational justification is necessary*."[214]

While Codreanu avoided developing a complete political program, Polihroniade defined seven main courses of action: 1) imperious moral reform of the country's political life; 2) reformation of the state; 3) ethnic purification; 4) state intervention in the economy and the achievement of economic autarchy; 5) social revolution through the elimination of major wealth differences and the protection of the "productive classes" and of intellectuals; 6) the culturalization of the masses; and 7) a new course for Romania's foreign policy based on "an alliance with Rome and Berlin."

These directions were intensively elaborated on and debated in *Axa*, often in polemics with leftist newspapers or with other, less revolutionary-minded, nationalist publications. During the time, main collaborators specialized in certain policy fields: Ion I. Moţa dominated debates on anti-Semitism, minority relations and the role of the League of Nations; Vasile Matei on economy and education; Constantin I. Papanace on colonization

---

[212] Mihail Sebastian, *Jurnal 1935-1944* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1996). Published in English as *Journal, 1935-1944*. Translated from Romanian by Patrick Camiller; with an introduction and notes by Radu Ioanid (London: Heinemann, 2000). An analysis of the inter-personal relations among Mihail Sebastian, Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu and Eugene Ionescu is provided by Matei Călinescu, in "Ionesco and Rhinoceros: personal and political backgrounds," *East European Politics and Societies* 9 (1995) 3, p. 393-434. See also Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionescu: L'oubli du fascims. Trois intellectuels roumains dans la tourmente du siècle* (Paris: PUF, 2003). On Sebastian, see Irina Livezeanu, "A Jew from the Danube: *Cuvântul*. The Rise of the Right and Mihai Sebastian" in Liviu Rotman (ed.) *SHVUT Jewish problems in Eastern Europe. First International Conference on the History of the Jews in Romania* (Tel Aviv: Diaspora Research institute The Goldstein-Goren Center for the History of the Jews in Romania, 1993), p. 297-312.

[213] Mihai Polihroniade, "Sensul revoluţiei naţionale," *Axa* II (15 June 1933) 15, p. I, 5.

[214] Polihroniade, "Sensul revoluţiei naţionale," p. I.

and ethnic policies; and Mihail Polihroniade on foreign policy. In line with the seven main courses of action, the main political reforms demanded by *Axa* were the eradication of corruption, "the delousing of the foreign elements which threaten to suffocate us," the elimination of economic trusts and monopolies, the elimination of "politicianism" in administration, church and army, and the punishment of those guilty of illicit enrichment.[215] In the following, I provide representative samples of the Legionary ideological or polemical articles debated in *Axa*.

In a series of articles, Vasile Matei pleaded for a form of state-controlled economy as a solution to the global crisis of capitalism, making ample references to the examples of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The application of the principle of state-controlled economy in Romania led to a debate about corporatism and its political implications. Another collaborator, Vasile Cristescu presented the corporatist system as a positive "re-actualization" of the medieval guilds. He favorably contrasted the fascist state "resulting from a normal evolution and totally integrated into the historical tradition of the west and of Italy" with the Bolshevik state, which was "incomplete, imprecise and international."[216]

Was corporatism well suited to Romania's socio-economic situation? Moța approached the question from the perspective of integral nationalism, redefined in the local context as "integral Romanianism." While he did not oppose it in principle, Moța rejected "corporatism for the corporatism's sake." In his view, such a system could be implemented in Romania only after fulfilling two main preconditions in a transitional pre-corporatist phase: the spiritual regeneration of the nation and its ethnic purification. He polemicized with Mihail Manoilescu, the leading figure of corporatism in Romania and with his magazine *Lumea Nouă*. For Moța, Manoilescu's corporatism was "ethnically colorless" because "it limited itself to a problem of formal state organization, without examining and aiming for a modification of the state's ethnic structure."[217] Since, in Moța's view, strategic professions in Romania were monopolized by foreign elements—mainly Jews—a corporatist organization based on "the current demographic situation" would have meant "the perpetuation of a nefarious ethnic structure."[218] Reacting to an article published in *Lumea Nouă* by Joldea Rădulescu, Moța reproached the author for not taking into account "the gravest problem of the contemporary Romanian state, the Jewish question:"[219]

> "When Romanians have almost completely lost their cities, industry, trade, liberal professions, the centers of cultural infusion and political influence being seized by Kikes and by those assimilated by them, we cannot regard as our comrades-in-arms those who are afraid to set this problem IN THE FOREFRONT of all other problems and not simply in the shadow of indirect allusions or general conclusions about the Romanian character of the future state."[220]

For Moța, although corporatism was "well-oriented" it remained an "incomplete nationalism," since it was still tributary to old concepts and political ideas.[221] He focused the debate over corporatism on three main inter-related dimensions: the spiritual regeneration of

---

[215] Ioan Victor Vojan, "Soluția crizei," *Axa* II (22 January 1933) 5, p. I.
[216] Vasile Christescu, "Actualizarea evului mediu," *Axa* II (5 March 1933) 8, p. 5.
[217] Ion I. Moța, "Faza precorporativă," *Axa* II (6 September 1933) 17, p. I.
[218] Moța, "Faza precorporativă," p. I
[219] Ion I. Moța, "Sub povara remanențelor," *Axa* II (7 December 1933) 23, p. 3.
[220] Moța, "Sub povara remanențelor," p. 3.
[221] Moța, "Sub povara remanențelor," p. 3.

the nation, its ethnic purification and then the implementation of a corporate mechanism favoring ethnic Romanians.

Discussions regarding political, educational or economic reforms thus converged toward a major political objective of *Axa* intellectuals: the ethnic homogenization of Romania through colonization, population exchanges and the elimination of minorities. In his above-mentioned programmatic article, Polihroniade demanded in multiethnic areas (called "the invaded territories") the implementation of "massive colonization and forced delousing. The Jews who have immigrated after 1914 have to be simply eliminated."[222] Another important advocate of ethnic homogenization through colonization and population exchange was Constantin I. Papanace, an ethnic Romanian originating from Macedonia. Motivated by the specific needs of Macedonian colonists in Southern Dobrogea, he authored a series of militant articles about the fate of the approximately two million ethnic Romanians leaving in the Balkans, Central Europe, Siberia and Caucasus. He demanded a strong diplomatic intervention of the Romanian state in order to prevent what he denounced as a harsh denationalization campaign.[223]

The overarching concept uniting these multiple directions of action was that of the totalitarian state. Vasile Marin pointed out that, "Similarly to Fascism and National Socialism, the Iron Guard fights for the creation of the totalitarian state, carved politically, economically and socially out of the national substance, and led by the nation's elite, a state which embodies in itself the social, political and juridical organization of the entire people, within which neither class interests nor the famous natural rights find justification to exist."[224] Marin rejected the claim that the Legion's ideology fell within the "extreme-right" or "extreme-left" political camps. Following Codreanu, he defined the Iron Guard as placed "neither right nor left, for the good reason that our movement encompasses the entire plan of national life, undifferentiated in its structure; our movement organizes to the same extent authority as well as liberty."[225]

While elaborating on its ideology, *Axa* intellectuals paid special attention to differentiating the Legion from other nationalist organizations, especially those who promoted similar values by different means, such as Cuza's LNCD. Polihroniade criticized the latter's obsessive fixation with the Jewish question, which hampered its recognition of the need for radical reforms in other fields as well. The LNCD's "non-realist anti-Semitism," was held responsible for the inefficiency of its nationalist fight.[226] Polihroniade contrasted the moderation of Cuza's organization with the Legion's revolutionary pathos: "Cuzism means a passive, self-defensive attitude of negation, as compared to the nationalist attitude of impetuous buoyancy, of offense, of creation."[227]

The *Axa* group also crystallized the political myth of the "new" generation by presenting the ideological conflict between moderate and integral nationalism as a debate over tactics and strategy between old and young leaders. In this way, generational cleavages were presented as the most salient political conflict.[228] This evolution is not surprising: As

---

[222] Polihroniade, "Sensul revoluției naționale," p. 5.

[223] C.I. Papanace, "Schimbul de populații," *Axa* II (9 April 1933) 12, p. 7-8; C.I. Papanace, "Românii de peste hotare," *Axa* II (3 March 1933) 8, p. II.

[224] Vasile Marin, "Extremismul de dreapta," *Axa* II (29 October 1933) 21, p. 1.

[225] Vasile Marin, "Extremismul de dreapta," p. 1.

[226] Mihai Polihroniade, "Naționalism şi Cuzism," *Axa* II (22 January 1933) 5, p. I. See also Ion I. Moța, "Garda de Fier şi L.A.N.C." *Axa* II (1 October 1933) 19, p. I.

[227] Polihroniade, "Naționalism şi Cuzism," p. V.

[228] This type of political legitimization based on generational solidarity had a strong impact upon public opinion. It was also taken at face value by numerous scholars, who tried to

Max Weber pointed out, in times of economic and political upheaval, characterized by economic scarcity and waning of traditional forms of religion, "the relative prestige of age within a community is subject to much change."[229] This can lead to an acute conflict of generations:

> "Also, where war is a chronic state of affairs, the prestige of the older men is liable to sink below that of the warriors and there often develops a democratic bias of the younger groups against the prestige of the old age (*sexagenarios de ponte*)."[230]

In his *Crez de generație* (Credo of a generation) Vasile Marin provided a powerful right-wing political manifesto of the "new" generation (See **Document 6**).[231] If other Legionary ideologists insisted on the Legion's unique religious character, Marin's writings contained intellectual references and political claims generally characteristic of contemporary fascist movements. First, in the spirit of the *fin de siècle* malaise, he claimed that the postwar era marked the end of a world. "It would seem that we live through the end of a century. There are signs." He portrayed the breakdown of the old order, marked by the decay of the old generation which was "at its death" due to its own "physical and moral inability." In contrast, he announced a time of "great renewals," a genuine "renaissance through revolution" due to the messianic action of the new generation, "a dynamic generation of credo and deed." While the old generation was on its way to extinction, the spirit of the new generation was "fertilized" by the "Nietzscheian principle of existence," and by the fascist "creative virility" encapsulated in the cult of action under the slogan of "*Vivere pericolosamente*."

Marin's powerful contrast of the old generation's degradation and the new generation's vitality and potency was accompanied by the ideological confrontation between corrupted democracy and nationalism. To the principles of democracy and the rule of law characteristic to "the corpse of the demo-liberal state," the young generation opposed an "ethical state" based on the will of the "national community" and "fertilized by the principle of moral authority." The imperative of action assumed by the "rock-like strength of warriors" contained in itself the spectrum of violence and "full intransigence," not only against the corrupted world of the old generation but also against leftist "invalid" or "skeleton intellectuals," who did not understood the call of the time.

The Legion's revolutionary pathos and totalitarian orientation differentiate it from traditional anti-Semitic organization, placing it within the spectrum of contemporary fascist movements, as a form of "political religion" as defined by Emilio Gentile.

---

account for the sharp ideological conflicts in inter-war Romania in view of generational conflicts. Thus, C. A. Macartney argued that "among the intellectuals of Romania, the true line of cleavage is not regional, but one between the new generation and the old. The young men, all over the country, are struggling to form a new Romania, more national, more united than the old." C. A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors: The Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences, 1919-1937* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 283. In a similar vein, analyzing the rise of fascism in Romania, Irina Livezeanu concentrated on "the fascination (this ideology) exercised upon the young generation and on the legitimacy the old generations conferred to this ideology." Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, p. 293.

[229] Max Weber, „Direct Democracy and Rule by Notables," in *Economy and Society*, p. 950.

[230] Weber, "Direct Democracy and Rule by Notables," p. 951.

[231] See also Vasile Marin, "Generația nouă şi statul etic," *Axa* I (19 March 1933) 9, p. I.

3.6. The Legion as a Major Political Force, 1933-1937

The Legion's development posed a major challenge to Romania's political establishment. Since administrative obstruction proved ineffective in preventing the Legion's electoral growth, on 9 December 1933 the new Prime Minister Ion G. Duca, head of the National Liberal Party, signed a decree outlawing the movement. Thousands of Legionaries were arrested all over the country, and their organization effectively paralyzed, just before national elections scheduled for 20 December. Heavily assisted by the bureaucratic state apparatus, the National Liberal Party scored a sweeping electoral victory, obtaining a share of 60 percent of the total number of votes, representing 300 parliamentary seats (out of a total number of 387).

The Legion was quick to respond. On 29 December 1933, Duca was assassinated in the Sinaia railway station, after a meeting with King Carol II, by a death squad composed of three Legionaries, and subsequently known in Legionary propaganda as "Nicadori," after a combination of the initials of their names (**Ni**colae Constantinescu, **Ca**ranica Iancu, **Dor**u Belimace). The three were captures by police and charged for conspiracy and murder, together with prominent Legionary leaders or sympathizers, such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Gheorghe Cantacuzino. After a short trial, the executioners were sentenced to life imprisonment and forced labor.

The group of terrorists augmented the Legionary gallery of blasphemous heroes and became an object of Legionary veneration. A popular Legionary song attributed to the *Nicadori* underlined their capacity for sacrifice and the significance of their martyrdom, one of obtaining salvation through violent revenge:

So many innocent deaths,
Were asking for revenge,
An entire people was bleeding,
We could not endure anymore.
All three united we started,
And tied ourselves in a vow
To revenge our comrades
And to save our country.
The Archangel helped us,
To punish the guilty,
No suffering scares us,
We are even ready to die.[232]

The "moral" authors of the crime, including Codreanu himself, were nevertheless acquitted. Insistent rumors circulating in Bucharest at the time credited the King with the protection of the main culprits in the case of Duca's assassination. This suspicion was fueled by the personal animosity of King Carol against Duca. Ascending to the throne in 1930, after having renounced its succession rights in 1924, King Carol harbored strong ambitions of establishing an authoritarian regime. Although he gathered support from numerous opportunistic politicians, industrialists and the army, resistance from mainstream bourgeois-democratic parties such as the National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Party hampered his plans. Given his refusal to serve as a peon of the crown, young Liberal Prime Minister Duca was particularly seen as a principal stumbling block in the King's plans to

[232] "Cântecul Nicadorilor" in *Cântece legionare*, (Bucureşti: Editura L.A.M., 1997).

establish a personal rule. While a major blow for the Romanian political system, Duca's assassination weakened the National Liberal Party and eased Carol's struggles.

The acquittal of the main defendants in the case of Duca's assassination and the concomitant political rumors exposed the hesitation of a part of the political elite, which had neither the means nor the apparent interest to completely suppress the Legion. After 1933, having learned that martyrdom in fact served the Legion's ascension, members of the establishment tried to channel the Legion in a clientelist direction, and to utilize it for their own transient political goals. While this strategy seemingly paid off in the short-term, in the long run it would prove largely inefficient in taming the Legion's radicalism.

The interval 1934-1937 represented a period of unprecedented ascension for the Legion, favored by the deepening crisis of the parliamentary political system, the social costs of the governmental program of forced industrialization, and the conciliatory attitude of authorities. The disorganization that followed the interdiction of its activity in December 1933 ended with the acquittal of the main Legionary leaders charged with conspiracy in the trial on Duca's assassination, on 6 April 1934. After serving a political ban of one year, in December 1934 Codreanu set up a new party called "All for the Fatherland." In order to mask its continuity with the Legion, Codreanu entrusted the leadership of the party to Gheorghe Cantacuzino, claiming he would dedicate himself to educational activities. An eccentric and adventurous aristocrat, Cantacuzino accepted the new task only on the formal condition "that we all recognize Corneliu Zelea Codreanu as our superior chief."[233]

Once re-launched under a new label, the Legion gradually re-inserted itself into the political life. It did so under substantially different conditions as compared to the previous period. The multi-party system instituted under the 1923 Constitution entered a structural crisis, due mainly to the erosion of major parties and the destabilizing actions of King Carol II, who—ever since his enthronement in 1930—undermined the multiparty system with the intention of establishing a regime of personal authority. The political establishment was deeply divided over parliamentarian, authoritarian or totalitarian political options.

After five years of political opposition, the Liberal Party re-instated its political domination based on traditional methods of government. The party was nevertheless weakened by an acute internal confrontation between old and new leaders. In order to further undermine its internal cohesion, King Carol appointed as Prime Minister the leader of the "young" Liberals, Gheorghe Tătărescu (1934-1937). Although unpopular and largely isolated within its own party, Tătărescu proved a loyal servant. He promoted a policy of forced industrialization favoring the economic interests of the Liberal elites and of the royal *camarilla,* financed through heavy taxation of the peasantry. He also assisted the King's efforts to weaken major parliamentary parties and to subordinate right wing movements as vehicles toward Carol's personal regime.

In this context, the Tătărescu government adopted a permissive attitude toward the Legion, trying to appease its anti-establishment radicalism and to re-direct its violence against concurrent parties. In order to manipulate the Legion from within, it encouraged internal factionalism and defections. The tactics had proven efficient in dividing major parliamentary parties: in 1935, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, former Prime Minister and a prominent member of the NPP, formed a new right-wing political organization in the service of the King, called *Frontul Românesc*, (The Romanian Front), agitating for *numerous clausus*. In the same year, Octavian Goga, who had previously defected from the People's Party, united with A. C. Cuza's LNCD into a new anti-Semitic organization called the National Christian Party. In a similar vein, in 1934 Mihai Stelescu defected from the Legion

---

[233] *Cuvântul Argeşului*, I (10 August 1935) 5, cited in Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 282-283.

and formed a rival organization called *Cruciada Românismului* (The Crusade of Romanianism).

The government also attempted to mobilize the country's youth in support of the monarchy and to diminish the Legion's influence. To this end, in May 1934 it established *Straja Ţării* (The Country's Sentry) with the aim of promoting "the moral, national-patriotic, social and physical education of the entire youth of both sexes, for boys between 7 to 18 years, and for girls between 7 to 21 years." *Straja* was designed as an independent state institution having its own leadership, patrimony, and network of subordinated institutions, such as "The Romanian Archers' Association," "The Romanian Falcons' Association," "The Christian Association of Youngsters," and "The Christian Association of Women." The King was proclaimed the Commander in Chief of the new organization; he was assisted by a Commander, a "Superior Guidance Council" and a "Permanent Council," made up of appointed dignitaries and ministers. In addition, the government sponsored a student organization, called *Blocul generaţiei naţionaliste din 1922* (The Block of the Nationalist Generation of 1922), made up of former student leaders with a critical attitude toward the Legion.[234]

Despite steady efforts, *Straja* and *Blocul* failed to make any impact on the student movement, being no match for the Legion' proselytizing force. Upon its establishment, the "All for the Fatherland" party engaged in "constructive" propagandistic activities, gaining the aura of an educational movement. Legionaries established labor camps all over the country: they laid access roads to monasteries, built village churches, dams and bridges in the countryside. The number of labor camps mushroomed from 4 in 1934 to 50 in 1936; in the same year, there also existed other 500 smaller scale Legionary building-yards.[235] These actions increased the popularity of the party in rural areas and among the youth; they also enabled Codreanu to claim that the Legion was a school for creating the "new man." Benefiting from three consecutive years of legality, the Legion's membership thrived, the number of nests growing from 3,495 in December 1934 to 4,200 in May 1935, 12,000 in January 1937 and 34 000 in December 1937.[236]

Moreover, once consolidated, the Legion resumed its confrontation with the ruling Liberal Party. In order to commemorate the repression initiated by Duca in the previous year, in 1934 Codreanu proclaimed 10 December as "The Day of the Legionary Suffering." His circular included as *motto* the following oath, calling for revenge: "We swear not to forget the horrors and crimes committed by the Liberal Party, the butcher of the Romanian youth and of the Romanian people."[237] Since 10 December was also the anniversary of the first national student congress (1922), the date symbolically linked anti-Semitism with the fight against Romanian political establishment.

A first open crisis between the Legion and authorities occurred in April 1936, when the government sponsored the national congress of the *Uniunea Studenţilor Creştini Comunişti* (The Union of the Romanian Christian Students), organized in Târgu Mureş. Hoping to capture the sympathy of the student movement, authorities financed much of the organizational costs and offered special trains for transporting the participants. These favors turned against the government: dominated by Legionaries, the congress adopted an anti-establishment orientation. Participants created "death squads" with the task of murdering the "traitors" of the nation. Their black list included defectors from the Legion, such as Mihai

---

[234] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhangelului Mihail,"* p. 247.
[235] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhangelului Mihail,"* p. 268.
[236] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhangelului Mihail,"* p. 262-263.
[237] Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, *Circulări şi manifeste, 1927-1938,* 2nd Ed. (Munchen: Colecţia Europa, 1981), p. 23-24.

Stelescu and his collaborators; well-known political enemies, among which two leading NPP politicians, Armand Călinescu and Virgil Madgearu; and notorious members of the royal *camarilla*, such as Virgil Marinescu and even the King's Jewish mistress, Elena Lupescu.

Alarmed, the King reshuffled the government on 29 August 1936, and firmer measures were taken against political radicalism. Although signaling a new political orientation, these measures were too little, too late. The Legion escaped political control and was on the way to political prominence.

In February 1937, King Carol II made a final attempt to subordinate the movement. Secret negotiations for political collaboration with Codreanu were conducted, but were fruitless. Codreanu's account of the meeting with King Carol II, recalled to the NPP politician Zaharia Boilă during a meeting that took place on 11 March 1937, illustrates his understanding of his leadership as charismatic:

> "I am sentenced to death by King Carol II. [...] Several weeks ago, I was called for an appointment with the king. It took place at night in a private residence (probably at Malaxa). The king told me that he sympathized much with our movement and that he intends to dismiss the government to inaugurate an absolutist personal regime based on the Legionary movement. The king requested me to proclaim him "the captain of the movement," I would become his lieutenant and he would name me head of the government. I replied to him that I am very happy for the goodwill with which he considers our movement, and I am very flattered by his favorable—even exaggerated—comments he voiced about my person, but that I cannot accept his offer. I believe that enthusiasm and discipline are not enough for assuming the responsibility of government, that we are not yet ready and we do not have experience. Concerning the question of leadership, we regard the king as a factor situated above, an arbiter over us all, but we cannot proclaim him as a chief of the movement or of the party. Since Legionaries have sworn their faith to me and not to another, this faith, this attachment cannot be an object of political transaction. Carol II tried to convince me that I see things in the wrong light, but, although he talked to me for a long time, bringing arguments in support of his thesis, he could not convince me."[238]

To the king's request to be proclaimed "the Captain" of the Legion, Codreanu thus opposed the unique and non-transferable nature of charismatic authority, replying that charismatic faith cannot be a political object.

His refusal led to open confrontation. In the national parliamentary elections that took place in December 1937, Codreanu joined an anti-Carol political alliance with the National Peasant Party led by Iuliu Maniu and the dissident Liberal faction led by Gheorghe Brătianu. The elections marked the final crisis of the parliamentary political regime in Romania.

---

[238] Zaharia Boilă, *Memorii*, apud *Citate culese din documente privind mişcarea legionară,1933-1938,* 2nd, revised ed., (Madrid, 1989), p. 17-18. The paragraph is also quoted in Kurt W. Treptow, "Populism in Twentieth Century Romanian Politics," in Joseph Held, ed., *Populism in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 208. See also Zaharia Boilă, *Amintiri şi consideraţii asupra mişcării legionare*, edited by Marta Petreu and Ana Cornea. (Cluj: Biblioteca Apostrof, 2002).

Table Two. Electoral Results of Major Parties, December 1937

Parties	**Share of Votes**	**Number of Seats**
National Liberal Party	35.92%	152
National Peasant Party	20.40%	86
All for the Fatherland	15.58%	66
National Christian Party	9.15%	39
The Hungarian Party	4.43%	19
National Liberal Party (Gheorghe Brătianu)	3.89%	16
Romanian Peasant Party	2.25%	9

Source: *Monitorul Oficial*, 1 (30 December 1937) 301, p. 9717.

First, there was no absolute winner: No political party was able to gather 40 percent of the votes and to thus obtain the right to form the government under the conditions set by the 1926 electoral law. The ruling National Liberal Party received only 35.92 percent of the votes, followed by National Peasant Party, with 20.40 percent. Second, the results highlight the fragmentation of major political parties, divided not over ideological issues but by personal conflicts. Thus, although together the two Liberal parties could have almost reached the electoral threshold necessary for forming the government, they ran separately, being divided over their attitude toward King Carol II. On their turn, radical right-wing parties were also alienated by acute personal conflicts.

Third, although politically divided, the radical right was, overall, on a strong political offensive: cumulated, Codreanu's "All for the Fatherland" and Cuza's National Christian Party obtained 24.73 percent of the total number of votes. The main frontrunner of the elections was "All For the Fatherland:" it received 437,378 votes representing 15.58 percent of the total number of the electorate and 66 parliamentary mandates (of a total 390), becoming the third major political party of the country (for its detailed results, see **Table 2** in the Annexes). Although the elections were generally evaluated as free and fair, the director of the Romanian Intelligence Service, *Siguranța*, Eugen Critescu stated in 1946 that in reality "Legionaries obtained more than 800,000 votes" but "300,000 votes were camouflaged [stolen] by the Ministry of Interior."[239]

Despite its impressive electoral score, the Legion's political accession was in fact a double-edged sword. The party raised to political prominence; but its incomplete victory made it vulnerable to state repression.

[239] Eugen Cristescu, in Cristian Troncotă, *Eugen Cristescu. Asul Serviciilor Secrete Româneşti* (Bucureşti: Roza Vânturilor, 1994), p. 371.

4. The Legion of the 'Archangel Michael' as a Charismatic Organization

4.1. The Cult of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu

The foundation of the Legionary ideology was the charismatic cult of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, an aspect that—although noted by numerous scholars—has not been subject to comprehensive research. What type of charismatic authority embodied Codreanu? In his writings, Max Weber did not explicitly differentiate among particular types of charismatic authority. Elaborating on Weber's theoretical perspective, Arthur Schweitzer differentiated among natural, supernatural, value and faith charisma; he also studied the interaction between charisma and politics.[240] Building on this typology, I argue that Codreanu's constituted a form of cumulative charisma, based on an interaction between natural, supernatural and value charisma. This combination contributed to the consolidation of his charismatic stature, each dimension adding legitimacy to his claim. The following section focuses on Codreanu's charismatic inner calling and self-identification, the creation of the Captain's cult and the recognition of his leadership, as an act of validation of his charisma.

The foundations of Codreanu's cult were established during the period 1924-1925, when he gained public notoriety as a violent and non-conformist student leader; the first articles celebrating his charismatic persona and mission were published in 1927-1928 in *Pământul Strămoşesc*. The creator of Codreanu's messianic cult was Ion I. Moța, second in rank in the Legion and its "gray eminency," referred to by his "comrades" as "the Saint," since he professed a very mystic religiosity that shaped the ideology of the movement.[241] Commenting on Moța's paramount influence on Codreanu, historian Zeev Barbu went so far as to describe the Legion as a genuine bicephalous authoritarian movement, a kind of "*folie á deux*" between a "primitive-impulsive" who exalted action and deeds (Codreanu), and a "highly repressed aggressive" who espoused faith and contemplation (Moța).[242] In Barbu's view, this contradictory dual mentality was expressed in the Legionary doctrine by a particular symbolism, an unusual blend between a mysticism of life (*Teologia Gloriae*) and a mysticism of death (*Teologia Crucis*). The dual political and religious character of the Legion was thus explained by Barbu through the meeting of political prophet Codreanu and the religious counterpart Moța.

---

[240] Schweitzer, "Theory and Political Charisma," p. 150-181

[241] Among Ion I. Moța's writings, see *Memoriu Regelui Ferdinand*. Scris în închisoarea Galata, 1924 (Iaşi, 1925); *Liga Naţiunilor (idealul, viciile şi primejdia ei)* (Bucureşti: Editura Institutului de Arte Grafice Bica, 1930); *La sécurité juridique dans la Société des Nations*. Teza de doctorat prezentată Facultății de drept a Universității din Grenoble (Bucureşti: Tipografia Biblioteca Centrului de Studii a Centrului Studenţesc Iaşi, 1932); *Memoriu Regelui Carol al II-lea* (Jilava, 1934); *Cranii de lemn* (Sibiu: Editura Totul Pentru Țară, 1936). Republished: (Munich: Ediția Monumentului Moța-Marin, 1970); *Testamentul lui Ion Moța* (Bucureşti: Tipografia Isvor, 1937); *Prezent!* (Bucureşti: Tipografia Bucovina, 1937); *Corespondența cu serviciul mondial (1934-1936)* (Salo: Colectia Biblioteca Verde); *Ion Moța şi Vasile Marin (25 ani dela moarte, 13 ianuarie 1937-13 ianuarie 1962)* (Madrid: Editura Carpați, 1963).

[242] Barbu, "Psyco-Historical and Sociological Perspectives," p. 387.

Ion I. Moța (1902-1938), a "Byronic leader,"[243] *dressed in folk costume.*

In his writings, Moța expressed all the steps of this messianic scenario with Codreanu as protagonist as follows:

1) Codreanu's divine mission: "The Captain leads us with his fortune from God and with his intuitive, unique power. Nobody but God inspires him, because He is sent by God."[244]

2) The revelation: "If I have satisfaction in life [...] [it] is that of being entrusted by God to discover the Captain in Corneliu."[245] "I am happy and die blissfully because I had the capacity to feel your call, to understand it, and to serve you. You are the Captain."[246]

3) The recognition of Codreanu's charismatic authority over his followers: "Thus our organization has a leader *whom no one elected* but who has the consensus of all those who,

[243] Weber, "Romania," in *The European Right*, p. 521
[244] Moța, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. II, p. 23.
[245] Moța, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. II, p. 22.
[246] Moța, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. II, p. 23.

seduced by a mysterious force, have come to constitute, under the leader's direction, the disciplined nests of the organization. Our leader is Corneliu Zelea Codreanu."[247]

4) The eulogy of Codreanu's leadership: "I have seen in this man a providential human being sent us by God to redeem our people from the destruction forced upon us by our centuries-old enemies. Choosing the title of Captain, I wanted to place him in the ranks of the world's famous captains, as was, for example, Hannibal. I do not think that events will prove me wrong. Corneliu Codreanu will remain in the national and political history of the people over centuries, as its leading light: Codreanu."[248]

Starting in 1933, the intellectuals enrolled in the Legion developed Codreanu's charisma into a highly polished and effective propaganda machine. His charismatic claims were further synthesized by Ion Banea, first in an article published in *Axa* in 1933 (See **Document 5**), and later in an ample hagiographic work entailed *Căpitanul*, published in 1936. Codreanu's charismatic claims were also elaborated on by Ernest Bernea in his gushing eulogy entitled *Cartea Căpitanilor* (The Captains' Book), published in 1937.[249]

In these works, Codreanu was portrayed in multiple and complementary roles, as an ethical religious prophet, spiritual reformer, predestined hero and political creator. First, the leader of the Legion was proclaimed by Legionary propaganda as "a new Messiah," the instrument sent by the Archangel to fulfill his commandments in order to bring salvation to the Romanian people. Codreanu's charisma can thus be characterized as supernatural, because it was based on a transcendental, divine call of mission, originating outside the established Church.

Second, Codreanu was presented as an ethical prophet, in the sense of being "primarily concerned with indicating the proper roads to religious salvation." He attached his charisma to a particular set of values, putting forward a code of conduct leading to salvation. His writings were saturated with religious terms such as salvation (*salvare*), faith (*credința*) sacrifice (*sacrificiu*), martyr and martyrdom (*martir*, *martiriu*), calling (*chemare*), chosen people (*popor ales*), passion (*patimi*), etc. As a religious prophet, he also claimed to have led an exemplary life, to be emulated by other Legionaries.

Third, Codreanu also claim a natural charisma, based on emotions. Schweitzer delineates four types of charismatic emotions: "ecstasy, euphoria, resentment and politically relevant passions." He also pointed out that Adolf Hitler unleashed the ecstasy of his followers during carefully staged public appearances and highly theatrical performances.[250] He utilized new technological inventions such as the microphone and the airplane. Codreanu was a mediocre speaker, lacking Hitler's oratorical abilities. He did not unleash the feeling of crowds into public hysteria but based his emotional union with his followers on mystical meditation and spiritual communion, acting as a mystical prophet. Therefore, the Captain avoided speeches and public appearances; he cultivated mystery based on silence. This attitude was also recommended to rank and file Legionaries within nests: "Speak as little as possible, meditate as much as possible, nothing should disturb the majesty of silence and communion. Make exercises of complete silence"[251] The charismatic ecstasy transmitted by Codreanu to his followers was based on resentment. In Schweitzer's words, a charismatic leader is able to unleash "the desire to revenge of the underprivileged whose resentment is

---

[247] Moța, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. II, p. 23.
[248] Moța, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. II, p. 205.
[249] Ernest Bernea, *Cartea Căpitanilor* (Bucureşti: Tipografia Bucovina, 1937).
[250] Schweitzer, "Hitler's Dictatorial Charisma," p. 147-162.
[251] See Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticica şefului de cuib* (Bucureşti: 1933). 2nd ed.: (Salzburg: Colecția "Omului Nou," 1952), Point 8; for an English translation, see *Legion: The Nest Leader's Manual* (London: The Rising Press, 1984).

attributed to the uneven distribution of goods to the sinfulness or the privileged," identified in the Romanian case with ethnic minorities and corrupt politicians.[252]

Fourth, Codreanu was also celebrated as a predestined revolutionary leader and was represented in view of the local panoply of heroic figures as the end result of a teleological line of Romanian historical development. He was compared to distinguished historical figures such as Moldova's medieval prince Stephen the Great (1457-1504), and was addressed with the title of "Captain" (*Căpitanul*) inspired by the mythology of the *haiducs*, popular outcasts fighting for social justice.

Fifth, Legionary propaganda emphasized Codreanu's exceptional personal gifts, such as his physical appearance and power of attraction, regarded as confirmation of his "natural" charismatic qualification. Horia Sima, wartime leader of the Legion, suggestively evoked Codreanu's charismatic beauty:

> "What was the most impressive, once you made first contact with Codreanu, was his physical appearance. Nobody could pass near him without noticing it, without being attracted by his looks, without asking who he was. His simple appearance in public provoked curiosity. *This young man seemed a God descended among mortals.* [...] If it were intended to appreciate him in view of the artistic canons of our civilization, it could be said that he was a synthesis between the beauty of the northern type and the ideal of beauty of ancient Greece. Looking at him, you felt dazed. His face exercised an irresistible fascination. He was a "living manifesto" as the Legionaries used to call him."[253]

[252] Schweitzer, "Theory and Political Charisma," p. 157.
[253] Horia Sima, în Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. II, p. 210, my emphasis.

The "Captain," Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. He is generally acknowledged as being the most attractive inter-war fascist leader. See Stanley G. Payne's physical description of Codreanu: "Tall with an intense gaze and classic features, he was probably the most handsome of the major fascist leaders (bearing, in more mature and serious form, some resemblance to a Hollywood actor of that era, Tyrone Power)." Payne, A History of Fascism, p. 285-286.

Was Codreanu a "genuinely" charismatic leader? In his writings, Max Weber did not provide a detailed methodological apparatus for identifying a charismatic leader, but focused unilaterally on his psychological qualifications of the ideal, an approach leading to the slippery terrain of psycho-history. In order to distinguish between genuinely charismatic leaders and mere "frauds," Robert Tucker proposed a more comprehensive test for identifying charismatic leaders, based on a combination of subjective criteria (such as self-identification and consistency of leadership) and more objective criteria (such as the relationship between the emergence of charismatic leadership and the political movement with which it is associated, and the response a leader attracts in his movement's pre-political phase).

Codreanu's self-identification fulfills all the subjective criteria put forward by Robert Tucker for distinguishing a charismatic leader, namely power of vision, sense of mission, confidence in the movement and in himself as the chosen one, and faith in the possibility of deliverance. The picture of a leader put forward by Codreanu in his programmatic work *Pentru legionari* strongly resembled the ideal type of charismatic leader.[254] Codreanu argued that a powerful mass movement needed a great leader (*un mare conducător*), portrayed as a rare mixture between experienced military commander and predestined hero: "Not everybody

[254] Codreanu, "Critica conducătorului," *Pentru legionari*, p. 242-245.

can perform this function. There is a need for a skilled man, with in-born qualities, who knows the laws of organization, development and struggle of a popular movement."[255]

In Codreanu's view, in order to qualify as a great leader, one had to possess the following spiritual features: an interior power of attraction, capacity for love, spirit and knowledge of organization, good knowledge of people, power of education, capacity for leadership, feeling for battle, courage, resistance, and strong commitment to a cause. The leader had to be not merely a theoretician, but an action hero, able "to dominate the movement and to control it."[256] His authority stemmed from his "interior power of attraction," a sign of his predestined charismatic qualification:

> "In the world there are no free (independent) individuals. As in the solar system, each planetary body is in an orbit within which it moves around a greater power of attraction, so the people, especially in the field of political action, gravitate around certain powers of attraction."[257]

The charismatic leader thus emerged "naturally" and did not need any formal or legal investment. The extent of his authority over his followers was bounded by the limits of his magnetism and "interior power of attraction:"

> "A leader has to have such a power of attraction. Some have it for ten people, and can be leaders to only that many; others for an entire village, others for an entire county, others for a province, others for a country, others exceeding the borders of a country. The authority of a leader is limited by the margins of his interior power of attraction. It is a kind of magnetic power, and if somebody does not have it, he cannot be a leader."[258]

The second most important charismatic qualification of a great leader was his capacity for love: "A leader has to love all his comrades in arms. The fluidity of his love has to penetrate to the margins of a movement's community."[259] The nature of the charismatic bond thus stood in sharp contrast to the legal-rational type of authority characteristic in democratic regimes. A democratic leader proposed a contractual relationship based on trust; a charismatic offered love and the hope of salvation in exchange for unconditional loyalty based on faith in his mission and in his capacity to deliver.

While the idealized portrait of the leader fulfilled an obvious propagandistic function, Codreanu's fanaticism nevertheless suggests the internalization of the charismatic behavioral model, based on the belief in magic and the predestined divine mission. According to numerous witnesses' accounts, Codreanu wore on himself the scapular of his patron, the Catholic Saint Anton of Padoa, used religious language, practiced ascetic rituals such as fasting and praying, and imposed severe personal discipline. In his memoirs, he confessed that "For six years I had not gone to theatre, cinema, pubs, balls or parties. By now, at the time I am writing this book, there are fourteen years since I have not been to such events. I do not regret it."[260] Most importantly, Codreanu constantly legitimized his leadership by means of his charismatic vision:

---

[255] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 242.
[256] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 242.
[257] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 244.
[258] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 244.
[259] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 244.
[260] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 244.

> "From the first moment I have had the clear vision of the final victory. I have assumed the full responsibility of leadership. From that time I have suffered many difficulties, dangers and innumerable risks, but this vision of victory has never left me."[261]

This conviction of him survived until his bitter death. Codreanu's prison diary, *Însemnări* [Notes], written before his execution in 1938, reveals his superstitious and mystical character:

> "Sunday, 15 May 1938: […] Faith in God is growing in my heart. I pray daily to Virgin Mary and Saint Anton of Padoa, whose miracles saved me in 1934. In this times of ire, they are my only support."
>
> "Friday, 25 May: I open at random Saint Anton's prayer-book: It opens at page 119. I read: 'Accept with serenity everything God sends to you, understanding that it is His will."[262]

The diary also confirms Codreanu's intimate belief in his charismatic mission. Following the behavioral scenario of *imitatio Christi*, he interpreted his suffering as Christ's Passion:

> "Wednesday, 15 June 1938: When I had finished the reading of the Gospel, I understood that I was in this prison by the will of God, that however innocent I was according to human justice, he punished me for my sins and put my faith to test. I calmed down; serenity descended upon the agitation and the passions of this world. For, I have been cruelly tortured. My poor flesh has suffered much. I have not lost faith and love, but I felt at one moment that I had lost any tie with hope. Physically tortured like a beast, my clothes are filled only with aches. For sixty nights I have been sleeping on these planks. Sixty days and nights, that my bones absorb like a sponge the moisture that oozes from floor and walls."[263]

Codreanu's leadership also fulfills the objective criteria put forward by Tucker. His biography exhibits the "goal fixation" characteristic to charismatic leaders. Corneliu received his name after a Roman centurion celebrated by the Orthodox Church on the day of his birth, 13 September. Educated in a militant spirit, Corneliu was animated by a highly combative mood at an early age. In 1916, when Romania entered the Great War, the young Codreanu wanted to join his father's regiment in the military campaign against Austria-Hungary and could hardly be forced to return home. In 1917, at the age of 18, he intended to set up a clandestine organization for resisting an imminent Soviet invasion of Romania. During his time at the University of Iaşi, Corneliu Codreanu was the source of continuous troubles. Due to his violent and non-conformist behavior, he was expelled by the university senate and readmitted to classes only at the insistence of his godfather, the influential politician A. C. Cuza. Later, although he never held a position of power in the state apparatus, Codreanu succeeded in building a voluntary nucleus of faithful followers, becoming the object of a fanatical cult of personality.

---

[261] Codreanu, *Cărticica şefului de cuib* p. 42.
[262] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Însemnări* (Salzburg: Colecţia Omul Nou, 1951), p. 15.
[263] Codreanu, *Însemnări,* p. 15..

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu among relics of Romanian soldiers who died in World War I, excavated by a legionary team in 1937 at Predeal. The image is illustrative for the cult of the dead—and that of the skull—that characterized Legionary ideology. The setting of the picture, as well as the lonely, contemplative and focused attitude of Codreanu is meant to suggest his charismatic "responsibility" and qualifications.

The publication of "For My Legionaries" in 1936 greatly increased Codreanu's personal prestige, consolidating his charismatic aura. The Legionary press acclaimed the book as a masterpiece inspired by divine revelation. The journal *Ideea națională* (The National Idea), claimed:

> "This book does not look like having been written by a man's hand. The letters seem to have been carved therein by the fire of destiny – so that they can deeply penetrate one's conscience, so that one can experience the great tragic feeling of their presence. […] This book is a bridge across time. […] It is written in the style of a prophet."[264]

Other Legionaries asserted that the book consecrated Codreanu as the natural charismatic leader of the new generation:

> "The enlightened youth of the country, the young people in factories, the village lads are fascinated by the Captain's personality. […] Corneliu Codreanu is an inspired man. A new man, a man called up by the Nation. […] An exemplary organizer,

[264] Quoted in Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 358.

> Corneliu Codreanu has a legion of saints in his power today. […] Codreanu's book is […] a history book, a book of doctrine and, above all, a great educative book. *For My Legionaries* is the work of a profound and very explicit thinker reflecting on the contemporary problems of the Romanian nation. […] It is a great book, indeed a fundamental book to our generation."[265]

The book was also widely debated by Romanian politicians and foreign diplomats, who were struck by Codreanu's fanaticism. In a summary sent from Bucharest in March 1937 to the British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, Sir Reginald Hoare pointed out "the astonishing vagueness" of Codreanu's doctrine and the "nebulous nature" of his nationalism, arguing that "the religious fervour enjoined by M. Codreanu is the most striking feature of the book." Hoare highlighted the dissimilarities between the Legion and the German National Socialism: "unlike the Nazis M. Codreanu bases his anti-semitism not on ethnic prejudice but on the theory that the Jews have stolen land which is the inalienable property of the original inhabitants of the country."[266]

The consolidation of Codreanu's charismatic stature attracted the attention of European press, as well, who saw in him a major challenge to parliamentary system in Romania and a possible political ally of Nazi Germany and Fascism Italy in Southeastern Europe. A controversial biographical work—entitled *L'Envoyé de l'archange* (The Emissary of the Archangel)—was authored by Jérôme and Jean Tharaud. These two famous writers, members of the French Academy in 1938 and 1946 respectively, traveled to Romania in 1938 and completed their work in December the same year, just before Codreanu's death. Although their work was not entirely favorable to Codreanu—being therefore criticized by leading Legionaries, they nevertheless portrayed the Captain as a romantic-idealist hero-fighter, "a man surrounded by archangels:"[267]

> "In front of me, a man still young, hardly forty years old, dressed in a folk costume of Romanian peasants, with curly hair, tall forehead, blue and cold eyes, with features of an ancient beauty, with few and measured gestures. He stood to welcome me; a smile relaxed his severe face, then he reclaimed his place behind the black wooden table crowded with statues and images representing the archangel. Behind him (by chance or by premeditation), an immense Saint Michael on the wall was opening its large painted wings, and with the body of the young man covering that of the saint, the wings of light seemed attached to [Codreanu's] shoulders. So appeared to me for the first time Corneliu Codreanu, the chief of the Iron Guard, the Captain, as he is called, who would be, five months later, sentenced to forced labor by a military tribunal for high treason and plotting against the state."[268]

---

[265] Nicolae Crevedia, in Ion Haralambie, Vasile Eugeniu, "Carte de întretăiere de lumi," [Book of the Crossing of Worlds] *Ideea Națională* IV (23 November-1 December 1936), 20, quoted in Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 358.

[266] Hoare's report is reproduced as Documents. No. 36 in Bela Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastica*, p. 218-219.

[267] Jérôme Tharaud, Jean Tharaud, *L'Envoyé de l'archange* (Paris: Plon, 1939). The first edition of their work was printed in over 1,500 copies.

[268] Tharaud, Tharaud, *L'Envoyé de l'archange,* p. 2-3. Generally, the foreign coverage of Codreanu was a faction of the political orientation of the respective newspaper or of the existing political regime. In democratic countries such as France and Great Britain, Codreanu's actions were generally reported with anxiety and hostility. The Italian, Spanish and German press was more favorable and at times laudatory. For representative samples, see

The Legion's powerful and innovative charismatic propaganda accounts for its mass appeal and major electoral success reached in 1937. The testimony of Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, a historian of Jewish-Hungarian extraction from Transylvania, is relevant in this respect. He documents the emotionally imprinted memory of an eight year-old child confronted with the skillfully choreographed appearance of Codreanu at the peak of his political popularity in 1937, when skillful propagandistic methods made his "charismatic aura" seem stronger than ever:

> "Though very young at the time, this writer remembers well the turbulent days of the autumn of 1937, when the most hotly contested elections of the interwar period were being fought in Transylvania. As a child of eight, I visited with my parents some relatives and family friends in a village deep in the Apuseni Mountains, the heart of Romanian Transylvania, home of the *moţi* and the birthplace of the legendary Avram Iancu. In the evening, when the intelligentsia gathered in the salon of the owner of the local saw mill (a Hungarian Jew), the venerable dowager duchesses of village society discussed but one thing, the visit of Codreanu, the dreaded Captain of the Iron Guard the next day. There was simply no limit to the abuse these ladies and gentleman, Hungarians of the Christian and Jewish faith, heaped on him.
>
> One of the ladies who had seen him in Târgu Mureş the year before spoke of him as if she had seen the monster's head, but dared not describe it. Something of an adventurer by nature, I decided I must take a closer look at this fabulous being, whatever the cost. The next day, I proceeded to carry out this decision. My best friend, the son of the local Orthodox priest, older than I by four years, provided some pieces of peasant costume, and two conspirators headed [us] toward the church yard, where the Legionary meeting was to take place. The little square before the church teemed with peasants dressed in their colorful Sunday best. Many of them had walked dozens of miles to get there, and there were many, too many gendarmes from the local gendarme station. The Prefect of the district of Turda had, as officials of corrupt regimes often do, administered the pin-prick to exasperate rather than a blow to crush. He had forbidden Codreanu to speak, but had not outlawed the meeting itself. And a crowd of simple miserable peasants swelled until the churchyard could hold no more.
>
> There was suddenly a hush in the crowd. A tall, darkly handsome man, dressed in the white costume of a Romanian peasant, rode into the yard on a white horse. He halted close to me, and I could see nothing monstrous or evil about him. On the contrary, his childlike, sincere smile radiated over the miserable crowd, and he seemed to be with it, yet mysteriously apart from it. Charisma is an inadequate word to define the strange force that emanated from this man. He was more aptly part of the forest, of the mountains, of the storms on the snow-covered peak of the Carpathians, and of the lakes and rivers. And so he stood amid the crowd. He had no need to speak; his silence was eloquent. It seemed to be stronger than me, stronger that the order of the Prefect who denied him speech. An old whitehead [whitened] peasant woman made the sign of the cross on her breast and whispered to us, "The Emissary of the Archangel Michael."
>
> Then the sad little church bell began to toll, and the service, which invariably preceded Legionary meetings, began. Deep impressions, created in the soul of the

---

Agathon, avec la collaboration de Vulfran Mory, *Codréanu et la garde de Fer. Le dossier: Le nationalisme roumain entre 1936 et 1940 vu par la presse de l'époque* (Paris: Francis Bergeron: 1991).

> child, die hard. In more than half of a century, I have never forgotten my meeting with Corneliu Zelea Codreanu."[269]

The text first records the strong repulsion Codreanu exercised upon certain groups of people, alluding to what Tucker called "counter-charisma," as part of the dual nature of charismatic attraction. Moreover, Codreanu's appearance, in addition to the entire Legionary performance, emphasized Orthodox religious rituals and Biblical imagery, while the repression of the prefect gave it an extra aura of virtuous political resistance.

In revealing the powerful emotional impact of the Legion's charismatic propaganda, Talavera's recollection of his childhood fascination with Codreanu is very striking, mostly since it comes from a Hungarian Jew from Transylvania who suffered "every Nazi persecution except death." Although presented as a childhood memory, the dramatic recollection of "Codreanu's epiphany" and the language of the paragraph is the choice of the adult historian of comparative fascism in East Central Europe. Moreover, other quotations from his book reveal Talavera's open admiration of Codreanu: "More than half a century later (if one ignores the Legion's actions later), it is not easy to condemn the Legion's ideas. If only all Legionaries had been like Codreanu, Moța or the Transylvanian Ion Banea were!"[270] The paradoxical fascination of Talavera with the Legionary leadership had not passed unnoticed. Remarking that Talavera "uses the exalted language of the 1930s Romanian right," Sorin Alexandrescu finds this to be a kind of "*post-mortem* victory of Codreanu."[271] It is a proof of the powerful impact of the Legion's propaganda, attracting sympathizers from all social strata of the society. But it also documents the authoritarian political orientation of numerous voters, regardless of their ethnic origin, who were in search of a strong charismatic leader.

How can one account for the mass response to Codreanu's charismatic claims? Numerous historians have tried to explain it in view of Codreanu's strong personality and impressive physical appearance. While reproducing elements of Legionary propaganda, this perspective is also problematic from a methodological point of view. In fact, charismatic attraction cannot be precisely measured, due to its relative nature as a function of the complex interplay between social context and individual subjectivity. Thus, while to his followers Codreanu appeared as "exceptional," to other contemporaries he seemed a mediocre personality. The leading journalist Pamfil Şeicaru provided the following portrait of Codreanu, emphasizing the discrepancy between his personal qualities and his leader cult:[272]

> "Although lacking all attributes that facilitate the politician's access to popular awareness, Mr. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, entirely deprived of the seductions of eloquence, however mediocre, and not fit to use the irresistible suggestion of the written word, has succeeded in recruiting a number of supporters whose accents of fanaticism, blind submission to the chief's order and romantic idealism, are amazing. No political party can mobilize ten (just ten) fanatics who believe in faith with such an aggressive violence, even craving martyrdom for faith. In what lies this hypnotic

---

[269] Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga. A Biography* (Iasi, Portland, Oxford: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1998), 2nd ed., p. 343-345.
[270] Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga*, p. 348.
[271] Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul Român*, p. 205.
[272] In the same vein, several close collaborators of Codreanu provided a highly negative picture of him: Nichifor Crainic portrayed Codreanu as a violent character, lacking political sense and rhetorical skills, while the legionary commander Mihai Stelescu characterized Codreanu as an egoistic and opportunistic figure.

> force of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, I can't say. Yet we notice one fact, the creation of a political sect. I have had the occasion to be in the same Chamber with Mr. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu—elected deputy in by-elections. Instead of a tribute to youthfulness, vibrating voice and eloquent gestures, a shy man in search of his own image, embarrassed by the questions put to him, common questions with nothing particular about them […]. This is why his temporary presence in the Chamber did not leave any impression."[273]

For the purpose of this study, the question of Codreanu's charismatic personality is ultimately of limited importance, since it cannot explain in itself the success of the movement. Codreanu's charismatic leadership was not due to his exceptional personal qualities, but was rather a combination of a "situational charisma" due to the "charisma hunger" of Romanian society and a charismatic agency responsible for the conscious creation of a messianic discourse of political mobilization and its dispersion in innovative forms of political propaganda. Since charisma does not reside in the personal attributes of the leader, but in the emotional relationship between the leader and his adepts, the following sections of this chapter turn the analysis from Codreanu's alleged "exceptional qualities" to the study of the movement itself, its members and their needs.

4.2. Charismatic Leadership versus Party Organization

The charismatic nature of the Legion also shaped its organizational structure. As Max Weber pointed out, charismatic movements form emotional communities. Although they are hierarchically structured, they differ from bureaucratic parties:

> "An organized group subject to charismatic authority will be called a charismatic community (*Gemeinde*). It is based on an emotional form of communal relationship (*Vergemeinschaftung*). The administrative staff of a charismatic leader does not consist of 'officials'; least of all are its members technically trained. It is not chosen on the basis of social privilege nor from the point of view of domestic or personal dependency. It is rather chosen in terms of the charismatic qualities of its members. The prophet has its disciples; the warlord his bodyguard; the leader, generally, his agents (*Vertrauensmänner*). There is no such thing as appointment or dismissal, no career, no promotion."[274]

Similarly to other Fascism movements involved in the political process, the Legion faced the great challenge of combining charismatic leadership with a bureaucratic party structure. In his analysis of the German NSDAP, Dietrich Orlow argued that the fusion between the *Führerprinzip* and the highly bureaucratic Nazi party organization resulted in a peculiar syncretism suggestively called "bureaucratized romanticism."[275] While Weber regarded bureaucracy and charisma as opposing principles of legitimacy and organization,

---

[273] Pamfil Şeicaru, "Împărţirea unei moşteniri de voturi," in *Curentul* VI (20 December 1933) 2115, quoted in Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 356.
[274] Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1, p. 243.
[275] Dietrich Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1933* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), Vol. 1, p. 8. For the uneven combination between charisma and bureaucracy in the organization of the Nazi Party, see also Hans Gerth, "The Nazi Party: Its Leadership and Composition," *American Journal of Sociology* 45 (Jan. 1940) 4, p. 517-541; and Cf. Nyomarkay, *Charisma and Functionalism*.

Orlow argued that the Nazi party structure "neither differentiated between the party functionaries' roles as private individuals and as public persons, nor did it seek to separate decision makers from decision administrators," but created instead "a bureaucratic functionary corps of extremely committed leader-executives who lived in their own synthetic society dominated by the totaling and reflexive myths."[276] As a result of its dual nature, "The NSDAP successfully avoided the problem of bureaucratic in-growth, but not by depersonalizing the relationship of bureaucratic superior and subordinate. The NSDAP combined personalization and bureaucratization in the party's organizational life. Hitler squared the circle, an achievement made possible by the operation of the myth within the organization of the party."[277]

Compared to the Nazi Party, the Legion had a less structured party organization, shaped to a greater extent by the spontaneity of the charisma principle. In August 1927, the Legion announced its first organizational structure, made up of four sections: the first—and most important—was that of "the youth"; the second "protecting" section was composed of "mature men"; the third "assisting" section, encompassed women; and the fourth "international" section was made up of Romanians living abroad.[278] Legion leadership was to be commonly exercised by a council composed of former or current student leaders, with the latter granted only a consultative vote; and by the Senate, made up of elected personalities over fifty years of age.[279] Originally conceived as the highest authority within the Legion, the Senate assembled for the first time only in 1930, and had in fact a consultative and decorative role, its members being appointed by Codreanu, and not elected on a regional basis, as previously intended.[280] As a collegial body consisting of elders, the Senate was nevertheless meant to provide symbolic legitimacy to the Legionary decision-making process, by formally guaranteeing "that the law which is applied is really authentically traditional."[281]

Despite its collective leading forums, the Legion had in fact an authoritarian structure based on the undisputed leadership of "the Captain" and on a hierarchical line of command. Its organization was spelled out in detail in the textbook *Cărticica şefului de cuib* (The Nest Leader's Manual), as the fundamental law of the Legion, published by Codreanu in 1933 and distributed to all members. The main building blocks of the Legion's structure were its grass-roots cells called *cuiburi* (nests), defined as "a group of people united under the command of a single man." As a function of their composition, there were several types of nests, forming the main sections of the Legion: nests of the Brotherhoods of the Cross, composed of teenagers aged between 14 and 20, activating only in urban areas; nests of the Legionary Corp composed of adult Legionaries, aged between 21 and 28; nests made up of female Legionaries; nests of workers, making up a separate corpus, created in 1936; nests of "mature men," responsible for the education of younger members, making up the political section (*Cărticica*, Point 26).

A nest was made up of three to thirteen members and led by a charismatic leader "emerging naturally." A secretary, a cashier and a courier assisted the latter in his activity. Nest members convened each Saturday evening or at any time the leader deemed necessary. They discussed organizational aspects, debated various political subjects, collected funds,

---

[276] Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1933*, p. 8.
[277] Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1933*, p. 8.
[278] "Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail," *Pământul Strămoşesc* I (15 August 1927) 2, p. 3-4; and "Organizarea Legiunii Arhanghelul Mihail," *Pământul Strămoşesc* I (1 October 1927) 5, p. 3-4.
[279] "Organizarea Legiunii Arhanghelul Mihail," p. 3-4.
[280] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelului Mihail*, p. 136.
[281] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 274.

conducted propaganda activities, recruited new members, initiated labors camps and carried out orders sent from the superior echelons of the Legion; each Sunday, they organized marches in the neighboring villages or regions. After six months of existence, nests were granted the right to have their own flag representing the Romanian colors (red, yellow and blue), with a Christian cross on the top. Those nests that had no activity were declared "dead"; for exceptional merits, the most active ones were rewarded with stars on their flag, graded from one to seven.

The flexible system of nests assured an exponential expansion of the Legion's membership. After completing his/her training, any member could leave his nest and initiate a new nest by bringing in new converts recognizing his leadership. Nests stemming from a common original nest were considered part of a "family" of nests. Such related nests were organized hierarchically, the original nest being the "superior" one, its leader having authority over all other chiefs in that family. In order to avoid fragmentation, nests from the same locality were obliged to maintain strong organizational ties. They organized regular common gatherings and actions under the authority of the chief of the oldest nest in a family.

Territorially, nests were grouped in garrisons, sectors, counties and regions, led by chiefs appointed by Codreanu and directly responsible to him. In 1937, at the peak of its strengths, the Legion encompassed nine regions, corresponding to all historical provinces making up Greater Romania: Muntenia, Oltenia, Dobrogea, Moldova, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Ardeal, Crişana and Timişoara. In every region existed separate leadership for the main sections of the Legion; the Brotherhoods of the Cross, women's fortresses, the Legionary Corp, the Workers' Corpus, the Student Corpus, and the Political Organization. The latter was invested with authority over the leaders of all the other sections (*Cărticica*, Point 27). In addition, at national level, above territorial regions, there existed general headquarters of all Legionary sections. They were led by chiefs appointed by Codreanu, as the Commander of the Legion (*Conducătorul*) and placed under his direct authority.

The hierarchical structure of the Legion was further complicated with its membership growth. Upon entering the Legion, new converts were considered "members." In order to become "Legionaries," they were subject to intensive training during a probation period of up to three years. In addition to the title "Legionary," new ranks of command were established, emulating military hierarchy, such as "Legionary instructor," and "deputy commander." *Cărticica* emphasized that meetings of Legionary chiefs were not democratic but military in character: the leader had to convene its subordinates "as a commander of a regiment calls to order his subaltern officers." Legionary chiefs at all levels had to file detailed monthly reports to their superiors, their activity being attentively monitored. There also existed specific organizational functions, such as: chiefs of garrisons, counties or regions; chiefs of working teams, labor camps or building-yards. Due to their importance, these functions had priority over military ranks (*Cărticica*, Point 39). In order to prevent the autonomous consolidation of high Legionary leaders, they could retain their posts for a maximum period of one year for regional leaders, and two years for political leaders (*Cărticica*, Point 28). After being released from their function, Legionary chiefs were advanced in rank and became part of the corpus of "charismatic commanders."

In sum, the organization of the Legion combined charismatic leadership at both grass-roots and top central levels with appointed officials named by Codreanu at intermediate levels; and the principle of geographical representation with that of central leadership. The essence of this structure was military hierarchy and unconditional devotion to the Captain, as the supreme Charismatic leader.

4.3. Charisma and Gender: Women within the Legion

The Legion was primarily an organization of young males. As George L. Mosse pointed out, fascist movements were generally male communities, a continuation of the wartime fraternities of trenches.[282] Fascists celebrated the cult of masculinity and virility, embodied by charismatic leaders such as *il Duce*, *the Führer* or *the Captain*. However, although organically tied to the masculine identity, the charismatic message of the Legion appealed to the spiritual revival of both men and women. It organized female sections and assigned them new public tasks, transcending the private sphere. The Legionary appeal to women was not just a temporary alliance meant to numerically compensate the generalized access of ethnic minorities to political rights; it was linked to the universal nature of the charismatic appeal. Although built as a fraternity of men, the charismatic community was open to followers of both sexes.

The political mobilization of women was innovative in a country where there was a long tradition of excluding them from the public sphere. In the early modern period, although based on the patriarchal authority of the husband in the family, the customary law and the Byzantine jurisprudence in the principalities of Moldova and Wallachia allowed women a certain visibility. Women could possess, inherit and manage property including landed estates, perform certain public roles and, in exceptional cases, hold leading political roles such as regent.[283] In the modern period, while gaining access to state-sponsored education and certain state or liberal professions, the legal status of women deteriorated. Modeled on the 1804 French *Code Civil*, the Romanian Civil Code adopted in 1865 was based on an underlying gender inequality, denying women political participation and depriving married women of nationality, rights to full property of household paraphernalia and legal capacity. As compared to the Old Kingdom, the legal situation of women in Transylvania, Bukovina and the Banat was more favorable: the Austrian Civil Code (functioning also in Cislethania with amendments enacted by the Hungarian Parliament) did not contain the French institution known as the "*tutelle de la femme*" and was more permissive to women's civil rights and legal capacity.

The great social-political upheaval of World War I offered a unique occasion for women's emancipation in Romania. Given the general mobilization of men, the war required an unprecedented participation of women in the public sphere, stimulating their campaign for emancipation. In 1917 and 1918, women associations addressed numerous memorandums to the parliament, claiming political rights. These demands were supported by politicians in Transylvania and the Banat: their manifesto concerning the future organization of Greater Romania adopted on 1st of December 1918 during the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia included the principle of granting political rights to adult women.

Despite the strong campaign for suffrage conducted by women's association, the 1923 constitution failed to emancipate women. While granting universal male suffrage, the constitution accepted women's enfranchisement only in principle: Article 6 stipulated that "Special laws, voted on with a majority of two-thirds, will determine the conditions under which women can exercise political rights."[284] The promised civil and political emancipation

---

[282] George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution. Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999).

[283] On women's status and public role, see Constantin Gane, *Trecute vieţi de doamne şi domniţe* 3 Vols. (Bucharest: Universul, 1933-1939); and Nicolae Iorga, *Viaţa femeilor în trecutul românesc* (Women's lives in the Romanian past) (Vălenii de munte: Neamul românesc, 1910).

[284] Articol 6, Title II, "Despre Drepturile Românilor," in *Constituţiunea Promulgată cu Decretul Regal no. 1360 din 28 Martie,* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, 1923), p. 611.

of women in Romania occurred only slowly and unevenly as part of the general process of administrative integration and legislative unification in inter-war Greater Romania: In 1929, women were granted political rights in local elections, while in 1932, a new Romanian Civil Code finally granted women full civil emancipation. As such, the political order was dominated by males who confined women to the private sphere and monopolized forms of representation and allocation of resources in the public sphere.

At a time when women were denied the right to enroll in parties and to vote in national elections, the Legion was the only movement attempting to mobilize female activists. In his 1928 appeal to "every mother, to every women in the country," published in *Pământul Strămoşesc*, Codreanu acknowledged that "until now, only men took part in the Legion's work."[285] He urged Romanian women to materially support the anti-Jewish propaganda of the Legion by selling needlework products for the Legion's benefit. His appeal made clear the fact that the Legion did not support the civil and political emancipation of women in society. Instead, it built on the traditional association between conservative feminism and nationalism. On the eve of World War I, dominant discourses on women's emancipation, authored by Cornelia Botez, Alexandrina Cantacuzino and Maria Buţureanu, emphasized women's adherence to the Romanian national cause. Influential female associations, such as *Societatea ortodoxă a femeilor române* (The Orthodox Society of Romanian Women) created in 1912 by Alexandrina Cantacuzino and Zoe Râmniceanu, promoted an "accommodating" feminism, which did not challenge the established gendered political order, but promoted a form of religious nationalism based on Orthodoxy.[286]

The organization of the third—assisting—section in the Legion is significant for gender roles assigned within the Legion. Overall, women made up only a minority of the total membership, estimated at circa 20 percent. The women's section was organized in independent nuclei (*nuclee*) made up of a minimum of three and a maximum of thirteen members. Codreanu recommended the following subjects of discussion within women's nests: the role of Legionary women within the new Romania, the rights and duties of Legionary women, the woman as mother, wife, and fighter, the art of cooking, new methods of education, household keeping, and producing clothes, etc. Young unmarried women were organized in a separate subsection called "The Sisters of the Legion" and were assigned the tasks of adorning its center and organizing exhibitions.[287]

The leader of the women's section and the most influential female Legionary was Nicoleta Nicolescu, portrayed by the priest Dumitrescu as a severe, ambitious and austere person:

> "The Female's Fortress (*Cetaţuia de fete*) was led by student Nicoleta Nicolaescu, who had women under her supervision, as well. She demanded the girls observe high moral standards. She wanted all remaining maidens to be full of devotion, learning military skills, as well."[288]

---

[285] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Un apel către 'surorile Legiunii', doamnele şi domnişoarele române," *Pământul Strămoşesc*, 2 (1 February 1928) 3, p. 4-5.

[286] See Alexandrina Cantacuzino, *Cincisprezece ani de muncă socială şi culturală. Discursuri, conferinţe, articole, scrisori* (Bucharest, 1928). For a general overview of feminism in Romania, see Paraschiva Cîncea, *Mişcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România, 1848-1948* [The Movement for the Emancipation of Women in Romania, 1848-1948] (Bucureşti: Editura Politică, 1976).

[287] "Organizarea Legiunii 'Arhanghelul Mihail,'" p. 4.

[288] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 60.

The Legionary propaganda invested women with a central role in its pedagogical propaganda of collective indoctrination.[289] Bearing the motto "Save the family, the religion and the fatherland," the Statute of the Legion asserted that the glory and decadence of peoples was "in direct relation to the moral standing of the woman," valued first and foremost as a mother.[290] Legionary mothers were duty-bound to raise their children in the love of the fatherland and to oppose frivolity and nudity "which dishonors, mutilates and disgusts."[291] They also had to discourage "unhealthy and immoral dances," and to prevent countryside girls to work as servants for Jews, an established anti-Semitic cliché. In this respect, the Legion was in line with other fascist movements: as Mosse pointed out, given their fear of (sexual) degeneration, fascists promoted a clear distinction of functions and division of labor between sexes as the basis of the moral and physical health of the nation.[292]

Female legionaries were primarily assigned gendered tasks—as mothers and wives—such as reproduction, moral education of children, cooking, sewing or performing communication jobs. At the same time, women were also required to fulfill new public roles as fighters for the national cause: to wear uniforms, to perform military activities and to conduct propaganda. One can thus identify an underlying contradiction between the traditional role of women as mothers and wives assisting the national cause and the active roles assigned to them in the national revolution and the future totalitarian political order.

This contradiction is manifest in principal Legionary texts, where female Legionaries are mentioned only marginally, mostly in connection with household activities. For example, Constantin Papanace recalled that "The behavior of Legionary students impressed me. Breaking with the current mentality which despises manual labor, they were cleaning the center with so much love that they were spreading only good disposition." Having grown up in a rural Aromanian environment in Macedonia, Papanace confessed he found it difficult to get used to women performing military activities: "But it seemed to me something strange, unnatural, to see them aligning in front with military commanders. Maybe the tradition of the environment in which I grew up generated this reservation. But I kept it to myself without making a big deal out of it. We were in the first, experimental, phase."[293] Papanace's reservations reveal latent internal divisions over the role of women in society. An influential member of the Legion, Papanace advocated a patriarchal family modeled on the traditional Aromanian family:

> "I am for a healthy family. I would not need to imagine the main features of this healthy family. I am thinking of the Aromanian woman who, in the most hostile conditions, preserved untainted our people in their healthy traditions. […] She venerates the household as a shrine and detests frivolity. She admits the primacy of the man in the family as the order of things settled by God. Only in this way does the family nest become a proper environment for fecundation, for good education and prosperity. But the man also considers his wife as his beloved first collaborator, venerated by all his family members. When life circumstances demand the husband travel abroad and the children are under-aged, she commands the family."[294]

---

[289] See Gentile, "The Sacralization of Politics."
[290] "Organizarea Legiunii 'Arhanghelul Mihail,'" *Pământul Strămoşesc* 1 (1 October 1927) 5, p. 1.
[291] "Organizarea Legiunii 'Arhanghelul Mihail,'" p. 1.
[292] Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution.*
[293] Constantin Papanace, "O mare mucenică legionară, Nicoleta Nicolescu," in *Martiri Legionari* (Cetatea Eternă: Colecția Omului Nou, 1952), No. 8, p. 10-13.
[294] Papanace, "O mare mucenică legionară, Nicoleta Nicolescu," p. 10-13.

The ideological contradiction between women as mothers and wives and women as fighters was linked to a deeper social cleavage within the Legion between leaders of rural extraction and more urbanized elements. Tactically, Papanace preferred not to spell out his disagreement, an indication he did not consider the issue to be a vital political problem. Debates over the role of women in the new national revolution became more acute during the Legion's short rule, focusing mainly on their role in patriotic education and the reproduction of the national community.

4.4. Charisma and Social Structure

The social composition of the Legion has been subject to numerous scholarly controversies, various authors emphasizing preponderantly either its peasantist or petty bourgeois components. This paper argues that the Legion was a charismatic *catch-all party*, incorporating diverse elements of society, among which the most important were students, blue and white collar workers, lower rural and urban bourgeoisie, members of the rural and urban intelligentsia, and members of the aristocracy. While greatly affected by the postwar upheaval, these social strata were united by the feeling of being excluded from the benefits of the social and political transformation. Codreanu's charisma, based on a compensatory salvational ideology, offered the unifying cement among these heterogeneous social strata. It managed to mobilize socially disenfranchised and economically impoverished groups who perceived themselves as the losers of the parliamentary political regime, forging a new political consciousness and thus obscuring internal social conflicts. At the same time with creating consensus, the Legion generated new political conflicts between its fanatical followers and the country's political establishment.

The original nucleus of the movement originated in Northern Moldova, an area that claimed peripheral status following the 1859 political union between Moldova and Wallachia and a steady economic pauperization allegedly due to the "Jewish invasion." Significantly, in his early manifestos, Codreanu appealed to Moldovans as "the poorest and most oppressed of all Romanians," urging them to unite "wherever they live in the Romanian lands."[295]

Gradually, the Legion penetrated other historic regions as well. In a pioneering article exploring the connection between fascism and the middle class, Eugen Weber used "the lesser-known case of the Legion" in order to contribute to the existing knowledge on the sociology of fascism and its mass appeal. Building on partial electoral data, Weber argued that the electoral base of the Legion was recruited predominantly form the impoverished, overwhelmingly rural and geographically isolated regions of Romania such as Northern and Southern Moldova, Southern Bessarabia and central Transylvania.[296] Weber rejected the Marxist cliché views that the Legion was either "a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois movement."[297] Although Legion leadership was part of what might be defined as the "middle class," it originated in small, "only-just-urbanized intelligentsia: sons or grandsons of peasants, school teachers, and priests."[298] In urban areas, it attracted mainly residents of rural extraction such as theology and agronomy students, salaried employees, professionals and members of "the new middle class," who accused marginality, restlessness and their lack of integration in the existing social system.[299]

---

[295] Codreanu, S*crisori studenţeşti din închisoare* (Iaşi, 1925), p. 7, 8.
[296] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 110-113.
[297] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 105.
[298] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 107.
[299] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 109.

Weber concluded that the Legion was a populist movement developed in areas where there was a political vacuum that could be exploited.[300] Since in inter-war Romania, there was neither a strong communist movement nor powerful resistance to nationalism, the Legion's radicalism "was able to develop without need to guard itself on its left or compromise too much with the forces of moderation."[301] Ultimately, for Weber, the key to understanding the social composition and electoral appeal of the Legion lies less in economy or social class than in "ideological conditioning" such as the lack of strongly structured parties and the psychological predisposition of followers.

Building on Weber's conclusions, Zeev Barbu argued that the Legion was "a psychological rather than a social group."[302] Its social composition can be therefore better explained by taking into account socio-psychological factors. Urban Legionaries were united by their marginality or "classness", as Barbu calls it: they "were climbing up the ladder of social hierarchy in the direction of the middle class," without severing their ties with the rural world.[303] The "symptom of marginality" rather than poverty accounts, in Barbu's view, for the membership structure of the Legion in rural areas, as well. Pointing to the example of Dumitru, a young Legionary peasant from a Transylvanian village near Sibiu, who was not poor but was a very isolated religious character suffering from a series of physical (he was the shortest man in the village), temperamental (choleric) and social stigmas (the "shame" of having a physically handicapped sister who was raising an illegitimate child), Barbu suggested that the typology of Legionary followers from rural areas encompassed diverse categories of marginals practicing despised or feared occupations (blacksmith, cobbler, etc) or displaying physical or behavioral stigmas.[304]

The typology of Barbu explains the appeal the Legion exercised upon certain psycho-social categories. As a recent partial sociological analysis of the Legion's membership indicates, a majority of the members were very young, mostly unmarried students (thus without a permanent social status on which to impose a rigorous social code of behavior) and *déclassé* through their transplantation from rural familial environment to hostile urban environment (See **Document 1**). However, given the fact that, at its peak, the Legion became a mass movement, one cannot possibly generalize Barbu's typology of stigmatic marginality at the level of this large aggregate membership.

The most elaborated analysis of the Legion's social profile was put forward by Armin Heinen.[305] Refuting Weber's preliminary thesis on the geographical basis of the Legion, Heinen pointed out that the Legion was in fact more successful in regions exposed to sudden modernization, "advancing by means of industrialization, trade and communication, as well as more widely spread literacy."[306] It attracted active middle social categories, such as lawyers, priests, teachers and students, who felt hampered in their upward mobility. The Legion could penetrate these categories using innovative ways of political propaganda, among which charismatic legitimacy figured predominantly.

The post-1933 membership growth of the Legion altered its initial social composition. Taking advantage of the social pauperization caused by the Great Depression (1929-1933), the Legion expanded its territorial basis and incorporated diverse segments of society. New interest groups emerged within the Legion, such as industrial workers, intellectuals and

[300] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 118.
[301] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 105.
[302] Barbu, "Rumania," p. 163.
[303] Barbu, "Rumania," p. 163.
[304] Barbu, "Rumania," p. 165.
[305] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelului Mihail*, p. 470.
[306] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelului Mihail*, p. 470.

aristocrats. As early as 1933, the Legion exerted special efforts to enroll industrial workers. In a polemical article published in *Axa*, Mihai Stelescu portrayed the Legion as "the real defender" of workers, criticizing the communists as demagogical and detrimental to workers' interests.[307] The growth of their membership led to the organization of a distinct *Corpul Muncitoresc Legionar* (Legionary Workers' Corpus) in 1936. The nature of the workers' participation in the Legion generated numerous political debates. In an insightful social analysis of the Legion, Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu, inter-war Romania's leading communist intellectual, argued that its membership was composed of three main social categories: broken aristocracy, petty bourgeoisie and *Lumpenproletariat*. Although very diverse, these categories shared the situation of being uprooted and dispossessed. While acknowledging that the Legion increased its propaganda in working-class environments and established special workers' sections, Pătrăşcanu argued, in line with the Marxist theoretical view on fascism, that "no genuine" workers would enroll in the Legion. The only exception to this rule, the massive participation to the Legion of workers from the Malaxa factory, had a political explanation: Since Malaxa produced armaments, workers were selected according to political criteria, a fact accounting for their right-wing political sympathies.[308] Pătrăşcanu concluded that the Legion's membership was dominated by underclass elements, who—although rebellious—were not capable of conducting a genuine social revolution.

The picture of this social heterogeneity characterizing the Legion's membership can be completed with numerous other types of marginal, such as impoverished aristocratic elements. Having lost their privileges in 1858 and their landed estates in 1921—following the most radical agrarian reform conducted in inter-war Europe—numerous aristocrats embraced radical politics in search for political visibility and upward social mobility. The most prominent aristocratic members of the Legion were Gheorghe Cantacuzino, Alexandru Cantacuzino, Mihai Sturdza and Alex-Vlad Sturdza, members of prestigious Wallachian and respectively Moldavian princely families.

Thus, while denouncing party patronage and patron-client relations as *politicianism*, the Legion itself gradually evolved as a composite interest group, a network of *déclassé* or peripheral elements excluded from, or dissatisfied with their place within, the existing socio-economic and political order. This evolution is in line with Weber's predictions on the evolution of charismatic movements:

> "It is only in the initial stages and so long as the charismatic leader acts in a way which is completely outside everyday social organization, that it is possible for the followers to live communistically in a community of faith and enthusiasm, on gifts, 'booty' or sporadic acquisition. Only the members of the small group of enthusiastic disciples and their followers are prepared to devote their lives purely idealistically to their call. The great majority of disciples and followers will in the long run 'make their living' out of their 'calling' in a material sense as well. Indeed this must be the case if the movement is not to disintegrate."[309]

At the top, the Legion was dominated by several families, among the most notables being the Codreanus, the Moţas, the Cantacuzinos and the Sturdzas, each of them having their own followers and clientele. The new Legionary elite was thus constituted through a

---

[307] Mihai Stelescu, "Cine apără pe muncitori," *Axa* II (3 March 1933) 8, p. I-II.

[308] Pătrăşcanu's Marxist analysis served as a source of inspiration for other—more recent—works on fascism. Cf. Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel.*

[309] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 367.

peculiar fusion between the new "charismatic aristocracy" and the old Romanian aristocracy. In some cases, the links between these families was further consolidated through marriage alliances (for example, Moța married Corneliu Codreanu's sister).

Although the ties between members were formally based on "love" and "friendship," in practice the Legion developed as a hierarchical organization made up of competing interest groups. As membership grew, there were attempts to formalize its relationship as ritual kinship. First, in order to gain access to the charismatic emotional community, Legionary had to take an oath of allegiance. Second, Legionary men and women were encouraged to choose their life-partners within the Legion. Third, the Captain, as the leader of the charismatic community, used to serve as the Godfather of new Legionary families and of their newly born children, during collective ceremonies. On their turn, Legionary families had the obligation to serve as wedding Godparents (*naşi*) for five new couples, and to subsequently attract them to the Legion. Charismatic and religious rituals were thus effectively joined in a heterogeneous Legionary code of conduct. Members of the charismatic staff were not just spiritual leaders, but also baptismal and wedding sponsors, which in the Romanian tradition meant also patrons, responsible for their well being.

4.5. Dictatorial Charisma, Education and Discipline

The membership growth of the Legion posed numerous organizational challenges, necessitating concomitantly the tightening of organizational disciple and an increased role of education and ritual socialization. Since, unlike the other two forms of political legitimacy, charisma is based on "non-coercive compliance," selection, discipline and education is very important for maintaining organizational cohesiveness. Max Weber pointed out the importance of education in building a charismatic community, highlighting its main components:

> "The real purpose of charismatic education is regeneration, hence the development of the charismatic quality, and the testing, confirmation and selection of the qualified person. [The elements of charismatic education are:] isolation from the familiar environment and from all family ties (among primitive tribes the novices—*epheboi*—move into the forests); invariably entrance into an exclusive educational community; complete transformation of personal conduct; asceticism; physical and psychical exercises of the most diverse forms to awaken the capacity for ecstasy and regeneration; continuous testing of the level of charismatic perfection through shock, torture and humiliation (circumcision may have originated primarily as a part of such ascetic practices); finally, graduated ceremonious reception into the circle of those who have proven their charisma."[310]

Codreanu assigned great importance to charismatic education. Legionaries were subject to extended practical training and participated in a process of community socialization following detailed rituals centered on the cult of the Captain and aimed at emulating his personality. The socialization of Legionaries started at an early age, with their enrollment in the subsection *Frăţiile de Cruce* (Brotherhoods of the Cross) defined as "brotherhood until death around the cross, of those who feel in their hearts the spark of love toward the fatherland."[311] As Eugen Weber pointed out, this practice was based on an Eastern

[310] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1143.
[311] Gheorghe Istrate, Nicolae Roşca, "Frăția de cruce," in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. 1, p. 12.

Orthodox Christian tradition, according to which children baptized in the same water were regarded as cross brothers.[312]

Members of the Brotherhoods were also called musketeers, Duma's novel *The Three musketeers* being one of their main assigned readings. They had to undergo an initiation period, which included training in military parades and even fencing, and were granted full membership rights only after taking an oath of allegiance.[313] The ritual of cross brotherhood initiation suggested a kind of symbolical Christian re-birth for the Legionaries. As one participant described it, "The chosen one was told that he was entering a world apart, was promised that by following the teachings and practices of this new world he would become a man of special essence." Thereafter, "there grew in him, out of the excesses of so-called religious practices, mystic exaltation and the wish to perform some resounding deed."[314]

Adult Legionaries received their Christian, national, sanitary, physical and social education within nests, on the basis of Legionary textbooks, among which the most important were Codreanu's *Pentru legionari* and *Cărticica şefului de cuib,* Moţa's *Cranii de lemn*, and Axa's series of conferences. The subjects discussed included the life and teaching of charismatic personalities such as Mussolini, Hitler or Lenin, the history of Italian Fascism, nationalism and socialism in France, Legionary art, etc.

In *Cărticica şefului de cuib,* Codreanu spelled out a code of conduct and a set of ideological commandments on the manner in which Legionary salvation was to be achieved. The code of conduct combined military discipline with religious asceticism. It contained nine Legionary commands (referring mainly to faith in God, self-discipline, dedication, rejection of politics, and love of legionary death), and six fundamental rules "of discipline," "of work," "of silence," "of education," "of mutual help," and "of honor:"

> "The Rule of Discipline: Legionary be obedient; without discipline we will not win. Follow your chief for better or worse.
> The Rule of Work: Do your daily work. Work with joy. Let the reward of your work be not any material profit, but the satisfaction that you have contributed something to the glory of the Legion and the greatness of your country.
> The Rule of Silence: speak little. Say only what has to be said. Speak when you need. Your eloquence is in your deeds. Let others talk; you act
> The Rule of Education: You must become another man. A hero. Let the Nest provide all your education. Get to know the Legion well.
> The Rule of Assistance: Help your brother in distress. Do not abandon him.
> The Rule of Honor: Follow only the ways that honor necessitates. Fight. Fight and never be a coward. Leave to others the ways of infamy. Better fall fighting with honor, than to win through an infamy."[315]

Proper Legionary conduct was to lead to Legionary salvation via two main paths: spiritual rebirth from within through sacrifice and the creation of the new man. In Codreanu's view, "The new man, or the renewed nation, presupposes a great rebirth of the soul, a great spiritual revolution of the entire person, in other words a fight against the spiritual direction

---

[312] Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. 1, p. 11; Eugen Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 520-521.
[313] *Pământul Strămoşesc*, IV (18 May 1930), p. 3. See also Heinen, *Legiunea Arhangelului Mihail*, p. 187.
[314] Eugen Weber, "Romania," in *The European Right* p. 522.
[315] Codreanu, *Cărticica*, Point 3 "Cele şase legi fundamentale ale cuibului."

of today."[316] Through a significant mutation, the subject of spiritual rebirth and messianic salvation became the nation itself: "All the virtues of the Romanian soul should be rejuvenated in the new man, all the qualities of our race. In the new man, we should kill all defaults or tendencies toward evil."[317]

The fundamental feature of the new man was his capacity for spiritual renewal through sacrifice. In attaining the superior rank of a Legionary, a Legion member had to pass a series of initiating tests, allegorically described by Codreanu as "the mountain of suffering, the forest of wild beasts, and the marsh of desperation."[318] These initiating tests were part of a blasphemous scenario of *Imitatio Christi*: the would-be Legionary had to "receive on his shoulder the yoke of our savior Jesus Christ."[319] The experience of suffering was thus central to the training of Legionaries. In Codreanu's view, without "the test of pain, the test of bravery, and that of faith, one cannot be a capable man, cannot be a Legionary."[320] He argued that "Every act of suffering is a step forward toward salvation, toward victory" (Cărticica, Point 55).

In practice, however, this severe legionary code of discipline could be imposed only partially, even within elite corps. Priest Dumitrescu-Borşa recollects the Romantic-adventurous atmosphere that dominated the first Legionary "Death Team," conducting electoral propaganda in "hostile" constituencies:

> "We were passing through villages, where we were getting off, singing, gathering people and speaking to them about the Iron Guard. The propaganda was effective. But the travelling was tiring. Therefore, there were also some quarrels and conflicts, generated also by love-stories, on the ground that one took the lover of the other one, because girls were courting us. We were reconciling with each-other by singing love songs."[321]

The Death Team's departure from Reşiţa was particularly difficult, the challenges it encountered being of a very different nature from the heroic fights claimed by the Legionary propaganda:

> "At the edge of the city Niki Constantinescu was waiting for me. 'Stop, we will wait here an hour and they will all come,' he told me. During this time, they started to appear, in pairs, embracing their lovers, who tried to excuse them by saying that they had to wash their cloth and prepare food. And legionaries were coming out of the forest, some from one side, some from the other, and near the car, farewell whispers, kisses, tears, and prolonged hugs. It took me several hours to get them into the car. While I was getting one Legionary in, another one was getting off, until I have finally started the car, while some Legionaries were climbing in motion, and several girls hanged on the bumper of the car, and then fell on the road. Only in this way we could leave Reşiţa."[322]

---

[316] Codreanu, *Cărticica*, point 69.
[317] Codreanu, *Cărticica*, p. 32, point 69-70 (my translation).
[318] Codreanu, *Cărticica*, Part IX, "Ce drum are de străbătut un legionar în viaţa sa legionară," Points 56-60. Vezi şi Faust Brădescu, *Cele trei probe legionare: elemente de doctrină* [The three Legionary tests: doctrinal elements] (Bucureşti: Editura Majadahonda, 2000).
[319] Codreanu, *Cărticica*, Point 56.
[320] Codreanu, *Cărticica*, Point 60.
[321] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 77.
[322] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 77.

Informed by the lack of discipline and morality of many Legionaries—especially among teenagers, who regarded Legionarism as a Romantic game—Codreanu himself had to admit his lack of effective means of coercion for disciplining his younger followers. Pragmatically, he privileged long term political goals over strict discipline and integrity (a conciliatory attitude which contrasted to the stricter discipline and norms of sexual behaviors applied to women, see above and below):

> "Legionarism was spreading throughout all counties. Teams were going for propaganda, with brochures, manifests, and circulars. Codreanu's answer to the royal message, printed in a brochure, was dispersed and had a strong impact on masses; but young Legionaries committed banquets and stupidities in a row. When I reported to the Chief [to Codreanu] what was going on, he replied, a bit worried: 'What to do, father? They are young, we also used to be like them once. I have issued circulars, I have punished them, and they do not correct themselves. They neglect their exams, and I have threatened those who do not pursue their studies with expulsion from the movement. These are not good signs. But all the worse is for the better. They have a great quality, which is missing to many. They are courageous in fights. With them I started the Legion and they are ready to sacrifice their lives. We will deal with their education later.'"[323]

In order to strengthen discipline, Codreanu put greater emphasis on selection and education: for becoming Legionaries, new members were subject to a probation period of up to three years. Regular screening of membership and harsh disciplinary measures were combined with extensive communal socialization and education based on songs, rituals and the emulation of Codreanu's personality. Imprisoned together in 1933 with numerous leading Legionaries following the assassination of Prime Minister I. G. Duca, Nichifor Crainic suggestively describes the Legionary patterns of socialization:

> "For Ismet's sake, the boys rend a complete order to prison life. The engineer Clime took command of the several hundred prisoners, combined the Legionary discipline with that of the military, formed teams for cooking and cleaning, and divided the day into hours of instruction, song, discussion and entertainment. Nobody from the prison's personnel was interfering anymore. In the first days, it turned out that one [arrested] is missing: he jumped out of the truck on the way to Jilava and disappeared. The boys sent word into the city for a prisoner to offer himself voluntarily from among the free Legionaries, so that the commander of the prison does not get in trouble with the superior authority! The immense cellar seemed like an oven afire: It was vibrating with Legionary songs. I was hearing most of them for the first time. It was the time when those glorifying assassinations did not yet appear. What heroic, seducing songs! And what words animated by the love of the country and of the Romanian people! It was difficult for a soul to resist this wave of creative enthusiasm, no matter how dry it was. The personnel of the prison knew them by heart. The songs were the great dynamic force of the Legionary movement—this bizarre mixture of sublime morality and of abjection. In stormy, innovating surges of unlimited sacrifice and of demonic criminality! These boys were all wearing the icon of Jesus Christ or of the Virgin Mary, prayed regularly in the morning and evening and still spoke with infinite tenderness of the "heroes" who killed! If recent years have revealed to me the

[323] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 66.

> creative will and impulse toward sacrifice of this youth, the prison revealed to me its most intimate elements, the black-and-white mixture of its good and bad instincts, unfortunately all equally disciplined, within their own line. The nature of "the Captain" lived in every boy. 'The Captain' was a dogma, a god, a supernatural existence. At that particular moment, nobody knew where he was and what he was doing. It is not possible that the "Captain" is not well there where he is! He is working, he does not sleep. He will arrange it in such a way that on a happy day we will all leave prison victoriously. In their burning feelings, some felt offended that I addressed him as "Corneliu" instead of 'the Captain' and that I do not take part in his deification. Then I realized that his entire character, in a strange phenomenon of osmosis, was absorbed in the marrow of the movement itself and constitutes its fatality, which nothing can change anymore. During this time, 'the Captain' was safe in Bucharest. For four and a half months the vigilant police of the capital could not discover him, because he was protected by Elena Lupescu herself, as he and nobody else told me the night he appeared at the trial! He did not suspect, poor him, that this refined protection was to lead him in several years to the same fate of I. G. Duca."[324]

These patterns of socialization applied to women, as well, leading to a sectarian attitude. In his memoirs, Virgil Gheorghiu, a young poet having his debut at that time, provides a suggestive psychological portrait of Legionary females. His text illuminates the perception the outside public had of the Legion in 1938 and the frustration of youngsters facing their exclusion from the community of Legionary women:

> "Legionary women are more sectarian than the boys. They avoid speaking with the students who are not part of the movement. They literally apply the slogan of the Legion 'he who is not with us is against us.' For them, the boys who are not part of the Legion cannot be frequented and should be avoided. Legionary women never use lipstick, perfume or other cosmetics. They do gymnastics, long marches and regularly go to church in a column. Love, for them, means marriage. The man they marry has to be a Legionary. Before the marriage ceremony, they all go before the Captain Corneliu Zelea Codreanu to announce to him their intention to marry.
>
> Young couples have the absolute certitude of their reciprocal fidelity, since they are integrated into the Legion. It would not be possible to be unfaithful or to misbehave: all the comrades watch over their conjugal fidelity and their good behavior.
>
> The marriage of a female outside the Legion, with a non-Legionary, would be considered a bad marriage. Because of that, usually, the Legionary female students avoid us. I have very rarely found myself in the company of my Legionary female colleagues. They keep their distance from all non-Legionary men. Even in the amphitheater, during lectures, they carefully avoid sitting near us.
>
> There are an infinite number of small things that separate us, despite the fact that we meet every day. The Legionary female students, for example, do not seem to appreciate my manner of speaking. In the military secondary school, they taught us to behave in society, especially in female company, with gallantry, politeness and always with gracious manners. […] It is precisely this elegant and polite behavior which the female Legionary dislike. They want to hear from the mouth of men only serious, edifying things. On the mission of the youth, on the moral value of the

[324] Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972), *Zile Albe – Zile Negre* [White Days – Black Days] (Bucharest: Gândirea, 1991), p. 257-258.

> sacrifice, on the exemplary beauty of the moral conduct. They detest humor, irony, gallantry."[325]

For Gheorghiu, the fanaticism of the female legionaries was a characteristic feature of an epoch, marked by charismatic leader cults, rather than a pathological feature of the Romanian youth:

> "I left them intrigued. These young females who ask me to go and see their Captain, are they hysterical? Are they mad? In any event, they are not an exception. There are millions of young girls and boys who adore Hitler, Stalin or the Captain, as they adore God. Dictators are divined."[326]

Gheorghiu failed nevertheless to emphasize the compulsory character of dictatorial charisma. Codreanu exercised a disciplinary, *oath-taking authority*, transforming enthusiasm into an obligation and demanding unconditional devotion from followers and total surrender of their will.[327] Legionaries took three main oaths vowing eternal loyalty to the Legion and its leader (see *Cărticica*, Point 81 bis). The first oath, performed upon entering the Legion, in front of the nest's chief and his comrades, consisted of five pledges of total devotion. The second one, upon receiving the title of "Legionary," after two or three years of training, was taken in front of the chief of the county's political section, during a public ceremony attended by "at least 50 people." The third and most important one was taken after four to five years of activity, in front of Codreanu, the supreme Chief of the Legion. Each Legionary received as a sacred talisman a small sack filled with earth collected from historical battlefields, glorifying Romania's wars of independence. The latter vow emulated the first oath-taking ceremony of the *Văcăreşteni* that took place on 8 November 1927. Non-giving followers were punished with severe coercion measures; defections were punished with assassinations.

---

[325] Virgil Gheorghiu, *Mémoires: Les témoin de la 25-eme heure* (Paris: Plon, 1986), p. 387
[326] Gheorghiu, *Mémoires*, p. 387.
[327] On the dictatorial dimension of charisma, see Schweitzer, "Hitler's Dictatorial Charisma," p. 147-162.

4.6. Charisma and Factionalism

In its first phase of development, the Legion was dominated by the inner group of the *Văcăreşteni*, who made up a charismatic aristocracy and commonly endorsed major decisions. The founding nucleus was united by their common experience of student activism, detention, and—as the founding telegram of the Legion claimed—faith in their messianic mission. As Codreanu recollected in 1937 at the tenth anniversary of the Legion, "I started with Moţa and another three. Together we were five," "those who, suffering prison sentences, have supported on our shoulders the entire burden of national movement in the last five years."[328]

[328] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Circulara Nr. 79" (Bucureşti, 18 June 1937), in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. II, p. 5; and Codreanu, *Cărticica*, p. 44.

The Văcăreşteni, the charismatic staff of the Legion, around the venerated icon of Saint Michael.

Since, during the time, the circle of charismatic aristocracy—composed initially of the *Văcăreşteni*—considerably enlarged, in 1933, Codreanu established the rank of "Legionary commander," awarded to prominent legionaries such as Ion I. Moța, Ion Banea and Mihai Stelescu. In 1936, the Captain created the "Knights of the Annunciation," a corpus of commanders selected on basis of their combat merit, trust and loyalty, and kept in high esteem among Legionaries.

The reorganization necessitated by the Legion's growth brought into question the power and influence of the founding group, resulting in factional competition. Reportedly, in 1934, four main factions were disputing prominence: one led by Moța, another led by Mihai Stelescu, a third led by Ion Dumitrescu, and a fourth one made up by the intellectuals

grouped around the journal *Axa*.[329] The precarious balance among these factions was maintained by Codreanu through a deliberate policy of "divide and rule."

The first defection was that of Stelescu, a young and dynamic leader who made himself notable through courage, dedication and determination, becoming a deputy in the Romanian parliament at the very young age of twenty-five. Reportedly, Stelescu tried to win the *Nicadori* and the Macedonians to his fight against the *Axa* group and against Moţa, whom he accused of "becoming a bourgeois and protecting the parvenus!" Constantin Papanace summarizes, with evident partisanship, Stelescu's discontent in the face of the fast accession of new "opportunistic" elements with the Legion to the detriment of older Legionary cadres, with the support of the central leadership:

> "Stelescu received me with feigned affability which seemed more like flattery. In essence, he told me that the movement faced the arrival of new elements such as the Cantacuzini, etc., which utilized people as Moţa, Clime, etc., etc., as a mere screen, disregarding the 'old fighters.' […] All those who sacrificed themselves for the movement cannot allow this to happen. We have to prevent the Captain's actions, in a determined manner! The Captain listens to you, the Macedonians. Raise the problem with him. Otherwise, the sacrifice of Iancu, Niki and Doru ["the *Decemviri*"] will have been in vain […] There have already been attempts to get rid of them, obliging them to renounce any legal recourse in order to bury them alive [in prison]!"[330]

Stelescu was unable to enlarge support for his *fronde* beyond his own followers; moreover, he soon entered into disagreement with Codreanu upon the political strategy to be adopted by the Legion. In addition, there were unchecked rumors within Legionary circles about Codreanu's jealousy of Stelescu. The latter's activity in the parliament overshadowed Codreanu, while his nucleus of devoted followers could question the undisputed authority of the charismatic leader. In 1936, accusing Codreanu of political opportunism, Stelescu founded a rival organization called *Cruciada Românismului*. In an open letter and several articles published in the press, Stelescu challenged Codreanu's capacity of leadership and questioned his moral integrity. He also provided a lucid deconstruction of Codreanu's cult, and of the propaganda on which his charismatic aura was built:

> "The first section of the Guard was organized by me at a time when I did not know you. Other sections were organized by other individuals who did not know you either. But after the Manciu trial, your name became popular and an extraordinary propaganda campaign was organized around you. As women wear silk lingerie of a certain fashionable brand, in the same way did all want to have you as a leader. And again and again, the same propaganda around you! Your marriage was recorded, you baptized children by the hundreds. *Propaganda, that is the secret of your prodigious ascension*. And we, the others, watching you riding a white or a black horse and holding a cross in your hands, we believed we saw with our very eyes the romantic plans we had made in our childhood coming true. But this dream has passed away as all dreams and the naked reality now appears to us."[331]

---

[329] Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhangelului Mihail*, p. 206.
[330] Constantin Papanace, *Despre Căpitan, Nicadori şi Decemviri. Crâmpei de amintiri* (Cetatea Eterna [Rome]: Editura Armatolii, 1963), Collection: Biblioteca verde, Nr. 18, p. 31.
[331] Jérôme Tharaud, Jean Tharaud, *L'Envoyé de l'archange,* p. 130.

For his "treason," Stelescu was soon punished with ritual murder. On 16 July 1936, while in hospital, he was attacked by a Legionary death squad, subsequently called the "*Decemviri*," and executed with more than twenty bullets; his corpse was then cut into pieces with axes. In order to justify this horrible assassination, Legionary propaganda engaged in a strong defamation campaign, accompanied by the glorification of the "*Decemviri*." The latter were arrested and sentenced to life forced labor, in April 1937.

The balance among the remaining Legionary factions was further modified in 1937, when prominent Legionary cadres assembled a team to fight in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the republicans. After taking part in several battles, Ion I. Moţa and Vasile Marin were killed in action near the locality of Majadahonda on 13 January 1937. In retrospect, their deaths seemed a premeditated gesture. In his political testament, entrusted to Nae Ionescu, Moţa expressed his conviction in the charismatic victory of the Legion, under Codreanu's leadership:

> "I die, Corneliu, full of vivacity and happiness for Christ and the Legion. I ask neither reward, nor anything else, only victory and you showing kindness to my children. And because this is a farewell, I wish you to be under God's protection and to attain victory soon. I am happy and die blissfully because I had the capacity to understand you and to follow you. Because you are the Captain. I haven't done enough for the Legion in the last years, but I have believed in you and I have never betrayed this faith. Make, Corneliu, our country as beautiful as a sun and strong and obedient to God."[332]

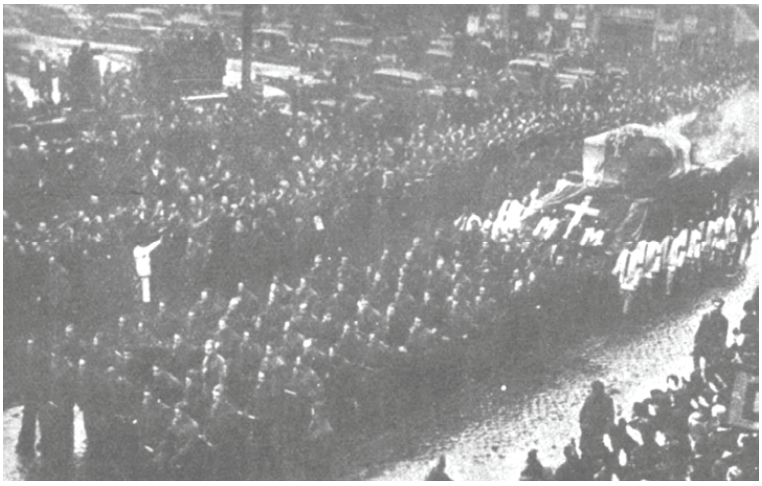
While, based on Moţa's own interpretation put forward in his "will," Legionary propaganda portrayed it as a Christian sacrifice, other analysts regarded it as a desperate attempt of the *Văcăreşteni* to restore the movement's idealism though a spectacular action. Mircea Vulcănescu reproduced a rumor that circulated in Legionary circles, according to which Moţa had gone to Spain in order to increase his prestige with the intention of taking over the leadership of the movement upon his return.[333] These insistent rumors over a crisis in the relationship between Moţa and Codreanu were fueled by the fact that numerous contemporaries appreciated Moţa as the gray eminency of the Legion and could not explain why such a personality accepted a subordinated political role in favor of other interest groups gaining prominence within the Legion.[334] In his memoirs, priest Ion Dumitrescu-Borşa points out Moţa's marginalization in favor of cohesive interest groups such as the Macedonians:

> "It was said that three Macedonians – Constantin Papanace, Iancu Caranica and Sterie Ciumetti – counseled Codreanu in various problems and I thought then why Ion Moţa, who had an education superior to all and was married to Codreanu's sister, did not run for deputy, because he would have performed well in the parliament. Was it because Codreanu was jealous of having his own role questioned, fearing that, through his intelligence, Moţa would have overshadowed him? Moţa used to come only rarely to the center, for short periods. He was almost never invited for lunch. He was kept at a certain distance. More accepted and esteemed was his father, the priest Moţa, already a

[332] "The Will of Ion I. Moţa," in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare,* vol. II. p. 110.
[333] Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu asa cum l-am cunoscut*, p. 100.
[334] They also pointed out that Moţa enjoyed a certain "moral supremacy" over Codreanu, due to his ideological influence upon the latter, and to the fact that he was the honorific chief of the nest of which Codreanu himself was a part. Moţa also took Codreanu's oath of allegiance to the Legion.

> fighter for Romanianism under the Hungarians [in prewar Austria-Hungary]. He was the publisher of the newspaper *Liberty* and he supported us very much during the event in Maramureş"[335]

Notwithstanding the intimate motivations of their gesture, the deaths of Moța and Marin shaped the evolution of the Legion yet again. The corpses of the two "martyrs" were transported from Spain to Bucharest by railway, with religious ceremonies organized in the most important Romanian cities the convoy passed through. The two were buried on 13 February 1937 with state funerals at the Mausoleum of the Legion, known as the "Green House" and built in its center in Bucharest, in an impressive display of politicians, religious officials and certain foreign diplomats. For Codreanu, the goal of the ceremony was one of "implanting the taste of death among the youth, under the emotion of the moment."[336]



The funerals of Moța and Marin, a major propaganda boost for the Legion. The ceremony resembled the funerals of assassinated Swiss Nazi leader Wilhelm Gustloff in northern Germany in 1936; the journey of Gustloff's coffin had taken fifteen hours, with the train stopping in every station for religious-liturgical commemorations.[337]

The "martyrdom" of Moța and Marin inhibited the political reorganization of the Legion, provoking instead "a pietist turn."[338] The cult of the two martyrs became a central ideological component of the Legion, closely related to the cult of the Captain. In January 1938, Codreanu established the elite section "Moța and Marin" within the party's *Totul Pentru Țară* (All of the Fatherland), defined as "a group with an essence strict and severely

---

[335] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 63.
[336] Romanian State Archive, A, Fond O, File 74, vol II, p. 107, apud Fătu, Spălățelu, *Garda de Fier*, p. 173.
[337] Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution,* p. 84.
[338] Veiga, "Întoarcerea la spiritul de jertfă, crecînd prin Spania" [The return to the Spirit of Sacrifice, through Spain], in *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 211-244.

educational and of heroic inspiration, which distinguished itself mostly through the following: the attitude the elite of any nation has to have in the face of death."[339]

This new section, meant to emulate the personality of the two martyrs, was to have a limited number of 10,033 elite "fighters" organized in thirteen units—called *bandere*—of 771 men each, led by a Legionary commander appointed by Codreanu. These thirteen units were to be dispersed throughout the country in all the historical regions of Romania: Orăştie, Cluj, and Sibiu in Transylvania; Arad in the Banat; Iaşi, Neamț and Galați in Moldova; Câmpu Lung and Cernăuți in Bukovina; Chisinău in Bessarabia; Craiova and Bucureşti in Wallachia; and Bazargic in Dobrogea. The fighters wore uniforms similar to that in which Moța and Marin died, while the "holy celebration" of the section was January 13, the day on which the two martyrs had died.

In the spirit of Moța's "teachings" and of Moța's and Marin's sacrifice, the new section promoted "a pedagogy of death and resurrection." The fighters were required to be under thirty years old, without family constraints and of sound moral integrity. They were to "love suffering, which fortifies the soul" and to despise a "sheltered life of pleasure and easy profit." Their most important features of character were their capacity of sacrifice, their loyalty, and their special attitude in front of death: "The fighter from the Legionary section 'Moța-Marin' is happy to face his death." They had to swear on the following sermon, a quotation from one of Moța's writings: "Let us not have as our single ideal that of being granted by God the happiness of dying torn apart and tortured for the spark of Truth we know we have within us and for the defense of which we confront in a life-and-death struggle the overwhelming powers of the dark. I am ready to die. I swear."[340]

[339] "O nouă unitate legionară în cadrul Partidului 'Totul Pentru Țară'" *Buna Vestire*, No. 270 (23 Ianuarie 1938), p. I.
[340] "O nouă unitate legionară în cadrul Partidului 'Totul Pentru Țară,'" *Buna Vestire*, 270 (23 Ianuarie 1938), p. I.

5. Charisma and the Romanian Orthodox Church

5.1. Religion and the Sacralization of Politics

Students of the Legion attempted to account for the success of Codreanu's charismatic propaganda by way of a "magical-religious ambiance" in inter-war Romania.[341] Indeed, popular religious practices in rural areas, ranging from the belief in the supernatural to the use of protective or harming amulets and talismans, favored charismatic bondage. During his electoral tournaments in rural areas, Codreanu exploited charismatic messages and imagery, usually appearing to peasants on a white horse while wearing a white shirt with a black sign of the cross. His short speeches announced a new era for the righteous believers:

> "Let us unite, men and women, to fashion for ourselves and our people a different fate. The hour of resurrection and of the Romanian's salvation is at hand. He who has faith, who struggles and suffers, will be recompensed and blessed by this people. New times are knocking at our doors! A world with a dry and sterile soul is dying, another is being born, one that belongs to those whose soul is full of faith. In this new world everyone will have a place, not according to schooling, intelligence, or knowledge, but according, in the first place, to faith and character."[342]

This message appealed to peasants, especially in provinces with a tradition of millenarist uprisings. Henri H. Stahl pointed out that the mystical belief in a divine messenger riding a white horse and leading peasants to revolt was widespread in rural areas, numerous popular legends explaining in this way the genesis of the massive 1907 peasant uprising in Romania, the last European *Jacquerie*. In Stahl's view, Legionaries had good knowledge of these popular superstitions, and were very skillful in manipulating them for their own political ends.[343] The couching of popular discontent in mystical-religious movements was also a recurrent phenomenon, especially in such regions as Southern Bessarabia. In 1912 in that region, Inochentie of Bălți preached the imminent end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ. His message was so popular that the entire region adhered to his sect. When Seraphim, the Orthodox metropolitan of Bessarabia, ordered Inochentie arrested and interned into a monastery, local Bessarabian peasants opposed with armed resistance, 60 of them dying in Inochentie's defense. Two decades later, Codreanu's electoral tournament in the region appealed to the same emotional substrate. Legionaries stormed the villages without addressing any speech, knowing that their "biblical" appearance alone would speak to the peasants.

It is therefore necessary to integrate the mass response to Codreanu's charismatic claims into the broader context of contemporary perception of magic in its various forms, beliefs and practices.[344] But the acceptance of charismatic authority cannot be explained through the existence of "peasant mentality," which remains an elusive concept. It was rather a case of conscious manipulation by the Legionary propaganda of religious sensibilities and

---

[341] See Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail,"* p. 38.
[342] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 341-342.
[343] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, p. 228.
[344] Although magic has been a popular subject of modern Western scholarship, especially concerning the history of the witchcraft, its history in Central and Eastern Europe has remained largely under-researched. Moreover, while recent anthropological works explore contemporary magic practices and beliefs, these subjects are rarely approached from a historical perspective.

traditional beliefs in magic, found both among the educated and commoners. In 1928, eleven students imprisoned in Cluj claimed that Jesus Christ visited them in their prison cell.[345] Their claim was endorsed by Moța, who proclaimed it to be "the beginning of a capital phase in the fate of our people and of humankind," namely "the active intervention of Divinity in the problem of the defense of the humankind, in the question of the earth's liberation from Satan's rule."[346]

Later, during the 1930s, Romanian media reported numerous religious "visions" such as the "miracle" of Maglavit (1935), in which peasant Petrache Lupu claimed to have seen God, or the "vision" of Maria Rusu, who asserted that she had spoken to the Virgin Mary. As a result, as Marxist intellectual Lucrețiu Pătrăşcanu recalled, "a wave of religious exaltation swept over the whole country, from one end to the other."[347] These events were all extensively exploited by Legionary press and integrated into their millennial message, as proof of divine signs. Thanks to the intersection of popular and elite magic, Legionary appeal to this common tradition had a powerful propaganda impact.

At a time when traditional forms of religiosity were waning, this propaganda was very efficient. Octavian Goga, a Romanian nationalist leader from Transylvania, pointed out that, after World War I, there was a great religious turmoil among Orthodox believers and a pronounced tendency toward messianism and spiritual rebirth:

> "A difficult struggle is going on around our village churches: Their old walls seem to weaken, the ancient Christian ideology is suffering hasty revisions. An extraordinary crop of religious sects, with tens and hundreds of thousands of followers, has sprung up all over the country during the last few years out of the rural storm, helped by the organic weakening of the Church."[348]

This phenomenon was expressed by a plethora of reformation movements within the Romanian Orthodox Church. One of them, preached in 1920s Bucharest by Father Tudor Popescu and Deacon Dumitru Cornilescu, appealed for a revitalized Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and for a greater emphasis on Bible reading, evangelical preaching and hymn singing. Cornilescu and Popescu were later expelled from the Orthodox Church and founded "The Evangelical Christians Organization." Another Orthodox reformation movement was "The Lord's Army" (*Oastea Domnului*) in Sibiu, initiated by Father Iosif Trifa in 1923 and inspired by the goals of "The Oxford Moral Rearmament Movement." With the support of the Transylvanian Metropolitan, Trifa wanted to improve the morality of Orthodox believers. He launched a strong campaign against alcoholism, preaching spiritual rebirth and a greater participation in the sacraments of the Church, including baptism and personal devotion. Initially, the movement did not constitute a separate denomination; later, it was excluded from the Orthodox Church and separated as a lay organization.

The Legion presented itself as a part of these religious movements, as an expression of a more general tendency towards spiritual rebirth among Orthodox believers. All these mustical movements of social protest exhibited common characteristics with the Legion,

---

[345] "Minunea cerească întâmplată zilele trecute în închisoarea Clujului. Cu cine e Isus!," *Pământul Strămoşesc*, 2 (1 February 1928) 3, p. 3-4.

[346] Ion I. Moța, "…Isus apare'n închisori!" *Pământul Strămoşesc*, 2 (15 February 1928) 4: 8-9.

[347] Lucrețiu Pătrăşcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi*, p. 56. See also Nichifor Crainic, "Vizită la Maglavit," *Sfarmă Piatră,* I (1936), p. 8.

[348] Octavian Goga, "Problema religioasă" (The Religious Problem), *Țara Noastră* (Our Country), III (1922) 11, p. 17.

namely: calls for personal devotion, for a greater implication of the believers in the sacraments of the Church, for asceticism and sacrifice; greater emphasis on the religious rituals meant to unite participants, with hymn singing figuring prominently; and close links with the Orthodox Church. In fact, some of the earlier-mentioned sects were part of the Orthodox Church. Others enjoyed the unofficial participation of many priests, even if higher clerics did not necessarily sympathize with them.

At the same time, these movements exhibited numerous differences in their membership composition, their relation to the official theology of the Church and their political involvement. Although it used the religious language of sacrifice, resurrection and redemption and attacked materialism and hedonism as signs of moral decay, the Legion was in essence a secular political movement and not a religious one. It exhibited a form of "religious politics" defined by Roger Griffin as a peculiar taxonomic sub-category of "political ideology."[349]

The main coordinates of the Legion's new type of "religious politics" were first set by Ion I. Moța (see above; also **Document 2**). Starting in 1932, while attempting to systematize the Legion's ideology, *Axa* intellectuals preserved and even expanded upon its irrational core. They further elaborated on Codreanu's charismatic claims, introducing new mythical elements and integrating them within a larger religious-political perspective. An article authored by editor Ioan Victor Vojen, entitled "Drumul credinței" (The Way of the Faith), argued for a new form of "religious politics." In Vojen's view, while the Old World was collapsing under the weight of its moral decadence and individualism, one could already identify "new signs" for "new needs and new settlements." Vojen asserted "The need for new ideals to overcome the old ones. The need for great faiths, the need to climb to a higher plan, the need for a new God." In his view, society moved away from the spirit of bourgeois individualism and competition, aspiring for an integration of all its aspects on higher spiritual-religious grounds:

> "But this integration, this creation of new organisms, has a religious substrate. Through the cooperation and the mutual aid of its members, it suppresses the arduous fight of the competition which was the essential condition of individualism. The daily life, the culture, the state forms look for a meaning, look for integration in a harmonious totality, in an eternal principle. In faith. Those people who are succeeding today in implementing political reforms are profoundly religious, are deeply penetrated by Christian spirituality. From the very beginning, their fight is clearly a fight against the enemies of the Church. Praying precedes all their actions. The future new world will probably be a religious world. Men's life and the state will be emanations of Christian precepts." [350]

The new form of politics captured the loyalty of people to the point of self-sacrifice: "Our century gave birth to people who sacrifice themselves, sacrifice the ones belonging to their own generation for the benefit of the future generations." Vojen also emphasized the role of a newly emerging political elite that would be the first to devote itself to the holy triad of "the Fatherland, the Church, the People."[351] Significantly, Vojen was aware that this new form of religious politics was a European trend: "This phenomena is not autochthonous.

---

[349] Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism,* p. 30.
[350] Ioan Victor Vojan, "Drumul credinței," *Axa* II (3 March 1933) 8, p. 5.
[351] Vojan, "Drumul credinței," p. 5.

Today it is European. Tomorrow it can perhaps be a worldwide phenomenon. As a reaction against all democracies."[352]

The strength of the Legion's propaganda was thus not simply given by the set of religious myths, rituals and symbolism incorporated in its ideology and practice but also by the more general trend toward what Emilio Gentile named "the sacralization of politics."[353] The Legion directly benefited from the attention paid to these aspects—more or less elaborately or dogmatically—by intellectuals of nationalist orientation during the inter-war period. It successfully mobilized several concentric circles of activists, placed on a large spectrum ranging from theoreticians to agitators, such as: intellectuals who did not explicitly identify themselves with the Legion but who were nevertheless sympathetic to it; theoreticians of religious nationalism who served the Legion's cause; and agitators and organizers devoted to practical political work.

In the following, I explore the status of the Romanian Orthodox Church, inter-confessional strife and the politicization of traditional religions in inter-war Romania. In the end, I evaluate the complex and ambiguous relationship between the Legion and the Orthodox Church, at high and grass-roots levels.

5.2. The Status of the Orthodox Church: Responses to Institutional Crisis

The principalities of Wallachia and Moldova have traditionally been a part of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, being attached to the Ecumenical Patriarchy in Constantinople. After the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the two principalities contributed to the survival of the Byzantine politico-religious traditions, a role synthesized by Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga in the formula "Byzance après Byzance."[354] A central component of this legacy was the strong link between church and state, which were united in what Georgije Ostrogorsky named "one and the same state-ecclesiastical organism."[355] Given the charismatic nature of their rule, each principality's prince was also head of the church, officiating certain religious ceremonies and confirming the election of Orthodox metropolitans and bishops. While accepting direct political interference of the prince over the election of its high-level leadership, the Orthodox Church nevertheless benefited from numerous privileges and functioned as a "state-within-the-state," possessing its own judicial system, landed property, dependent peasantry and cities.

The establishment of the Romanian nation-state in 1859 through the union of Moldova and Wallachia dramatically reconfigured the close association between church and state that had previously followed the Byzantine tradition. Romanian political elites treated the Orthodox Church as a main institution in the process of nation- and state-building. The

---

[352] Vojan, "Drumul credinței," p. 5.

[353] Gentile, "The Sacralisation of Politics," p. 18-55.

[354] Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance*. *Continuation de l'"Histoire de la vie byzantine"* (Bucharest: Editions de l'Institut d'études byzantines, 1935). The Byzantine tradition was available to the principalities either by direct contact, or filtered through the experience of Balkan Christians immigrating in the principalities, mainly Greeks and Serbs. For a more recent comprehensive account of the Byzantine political tradition in the principalities, see Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI-XVIII* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1983). Pippidi defined the political tradition as "principles of state leadership evolving into a consistent doctrine due to their large acceptance by the dominant class over several generations." Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină,* p. 6.

[355] Georgije Ostrogorski, *History of the Byzantine State,* translated from German by Joan Hussey, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 36.

church could preserve a prominent political profile but was subordinated to state policies and interests regardless. As part of its effort to westernize Romania's internal legislation, Prince Cuza substantially reduced the political role and material property of the Orthodox Church. In December 1863, "The Law of Secularization of the Monastic Estates" nationalized the land of Orthodox monasteries that comprised 25.2 percent of the country's area at the time. The 1865 Civil Code emancipated civil life from the jurisdiction of the Church by transferring control of parochial registers from religious authorities to the local civil administration.[356]

In 1866, the new Romanian constitution took additional steps toward secularization. On the one hand, it conferred the Orthodox Church a privileged legal status as compared to other religious cults, in stating that "Orthodoxy is the dominant religion of the Romanian state." High-level Orthodox hierarchs were granted political representation: metropolitans and bishops were automatically appointed to be members of the Senate, the upper house of the Romanian parliament. Most importantly, the existence of an overwhelming Eastern Orthodox majority in Romania coupled with the tradition of ancient treaties (*capitulations)* between the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia and the Ottoman Empire, which had forbidden the practice of Islam on Romanian territory, favored the legal association between the practice of Christianity and access to naturalization to Romanian citizenship: Article 7 of the 1866 constitution read that "Only Christian foreigners can acquire naturalization." The main aim of this stipulation was the exclusion of Jews from state citizenship on religious grounds.

The Church was also regarded as a symbol of the country's self-determination. In 1884, an amendment to the constitution following the achievement of independence six years previous proclaimed its autocephaly from the Ecumenical patriarch in Constantinopole: "The Romanian Orthodox Church is and remains independent of any foreign authority, preserving however the ecumenical unity of the East in regard to religious dogma."

On the other hand, the constitution consecrated the subordinated legal status of the Church. It stipulated that: "The spiritual canonical and disciplinary affairs of the Romanian Orthodox Church will be regulated by a single central authority according to a special law. The metropolitans and bishops of the Church are elected according to a special law." Adopted in 1872, The Law for the Selection of Metropolitans and Diocesan Bishops unified the historical metropolitans of Wallachia and Moldavia into a single church under the governance of the Holy Synod, but stipulated that its members be appointed by a lay and politically dominated council.[357] Despite vivid protests of high clerics regarding these stipulations, secular control over the church continued to consolidate in the next period.

---

[356] See Constantin Hamangiu and Nicolae Georgean, (eds), *Codul Civil Adnotat* (The Annotated Civil Code). 2 Vols. (Bucureşti: All Beck, 1999), vol. 1, p. 67-71.

[357] In 1893, the Law concerning the Organization of Religious Seminaries placed the education of the clergy under the joint jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction. Another law passed in 1902 established a center for the control of the ecclesiastic property, administration of a national budget, and for handling personnel matters. In 1909, a lay dominated Superior Church Consistory was given authority over issues previously under the jurisdiction of the Holy Synod. For works on religion and politics in Eastern Europe, see Pedro Ramet, ed., *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988); and Sabrina Petra Ramet, ed., *Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia: The Communist and Postcommunist Eras* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992).

Romania's territorial enlargement as a result of World War I fundamentally changed its religious configuration. The country became a genuine religious mosaic, having fifteen major religions practiced, among which seven officially recognized, and an additional number of sects. Numerically, according to the general census of 1930, the most important religious cult was the Orthodox one—with 13.108.227 people or 72.5 percent of the total population; followed by Greek Catholics—with 1.427.391 believers or 7.9 percent; Roman Catholics—with 1.234.151 believers or 6.8 percent, Judaism—with 756.930 believers or 4.2 percent of the population; Calvinists—with 710.706 believers or 3.9 percent; Lutherans—with 398.759 believers or 2.2 percent; and Islam—with 185.486 believers or 1.0 percent of the population.[358]

This radical change in Romania's religious composition challenged the fragile equilibrium between the Orthodox Church and the State. For the first time, all Romanian Orthodox believers became part of a unified Romanian church, whose jurisdiction extended over newly acquired territories of Bessarabia, Bukovina and the Banat. But the inclusion of a large number of Protestants, Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics within the new state also generated a greater religious plurality, imperiously posing the problem of inter-confessional relations.

In this context, the Orthodox leadership experienced an intense feeling of insecurity in its relationship with other denominations. Although declared a "dominant" church by the 1923 Constitution, Orthodox Church felt underprivileged, mostly in regard to the Roman Catholic Church, which allegedly enjoyed superior material power and political influence. The tension between the two churches was greater in Transylvania, where a legacy of this antagonistic relationship existed.

Grave concerns were also voiced by Orthodox clerics with regard to the Greek Catholics, who numbered approximately 1,500,000 believers in 1934, representing 7.9 percent of Romania's total population. Recognizing the important role played by Greek Catholics in the development of the Romanian national movement in Transylvania, the 1923 constitution defined the Greek Catholic Church as national, together with the Orthodox Church, and the two were usually referred to as "sister churches." Despite this conciliatory official formula, their inter-confessional relations were often strained, characterized more by an acute competition for material resources and spiritual prominence rather than by cooperation.[359]

Along with the theological dimension of the Orthodox/Catholic rivalry, another aspect was the quest for spiritual and political domination, and the resulting competition for resources. The Concordat signed in 1927 between Romania and the Vatican was strongly

---

[358] Institutul Central de Statistică, *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1939-1940* (Bucureşti: Imprimeria Naţională, 1940), p. 70-75. Concerning the role of religion as a factor of public identification, it is also interesting to note that, out of a total population of over eighteen million inhabitants, only 6.604 declared themselves atheistic and only 6.686 persons refused to declare their religion.

[359] The inter-confessional debates between the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches were replicated, in post-communist Romania, in a different historical context. Facing a strong Greek Catholic campaign for the restitution of its property confiscated in 1948 (upon the abolishment of the Greek Catholic Church and its "reunification" with the Orthodox Church) and handed over to the Orthodox Church, high Orthodox hierarchs unilaterally equated Romanian national identity with Orthodoxy, portraying Greek-Catholics as foreigners. See Constantin Iordachi, "Politics and Inter-Confessional Strife in post-1989 Romania: From The Competition for Resources to the Redefinition of National Identity," *Balkanologie* (Paris) III (September 1999) 1, p. 147-169.

criticized by the Orthodox Church, on the grounds that it conferred a privileged position to the Catholic Church in Romania.[360] According to the Concordat, Catholic bishops had to swear allegiance, aside from the Pope, to the King; in exchange, all Catholic institutions (such as orphanages, schools and hospitals) were free from governmental control, a privilege fueling the Orthodox allegation that the Catholic Church in Romania was "a state within the state."

Orthodox hierarchs vehemently objected to the vast autonomy enjoyed by Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic ecclesiastical schools. In this respect, Orthodox claims found common ground with the nationalist campaign accusing Catholic schools in Transylvania of being centers of Magyarization. The leadership of the Orthodox Church therefore pursued a virulent political campaign against the ratification of the Concordat, especially through Patriarch Miron Cristea and Transylvanian Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan.[361] In addition to the Catholic "menace," the Orthodox Church denounced the "offensive" of neo-Protestant movements in post-1918 Romania, represented mostly by Baptists, Adventists and Pentecostals, who were making numerous proselytes among Orthodox believers.

The status of the Orthodox Church was thus greatly challenged by the overall postwar legal and political reorganization, and this provoked a strong reaction from Orthodox theologians. Katherine Verdery explained the unprecedented participation of theologians in the debates about Romanian national identity through the acute competition of religious cults over material resources and spiritual hegemony in Romanian society.[362] In their attempts to defend their interests and expand their privileges, theologians took an active part in the debates concerning Romanian national identity and path of development, trying to develop a symbolic-ideological control over the nation by defining the Orthodox Church as the national spiritual leader and repository of traditional values. This explains why theology left the narrow "ivory tower" of purely ecclesiastical debates and became a main terrain of ideological confrontation in Romanian society. The political activation of the Orthodox Church was expressed by an impressive number of new theological publications and by the prominent political activity of the Orthodox Church.

---

[360] Mircea Păcurariu, a prominent contemporary historian of the Romanian Orthodox Church, writing from the official point of view of the Church, argues that the 1927 Concordat between the Vatican and the Romanian State placed the Orthodox Church "in a position of inferiority and humiliation as compared to the Roman Catholic and to all the other religious cults in Romania." See Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române,1981), p. 401-405. He blamed the fact that "the number of state-employed Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic councilors, proto-priests and priests" was "much superior to the number of the Orthodox ones" and received "much better salaries as compared to the servants of the Orthodox Church." Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii*, p. 420, 423.

[361] Nicolae Bălan, *Biserica neamului şi drepturile ei* (The Church of the People and its Rights) (Bucureşti, 1927).

[362] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1991), p. 61. For her seminal analysis of the debates over the Romanian national ideology, see mainly p. 8-12 and 27-63. Verdery focuses on the "discursive struggles in which the concept of 'the nation' or 'the Romanian people' has formed a central preoccupation" (p. 9).

5.3. Religion, Politics and Anti-Semitism at Grass-Roots Level: The Borşa Incident

The grave incidents that took place in Borşa in June-July 1930 and the subsequent political career of Orthodox priest Ion Dumitrescu are illustrative of the *ad hoc* alliance at a grass-roots level between the Legion and Orthodox countryside priests, and are therefore analyzed in details below. In 1929—as a disciplinary measure—Dumitrescu was sent to Borşa, Maramureş, as a missionary, in order to create proselytism within a region dominated by Greek Catholics. At the time, Borşa was the largest commune in Maramureş and one of the largest in the country, with a total population of 12,000 inhabitants, among which 4,000 Romanians, 4,000 Jews, 2,000 Hungarians, and 1,000 Germans.

In order to mobilize Orthodox believers and to increase the number of parishes, Ion Dumitrescu started a campaign of proselytism based on nationalism and anti-Semitism, exploiting local socio-political cleavages into a multiethnic area. In his view, the increasing pauperization of the Christian peasantry was due to their heavy exploitation by the Jews, who owned most of the timber industry, controlled local trade and forestry, and managed to buy out the center of the village, forcing Christians to relocate in marginal districts. Dumitrescu warned that Maramureş region was serving as a new Palestine for Jews, and demanded firm and urgent measures from the authorities to contain "the Jewish invasion" and to defend the Christians' economic interests.

Dumitrescu's anti-Semitic message exacerbated local socio-political conflicts, leading to violent skirmishes between Jews and Christians. His nationalist campaign was supported by a local nucleus of activists made up of Greek Catholic priest Andrei Berindei, of members from the village intelligentsia such as teachers Apostolescu, Mălăgeanu, and Chirilă at the local Romanian school, and of a nationalist student active in the region, Constantin Danilă.

A member of the anti-Jewish organization "The Cult of the Fatherland," Dănilă had held cultural conferences in the region since March 1930.[363] In April, Dănilă's conference in Borşa degenerated into anti-Semitic instigation and was violently interrupted by the local Jewish population. In order to avenge this "defeat," nationalist activists in Borşa invited Dănilă for a second conference, which yet again resulted in violent clashes between Jews and Christians. On 8 May, the church bells began to chime, attracting a large crowd subsequently agitated by priests Dumitrescu and Berindei in addition to Dănilă. After the two priests officiated a mass, participants circled the church seven times and pledged to fight together against the Jews. Dănilă read a manifesto, allowing the Jews to remain in Borşa provided that they fulfilled the following conditions: agreeing to erase all debts owed by the Christians, renouncing of their agricultural land, provision of villagers with part of their forests and pasturage, and avoidance of employing Christian servants. The Church sent arch-priest Munteanu and vicar Boros from Sighet to calm down the peasantry, but to no avail. The agitation could be quelled only by intervention of the army

Disappointed with the "anti-national" attitude of authorities who had intervened in defense of the Jews, Ion Dumitrescu, via the mediation of Danilă, traveled by horse and carriage to Iaşi at the beginning of June 1930 in order to meet Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the new leader of the nationalist movement, and to demand assistance in the fight against the Jews. Dumitrescu's recollection is confirmed by Codreanu who, in *Pentru legionari*, portrayed Maramureş as yet another Romanian province "over which death spread its wings," due to the Jewish invasion:

> "There, the Jewry overwhelmed the villages. It took over the land, the mountains, and the sheepfolds. The Romanians, brought into a state of slavery, are continuously

[363] ISAS, "En Roumanie: une vague de pogromes," *Paix et Droit*, September 1930, p. 3.

> withdrawing in front of the Judaic invasion and they slowly disappear, letting their estates […] in the hands of the invaders. No government is interested in them, no law defends them."[364]

Responding to Dumitrescu and Beridei's appeal, the Captain promised to send a team of Legionary propagandists to Borşa. He also organized for the delegation a triumphal and highly mediated return to Maramureş marked by public rallies of sympathizers, anti-Jewish attacks and clashes with the police in major cities along the route, such as Câmpulung.[365] In two weeks, the Legionary team promised by Codreanu, composed of four secondary-school pupils from Galaţi led by Constantin Savin, arrived in Borşa.[366] They conducted an intense electoral campaign marked by parades, songs and promises of salvation. Their propaganda also benefited the rumor that Dănilă (who had left the village) was in fact Carol Hohenzollern, the son of King Ferdinand and the father of the minor king Mihai I, who came into the country incognito and claimed the throne on 8 June 1930 as king Carol II. According to the report of the newspaper *Újkelet* [New East] from Cluj,

> "The priests spread the rumor that the student Carol Dănilă was Prince Carol, who came to save the Christian population from the Jewish yoke. The agitators established their headquarters at Borşa and Boiana, where they managed to gather a large number of villagers. The villagers came to Prince Dănilă and kissed his hands, his legs and his coat. Dănilă produced incendiary speeches, urging the peasants to throw the Jews into the river Tisza. The peasants indeed obeyed him, seizing a great number of Jews and throwing them into the river. About 2,500 Jews took refuge in the nearby forest. The prefect decided to send several detachments of troops on the ground. A commission of inquiry arrived on the spot."[367]

In his memoirs, Dumitrescu blamed these rumors on women's traditional superstition: "Women spread the rumor that Dănilă was Carol II, that they had seen on his chest a star and certain signs. While he lived in Borşa, he hid his real name, but now he has occupied the throne as a king." Scandalized, he concluded, "What fibs could be generated in the female mind!" In fact, the rumor reflects the peasants' eschatological expectations, skillfully exploited by nationalist propaganda.

This proselytizing campaign had strong local echoes, leading to violent clashes between Jews and Christians. On 18 June, anti-Jewish manifestations degenerated into a fire, which burned down the center of the village but left no human casualties.[368] Eighty-seven

---

[364] Codreanu, "Frământări în Maramureş," in *Pentru legionari,* p. 353.

[365] Ion Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros. Memorii Legionare* (Bucharest: Lucman, 2002), p. 27. For a comprehensive analysis of the incidents in Borşa, see also Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, p. 291-295.

[366] According to Dumitrescu-Borşa, the team was made up of Constantin Dumitrescu-Zăpadă, Ghiţă Costea and Andriţoiu. See Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros,* p. 31-32. According to Codreanu, it was made up of Totu, Eremeiu, Constantin Savin and Constantin Dumitrescu- Zăpadă. See Codreanu, "Frământări în Maramureş," in *Pentru legionari,* p. 354.

[367] ISAS, "En Roumanie: L'élection de Couza—Troubles antijuifs," *Paix et Droit*, 2 (May 1930) 5, p. 6.

[368] Gheorghe Vornicu, a reporter of the newspaper *Cuvântul*, stated that 128 houses and 67 annexes were burned, most of them belonging to Jewish owners, only four having Romanian owners and other four having German owners. See Gheorghe Vornicu, "O anchetă în Maramureş: Borşa şi necazurile ei," *Cuvântul* 6 August 1930, cited in Livezeanu, *Cultural*

persons, among them seventeen Jews accused of public disorder, were arrested, kept in detention in Sighet and finally put on public trial in Satu Mare on 17 November 1930. Among the chief defendants were Orthodox Dumitrescu, Berindei, Dănilă, and the four Legionary activists. Their defense was organized by a high-level Legionary delegation made up of Codreanu, Moța, Gârneața, Mihai Silaghy and Iaşi lawyers Ion Cătuneanu and N. Ionescu.

The trial was amply covered in the press, with various newspapers giving highly conflicting reports about the events as a function of their political orientation. Left-wing newspapers such as *Adevărul* and *Universul* were alarmed by the rise of anti-Semitism and demanded punishment for the perpetrators. On the other side, nationalist propaganda portrayed the events as a Jewish plot. According to Codreanu,

> "The Jews realized the danger posed by the Romanian resistance and initiated provocation. Realizing that their system does not succeed, they appealed to an infernal recourse. They set fire to Borşa, while blaming the Romanians for this. The Kike newspapers began right away to scream, demanding energetic measures against the Romanians who wanted to stage programs. Both priests were attacked by the Kikes, mocked, bitten and then chased with stones for several kilometers."[369]

The Legion also intended to exploit the trial for anti-Semitic propaganda. According to Ion Dumitrescu, "It was a trial of the Jewish Question in Romania, with an anti-Semitic character."[370] Significantly, Dumitrescu's account of the events contradicts that of Codreanu: He does not blame the Jews for the fire but asserts that it was provoked involuntarily by the village doctor's servant.[371]

Official reports provided conflicting accounts of the events, one blaming a criminal action, while the other claiming it was an unfortunate and involuntary accident. In order to appease local tensions, and under strong pressure from public opinion, authorities favored the version in which the fire was the result of an accident and acquitted the main defendants. The incidents were also debated in the parliament. While A.C. Cuza capitalized on the event by launching a new anti-Semitic political campaign, Jewish deputies countered his xenophobic propaganda, condemned the passivity of the authorities and asked for stringent measures against the perpetrators.[372]

Politics, p. 291. According to Ion Dumitrescu-Borşa, the fire destroyed 140 Jewish houses and 10 Christian houses. See Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 21. For other reports of the event, see ISAS, "En Roumanie: L'élection de Couza—Troubles antijuifs," *Paix et Droit*, 2 (May 1930) 5, p. 5-7; ISAS, "En Roumanie: une vague de pogromes," *Paix et Droit*, (September 1930), p. 3-6; ISAS, "En Roumanie: La sentence du tribunal de Satu-Mare. Nouveaux désordres. Déclarations de Couza," *Paix et Droit*, 2 (December 1930) 10, p. 4-6; Gheorghe Vornicu, "Semne rele prin satele maramureşene," *Cuvântul* (26 August 1930); Gheorghe Vornicu, "O anchetă în Maramureş: Cum s'a ajuns la mişcările din Borşa," *Cuvântul* (7 August 1930). After the fire, the Jews from Borşa demanded the help of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU). See AIU *Archives*, Paris, Roumanie, I.L.1-10, Bobine 12-13. The *Alliance* offerred them 30.000 French Francs. See ISAS, "En Roumanie: une vague de pogromes," p. 6.

[369] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 354.

[370] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 41.

[371] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 33.

[372] For parliamentary debates over the anti-Semitic incidents in 1930 that took place in Borşa, Vişeu, Ieud, see Federația Comunităților evreieşti din România, Centrul pentru studiul istoriei

The Borşa episode showed the powerful impact of the "unholy alliance" between Orthodox priests and new radical nationalist organizations. It also highlighted the political accession of the Legion: Initially, Dumitrescu had intended to demand help from A. C. Cuza, "the father of the Romanian nationalism."[373] He hesitated to work together with the Legion, confessing that "there was something mystic, mysterious about it, the names of Archangel Michael, Iron Guard, did not seem to me to be serious, except for the fight against the Jews."[374] But the assistance Dumitrescu received from the Legion marked the beginning of a long political collaboration. Due to his active political engagement, his prolonged absence from his parish and his collaboration with the local Greek Catholic priest, Ion Dumitrescu was released from his service in the Borşa parish; he then enrolled in the Legion, soon becoming its secretary and "official" priest, under the name of "Dumitrescu-Borşa." As an intimate of Codreanu, he was to be involved in all of the major activities of the Legion, opening its gates to numerous Orthodox priests.

5.4. The Legion and the Orthodox Church

What was the relationship between the Legion and the central leadership of the Romanian Orthodox Church? By and large, historiography on the Legion either accused the Orthodox Church of "clerical fascism," or completely denied any political connection between the Church and the Legion. In view of its "overtly and sincerely religious" character, and the massive and sincere participation of clerics to its activity, Roger Eatwell defines the Legion as a form of "clerical fascism," singling it out within the general typology of fascism.[375] The current paper argues that the charismatic nature of the Legion and its pseudo-religious practices account for its ambivalent relationship with the Orthodox Church, oscillating between periods of collaboration and conflict. This troubled alliance was directly linked to the post-1918 institutional crisis of the Romanian Orthodox Church, as highlighted above.

In their attempt to defend their institutional privileges, Orthodox clerics intensified their political lobbying. To many Orthodox prelates, the Legion appeared to be an useful potential political ally. As previously noted, the core of the Legionary message was based on religious themes, such as their proclaimed belief in God; the charismatic type of legitimacy; the belief in the apocalypse and in salvation; the millenarist message; love as a principle regulating community relations; and the cult of martyrs. In addition, Legionary ceremonies employed central religious symbols, most importantly the cross and the icon, and took place according to a religious ritual always beginning with a liturgy officiated by an Orthodox priest.[376]

---

evreilor din România, *Parlamentari evrei în forul legislativ al României*, (1919-1940) (Bucureşti: Editura Hasefer, 1998), p. 254-256.

[373] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 21.

[374] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 21.

[375] See Roger Eatwell's statement that "Clerical fascism is essentially a misleading concept outside groups such as the Iron Guard," in "Reflections on Fascism and Religion," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion* 4 (Winter 2003) 3, p. 145-166, here p. 146. In disagreement with Eatwell over this point, I believe that a more appropriate example of "clerical fascism" is provided by the Hlinka Party in Slovakia. See Jelinek Zeshazahu, "Clergy and Fascism: The Hlinka Party in Slovakia and the Croatian Ustasha Movement," in Larsen, Hagtvet, Myklebust, eds., *Who were the Fascists*, p. 367-378.

[376] Although useful propaganda tools, these practices were at times denounced by priests as blasphemous. Here is the reaction of the Legionary priest Ion Dumitrescu-Borşa to the

Special significance was conferred to the act of praying, considered by Codreanu as "the only possibility of contact with God." Since a charismatic movement is based on faith in a divine mission, praying was a fundamental element of Legionary ritualism in its search for a direct and unmediated contact with God: "The prayer has to be felt. When you pray, you are spirit. You cannot see your flesh anymore. You cannot feel it anymore. You do not feel it anymore. Only in this way is it possible to reach communion with the spirit to which you pray." Prayer was seen as a way to redemption: "Our people, full of sins, live on the basis of the ceaseless prayers of nuns isolated from world and of monks from all the monasteries and hermitages of our country." The sacred character of prayer was also a modality to increase the cohesion of the Legionary community: "The power of the attraction is so much bigger than the appeal, the prayer is done in common, by as many people as possible." Prayer was therefore considered a necessary element of any Legionary gathering: "Pray continuously, because at the moment when churches and monasteries stop praying, our country will collapse." The legionary "nest" was portrayed as similar to a church: "the congregated nest is like a church."

These religious components of Legionary ideology attracted numerous Orthodox priests, especially those of lower rank. Although complete and reliable statistics are missing, partial data or informed estimates confirm the strong participation of Orthodox priests in the Legion. Thus, the burial of Moţa and Marin was attended by no fewer than 400 priests. In the general parliamentary elections of November 1937, 33 of 103 candidates representing the "All for the Fatherland" party were priests. In his history of the Legion, Spanish historian Francisco Veiga estimated that in 1937, of approximately 10,000 Romanian Orthodox priests, 2,000 converted to or sympathized with the Legion, a claim which remains nevertheless difficult to verify.[377] In their propaganda, Legionary ideologues often identified Orthodox priests with the Legion: "A true priest will consequently be a Legionary through the very nature of things, exactly as, and again through the nature of things, a Legionary is the best son of the Church." [378]

The attitude of Orthodox leadership toward the Legion was, however, more ambiguous. On several occasions, Orthodox leadership showed sympathy to the anti-democratic and anti-Semitic message of the Legion and advanced attempts to forge a political alliance. In spite of occasional collaboration, Orthodox hierarchs were nevertheless concerned by the active participation of clerics in Codreanu's movement. On 4 October 1935, the Holy Synod portrayed the Legionary working camps in the countryside as hidden

---

blessing of a van bought by the Legion: "The next day (23 April, the celebration of Saint George), the van was taken into the city center, in the middle of a square made up of legionaries. The songs attracted a large public. Three priests, in sacerdotal cloths, with candlesticks and candles, sitting at a table near the van, officiated a mess, after which they sprinkled the van with consecrated, holy water, on all its sides, baptizing it 'The Saint George Van.' I was a bit vexed. What is the purpose of this masquerade, mixing Saint George The Triumphant with a car to be blessed by priests, while Codreanu the father, making the sign of the cross with ample gestures, and bowing all the way down to the ground, was offering candles to participants? I knew that only icons and cult objects could be blessed; had the van anything saint, to venerate it? I told the Professor [Codreanu the father], that I do not understand these acts, and that we mock the faith. He answered that this is the right way to do it. The van will be just like Saint George and will go from victory to victory." Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 68.

[377] Veiga, *Istoria Garzii de Fier*, p. 231.

[378] Ilie Imbrescu, "Biserica şi mişcarea legionară" (The Chruch and the Legionary Movement) (Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 1939), p. 201.

propaganda to attract Orthodox believers and refused to accept the Legion's voluntary assistance to repair churches.[379] This decision was reconsidered in March 1937, when the Synod refused to publicly repudiate the Legion.[380]

Legionaries openly criticized the hesitations of high-level Orthodox clerics. In "Teologii şi Garda de Fier" (Theologians and the Iron Guard), Ilie Imbrescu argued for a natural alliance between the Church and the Legion, as the most loyal and devoted servant of the faith.[381] He portrayed Legionaries as "lunatics for Christ" who "subjugate the political to the spiritual, and transform into a religious faith their fight and sacrifice for a Christian 'Romania of the Romanians.'"[382] Exposing the duplicity of the political attitude displayed by Orthodox leadership, Imbrescu argued that "Legionaries do not falsify the teaching of the Holy Church, but they fully obey the canons. Therefore, they […] do not lend themselves to heresy."[383] He integrated their fight within the "apocalyptic show of the modern world, in which the fight between two opposing principles is hardening."[384]

Another (unsigned) article entitled "Mântuirea" (The Salvation) and published in *Axa* explicitly criticized Orthodox leadership for not taking an open attitude in the defense of the Iron Guard, banned by the authorities in December 1933.[385] The article accused the "Official Church" of cowardliness and opportunist collaboration with the state. "The Church fails to fulfill one of its imperious duties […], continuing to ignore the Legionary spirit, and despising exactly those who are its best sons and who have exposed themselves, and so sacrificed themselves, then as now, in the fight with the satanic spirit that dominates the former and current leadership of the state."[386] The passivity of the Church was condemned further in consideration of the fact that, among the arrested Legionaries, "there are also several priests, and not entirely unknown ones." This attitude was not only an abdication from its very mission, but also detrimental to the most intimate interests of the Church: "If indeed it wants to conquer the world, the Christian Church cannot do this without the support of a spiritual army such as the Legionary army […]."[387]

The article ended with a strong reiteration of the charismatic mission of the Legionaries, destined to bring salvation to the Romanian people through sacrifice: "Between the heavenly army of Saint Michael and the innocent souls of the Legionaries sacrificed for the national idea, a new pact has been established in a miraculous way, a new agreement between the sky and the earth which will bring, as in other times, the Salvation. Do believe in this one, as in that one!"[388]

Deploring the hostility of Orthodox leadership, leading Legionary theologians such as Gheorghe Racoveanu cultivated instead the image of a natural alliance between parochial priests and Legionaries:

> "The activity of Codreanu's school [...] was at the same time help given to the church. The fact that churches were full of Legionary youth is very telling. The lack of

[379] The Holy Synod of Romanian Orthodox Church, 23 October 1935, No. 1429, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. 1, p. 136.
[380] Heinen, Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail," p. 457.
[381] Ilie Imbrescu, "Teologii şi Garda de Fier," *Axa* II (15 June 1933) 15, p. 3.
[382] Imbrescu, "Teologii şi Garda de Fier," p. 3.
[383] Imbrescu, "Teologii şi Garda de Fier," p. 3.
[384] Imbrescu, "Teologii şi Garda de Fier," p. 3.
[385] "Mântuirea," *Axa*, II (23 December 1933) 24, p. II.
[386] "Mântuirea," p. II.
[387] "Mântuirea," p. II.
[388] "Mântuirea," p. II.

> understanding from the higher-level hierarchy of the Orthodox Church is surprising. But communal priests knew who their real allies were, and they supported Codreanu's efforts, in spite of unavoidable risks."[389]

Codreanu himself also criticized the Orthodox leadership, differentiating between the institution and its representatives: "It seems to me that, the church—through its representatives, men—distanced itself from the line of The Church."[390] He regularly complained that Orthodox hierarchs did not respond to his Legionary appeal to the extent of his expectations. Codreanu implicitly acknowledged that, in its ultimate consequences, the Legionary ideology was not only different but even opposed to the official theology of the Church, however:

> "We make a great distinction between the line we are following and the line of the Christian Church. The line of the Church is thousand meters above us. It reaches for the perfect and the sublime. We cannot degrade this line for explaining our deeds. We, through our actions, deeds and thoughts, aspire toward this line, we rise ourselves towards it to the extent to which the sins of our flesh and the damnation to which we have been sentenced by the original sin allow us. It remains to be seen if we can, through our earthly efforts, elevate ourselves toward this line."[391]

The distinction Codreanu made between "the line in which we live," and "the line of the Church" served to justify the substantive differences between the official theology of the Church and Legionary ideology. Legionaries utilized a millenarian message for accomplishing worldly, terrestrial and secular aims through political action. Codreanu believed that this type of action was permitted only to Legionaries, the laymen, since priests should not use, bless or encourage the use of arms.

The divergence between the Orthodox establishment and the Legion is not surprising. As a charismatic movement, the Legion blended religious and secular elements. Although its message of theological inspiration attracted numerous lower-rank prelates, from the point of view of the established Church, the Legion was ultimately a heretical movement. At certain political moments, Orthodox leadership tried to use the Legion to pressure political power. In the long run, this collaboration was harmful to Church interests. The charismatic legitimization of the Legion was ultimately competing with and even subverting the charismatic monopoly of the Church. Later, therefore, the Orthodox Church acted as a pillar of the personal regime of Carol II (1938-1940). On 16 April 1938, during the royal dictatorship, Orthodox priests who participated in the Legion were interned to a camp in Sadaclia by governmental decree.

---

[389] Gheorghe Racoveanu, "Mişcarea legionară şi Biserica" (The Legionary Movement and the Church), in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. I, p. 57.

[390] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Scrisoare răspuns catre un preot-profesor" (Reply to a Professor-Priest), 25 November 1936, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. I, p. 32.

[391] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Mişcarea legionară şi biserica" (The Legionary Movement and the Church), 11 November 1936, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. I, p. 31.

6. Caesarism against Charisma: Carol II's Personal Regime and the Confrontation with the Legion, 1938-1940

6.1. Building a National Anti-Legionary Coalition: The King's Personal Regime

The Legion's 1937 electoral success marked the beginning of its decline. Encouraged by the political crisis resulting from the elections, Carol II was determined to establish a regime of personal authority by activating the charismatic component of his royal legitimacy. The King's failure to control the Legion by channeling it into a patron-client relationship paved the way to an open and violent confrontation. Max Weber explained the irreconcilable nature of the conflict between two leaders with competing charismatic claims:

> "When such an [charismatic] authority comes into conflict with the competing authority of another who also claims charismatic sanction, the only recourse is to some kind of a contest, by magical means or an actual physical battle of the leaders. In principle, only one side can be right in such a conflict; the other must be guilty of a wrong which has to be expiated."[392]

The establishment and consolidation of King Carol's personal regime took place in several stages. In order to force the collapse of the multi-party parliamentary system, on 28 December 1937, Carol II brought the National Christian Party (NCP) led by A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga to power, although it had obtained only 10 percent of the votes and finished fourth in the election. Expectedly, the NCP was unable to control the political situation. Instead, it initiated a legal procedure for revoking the citizenship of Romanian Jews and started a political vendetta against its enemies, marked by numerous violent confrontations with the Legionary paramilitary troops. While the country plunged into political and economic chaos, the ruling party was busy preparing new general elections for winning the parliamentary majority.

After only forty days of National Christian rule (28 December 1937-9 February 1938), having proven to public opinion the inability of political parties to manage the crisis and fearing a possible coalition between the NCP and the Legion, on 10 February 1938 King Carol staged a *coup d'état* and assumed authoritarian powers. In a proclamation whose language borrowed the urgency of Legionary manifestos, Carol justified his act by the imperious need to put an end to political chaos and sterile rivalry: "Romania has to be salvaged and I am determined to work toward this end, motivated by my sole and eternal aim: the permanent interests of the country and its continuous strengthening."[393] The king asked for support in the "great work of national awakening, of the country's recovery and salvation."[394]

Carol II appointed a new government, led by the Orthodox Patriarch Miron Cristea, and conceived a broad national coalition against the Legion, uniting throne, church, and army. The coalition also included almost all former prime ministers and prominent politicians, most of them as ministers without portfolios grouped in the newly created Committee of Patronage. The appointment of the Orthodox patriarch was meant to appease political rivalries, to show the Church's backing of the king, and to mobilize the prelates and the masses of believers in support of the new regime and away from the Legion's influence.

---

[392] Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1, p. 244.
[393] Carol II, *Cuvântări, 1930-1940*, p. 307.
[394] Carol II, *Cuvântări, 1930-1940*, p. 305.

The political coalition between the king and the patriarch resembled the old Byzantine political tradition functioning in the principalities until the early modern period, based on the autocratic power of the prince and the intertwined relationship between church and state. In exchange for an extension of the Church's corporate privileges, the patriarch assisted the king in the "domestication" of his subjects. In a virulent pamphlet against political parties, the patriarch enthusiastically endorsed the new political regime, asserting that it was "clear from where salvation comes: from the heroic determination of Your Majesty."[395]

On 12 February, the King announced his political program combining authoritarian rule with ethnic nationalism. Under the slogan "Peace and Union," Carol II promised comprehensive constitutional reforms promoting "national ideas and the interests of the Romanian element"; the revision of citizenship for Jews "in order to allow economic life for the Romanian element"; the depoliticization of the administration; and the maintenance of Romania's traditional foreign policy course based on the defense of the Versailles treaty system.[396]

The legal basis of the new political regime was the constitution passed on 20 February 1938 under the slogan of "Rescuing Contemporary Romania." Although it preserved the decorative facade of a multi-party parliamentary system and a formal separation of powers, it consolidated all effective power into the king's hands and proclaimed the preeminence of the executive over legislative power. The King had the right to name the government, to veto the promulgation of the laws voted upon by the parliament and to issue decrees during the time the parliament was not in session.

Certain stipulations of the Constitution were specifically directed against the Legion. In order to eliminate its young electorate from political participation, political rights were granted only to literate men and women over 30 years of age. State dignitaries had to originate from families holding Romanian citizenship for at least three generations, a stipulation possibly targeting the Codreanu family, naturalized only in 1903.[397] Finally, the constitution introduced capital punishment for assassination attempts against members of the royal family or state dignitaries.

The new constitution was approved by a plebiscite orchestrated to produce unanimity for the new regime. Secrecy was eliminated from the ballot box and severe punishment was introduced for absenteeism, so that out of 4,303,064 registered voters a mere 5,483 (0.13 percent of the electorate) had the courage to vote against it.[398] The plebiscite was meant to consecrate the charismatic qualification of the King. As Max Weber pointed out, "Certainly, the democratic system of so-called plebiscitarian rulership—the official theory of French Caesarism—has essentially charismatic features […]. The plebiscite is not an 'election,' but the first or the renewed recognition of a pretender as a personally qualified, charismatic ruler […]."[399]

The basis of the new political order was the cult of the King, the leader of the newly formed unique *Partidul Natiunii* (the Party of the Nation), celebrated as a predestined ruler. The authoritarian rule of Carol II also borrowed numerous political elements from the contemporary fascist regimes, most importantly the personality cult and the socialization of

---

[395] *Monitorul Oficial*, 1 March 1938.
[396] *Universul*, 12 February 1938, cited in Mircea Muşat, Ion Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire* (Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1988), vol. 2, Part II: november 1933-September 1940, p. 805.
[397] Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts*, p. 297.
[398] Muşat, Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 805
[399] Max Weber, "Genesis & Transformation of Charismatic Authority," in *Economy and Society*, vol. 2, p. 1126.

the Romanian youth, through political mobilization "from above". King Carol made steady efforts to capture the support of the youth in order to enlarge the popular basis of his personal rule. To this end, the activity and membership of the ***Straja Ţării*** experienced a major boost. It organized initiation-courses, training and recreational camps for boys and girls in all counties:

Table Three. The Membership of the Leadership of the *Straja Ţării*, 1st June 1939

Year	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Units	842	1,986	3,156	5,464	10,255	10,865
Members	93,391	273,686	474,144	896,096	2,268,307	3,114,117

Source: *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1939 şi 1940*, p. 300.

The anti-Legionary role of the *Straja* was evident. Participation to its activities was mandatory. In addition, *Straja* held a monopoly of youth education, no other organizations being allowed to function on Romanian territory. The commanders of the *Straja*'s territorial unites were recruited mainly among teachers, professors, officers and priests, the main professional categories targeted by the Legion.

Table Four. Professional Composition of the Leadership of the *Straja Ţării*, 1st June 1939

Commanders	Total:	Teachers	Professors	Bureaucrats	Officers	Priests	Others
Male Commanders	12,851	9,693	2,003	222	229	213	491
Female Commanders	5,199	2,873	1,929	89	—	—	308
Total:	**18,050**	**12,566**	**3,932**	**311**	**229**	**213**	**799**

Source: *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1939 şi 1940*, p. 300.

Despite the steady efforts of the authorities to mobilize the Romanian youth in the support of the monarchy, *Straja* did not mange to induce in youth feeling of loyalty to the King. Henry Prost suggestively pointed out the formal character of the *Straja*:

> "It was frivolous to hope that the *Straja Ţării* could victoriously supplant the Legionary Movement. The Legionaries were convinced that they belonged to an elite. Their organization, semi-secret, did not accept everybody. The donning of the green shirt was preceded by a religious initiation. They had the feeling of being summoned to a great fight for glory and profit. The *Straja Ţării* did not offer anything similar to the schoolboys who were forced to enlist."[400]

6.2. The Great Repression: Codreanu's Execution

[400] Henry Prost, *Destin de la Roumanie (1918-1954)* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1954), p. 124. The translation in English is provided by Michael Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe. Memoirs of Prince Michael Sturdza, Former Foreign Minister of Rumania* (Boston, Los Angeles: Western Islands, 1986), p. 125.

Under Carol's personal regime, the Legion's political position rapidly deteriorated. Aware of the danger and confident that his time was yet to come, Codreanu adopted a passive attitude. On 21 February 1938, he tactically disbanded the "All for the Fatherland" party. He ordered the closure of its headquarters and recommended to Legionaries mystical communitarian isolation through the observance of fasting, praying and total abandonment of "earthly" activities. Codreanu also rejected the option of violence leading to civil war:

> "To all concerned: the All for the Fatherland party no longer exists. All those presently belonging to the Legionary Movement are released from their bonds. All the offices of the movement are abolished.
>
> We do not want any more of the experiences of the past when, contrary to our will, we have been pushed onto the road of violence. We won't answer violence any more. We will accept any brutality even if the whole nation is treated as a herd of livestock. We won't revolt, because we have the conscience of our mission and of our responsibility. We won't, through irrational action, make another bleeding Spain of our country.
>
> Our generation sees the gauntlet that has been thrown before it. We won't take it up. The hour of our victory has not yet struck. This is the hour of others. If those of our predecessors' generation think that they are doing right, we won't try to prove them wrong. They have the responsibility of their actions before God and before history."[401]

The passive attitude of Codreanu was subject to much speculation. Macedonian leader Constantin Papanace recalls the Captain's dilemmas in judging the new political situation created by the king's *coup d'état* during a final meeting with the Captain on 25 March 1938. Codreanu and Papanace were in accord that, unlike the previous waves of repression (1931, 1932, 1933), keeping a low profile would not be enough to save the Legion this time, given the king's determination to decapitate it. Plans for a countercoup were also rejected as "foreign" to the spirit of the Legion. Papanace was of the opinion that Codreanu should seek temporary refuge in Rome to escape repression, but Codreanu was determined to remain in the country. In accounting for his refusal to leave in face of imminent repression, Papanance asserted that the Captain interpreted the establishment of the royal dictatorship as a divine sign to repent, voluntarily choosing "Christian martyrdom."[402]

> "Without hesitation, the Captain chose martyrdom, the only way which could save the essence of the Legionary school. At one time, he contemplated the solution of going abroad, for writing "For the Legionnaires" [the second volume.], while giving time to the enemies of his movement to unfold their policies, until realities would force them to revise those policies. But when he realized that dirty speculation of irresponsible political factors […] can cast shadows over Legionary conduct, he renounced this intermediary solution."[403]

Papanace also describes Codreanu's last public appearance during the same meeting (25 March), speculating on the mystical union between the Captain and the crowd:

---

[401] Quoted in Sturdza*, The Suicide of Europe*, p. 38.
[402] See the eulogy of Constantin Papanace, "Evoluția mișcării legionare după arestarea și asasinarea Căpitanului. Cazul Horia Sima," *Pământul Strămoșesc*, (1977) 4, p. 2.
[403] Constantin Papanace. *Despre Căpitan,* p. 15.

> "We headed toward the exit [of the church]. At the appearance of the Captain, the crowd on the stairs and in the market raised a forest of arms to the sky, as if it was following a spontaneous command coming from the depths of their hearts. I have rarely felt so much *collective spiritual vibration* as in that moment. Could that crowd, made up of Legionaries or 'unknown' sympathizers, have had the intuition that it was the last salute it would give to their adored Captain?"[404]

Codreanu's passivity was in fact a sign of his lack of available political options. With the political consolidation of Carol's regime, the Captain's fate appeared to be sealed. The Legion lacked the capacity to organize a successful *coup d'état,* or to resist a powerful state-organized repression. Although it grew almost overnight into a mass movement, its leaders were better trained in activating within small, fragmented units, and they lacked the experience of effective mass mobilization at national scale.

On 30 March, the King appointed a second government led by Patriarch Cristea. Far from being a simple reshuffling, the new government was the beginning of a pre-emptive anti-Legion campaign. The key figure in the government was King Carol's right-hand man, Armand Călinescu, nicknamed the "Black Monocle." Călinescu made his political debut within the Peasant Party of the Old Kingdom. After its 1926 fusion with the Transylvanian National Party, he made himself known as a prominent leader of a new wave of young and energetic politicians within the newly formed National Peasant Party. In the second National Peasant government, Călinescu held positions in the Ministry of Interior, soon becoming notorious for his severe and uncompromising attitude against Legionary or communist mass demonstrations. In 1937, dissatisfied with the ossified cadre policies of the NPP—which favored older politicians—and aware that the political fortune of traditional parties was in decline, Călinescu defected from the NPP and entered the service of King Carol as part of a political faction known as "the centrists." He first served as Minister of the Interior in the right-wing government led by Octavian Goga (December 1937-February 1938); after the establishment of Carol's personal regime on 10 February 1938, Călinescu acted as the king's most trustful political collaborators.

Călinescu argued for strong repression of the Legion using harsh measures. In his political notes, he characterized Codreanu's personality in the following way: "Uneducated, cruel, no professional activity."[405] Together with the King, Călinescu set up a plan for the arrest and neutralization of the main Legionary cadres.

On the first day of the new government's installation, a military tribunal charged Codreanu with defamation of a public official. The legal pretext invoked for Codreanu's indictment was the injurious letter he had sent to Nicolae Iorga, at the time a royal counselor. In reaction to Iorga's press campaign against Legionary restaurants that prompted their closure, Codreanu accused the notorious historian and politician of opportunism, dishonesty, and betrayal of the national ideals he had once preached to his students. On 17 April 1938, Codreanu and other main Legionary leaders and sympathizers were arrested and interned in various camps across the country at Tismana, Dragomirna and Miercurea Ciuc. After a fast trial, Codreanu was sentenced to six months of forced labor.

Codreanu's trial was only the beginning of harsh repression. In May 1938, after intense legal and political preparations, he was brought to yet another public trial—this time more elaborated—designed by official propaganda as a definitive public defamation of the

---

[404] Papanace, *Despre Căpitan,* p. 6.

[405] Armand Călinescu, *Însemnări politice* [Political notes] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990), p. 390.

Legion and its terrorist activities. The trial polarized the attention of Romanian public opinion. The prosecutor's accusations insisted on Codreanu's rebellion against the state, high treason, alleged collaboration with foreign agents against state interests—although no evidence was produced in this regard—and undermining the existing social order.[406] In contrast, Legionary propaganda focused on the victimization of the Legion at the hands of corrupt politicians and pledged revenge for injustice and humiliation. It also exploited the charismatic epiphany of Codreanu, praising his capacity of sacrifice. On 26-27 May, Codreanu was sentenced to ten years of hard labor, despite the fact that the prosecution could not produce a legally sound trial.

Although the Legion was effectively neutralized, Carol II feared its political resurrection via German assistance and made plans for Codreanu's assassination. On the night of 29-30 November 1938, returning from an unsuccessful diplomatic tournament marked by an official visit to the United Kingdom and unofficial visits to France, Belgium and Germany, Carol II ordered Codreanu's elimination, along with thirteen other legionaries, the *Nicadori* and *Decemviri*. The following day, a laconic media report announced their execution under the pretext that they had attempted escape. According to the deposition given by one of Codreanu's executioners in 1940, taken by the Romanian High Court of Cassation, the prisoners were strangled in a forest near Bucharest. Their bodies were buried in the courtyard of the Jilava prison and burned with vitriol:

> "We left that night [November 29 to November 30] in two police busses. […] After that, we went into the prison courtyard and each of us received a Legionary in custody. I got one taller and stronger than the others; I learned afterwards that he was the Captain, Corneliu Codreanu. We put them in the two police cars. There we attached their hands to the rear bench and their feet to the lower part of the front seat in such a way that they could not move one way or the other. Ten of them were bound in the first car and four of them in the second. […] When we reached the Tâncăbeşti woods, Major Dinulescu, with whom we had agreed about a signal, turned his electric lamp on and off three times. It was the moment for the execution. But I don't know why none of us moved. […]
>
> In the other car Major Macoveanu had been obeyed, and the four Legionaries had already been strangled. The Captain, turning slightly toward me, whispered: "Comrade, permit me to talk to my comrades." But in the same moment, even before he had finished the sentence, Major Dinulescu appeared with his revolver in hand and growled between his teeth: "Execute!" Then the gendarmes threw their ropes…
>
> We proceeded with lowered curtains to Jilava, and we reached it at seven o'clock. We were received there by Colonel Gherovici, the legal medic, Lieutenant Colonel Ionescu and others. […]
>
> The grave was already prepared. The corpses of the Legionaries were then shot several times in the back to substantiate the story of an escape attempt and thrown in the prepared grave. Some weeks later the same gendarmes were called to Jilava and, after uncovering the grave, we threw fifteen gallons of vitriol over the corpses. We were asked to sign a declaration confirming the story that the Legionaries had been shot while trying to escape."[407]

---

[406] For a pro-Legionary analysis of the trial, see Kurt W. Treptow, Gheorghe Buzatu, eds. *"Procesul" lui Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (Mai, 1938)* (Iaşi: S.C. Dosoftei S.A., 1994).

[407] Quoted in Muşat, Ardeleanu, *România după Marea*, vol. 2, p. 877-878. See also Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe*, p. 119-120.

The common grave was later covered with a thick layer of cement. Despite this desperate attempt to eradicate Codreanu's charisma, the spirit of "the Captain" obsessed his followers more then ever. Mircea Eliade provides an indirect witness account of the spontaneous reaction to Codreanu's death of Legionaries imprisoned in camps throughout the country, through the impression of Ştefan, a fictitious character:

> "Then Ştefan heard a wild cry of a wounded beast: "They shot the Captain." Not a whisper could then be heard in the entire courtyard. That stone-like silence seemed to him more terrible than any cry. In the next moment, he saw them all falling to the ground, others hurled as beaten dogs. With their guns in their hands, the gendarmes were watching them. Ştefan made the sign of the cross and inclined his forehead, devoid of thought."[408]

Legionary revenge was quick to follow. On 21 September 1939, a Legionary death squad led by Miti Dumitrescu (1913-1939) assassinated Prime Minister Armand Călinescu (1893-1939) in a Bucharest public square. Upon the death of Patriarch Miron Cristea on 7 March 1939, Călinescu became Prime Minister and continued his policy of repression; the Legionaries held him directly responsible for Codreanu's assassination.

[408] Mircea Eliade, *Noapte de Sânziene* (Bucureşti: Editura Minerva, 1991), vol. 1, p. 180. The quotation was noticed by Claudio Mutti, *Mircea Eliade şi Garda de Fier*, p. 17, apud Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul Român*, footnote 78, p. 267. At the time, Eliade was in fact released from the camp of Miercurea Ciuc, having been treated of a pulmonary infection. See Ţurcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, p. 292.

Miti Dumitrescu (1913-1939), the leader of the death squad which assassinated Prime Minister Armand Călinescu.

After fulfilling their revenge mission, the death squad stormed the national radio station, publicly announcing that "The Captain has been avenged." The "political will" of the death squad sheds light upon their charismatic beliefs and indoctrination. First, the terrorist act was presented as legitimate revenge on those guilty for the assassination of Codreanu. Second, the members of the squad expressed their belief that Codreanu was a "God descended among mortals" and that he defended himself so effectively during the process that he did not deserve to die. Finally, they reiterated their conviction that the Romanian people had to fulfill a divine mission entrusted by God.

The fanaticism of the death squad was also revealed by the fact that, after delivering their radio message, its members voluntary surrendered to police. They were carried back to the public square and executed during the night of 22 to 23 September, without a trial. Their bodies were displayed for several days for public opprobrium.

The summary execution of the Legionary death squad, in the same square where they assassinated Prime Minister Armand Călinescu.

The picture occasions a comment on the nature of political violence in the Balkans. In view of *irredenta* wars and forced population movements that accompanied the formation of nation-states, the area has been generally regarded as a classic locus of violence. Most recently, numerous scholars have reacted against the "essentialization" of the historical experience of the Balkans, pointing out that violence is a universal practice, no region possessing a monopoly on it. In his short history of the Balkans, Mark Mazower argues that the association of the Balkans with violence is in fact due to a change in the concept and meaning of "acceptable violence" in the West.[409] If in the Middle Ages executions used to take place in the public square, beginning with the second half of the nineteenth century,

[409] Mark Mazover, "On Violence," in *The Balkans. A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), p. 128-135.

Western methods of punishment have become more institutionalized and "hidden" from the public view.

Since in the Balkans, traditional forms of violence survived the political practice in the modern period, Western observers "romanticized" these practices, interpreting them as proof of the existence of a Balkan "culture of violence." The public execution of the Legionaries shown in the picture revived a traditional practice of displaying the victims for public opprobrium. It was a demonstration of force, meant to prove to the public that the criminals were indeed dead, that justice was done, and that the state was still in control of the situation. The demonstrative killing was also meant to prevent other Legionaries from carrying out similar acts of revenge. The public attending the grotesque show was not a spontaneous crowd: it was brought there by authorities, who organized regular visits to the site of the crime, especially by teenagers—the main target audience of the Legion—to discourage their pro-Legionary sympathies.

During the next days, the symbolic violence of the state was abandoned in favor of mass repression, organized under a temporary government led by General Gheorghe Argeşanu (21-28 September 1938). In the night of 21 to 22 September, 252 Legionaries were executed without trial.[410] These included the main leaders interned in camps: 44 in the Miercurea Ciuc, 31 in Vaslui, 13 in the Râmnicu Sărat, 10 in Bucharest and 7 in Braşov. Among them, there were Gheorghe Clime, the leader of the "All for the Fatherland" party, Alexandru Cantacuzino, the leader of the "Moţa-Marin" section, Gheorghe Gh. Istrate, the leader of the "Brotherhoods of the Cross" section, Ion Banea, the leader of the Transylvanian regional section, the intellectuals Cristian Tell, Mihail Polihroniade, etc. In addition, 147 Legionaries were arbitrarily selected all over the country (two to three per each county) and executed. Their corpses were displayed in main public squares, together with the banner: "This is the fate of all traitors of the nation."

The confrontation between the two undemocratic "systems of belief" reached its peak. Unable to use them for his own purpose, Carol II had Legionaries killed by lawless methods as the only effective way for countering their criminal terrorism. The bloody repression of the Legion highlights the legal challenges generally faced by multi-party parliamentary regimes trying to effectively counter terrorism. Henry Roberts accounted for the strong political offensive of the Legion in late 1930 in view of the weakness of the Romanian state, most evident in its loss of monopoly on violence.[411] In doing so, he alluded to Weber's definition, according to which

> "A state is that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a certain territory, this 'territory' being another of the defining characteristics of the state. For the specific feature of the present is that the right to use physical violence is attributed to any and all other associations or

[410] Palaghiţă, *Garda de Fier*, p. 124; Veiga, Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier,* p. 261; Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail,"* p. 376.

[411] In post-communist southeastern Europe, the "weak state" paradigm is frequently used to explain the failure of democratic transition in view of the state's inability to collect taxes, to contain organized crime, or even to perform certain public services, such as road repairs. For the critique of the explanatory limits of this "paradigm," see Ivan Krastev, "The Balkans: Democracy Without Choices," *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (July 2002), 3, p. 39-53.

> individuals only to the extent that the *state* for its part permits this to happen. The state is held to be the sole source of this 'right' to use violence."[412]

Indeed, in the inter-war period, the Romanian state lost the monopoly on violence. However, insofar as its bureaucratic and law enforcement capabilities were concerned, the state was not weak. It was still able to implement the physical suppression of the perpetrators, when political elites were determined to act. The main inter-war societal problem was the lack of the rule of law. The political accession of the Legion was possible because the crimes committed by Legionaries remained unpunished. The acquittal of the student activists in 1923-1924 against the will of the government can be interpreted as a sign that the justice system was independent of political power. But it also highlights the lack of consensus over liberal and democratic values, as well as the lack of firmness of the justice system, since the jury court did not take the risk of enforcing the law by going against public opinion.[413] The Legion thrived in an under-institutionalized political system, marked by rampant corruption, inefficiency and lack of rule of law; under authoritarian regimes it proved highly vulnerable.

---

[412] Max Weber, "The Profession and Vocation of Politics," in *Political Writings*, edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 310-311.

[413] This was in fact a long-term characteristic of the Romanian juridical system. Andrew Janos pointed out that in the last pre-war decade, out of a total of 15,518 crimes or smaller legal offenses, only 6,310 resulted in convictions (among which 4,997 consisted only of small fines), while 9,208 defendants were acquitted. See Janos, "Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective," p. 89.

7. Factionalism and the Routinization of Charisma: The Legion's Destructive Rule, 6 September 1940- 23 January 1941

7.1. The Legion in Power: Succession to Charismatic Leadership

The extermination of the Legion's leadership ended a cycle in its history. Armin Heinen argues that, following Carol's repression, the Legion was effectively destroyed as a political movement: "Under the shock of a rigorous state repression, the Legionary Movement dismembered, what remained from it representing only a small terrorist organization of cadres."[414] Therefore, his book devotes limited attention to the post-1940 history of the Legion, regarded not as an autonomous development but as an "imposed evolution."[415] Notwithstanding the importance of the repression, this author believes that the post-Codreanu evolution of the Legion and its short rule (6 September 1940-21 January 1941) illuminates its charismatic nature and political trajectory.

The transformation of the Legion was not simply due to the elimination of its leadership; it was an outcome of the complex process of the normalization—or, as Weber calls it, "routinization,"—of Codreanu's charisma. Although the question of succession in leadership "is crucial," the process of routinization is not solely confined to this issue, but involves "a transition from a charismatic administrative staff, and the everyday principles of administration, to one which is adapted to everyday conditions."[416]

In the case of the Legion, this process was concomitant with the sudden transition from a clandestine organization to a ruling party. On 6 September, after the loss of Northern Transylvania to Hungary and of Bessarabia to Soviet Russia forced Carol II to abdicate, General Ion Antonescu stepped in to fill the political void. This change opened the Legion's way to power. In need of a political mass movement to legitimize his authoritarian rule, the General invited the Legion to power. On 14 September, Antonescu proclaimed the "National Legionary state." The Legion became the ruling party but had to share executive power with the army.

After two years of clandestine political activity, the Legion was unprepared to rule; it faced a profound crisis of identity. Codreanu's death opened the acute question of succession to the charismatic leadership. On the one hand, there were no rules of selection and Codreanu had not officially designated anyone as a legitimate successor.[417] On the other hand, the harsh repression in 1938-39 provoked a leadership vacuum by eliminating almost completely the old cadres of the Legion and bringing to the forefront new regional cadres with different social backgrounds and new political aims. A secret report sent to Hungarian Foreign Minister T. Csáky judged that in late 1940 the Legion was divided among three main factions: the group gathered around Horia Sima, a dynamic local leader from the Banat region, which was the most revolutionary-minded, power-oriented and least Orthodoxist; the group gathered around Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's family, composed of his brothers Decebal

[414] Heinen, *Legiunea Arhangelului Mihail*, p. 29.
[415] Heinen, *Legiunea Arhangelului Mihail*, p. 30.
[416] Weber, "The Types of Legitimate Domintion," p. 253.
[417] Legionaries faithful to Codreanu (called *Codrenişti*) family argued that the Captain let a political will, including a list of legitimate successors in leadership. On the first position was Gheorghe Clime, while Horia Sima was only on the 14th position. This rumor was later also confirmed by Eugen Cristescu, the head of the Romanian Intelligence Service (1940-1944), in a statement made on 15 April 1946 and reproduced in Troncotă, *Eugen Cristescu*, p. 316-317. The *Codrenişti* accused Sima of deliberately provoking the death of the thirteen leaders placed ahead of him on that list. For the conflict between *Simişti* and *Codrenişti*, see below.

and Horia and his father Ion Zelea Codreanu, and their followers; and the "Moța-Marin" group, which wanted to strengthen the religious character of the movement.[418]

The succession in the Legion's leadership took the form of factional conflicts, a typical evolution for a charismatic movement. As Max Weber pointed out,

> "As a rule, routinization is not free of conflict. In the early stages personal claims on the charisma of the chief are not easily forgotten and the conflict between the charisma of the office or of hereditary status with personal charisma is a typical process in many historical situations."[419]

Factionalism opened up several options for the routinization of Codreanu's charisma. The first was the natural selection of a new charismatic leader. In 1940, after a long period of confusion, Horia Sima overcame the competition and assumed leadership. Sima entered the Legion in the period 1928-1930. Although he remained only a second-rank regional leader, in 1938-1939 he took advantage of the fact that the most prominent Legionaries were incarcerated and claimed the leadership. Motivated by strong personal ambition, Sima consolidated his hold over the Legion through skilful maneuvering. On 6 September 1940, he was consecrated leader by the Legionary Forum, a body created ad hoc at his own initiative.[420] In order to claim continuity with the charismatic founder, Sima also asserted that the Captain himself declared him a legitimate successor in leadership.

Sima acquired the leadership in a particularly important moment, when the Legion moved to a new phase in its political development, namely the accession to power. While he appeared as a possible interim solution during the period of confusion that followed Carol's repression, the prolongation of his leadership nevertheless met with strong internal opposition from certain *Văcăreşteni* such as Ilie Gârneață, Radu Mironovici and Corneliu Georgescu. Regarding him as an illegitimate successor, the *Văcăreşteni* tried to either designate a new charismatic leader, or to install a collective domination of the "Legionary aristocracy," made up of the "Commanders of the Annunciation."

Sima's authority was soon contested by a second option for the routinization of charisma: its transmission to Codreanu's kin. Arguing that he alone had the capacity and the legitimacy to replace his divinely inspired son, Ion Zelea Codreanu put forward rival claims to Legion leadership, gaining several founding *Văcăreşteni* in his support. The Legion thus split into those loyal to the Codreanu family—named "Codrenişti" or "Gârneţişti" after the leader Ilie Gârneață—and the group of "*Simişti*," made up of the Sima's followers. The former accused Sima of disregarding Codreanu's order and thus directly provoking Codreanu's death.[421]

The conflict for succession between Sima and Ion Zelea Codreanu dominated the Legion during the first weeks of Legionary rule. Facing strong internal opposition, Sima tried to appease the resistance of the older cadres by integrating them into the Legionary Forum together with his own supporters. Finding himself increasingly isolated, Codreanu signaled his dissidence by withdrawing at Huşi, in Northern Moldova. On 2 November, he sent an

---

[418] *Budapest, Magyar Országos Levéltár, Külügyminisztérium, Politikai Osztály*, Bukarest (Budapest, Hungarian National Archives, Foreign Ministry, Political Department: Bucharest), File K63 (10 November 1940), p. 66-67.

[419] Max Weber, "The Types of Legitimate Domintion," in *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 252.

[420] Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelului Mihail,"* p. 416.

[421] Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, p. 317. For a strong anti-Sima pamphlet, see Palaghiță, *Garda de Fier*, p. 111.

ultimatum to Sima, asking for his resignation.[422] Three days later, Sima went personally to Huşi, to negotiate with Ion Zelea Codreanu, a meeting apparently initiated by Iredenta Moţa and Elena Codreanu. Although he could not definitively appease Codreanu, Sima obtained a precious temporary armistice.[423]

On 8 November 1940, the new regime organized a major public celebration, on Saint Michael's observance, meant to capture the support of the public opinion. Festivities took place in Iaşi, the first center of the Legionary Movement, proclaimed "a saint Legionary city" and the symbolic capital of Romania—a role comparable to that played by Nuremberg in the propaganda of the Nazi Party.[424] During the official ceremonies, the tension between Sima and Ion Zelea Codreanu was visible. In his political report, Henry Spitzmuller, the *chargé d'affaires* of France in Bucharest, emphasized "the unexpected intervention, in-between two crises of *delirium tremens*, of Ion Zelea Codreanu, the father of the founder of the Legion," who "in an emphatic and sick style," saluted "our *Führer* sent by God" and wished "victory and glory to our *Duce* Benito Mussolini."[425] He arrogated to himself pretenses of spiritual leadership over the Legion, by decorating Horia Sima with the White Cross. A source of embarrassment for Sima, Codreanu's discourse was not reproduced by the official press the next day.

After successfully avoiding a public confrontation with Ion Zelea, Sima could safely counter-attack. In order to weaken the position of the Captain's father, on 13 November 1940 Sima issued a communiqué in which he excluded from the Legion Ion Zelea's most zealous supporters, namely priest Ion Dumitrescu-Borşa, Dumitrescu Zăpadă and Gheorghe Ciorogaru. Sima further specified that Horia Codreanu, brother of Corneliu, was not a Legion member and did not hold any leading function. The following day, asserting that he was the Captain's father and "his earthy representative" (*locţiitorul pământesc al Căpitanului*), Ion Zelea Codreanu and his followers stormed the Legionary Green House in Bucharest, in an unsuccessful attempt to install a "kinship charisma."[426] After an exchange of fire with the guards during which several Legionaries were shot dead, Ion Zelea Codreanu was arrested. Spitzmuller reported to Pierre Laval the following account of the events:

> "The second day after this purge of the movement, a new plot was led by another member of the Codreanu family, the famous Ion Zelea, who was completely convinced, according to his speech held on 8 November in Iaşi, that Romania and the Legion were awaiting him for salvation. The father of the 'Captain,' supported by twenty-seven collaborators, planned to oust Horia Sima and to take power. They organized a genuine attack on the Green House followed by bloody clashes. Despite this, Horia Sima's men controlled the situation. The rebels and their numerous

[422] Palaghiţă, *Garda de Fier*, p. 133-134.
[423] Horia Sima, *Era libertăţii. Statul Naţional–Legionar*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Editura Mişcării Legionare**,** 1982–1986), vol. 1, p. 16-17; Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 320-322; Palaghiţă, *Garda de Fier*, p. 133-134. The latter claim that Sima did not go personally to Huşi, but sent only a delegation.
[424] Ştefan Gheorghe Ion, "Iaşii, the city of the Legionary Movement" (Iaşii, the citadel of the Romanian soul), in *Axa,* 5 December 1940, p. I
[425] Henry Spitzmuller, *Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères,* Nantes, Bucharest, Serie Ambassade, Legation, 48, Bucharest, 8 November 1940. Ion Zelea Codreanu's and Sima's factions are giving conflicting accounts of this event.
[426] Ion Zelea Codreanu, *O mărturie* (Iaşi, 1941), p. 13, 15.

> partisans in the capital and in the provinces were arrested and imprisoned, while Codreanu's father was sent to hospital to treat his alcoholism."[427]

Since the conflict with the Captain's father undermined Sima's legitimacy, the latter did not miss the opportunity to emphasize his strong links with other members of the Codreanu family. According to Spitzmuller,

> "because the Captain's family clearly made a very bad impression on public opinion, Legionary leaders believed that it was more rewarding to bring into the forefront characters less turbulent that Codreanu's father, and for two weeks newspapers did not miss any opportunity to publish photographs of Codreanu's widow, and made a kind of heroine of the Codreanu's daughter, aged 10." [428]

Sima also tried to justify his action against Ion Zelea by arguing against the principle of kinship transmission of leadership:

> "Professor Codreanu claimed to be recognized as the Chief of the Legion on the grounds that he is the father of Codreanu, in other words he intended to apply the hereditary principle that had in fact been declared unsuitable as a criteria for selecting leadership cadres at any level by [Corneliu] Codreanu himself. He claimed a leadership that exceeded his possibilities and which he would have been unable to exercise, even if I were not there."[429]

In the next period, in order to retain charisma as a source of legitimation, Sima combined two main strategies. First, he consciously emulated Codreanu's charismatic style of leadership. According to Dumitrescu-Borşa's critical account, during public ceremonies, Sima tried to employ "the attitude of a god" and to "imitate Corneliu Codreanu in certain gestures, giving the impression that he was living in high spheres, and trying to look as majestic and imposing as possible."[430] More importantly, the Legion's official propaganda celebrated Sima's own charismatic qualifications. The young philosopher Constantin Noica, a recent convert to the Legion, made the eulogy of the Sima's leadership, arguing that his mission was "to awaken in all the people of this country that feeling the Captain has succeeded in awakening in nearly all Legionaries."[431] Noica synthesized Sima's claims in an article published on 14 November 1940, suggestively entitled "*Sunteți sub har*" (You are under grace):

> "Today, we are under a certain grace. Horia Sima does not levy taxes on wages; he puts souls in motion. The Minister of Education doesn't announce a new teaching system in schools; he is searching a new soul for this teaching. Grace has descended upon the Romanian community. Today, we are under the grace. To what extent, we

---

[427] Spitzmuller, Bucharest, Serie Ambassade, Legation, 48, Bucharest, 28 November 1940. Ion Zelea Codreanu's and Sima's factions are giving conflicting accounts of this event. For the account put forward by the Codreanu faction, see Palaghiță, *Garda de Fier*, p. 134-135. On 15 November, new violent confrontations took place between *Simişti* and *Codrenişti* at the Guttenberg canteen in Bucharest. See Troncotă, *Eugen Cristescu,* p. 61.

[428] Spitzmuller, Bucharest, Serie Ambassade, Legation, 48, Bucharest, 28 November 1940.

[429] Horia Sima, *Era libertății,* vol. 1, p. 16-27; see also Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 327-328.

[430] Dumitrescu-Borşa, *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 314.

[431] Quoted in Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 198.

> shall see. You will see. But there is not the Law anymore, there is the grace. […] We are not under the law, we are under the grace. If the biblical words did not exist, we would keep silent. So great is our hope. So great is our faith."[432]

Second, unable to consolidate his charismatic status by proclaiming himself a new "Captain," Sima legitimized his authority on the basis of his predecessor's charisma. To this end, he adopted another option of routinization: the cult of the dead leader. The ritual basis of the new political regime was the exhumation, public burial and legal rehabilitation of Codreanu and other Legionary "martyrs."

As George L. Mosse pointed out, the practice of organizing state funerals, having its roots in the French revolution, "marked the beginning of a democratization of politics that climaxed in twentieth-century fascism."[433] Once in power, the Legion integrated pompous and carefully programmed state ceremonies into their own political style and representation. Indicative of the Legionary cult of the dead, this morbid display changed the name of the "Nation Legionary State" in the public memory to the "National Funeral State." The process culminated in the exhumation of Codreanu's corpse and of the two groups charged with political assassinations, the *Decemviri* and the *Nicadori*, on 27 November 1940, retrospectively regarded by Sima as the most important task in justifying the Legion's accession to power.[434]

---

[432] Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 198-199.

[433] Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, p. 87.

[434] On 24 December 1940, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu was legally rehabilitated by a decision of the High Court of Cassation and Justice, which reversed the previous decision and declared as false all the previous charges. The decision was published in the Official Monitory No. 303, 1940. See Mihai Fătu, *Contribuţii la studierea regimului politic din România, septembrie 1940-august 1944* (Bucureşti: Editura Politică, 1984), p. 34.

The exhumation of the corpses of Codreanu and of the members of two terrorist groups, the Decemviri and the Nicadori, killed at the order of King Carol II in November 1938 and buried in the courtyard of the Jilava Prison under a thick plate of cement. The ceremony, which took place on 27 November 1940, under the National Legionary regime, was attended by high state representatives and Orthodox clerics and is illustrative for the cult of the dead leader as a form of routinization of his charisma.

The ceremonies occasioned yet another symbolic confrontation between Ion Zelea Codreanu and Horia Sima over inheriting Corneliu's charismatic aura. The Captain's father conducted the exhumation ceremony and transported the coffins to the Saint Ilie Gorgani Church, planning to decorate the "martyrs." The next day, Sima unexpectedly came to the church early in the morning and stole the limelight: he decorated the martyrs himself, took propaganda pictures, and then sealed the coffins.[435]

The reburial was exploited by the official propaganda as a strong reaffirmation of Codreanu's charisma, as the foundation of the Legionary ideology.[436] The Captain's personality was eulogized in official newspapers, radio conferences, religious ceremonies, and in propaganda posters, stamps, calendars and postcards depicting "heroic" scenes from his life or of other Legionary martyrs, etc. On the day of the reburial, *Cuvântul*, the leading Legionary newspaper, wrote, "It is the day of the Captain's resurrection. He has been resurrected, as he said, according to the Gospel. He has been resurrected, raising from grave to present us again with Romania itself, buried by the sinful age."[437] In a radio conference, philosopher Emil Cioran, at the time a youngster in his twenties, provided a powerful plead for Codreanu's *post-mortem* charismatic cult:

> "After his death we all feel lonely. [...] With the exception of Jesus, no other dead was so present among the living. Has anybody even thought about forgetting him? 'From

[435] Palaghiță, *Garda de Fier*, p. 135-134. Palaghiță states that Sima did not attend the exhumation ceremony. This claim is contradicted by Dumitrescu-Borşa's account in *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 349.

[436] For the tradition of reburial in Eastern Europe and its political significance, see Katherine Verdery, *Political Life of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1999).

[437] Florian, Petculescu, *Ideea care ucide*, p. 107.

> this moment on, our country is being led by a dead man,' a friend was telling me on the bank of the Seine. This dead man spread a perfume of eternity over our human drag and brought back the sky over Romania."[438]

Codreanu's reburial spurred a terrifying orgy of Legionary vendettas: during the night of 26 to 27 November, a squad of the Legionary Workers' Corpus led by Dumitru Groza executed without trial sixty-five former dignitaries considered guilty of persecuting the Legion. These dignitaries had been arrested soon after the Legion's accession to power, and awaited legal punishment in Jilava prison. On 27 November, two Legionary death squads also assassinated Nicolae Iorga and Virgil Madgearu.

These horrible crimes were later repudiated by General Antonescu, an official investigation demonstrating their premeditated character.[439] They were perceived as crossing the border of legitimate charismatic violence, falling into the category of criminal behavior. In order to exculpate themselves, the *Codreniști* accused Sima for ordering the executions, blaming him for a deliberate distortion of the meaning of revolutionary charisma. On their turn, the Simiști portrayed the crimes as spontaneous reactions of Legionaries at grass-roots level. They blamed the responsibility for these murders on Antonescu, stating that the General intended to release the detainees, thus forcing the Legion to act in haste.[440] In spite of these attempts to exonerate crimes, violent revenge was in fact the Legion's most intimate aims. In *The Nest's Chief Manual*, Codreanu set as a main point of the Legion's program:

> "The first day after the Legion's victory, an Exceptional Tribunal will be established to summon and try for betrayal of the fatherland:
> a) all plunderers of public property;
> b) all those who have accepted bribes to facilitate businesses;
> c) all those who, violating the fundamental laws of the country, have persecuted, imprisoned or damaged legionaries or their families. Whatever position they hold, from gendarme to Minister, no one will escape this judgement. […] The Romanian nation, aware of its won rights, will start the new life by legal punishment. We are patiently waiting for this moment. Without this moment of chastise, no reconstruction is possible in this country." (Point 84)

Although Codreanu demanded legal punishment, a widespread rumor circulating among Legionaries contained that the Captain allowed, in his political will, twenty-four hours of chastise action.[441]

The Legion thus finally succeeded in its goals. The old order collapsed under its strikes and its main enemies received punishment. But it was the triumph of nihilism, criminal revenge and self-destruction. The subsequent rule of the Legion was characterized

---

[438] Emil Cioran "Profilul interior al Căpitanului," (The Interior Profile of the Captain) *Glasul strămoşesc*, VI (25 December 1940) 10. The paragraph is also quoted in Zigu, *Anii treizeci*, p. 197.

[439] See Preşedinţia Consiliului de Miniştri, *Pe marginea prăpastiei, 21–23 ianuarie 1941*. 2 vols, (Bucureşti: Monitorul Oficial şi Imprimeriile Statului, Imprimeria Centrală, 1941), vol. 1, Part 2: *Guvernarea naţional–legionară*. See also *Ion Antonescu şi "Garda de Fier". Pe marginea prăpastiei, 21–23 ianuarie 1941*, edited by Serafim Duicu (Târgu-Mureş: Casa de Editură "Rom-Edition," 1991), p. 93.

[440] See Palaghiță, *Garda de Fier*, p. 135. In contrast, Dumitrescu-Borşa blames Sima for these assassinations, in *Cal Troian intra Muros*, p. 349.

[441] Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 313

by the prevailing tension between its charismatic nature and the need for pragmatic political orientation. Internal contradictions aggravated the conflict of interests between the Legion, as the political base of the new regime, and General Ion Antonescu, as its executive leader, paving the way toward the Legion's political elimination. On 21-23 January 1941, after a chaotic Legionary rebellion meant to transfer full governing power into their own hands, the Legion was disbanded, while its main leaders sought refuge abroad.[442] According to Sima's own evaluation, the Legion thus proved itself incapable of "moving from the revolutionary phase to the governing phase."[443] It failed to establish a long-lasting dictatorial regime: its violent campaign triggered a counter-violent reaction of the military, leading to the complete elimination of the movement. Many analysts remarked on the political ineptitude of the Legion. Henry Roberts, for example, stated that:

> "[The Legion's] effectiveness seemed to be inversely related to its nearness to power. In opposition and under Carolist persecution, it seemed powerful and menacing; martyrdom served it well. When it came close to power it showed itself inept and maladroit. In the face of real problems, whether of government or of maintaining power, its aura vanished and its new men proved to be nothing but pillagers and thugs with no idea how to master a country, much less run it. The very negativeness of the Iron Guard, which gives it its particular interest, was its own undoing."[444]

The political ineffectiveness of the Legion was directly linked to its charismatic nature. As Weber pointed out, "every charisma is on the road from a turbulently emotional life that knows no economic rationality to a slow death by suffocation under the weight of material interests: every hour of its existence brings it nearer to this end."[445]

7.2. Charisma and Violence: Criminal Revenge versus Christian Morality

The charismatic nature of the Legion accounts for its violent character. Violence is a universal feature of generic fascism; however, the self-destructive nature of the Legion and its propensity for sacrifice single it out in comparison to other movements. Stanley G. Payne pointed out that, although the Legion "was sometimes violent in the extreme," its violence was "in one sense qualitatively different from that of other radicals and revolutionaries," namely in its emphasis on self-sacrifice "leading to veritable immolation" resembling "the most moralistic and idealistic of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary assassins at the turn of the century."[446]

---

[442] On the Legionary rebellion, see Gheorghe Buzatu, Cezar Ardeleanu, Dana Beldiman, Cornel Beldiman, Iulian P. Lică, Gheorghe Neacşu and Radu–Dan Vlad (eds.). *Evenimentele din ianuarie 1941 în arhivele germane şi române*, 2 vols. Traducere de Bogdan Basarab. (Bucureşti: Majadahonda, 1998–1999); Ottmar Traşcă and Ana–Maria Stan. *Rebeliunea legionară în arhive străine: germane, maghiare, franceze* (Bucureşti: Albatros, 2002).

[443] Constantin Papanace, "The Fragmentation into Generations" (Madrid, 1958) in Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, Annex, p. 450-467.

[444] Roberts, *Rumania*, p. 233.

[445] Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," p. 1120.

[446] Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition,* p. 117. This feature was noted by other scholars, as well. See, for example, Zeev Barbu's comment: "I know of no other fascist movement which inculcated in its members a deeper sense of personal dedication and sacrifice." Barbu, "Rumania," p. 157

The Legion practiced a reactive type of violence, stemming from two main sources: revenge for what they perceived as their public humiliation, and punishment for treason.[447] First, its vengeful character was indicative of the stigmatic identity of the two main Legionary protagonists, Codreanu and Moța, accounting for their criminal behavior. In 1924, Codreanu was arrested by prefect of police Constantin Manciu together with fifty student activists, carried in handcuffs through the city center and then maltreated. The humiliation of being slapped and spat at by the police and then publicly "derided" by Jews—a traumatic experience amply documented in his memoirs—generated a deep crisis of identity which Codreanu solved by endorsing violent revenge: "From now on I will always keep my revolver on me. And, at the first, the slightest provocation, I will shoot; nobody will be able to change my decision."[448] Codreanu's cult of the revolver served as a symbolic compensation for his stigmatic symptom of powerlessness and inadequacy (See **Document 7,** and below).[449] The experience of personal humiliation was later projected to the level of the entire Legionary community, accounting for the strong emphasis on pride and honor put by the Legionary code of conduct: "I believe there is no greater suffering for a fighter, who lives from pride and honor, than his disarming and then his humiliation. Death is always sweeter than this."[450] This manner of rationalizing violence by appealing to moral categories such as "integrity," "purity" and "righteousness" is characteristic of charismatic movements of a sectarian authoritarian orientation.[451]

Second, since Legionaries preached the creation of a new, homogeneous and internally unified national community, political treason and religious conversion—defined as forms of one breaking his/her organic ties with the community—were regarded as capital sins.[452] It was therefore not by chance that the Legion's two founding political acts were crimes punishing treason or corruption: in 1923 Moța wounded his comrade Alexandru Vernicescu for denouncement, while in 1924 Codreanu killed prefect of police Manciu to "avenge" his humiliation and repression of student nationalism. Codreanu's and Moța's criminal actions emulated the local model of popular *haiducs*, as fighters for social justice outside state institutions; they can also be seen as part of the postwar trend of "shooters" that proliferated in European politics in the first postwar years.[453]

---

[447] This is not to say that the Legionaries were *provoked* to violence by authorities, as Eugen Weber suggested. In fact, Zeev Barbu recollects that, in public meetings he attended in inter-war Romania, legionaries were the ones causing troubles and instigating to violence. Moreover, Romanian authorities lacked firmness, alternating harsh methods with conciliatory attitudes. Despite their propaganda claims, Legionaries were thus perpetrators rather than victims. See Barbu, "Rumania," p. 159-160. In this paper, the reactive character of the Legionary violence refers to their *perception* of being victimized.

[448] Codreanu, "Pe Rarău," *Pentru legionari*, p. 199.

[449] On this issue, see also John Millfull, "'My Sex the Revolver: Fascism as a Theatre for the Compensation of Male Inadequacies," in John Millfull, ed., *The Attractions of Fascists. Social Psychology and Aesthetics of the 'Triumph of the Right'* (New York, Oxford, Munich: Berg, 1990), p. 176-185.

[450] Codreanu, "Complotul Studențesc din octombrie 1923," *Pentru legionari*, p. 165.

[451] On this point, see also Barbu, "Rumania," p. 159-160.

[452] Nae Ionescu, "Trădarea şi convertirea," in *Fenomenul legionar.* Introduction by Constantin Papanace (Cetatea Eterna [Rome]: Editura Armatolii, 1963), p. 28-29.

[453] Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier,* p. 81. See also Hobsbawm, "The Social Bandit," in *Primitive Rebels*, p. 13-29. In the latter's view, "A man becomes a bandit because he does something which is not regarded as criminal by his local conventions, but is so regarded by the State or the local rulers." The career of a social bandit always starts with a small incident

The Legion's violence was directed not only against Romania's ethnic minorities such as the Jews, but also against the country's political establishment, regarded as corrupt and inefficient. The Legionary "hierarchy of guilt" was discussed and agreed upon by the *Văcăreşteni* ever since the 1923 student plot:

> "The first problem posed to us was the following: who had to pay first? Who are the guiltiest for the terrible state of the country: Romanians or Jews? We unanimously agreed that the first and guiltiest are scoundrel Romanians who, for Judas' money, have betrayed their people. The Kikes are our enemies and in this quality they hate us, poison us and exterminate us. But the Romanian leaders who place themselves in the same category with them are more than enemies: They are traitors. The first and most terrible punishment is deserved first of all by the traitor and then by the enemy. If I had a single bullet, and in front of me there were an enemy and a traitor, I would shoot the latter."[454]

Accordingly, Codreanu defined the fight against the corrupt and treacherous political establishment as a precondition for solving the Jewish question: "The Romanian people cannot solve the Jewish question before solving the problem of *politicianism*."[455] This list of priorities imprinted the Legion an anti-establishment orientation from its very inception.

The practice of violent revenge contradicted the alleged Christian basis of Legionary ideology, generating pressing moral and ideological dilemmas. At personal level, the tension between Ion I. Moţa's and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's self-professed Christian convictions and their option for violence is documented by numerous witness accounts, which pointed out that the two were at times torn apart by moral dilemmas in justifying their crimes. The sociologist Mircea Vulcănescu argued that Codreanu "was often tortured by guilt which furrowed his face with deep wrinkles of regret, and darkened, behind their usual fierceness, his blue eyes."[456] Similarly, in 1932, Nichifor Crainic provided a shocking account of Codreanu's first experience as a speaker in the Romanian parliament (See **Document 7**). Although he had before him an elaborate text authored by Crainic, Codreanu was unable to declaim it. Inquired by Crainic over the reasons for his deplorable failure, Codreanu confessed that during his speech he constantly feared that the audience would openly blame him for his crime, calling him a criminal. He then showed Crainic his pistol, stating that he was ready to use it for punishing the eventual verbal aggressors for humiliating him.

In order to justify their deeds, Codreanu and Moţa published autobiographies, entitled *Pentru legionari* and *Cranii de lemn* respectively, resembling the genre of spiritual memoirs proliferating at the turn of the century, especially in France. Although these works were propaganda materials written for the consumption of the Legionaries and for recruiting new members, they document the convictions and main motivations of the two leaders during a particularly formative period of their existence. In retrospect, these autobiographies can also shed light on the death of the two leaders, which followed the inflexible constraints of their charismatic self-identification. According to Vulcănescu, Moţa, "tortured by bitter remorse" for his sin, went to fight in the Spanish Civil War "so that God judges him."[457] In the same

---

which pushes him in outlawry; the incipient bandit is nevertheless regarded by the local population as "honorable" and non-criminal. See p. 15, 16.

[454] Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 163.

[455] Codreanu, "Gânduri de viaţă nouă," *Pentru legionari*, p. 178.

[456] Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu asa cum l-am cunoscut*, p. 81.

[457] Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu asa cum l-am cunoscut*, p. 100.

vein, Papanace argues that Codreanu chose to confront the king's repression, fearing that taking refuge abroad might be regarded by his followers as an abdication from sacrifice.

Legionary fanaticism led to the creation of "death squads" whose members fulfilled revenge missions at all costs, thus imprinting a terrorist character on the Legion. Ion I. Moţa valued self-sacrifice as the most efficient way of political combat, in a paragraph that synthesizes the self-destructive character of the movement: "The spirit of sacrifice is essential! We all dispose of the most formidable dynamite, the most irresistible instrument of fighting, more powerful than tanks and rifles: our own soot."[458] Codreanu also claimed that "The Legionary loves death, since his blood forges the cement of a future Legionary Romania." The propensity to sacrifice led to the glorification of Legionary death, celebrated in numerous manifestos as "our most dearest wedding among weddings," as in the song by Rady Gyr, the official poet of the Legion, entitled "The Anthem of the Legionary Youth":

> The Guard, the Captain,
> Recasts us like iron eagles
> The Fatherland, the Captain,
> And the divine archangel.
> *Death, only Legionary death,*
> Is our most dearest wedding among weddings,
> For the Saint's cross, and for the Fatherland,
> We defeat forests and subdue mountains.
> There is no prison which frightens us,
> No torture, no hostile storm,
> If we all are to fall, struck in the forehead,
> Death for our Captain is dear to us.[459]

In comparing death to a wedding, Gyr alluded to a traditional feature of the widespread popular vision of a "cosmic Christianity." In its most sublime form, this attitude in the face of death was expressed in the popular ballad *Mioriţa*, a masterpiece of Romanian folk poetry, of which over seven hundred variants spread throughout the country are known. After being told by a magic sheep of an imminent plot to assassinate him, the ballad's hero, a well-to-do shepherd, adopts a passive and resigned attitude, portraying his death as a stellar wedding ceremony.

Another popular source for the cult of the sacrifice was the mythical figure of the Manole mason. According to a historical legend, Manole built the church of *Curtea de Argeş,* the medieval residence of Wallachian princes. Since the church repeatedly collapsed, in order to erect the building Manole had to sacrifice his own wife, by building her into the wall. Manole's figure appeared in numerous works attempting to define the Romanian national character in the inter-war period.[460] Due to its importance, Sorin Alexandrescu defined the "Manolic passion," as a main feature of the Romanian political culture.[461]

---

[458] Moţa, "Spasmul şi concluziile sale," in *Almanahul Societăţii "Petru Maior"* (Cluj: Cartea Românească, 1929), p. 207.

[459] Radu Gyr, "Imnul tineretii legionare," music by Ion Mânzatu, in *Cântece legionare*, edited by Ioan-Laurian Tota (Bucureşti: Editura L.A.M., 1997), my emphasis.

[460] Among the most important ones, see Lucian Blaga's drama Meşterul Manole (1927). See also the chapter on Manole in Mircea Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan. Études comparatives sur les religions et le folklore de la Dacie et de l'Europe orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1970). English edition: *Zalmoxis, the Vanishing God: Comparative Studies in the*

In addition to Christian symbolism and popular attitudes towards (self-)sacrifice,[462] Legionary ideologues also referred to the cult of death practiced by the Dacians, ancient inhabitants of the territory of Greater Romania celebrated as ancestors of the Romanian people. The Dacians defied death and offered their bravest heroes as voluntary sacrifices to their gods, as messengers to the other world. In a similar vein, the Legionary cult of death was closely associated to the cult of martyrs and presented the possibility of communion with God: "Our dead Legionaries have made the link between sky and earth. Every Legionary grave means a new root in the earth, on which the Legion is firmly grounded."[463]

The challenge of justifying violence became even more acute with the multitude of Legionary terrorist acts, most notably those committed by the *Nicadori* and the *Decemviri*. They introduced the practice of political assassinations in Romania, shocking the public. Under what conditions was a Legionary crime acceptable? What, if anything, differentiated a Legionary killing from an "ordinary" crime? How were the assassins to be punished? Legionary ideologues and theologians engaged in long speculative exercises in order to justify and exculpate these murders.

Constantin Papanace reports a vivid debate he had in prison with the assassins of Mihai Stelescu, the *Decemviri*, over the moral, political and Christian justification of Legionary crimes and their meaning. Although his essay has a propagandistic nature, it nevertheless reveals the Legionaries' own understanding of violence. Asked by the *Decemviri* to expose his position regarding their deed, Papanace acknowledged the impossibility of reconciling the belief in Orthodox Christianity with the sin of committing a crime:

> "Because you asked me to speak openly, I want to make clear the following: No matter how many moral, national or political justifications would exist for the radical punishment applied to the traitor Stelescu, from a Christian point of view—and those who are theologians know this better—it constitutes a moral sin. And the Legionaries, who regard the Christian dimension as the basis of their spiritual formation, cannot disregard this issue. This remains valid, even if there indeed exist many Christian states which maintain the punishment of death in their legislation. On this particular issue, personal or national motivation cannot attenuate the gravity of our deed. The only great excuse I see for you is your voluntary capitulation to police to pay for your sin in front of human justice, as well. The fact that there has not been any intention of escaping justice from your part proves that we are not dealing here with a terrorist act. We are dealing with an active expression of the faith—which, it is well understood, is inferior to passive (non-violent) expression, characteristic of true Christian forms—but is by far superior to so many kinds of irresponsible killings under the form of individual, collective, or revolutionary utilitarian terrorism, etc., or under legal cover, such as execution platoons, battlefields, etc. […] Therefore, together with material and earthly repenting, continuous prayers for forgiveness and mostly Christian repenting is needed for Doomsday."[464]

Religions and Folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

[461] Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul Român*, p. 23.

[462] For an anthropological analysis of popular mores treating death as a wedding, see Gail Kligman, *The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[463] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Cuvânt pentru legionari," 24 June 1937, p. 3.

[464] Constantin Papanace, *Despre Căpitan, Nicadori şi Decemviri. Crâmpei de amintiri* (Cetatea Eternă [Rome]: Editura Armatolii, 1963), p. 42.

In order to exculpate Codreanu's responsibility for the crimes committed on behalf of the Legion, Papanace presented them as voluntary initiatives at grass-roots levels. However, if they were indeed spontaneous, the criminal acts of the *Nicadori* and the *Decemviri* violated Legionary discipline. Papanace acknowledged that punishing them for insubordination was a very delicate issue, since the members of these "death squads" were in fact emulating the founding political acts of the Legion's leadership:

> "On this issue, the Captain's power of decision is not totally free. The fact that he himself, as well as Moța, were forced by circumstances to answer violently to abuses and treason hampered him from punishing similar acts. Moreover, he was compelled to show even more understanding, even at the risk of creating confusion. The situation would have been totally different had the founders of the Legion not had the fatality to walk, in their youth, constrained by circumstances, on the road to violence, in order to avoid suffocation by abusive politicians. This fatality continues to this day. Ultimately, the Legionaries are its victims."[465]

By portraying Legionaries as victims of circumstances, Papanace attempts to exculpate their crimes, with the viewpoint that their violence was in self-defense:

> "Indeed, from a Christian point of view, these acts remain regrettable. But they were the fatal consequence of the oppression by alienated and sold-out Romanian politicians, exercised at foreign instigation. Had the Legionaries been granted the liberties guaranteed by the constitution and had they not been denigrated in all forms and by all means, most surely those desperate acts would have not been committed."[466]

Papanace thus portrayed the Legionary assassins as innocent victims, as martyrs who consciously took upon them the burden of avenging betrayal, even at the risk of sacrificing their liberty. He glorified the perpetrators as earthly incarnations of Archangel Michael's revenge characterized by altruism, purity of soul and capacity for sacrifice. Only in this light can one understand the candid portraits Papanace draws of the Nicadors:

> "It seems to me that their innocence was best expressed by Doru's shining figure of an archangel, illuminating the 'box' of the main defendants. How impressive was this Nicadorian 'synthesis'! Niki's thundering regards, stemming from nicely arched eyebrows, Iancu's figure, framed by a prominent forehead, would have remained incomplete if they were not nuanced by the equilibrated but shy serenity of Doru. Only in this way did the archangelic attributes complement each other: strong determination, straightforward judgment and seraphic serenity. The picture was impressive in its totality. The sympathy emanated by Doru was irresistible not only to the Legion's followers, but also to its most uncompromising, yet fair, enemies. It was irradiating, attenuating the dark colors with which a certain part of the press portrayed the 'ferocious' Legionary criminals. Serenity was Doru's most fascinating feature."[467]

Following this line of twisted reasoning, Papanace concluded by reasserting the political usefulness of violent revenge in repressing both external betrayal and internal

---

[465] Papanace. *Despre Căpitan,* p. 43.
[466] Papanace. *Despre Căpitan,* p. 43.
[467] Papanace, *Despre Căpitan*, p. 43.

treason. In doing so, he implicitly acknowledged that, far from constituting regrettable accidents, assassinations were in fact central to the Legion's development. His conclusion is very telling in this respect: "the sacrifice of the Nicadors, as well as yours [of the *Decemviri*], despite the problems they raise, are not in vain. The movement will venerate them." [468]

Papanace's essay illuminates the Legionaries's understanding of violence, stemming from their self-professed charismatic legitimacy. It also reveals the Legionary "code of conduct" in publicly justifying their aggressions. Legionary crimes were presented as heroic acts of social justice: since state institutions were corrupted, Legionaries took on themselves the burden of revenge on behalf of the community. In order to repent for their moral sins, after fulfilling their criminal "missions" the members of the death squads voluntary surrendered to police. At the same time, they were hailed by Legionary propaganda as martyrs for the national cause.[469]

The Legion's discourse on violence underwent several tactical changes during the time, due to new political circumstances. Initially, Legionary terrorist attacks resembled the actions of a "Romantic assassin, who dies killing, out of desperation."[470] Legionary violence was selective and demonstrative, terrorist missions being carried out either by individuals or by small teams.[471] The growth of the Legion into a mass party in the 1930s demanded more sophisticated elaboration on the nature of violence and its relation to the totalitarian state. From a theoretical point of view, the Legion's pursuit of violence was legitimized by invoking the eclectic intellectual and political writings of French theorist Georges Sorel (1847-1922). Building mainly on the ideas of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Friedrich Nietzsche, Sorel advocated the renewal of the social order through a new form of apocalyptic politics in which violence played a central role.[472] Under the impact of Sorel's writings and political engagement, many intellectuals in Italy and France deserted the democratic idea in favor of the cult of violence.[473] Sorel's ideas were incorporated into Legionary ideology as well. Since 1926, in articles published in *Conştiinţa Naţională* and later in *Axa*, Nicolae Roşu tried to "legitimize violence, practically and theoretically" by valuing "the moral and dynamic sense of Sorelian violence."[474]

Under Carol's personal regime, fearing state repression, Codreanu tactically denounced violence. He gave up claims to legitimate forms of charismatic violence, invoking in his defense the civil rights and liberties stipulated by the constitutional order he had previously so vehemently opposed. He asserted that:

> "The Legionary Movement will never resort to complot or a cup in order to win. By the very essence of our beliefs we are against conspiracy. This would mean violence of an outward character, while we expect victory from an inner realization of the nation's soul.

---

[468] Papanace, *Despre Căpitan*, p. 43.
[469] For the legionary cult of the martyrs, see Constantin Papanace, *Martiri Legionari* (Cetatea Eternă [Rome]: Editura Armatolii, 1952), Collection: Biblioteca verde, No. 8.
[470] Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier,*p. 79.
[471] Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier,*p. 82-83.
[472] David Ohana, "Georges Sorel and the Rise of Political Myth," *History of European Ideas*, 13 (1991) 6, p. 733-746.
[473] See Jack J. Roth, *The Cult of Violence: Sorel and the Sorelians* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980), and his claim that Italian Fascism was "a Franco-Italian enterprise."
[474] Nicolae Roşu, "Dizolvarea Gărzii de Fier," *Axa* II (23 December 1933) 24, p. I.

> We have walled ourselves inside a framework of perfect order and legality, so as to be above any reproach. We will follow the line of the country's laws without provoking anybody, without answering to any provocation. But do not believe that this will be of any avail. The way our government thinks is: 'We cannot destroy you under the pretext that you have violated our laws; therefore, we will violate our laws and destroy you. You have decided not to be «illegal»? Well, we will be illegal for you.' So, we have been locked up in a purely diabolical system: we are accused by the press and all the official media of propaganda of violating the law, and it is just because we maintain ourselves unshakably in the framework of the law that our adversaries are able to crush us in the more cruel way.
>
> They try to throw us out of that state of legality into one of violence. But we won't allow ourselves to be pushed into that position. We have decided to act in the framework of the law. We do not want to use force. We do not want to use violence."[475]

Codreanu's strategy did not work out. On the one hand, the imprisoned Captain could not control radical regional leaders, such as Horia Sima in the Banat, who continued to sponsor terrorist attacks against authorities. On the other hand, Carol II was determined to eliminate the Legion by all possible means. The execution of Codreanu occasioned polemics over the meaning of the term "legality," fueling the Legionaries' belief in their alleged right to violent justice. After the assassination of Prime Minister Călinescu, a Legionary song glorified the sacrifice of "Miti Constantinescu death squad," including them into the panoply of Legionary assassins, made up of the *Nicadori* and the *Decemviri*:

> We are a squad of Legionary revenge
> And Decebal, in a terrible hurricane,
> Raises in us from millenarian times
> To terribly avenge the Captain.
> We are the team of Legionary revenge
> And in our chests we have the shadow of the holy martyrs
> To open to the Guard a road to the sun,
> We descend from *Nicadori* and *Decemviri*.
> For the destiny of the betrayed country,
> And for the people broken in chains,
> For light and for justice,
> We raise as the Dacians did out of the earth
> Prahova winner in eternity
> Digs our creed in granite rock,
> *Through our merciless arm,*
> *The Holy Archangel punishes.*[476]

Denouncing the unprecedented repression that followed as an act of state terrorism, Mihail Sturdza (who was to be the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Legionary government) denounced the execution of Legionary leaders as "the slaughter of the flower of the Romanian youth." He drew the attention to the cruelty of the massacre, arguing that "the

---

[475] Quoted in Sturdza, *The suicide of Europe*, p. 37.

[476] "Imnul echipei Miti Dumitrescu," by Ion Tolescu, music by Ion Cubicec, in *Cântece legionare*, Ediție completă îngrijită de Ioan-Laurian Tota (Bucureşti: Editura L.A.M., 1997), my translation and emphasis.

bodies of those murdered were left for days at the crossroads as in the times of Genghis Khan."[477]

Debates about the meaning of violence amplified during the Legion's short rule, when it could mobilize state institutions and capacities for pursuing its enemies. In order to justify its campaign of punishment, the official Legionary propaganda presented revenge as a necessary act of justice leading to the salvation of the community. Constantin Noica hailed the purifying effect of violence, openly assuming the contradiction between the Legionary code of conduct and the moral code preached by the Church:

> "Violence does not always means blindness; sometimes, it means thirst for purity. The Captain and Moța have struck up. Yet they have struck because their gestures had a purifying effect to the heart of this people. And they have struck up only then. Is it a sin to deal a blow? Moța knew the answer; the Captain knew it, too. That is why he once told a priest: 'We are sinful towards the Church; this is the Legionaries' attitude toward the Church." But the spirit of the community had asked all those who were giving punishment, to punish. Do you understand the drama in a Christian's conscience? You have to lose your soul in order to purify the soul of your nation. This is true. The Church does not allow you to lose your soul."[478]

Once liberated from its Christian moral constraints, Legionary violence escalated to unchecked heights, evolving from selective and demonstrative revenge to organized terror and arbitrary killing.

[477] Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe*, p. 149.
[478] Constantin Noica, "Sufletul cetății" (The soul of the community), *Buna Vestire* (New Series), 14 (23 September 1940), quoted in Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 360

8. Legionary Legacy Revived: Codreanu as a Contemporary Hero Model

8.1. "The symbol of the Divine Will:" Codreanu as a Charismatic Giant

The defeat of its rebellion in January 1941 marked the Legion's complete and definitive demise from the political scene. On 14 February 1941, the National Legionary State was abolished and any form of political activity strictly forbidden. General Antonescu ordered a new wave of repression: According to official figures, until 25 February, authorities arrested 4,638 Legionaries in Bucharest and another 4,714 in the rest of the country.[479] They were subjected to public trials and sentenced to death, to forced labor, or allowed to fight in special units of sacrifice against Russia on the Eastern front.[480] Antonescu also orchestrated the state-sponsored propaganda with the purpose of irrevocably compromising the Legion before the public.[481] Numerous Legionaries who repudiated the Legion's actions joined this campaign either voluntarily or forced by authorities.

The death of Codreanu and the Legion's rapid loss of power marked the breakdown of the charismatic community. While scholarly research has generally concentrated on the life-trajectory of the main Legionary leaders, little attention has been paid to charismatic group formation and dissolution as significant components of tragedy.[482] The lack of "miracles" brought the charismatic hypnosis of the followers to a bitter end, refuting their professed confidence in a final victory. The troubling confession of one Legionary—taken in 1939, just before his execution in the Miercurea Ciuc camp—documents his loss of trust in the final victory of the movement:

> "You know, […] I would like to be strong, not to tremble and to die serenely. But you see, I cannot. I feel in me desperation, total devastation. Why did our youthful years have to be broken in this way? It is so beautiful under the sun! And this fog outside, I feel how it is pressing on me, how it is taking over my inner substance. You see, I will not be able to say, as Moţa did, 'I die, Corneliu, full of happiness, for Christ and the Legion. I am happy and die blissfully because I had the capacity to understand you and to follow you.' He, as well as Marin, knew that as long as the Captain was alive, Legionary victory was assured. They could not possibly imagine that somebody in this country would have had the courage to harm the Captain. They believed he was under the protection of God, who would not allow his death until his time came, which would have meant the turning of the entire world toward the Higher One.
>
> But us, we had to live this tragedy of the Captain's destruction. As long as he was alive, death did not mean anything to us, as in the song: 'Death, only Legionary

---

[479] *Universul* no. 52 (25 February 1941), quoted in Cristian Troncotă, *Eugen Cristescu. Asul Serviciilor Secrete Româneşti* (Bucureşti: Editura Roza Vânturilor, 1994), p. 71.

[480] Dorin Dobrincu, "Legionarii şi guvernarea Ion Antonescu (1941-1944)," in Kurt W. Treptow, ed., *Romania: A Crossroads of Europe* (Iaşi, Oxford, Palm Beach, Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002), p. 199-230.

[481] *Pe marginea prăpastiei, 21–23 ianuarie 1941*. 2 vols. (Bucureşti: Monitorul Oficial şi Imprimeriile Statului, Imprimeria Centrală, 1941). Vol. 1: Partea 1: *Lovitura de stat din septembrie 1940*. Partea 2: *Guvernarea naţional–lcgionară*; Vol. 2: Partea 3–4: *Pregătirea rebeliunii*. Partea 5: *Rebeliunea*, 2nd ed., Reprinted: (Bucureşti: Editura Scripta, 1992).

[482] For the links between the dissolution of the charismatic authority and tragedy, with a discussion of William Shakespeare's *Othello*, see Raphael Falco, "Charisma and Tragedy: An Introduction," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16 (June 1999) 3, p. 71-98.

> death, is our most dearly wedding among weddings…' Today, without him, our fight seems futile to many. No matter how many sacrifices we make, we will not be able to move the soul of this people. Think with what indifference the news of the Captain's assassination was received in political life. Not even one protest from anybody. Nobody raised his voice. How much cowardliness in people!"[483]

This genuine "awakening" from the charismatic hypnosis was also documented by Mircea Eliade, who recalls—in his memoirs—the shock of learning about the horrible crimes committed as revenge against Codreanu's assassination:

> "With horror I learned of the assassination of Nicolae Iorga and V. Madgearu, plus a group of "detainees" awaiting interrogation at the Văcăreşti prison. By the assassinations of the night of November 29, the Legionary squads who committed them believed they were avenging Codreanu. In fact, they had nullified the religious meaning of 'sacrifice' held by the Legionaries executed under Carol and had irreparably discredited the Iron Guard, considered from then on as a terrorist and pro-Nazi movement."[484]

In the process of routinization following Codreanu's death, the Legion lost the vitality of charisma. After its demise from power, it survived only as a political grouping only through a small group of cadres who escaped the harsh repression by taking refuge in Germany. These émigré Legionaries were divided by an acute factional rivalry. A report of the Romanian Intelligence Service, *Siguranța*, revealed the existence of four factions within the Legion.[485] The first and most powerful was the group of Sima's partisans, called "Simişti," formed by leading cadres from Bucharest and other territorial strongholds. Rejecting any compromise, and formally preserving the command structure of the Legion, the Simişti were plotting to regain political power with German aid. To this end, they planned terrorist attacks in Romania for causing instability.

The second faction, led by priest Ion Dumitrescu-Borşa, called the "Codrenişti," gathered the Legionaries loyal to Ion Zelea Codreanu, such as Dumitrescu-Zăpadă, the wives of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Ion Moța, and diverse Legionary founders. Although motivated by a spirit of revenge, this faction was more moderate in its orientation. It organized clandestine propaganda activities and organizational meetings, but generally rejected violent means of action. Lacking political initiative, the Codrenişti were nevertheless dominated by the more influential Sima group, with which many preserved strong ties. The third faction, called the "Memorialists," and led by Augustin Bidianu, Victor Medrea and Vasile Noveanu, grouped approximately 200 cadres who denounced the Legionary rebellion. They pleaded for reconciliation with General Antonescu. The fourth, and less numerous faction, called the "Găvănescu-Budişteanu grouping," intended to serve as mediator between Sima and General Antonescu. Its members lacked real influence within the Legion, and their efforts remained therefore largely unsuccessful.

The loss of power led to the repudiation of the leadership of Sima, who was held responsible for the Legion's lamentable failure. Opposition factions attempted to re-launch

---

[483] Ion Roth Jelescu, *Şi cerul plângea* (Madrid, 1974), quoted in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, Vol. 2, p. 256-262.

[484] Mircea Eliade, *Autobiography II 1937-60* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 85.

[485] Arhive of the Romanian Intellicenge Service, File no. 7, 910, p. 64-65, cited in Troncotă, *Eugen Cristescu*, p. 70-71.

the movement on the "Christian foundations" allegedly set by Codreanu and Moța but betrayed by Sima. A main attempt to reorganize the Legion was put forward by Constantin Papanace. In *Orientări pentru legionari* (Guidelines for Legionaries), written in 1942 in the German camp of Berkenbrück Spree, Papanace identified several challenges to the Legion's internal cohesion: its leadership crisis, its political and doctrinal confusion, the "police psychosis" it had acquired in more than a decade of clandestine fighting, the general suspicion, sectarianism and clan networks dominating the movement, the fragmentation in generations of the Legionary membership, and the "sterile and dangerous" regionalism hampering its national cohesion. He reasserted the importance of love as the fundament of the Legion's organization: "In the Legionary system, love is the principal generating force. It is also love that assures the cohesion of the movement. Love is the bright side which melts and tears apart all satanic actions."

Despite Panapance's words of warning, claims for a charismatic renewal within the Legion took the form of generational conflict. As previously shown, the political self-legitimacy of the Legion was based on the myth of the messianic mission of the "young generation." This idea was repeatedly reiterated by Legionary propaganda. In 1940, Traian Herseni emphasized the messianic qualification of teenagers: "From where then can come salvation? Only from these people who were not called into power and are not guilty at all for the bad state of affairs. These people have to be in their great majority youngsters."[486] However, in the early 1940s, the founding Legionary leaders born at the turn of the century and starting their political activity in their early twenties were around forty years old. Against the background of intense factional rivalry, their age posed a major challenge to their leadership, leading to generational cleavages.

The latent conflict erupted within the Legionary camp in Buchenwald. Eugen Weber pointed out that, among the 226 legionaries interned there, only fifteen belonged to the Captain's generation; the rest had an average age of 27.4 years, with three-quarters of them still in their early twenties.[487] Invoking the messianic vocation of the teenagers, these young Legionaries—members of the Brotherhoods of the Cross—argued "the Captain's generation has failed. Now, only those who are twenty years old can fulfill his ideals." Facing a political offensive of young Legionary cadres, older leader Papanace had to acknowledge the existence of a generational schism within the Legion: "Ten years ago this problem did not exist, because all the Legionary cadres were of a similar age. [...] Nowadays, after twenty years, there are already many older cadres."[488]

Papanace reacted virulently against this "horizontal fragmentation" of the organization, denouncing it as "a dangerous path." In his view, the "twenty circular age-groups" of Legionary membership formed "the backbone of the Legion."[489] A continuous fragmentation of its leadership in subsequent generations would end in the destruction of its internal organizational structure and in wasting creative energies. In defending the messianic legitimacy of Codreanu's generation, Papanace presented it as predestined to lead though a unique combination of an exceptional historical moment, fate and qualities.

In the postwar period, Legionary propaganda abroad experienced an unprecedented boom. If under the Antonescu regime or in Nazi Germany Legionary publications were subject to political control and censorship, after the war Legionary propaganda could flourish in Diaspora circles, mainly in Austria, Spain and Brazil. Most of the "classic" works, such as Codreanu's *Pentru legionari* and *Cărticica şefului de cuib*, and Moța's *Cranii de lemn,* in

[486] Traian Herseni, *Mişcarea legionară şi ţărănimea* (Bucureşti, 1941), p. 4.
[487] Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 119.
[488] Papanace, "Fragmentarea în generații," p. 450-467.
[489] Papanace, "Fragmentarea în generații," p. 450-467.

addition to memoirs and other doctrinal works were published within a new series entitled "Colecţia Omului Nou" (The Collection of the New Man) printed in Salzburg. To these, main leaders in exile, such as Horia Sima and Constantin Papanace, and the Legionary intellectual Faust Brătescu added a massive corpus of works meant to further elaborate and systematize Legionary doctrine, as "a new vision over world and life."[490]

The cult of the Captain was at the very center of this propaganda activity, being assiduously promoted by hagiografic works celebrating anniversaries of his birth or death or main events in the history of the Legion, authored by members of main Legionary factions, the *Codrenişti* and the *Simişti*. A first eulogistic portrait of Codreanu in a multitude of charismatic roles was provided by priest Ştefan Palaghiţă, belonging to the former faction. In an essay written in November 1944 and included in his partisan history of the movement first published in 1956, Palaghiţă portrayed Codreanu as a "constructive" hero who focused on the spiritual dimension of his followers' character; as a great political figure who had the prophetic power to "foresee political events many years ahead and to organize the direction of the fight" meant to guide the following generations; as a Byzantine "*Basileus*" (Emperor), in view of "his perfect understanding of Christian doctrine and the way he understood to unite the people and the Church;" and as a "great Christian" due to his unusual spiritual power and capacity of communion with God through prayer.[491] In order to exemplify this last quality ascribed to Codreanu, Palaghiţă narrated the following personal anecdote, meant to assert the mysterious attraction of clerics to the Legion, as opposed to "ordinary" politics:

> "All priests were once convoked by Dem. Dobrescu, the mayor of the capital. There [in the city hall] I found myself in a meeting with about 100 priests called in for being convinced to make peasantist politics [for the National Peasant Party]. After the end of the meeting, I headed toward Saint Ilie Gorgani Church. There were only several ladies there and in front of the shrine was the Captain, kneeling. He was praying at the icon of the Redeemer for the healing of General Conatacuzino *Grănicerul*. I went further and, out of curiosity, I watched the way he was praying. [….]
>
> There are some who, during prayer, try hard to fixate a saint's face in their imagination, or to look at an icon, falling into the mistake of holding to an imaginary prayer. This practice is false. It makes a man wander like a traveler in a night without stars and prevent him from ever reaching God. Others, when they pray, are invaded by all kinds of thoughts and temptations, and for this reason they wage a continuous and desperate fight with their thoughts and temptations, and they too do not reach the necessary peace, God. There is a third type of prayer, in which the man considers his mind a liturgy and his heart a shrine, where he concentrates his mind and his entire being and from which elevates toward God as perfumed incense, and experiences moments when he forgets he lives on earth.
>
> Watching the Captain then, I realized I had in front of me a liturgier. A mysterious power pushed me to kneel as well, my gesture being justified by the Orthodox duty that we have to pray all for one. In a mysterious way, the Captain's prayer was giving me strength and warmth. This mystical excursion lasted for a long time. When I stood up, to my great surprise, I saw behind me all the priests from

[490] Horia Sima, *Doctrina legionară* (Madrid: Editura Mişcării Legionare, 1980), p. 5. See also his *Histoire du Movement Legionnaire* (Rio de Janeiro: Dacia, 1972). Significantly, Sima's account finishes with the Legionary electoral success in 1937, the author avoiding to document the most controversial aspects in the history of the movement that took place in the period 1938-1941, during which he was a central protagonist.

[491] Palaghiţă, "Căpitanul," in *Garda de Fier*, p. 51-64.

> which I had separated after the peasantist meeting. They kneeled and they were praying, just as I did. The Captain was inexpressibly happy that we had prayed together with Him. He still did not recover from the prayer and his green eyes were mysterious, which gave me shivers in the same way as the eyes of the Byzantine icons. Outside, all priests gathered together, and we asked ourselves: 'What brought us to the Gorgani Church? And what made us kneel together with the Captain?' We did not find the answer, but many of those priests later became Legionaries. They all maintain the conviction that the great power of the Captain is his capacity of prayer. It confers on him the light and the grace to create the New Man. The Legionary who does not pray, or who is ashamed of praying, cannot be called a Legionary, because he is not in communion with the Captain."[492]

Another representative work for the cult of the Captain, originating from the latter faction, is Sima's *Doctrina Legionară*. On the one hand, in order to legitimize his doctrinal writings, Sima appealed to the authority of the venerated texts of the "Legionary founders," Codreanu and Moța. On the other hand, in an attempt to adapt the Legion's program to post-1945 socio-political realities and to assert its continued relevance, Sima tactically presented the fascist negations, namely anti-communism, anti-Semitism and anti-*politicianism*, as "accidents in the ideological development of the Legion" which disappeared together with the historical conditions that had generated them.[493]

In the preface of a new edition of *Pentru legionari*, published in 1968—on the 30th anniversary of Codreanu's death—Sima provided a strong reaffirmation of Codreanu's charismatic cult as a way of legitimizing the movement's continuity:

> "Corneliu Zelea Codreanu cannot be removed from our daily preoccupations by venerating him only as a historical figure, as happens with all great men who contributed great deeds to the history of a people. The Captain is not a reality of the past; he constantly affirms his presence in our actions. He inspires us in every moment of our decisions, he corrects us when we do things not in line with his vision, and he is happy and approves of us when we act in his own style. With the Captain we keep a permanent dialog. He gives meaning to the will of the nation better than we do. In fact, he leads the movement, or if the movement were to be conducted in a manner foreign to his thinking, the movement would cease to exist. He is the energy who constantly revitalizes our energies weakened by fights, privations, deceptions and prisons. The Captain has not died and cannot die! Although he is not among us in flesh and blood, he is not less alive then we are. This is a question those foreign to our Legionary universe cannot understand. The Captain is alive in our midst not in a speculative or theoretical sense, not for employing a certain kind of speaking about the lost ones, not as an image, symbol or expression, but alive as a soul in a concrete sense, alive as a spiritual force which dominates us and overwhelms us, takes us from apathy and engages us in the fight."[494]

In post-World War II Legionary propaganda, the *magnification* of Codreanu's persona thus knew no limits, the dead leader being transformed into *a charismatic giant*. His cult reached incongruous heights in the writings of Legionary émigré Faust Brătescu, who—

---

[492] Palaghiță, *Garda de Fier*, p. 59-60.
[493] Sima, *Doctrina legionară*, p. 5.
[494] Horia Sima, "Destinul scrierilor legionare," in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari* (Salzburg, 1968), Colecția "Omului Nou," my translation and emphasis.

in an eulogy entitled *Corneliu-Zelea Codreanu, Erou Neo-Cosmogon*—referred to Codreanu as "the symbol of the Divine Will, the meta-human."[495]

8.2. Charisma and Communist Leadership

Although, during its short history, The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" was outlawed five times by authorities and endured waves of harsh physical repression under successive political regimes, its charismatic nationalism has had an enduring impact on Romanian political life. During the communist regime, it inspired the strong charismatic component of Nicolae Ceauşescu's rule (1965-1989), an aspect that has remained to date under-researched. In the following, I explore the utilization of elements of the Legionary legacy under the communist regime during its various phases, suggesting directions for future research on the topic.

Numerous scholars applied charisma to the study of communist movements and regimes. Gentile defined communism as a type of totalitarian political religion, similar to fascism; Griffin emphasized the palingenetic mythical core of communist ideology, suggesting comparative analyses of several "palingenetic political communities" such as Ceauşescu's Romania, Nasser's Egypt, Kim Il-Sŏng's North Korea, Pol Pot's Cambodia, Gadhafi's Libya, Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the Ayatollah's Iran; Daniel N. Nelson offered a typology of communist leadership based on three strategies of legitimization, namely charisma, control and coercion; Robert C. Tucker studied the Bolshevik Party and the charismatic leadership of Vladimir I. Lenin; Jean C. Robinson focused on the institutionalization of Mao's charisma after his death; Kenneth Jowitt pointed out the transfer of the charismatic legitimacy from an individual to a supra-individual party organization, and identified three stages of development of Leninist regimes: transformation of the old society, consolidation of charismatic-revolutionary regimes, and societal inclusion.[496]

In Romania, the communist take-over was not the result of a victorious revolutionary movement led by a charismatic personality, comparable to Fidel Castro, Iosif B. Tito or Mao Tse-Tung. Although formally legitimized on the basis of contested national elections (1946), the communists' bid for power relied heavily on coercion and the support of the Red Army. The first stage of the development of Romania's communist regime (1946-1958) was defined by Stefan Fisher-Galați as the loss of national identity by the destruction of the "bourgeois nationalist" legacy and the diminution of national sovereignty under a virtual Soviet occupation.[497] The same process was described by Michael Shafir as a "primitive accumulation of legitimacy"[498] and by Kennet Jowitt as "breaking through" namely "the decisive alternation or destruction of values, structures, and behaviors which are perceived by

[495] *Corneliu-Zelea Codreanu, Erou Neo-Cosmogon* (Madrid: Editura Carpați, 1987).

[496] Gentile, "The Sacralisation of Politics," p. 18-55; Robert Griffin, "The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies," *The Journal of Contemporary History*, 37 (2002) 1, p. 35; Tucker, "The Theory of Charismatic Leadership," p. 731-756; Daniel N. Nelson, "Charisma, Control, Coercion: The Dilemma of Communist Leadership," *Comparative Politics* 17 (October 1984) 1, p. 1-15; Jean C. Robinson, "Mao after Death: Charisma and Political Legitimacy," *Asian Survey* 28 (March 1988) 3, p. 353-368; Kenneth Jowitt, "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes," *World Politics* 28 (October 1975) 1, p. 69-96.

[497] Stephen Fischer Galati, *The New Rumania. From People's Democracy to Socialist Repu*blic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

[498] Michael Shafir, *Romania: politics, economy and society* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1985), p. 56.

a new elite as compromising or contributing to the actual or potential existence of alternative centers of power."[499] The Communist Party conducted a campaign of indoctrination having at its center the theme of the revolutionary transformation of the society through class struggle and the ideological rebirth of the political community.[500] The official propaganda manufactured a revolutionary past for the Party, capitalizing on its "heroic" clandestine fight in the pre-1944 period.

In their efforts to establish their rule, communists did not hesitate to collaborate with former Legionaries, in view of two main advantages. First, the Communist Party was in a desperate need of cadres for fully conquering the political power. Outlawed during the period 1924-1944, the Party lacked not just mass support, but also regional networks of activists: it had only 1,000 members in 1944 and 35.000 in April 1945.[501] Given their extensive experience in conducting political propaganda and in building regional networks, Legionaries could prove useful in the effort of increasing party membership. Second, the Legionaries' collaboration with the communists was not simply and purely opportunistic: despite major ideological differences and history of hostile relations, they were nevertheless united by strong anti-Western, anti-democratic and anti-liberal convictions. As a result, several political accords were concluded in 1945 with the Communist Party.[502] In exchange for amnesty, certain Legionaries were eager to actively contribute to the demise of the "old order."[503] Surely, the Legionaries' enrollment in the Communist Party was far from unanimous; many of them could not overcome their virulent anti-communism and organized an armed resistance that undermined the regime until mid-1950s.

Also as a result of this infusion of new members, the Communist Party experienced a spectacular growth to 710,000 members in 1947 and to over 1,000,000 in 1948 (due to its fusion with the Romanian Social-Democrat Party, under the new name of Romanian Workers' Party).[504] Upon its consolidation, the attitude of the communist regime towards

---

[499] Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development. The Case of Romania, 1944-1965* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University. of California Press, 1971), p. 7.

[500] For literary propaganda in favor of the new Communist political religion, see Eugen Negrici, *Poezia unei religii politice* (Bucureşti: Editura Fundaţiei PRO, 1995).

[501] Ioan Chiper, "Considerations on the Numerical Evolution and Ethnic Composition of the Romanian Communist Party, 1921-1952," *Totalitarian Archives* X (Spring-Summer 2002), 11.

[502] Stelian Tănase, *Elite şi societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej, 1948-1965* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1998), p. 48.

[503] This claim is documented by the results of a comparative research project on the history of land collectivization in Romania initiated and coordinated by Gail Kligman (UCLA) and Katherine Verdery (University of Michigan). The project includes nineteen studies authored by historians, sociologists, anthropologists and literary critics based in the USA, the UK, and in various academic centers in Romania, covering all historical regions of Romania and focusing mainly on complex inter-ethnic and multi-religious communities. Using a combination of archival research and oral interviews, many researchers confirm that numerous communist activists and agitators at local level were former Legionaries, eager to exchange their "green shirts" with membership into the Communist Party. For such examples, see studies by Liviu Chelcea on Reviga, Ialomiţa county (Wallachia), Virgiliu Ţârau on Rimetea and Măgina, Aiud and Turda counties (Transylvania), Gail Kligman in Ieud, Maramureş county etc., in Constantin Iordachi, Dorin Dobrincu, eds., *Ţărănimea şi puterea: procesul de colectivizare in România, 1949-1962* (Iaşi: Polirom, Forthcoming 2005).

[504] Tănase, *Elite şi societate*, p. 47-48.

Legionaries radically changed. In 1948-1952, a campaign of "verification" of the Party membership led to the elimination of circa 100,000 Legionaries, followed by other 40,000 until 1960;[505] many of them were arrested and imprisoned. Although purged from the Party, Legionaries remained a concern for the regime in the following years, as well. Statistics compiled in 1957 by the Ministry of the Interior indicated a number of 289,582 persons hostile to the regime: among them, 84,521 were former Legionaries, 48,997 had been members of the National Peasant Party, 32,346 members of the National Liberal Party, and 12,854 members of other parties.[506]

The turning point in the evolution of the Romanian regime is generally considered the deviation from Soviet foreign policy that took place in the period 1958-1964. This deviation occurred in several strategic steps. It began in 1958 when Soviet troops left Romania, continued in 1959 when Romanian leaders rejected the "Valev plan" for a division of labor within the COMECOM that assigned the role of agricultural supplier for the more industrialized communist countries to Romania, and culminated with a famous "Statement of the Romanian Communist Party" issued on 21 April 1964, regarded by many analysts as a nationalist and anti-Soviet political document.[507]

The outbreak of the diplomatic conflict with the Soviet Union had deep internal and external consequences. The necessity to create a basis for the new policy of independence from Moscow generated a nationalist turn in the domestic policy of the regime, leading first to the partial recuperation and then the recreation of national ideology in a socialist system. To this end, the regime renounced external sources of legitimization and in favor of internal values and consensus. The nation, rather than the proletariat, became the regime's ideological base. Romanian leaders abandoned Marxism for a policy of modernization. This policy led to the establishment of a national communist regime based on three main sources: the redefinition of the relationship between local elites and Moscow; the implementation of an independent program of industrial development in view of the "national interest"; and a return to certain elements of the cultural tradition of the inter-war period.[508]

The policy of political separation from the USSR was continued and even amplified under the leadership of Nicolae Ceauşescu. Domestically, the communist regime underwent considerable changes during this long rule, moving into the direction of charismatic leadership. William Crowther pointed at the post-1965 "authoritarian nationalist renaissance" in Romania based on a peculiar mixture of prewar practices and postwar institutions.[509] If in other Eastern European communist countries there occurred a gradual process of de-Stalinization marked by decentralization and "elite accommodation," in Romania the regime turned to an authoritarian rather than an accommodating direction, opting for increased centralization and populist strategies of mobilization supported by coercion. In a similar vein, Katherine Verdery suggested that communist regimes generally used a combination of three models of control over society: remunerative, coercive and symbolic-ideological.[510] In the

---

[505] Nicolae Ceauşescu, "Stenograma Plenariei CC al PMR din 30 noiembrie-6 decembrie 1961," cited in Tănase, *Elite şi societate,* footnote 50, p. 90. Overall, in 1948-1955, 434,607 persons were excluded from the Party, representing a share of 45 percent of its total membership. As a result, the number of members decreased to half a million in 1953. Tănase, *Elite şi societate*, p. 115.

[506] Tănase, *Elite şi societate*, p. 157

[507] Shafir, *Romania,* p. 177.

[508] Tănase, *Elite şi societate*, p. 218-222.

[509] William E. Crowther, *The Political Economy of Romanian Socialism* (New York, Westport, London: Praeger, 1988).

[510] Cf. Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*.

case of Romania, the emphasis was put on the latter two forms of legitimization. While incipient attempts for remunerative control were reversed and subsequently kept minimal, with the "July Thesis" (6 and 9 July 1971) the regime shifted to a symbolic-ideological control of society, which "institutionalized" the discourse on Romanian national identity and designed a privileged political role for a cultural elite composed mainly of Party historians, writers and philosophers.[511]

The regime took the direction of an increasingly personalized power, based on Nicolae Ceauşescu's leadership.[512] In order to forge popular consensus and to obtain political mobilization and inclusion of heterogeneous social strata, Ceauşescu employed a charismatic imagery, symbolism and style of leadership. He acted as an omnipresent populist leader, travelling all over the country: only between 1965 and 1973, Ceauşescu visited more than 1,000 enterprises.[513] Given the fact that charismatic fervor can be sustained only through its continuous recreation, Ceauşescu heavily relied on the rhetoric of the "permanent revolution." As Michael Shafir emphasized, the regime employed a policy of "simulating change/simulating permanence." Internally, it created a facade of mobilization and change, using such formulas as "the New Economic Mechanism," or "the New Agrarian Revolution," in order to foster political mobilization. In foreign policy, it simulated permanent allegiance to the Soviet Bloc in order to avoid a military intervention, while constantly reassuring the West of Romania's autonomous foreign policy course.[514]

Ceauşescu's leader cult was built on the legacy of Legionary "palingenetic" nationalism.[515] This syncretism was possible due to the fact that, with the change in political context in the late-1950s, there occurred a gradual relaxation of political control and many survivors of the pre-1945 cultural elite could return to their academic positions, paving the way towards a synthesis of the tradition of integral nationalism and official Marxist ideology. Important cultural figures and works of the 1930s—some of them well known for their Legionary orientation—could reappear on the cultural scene.[516]

---

[511] Cf. Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*.

[512] For comprehensive presentations of the cult of personality under Ceauşescu's Romania, see Mary Ellen Fisher, *Nicolae Ceausescu: A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989); and mostly Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *The Ceauşescu Cult* (Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 2000); Romanian edition: *Cultul lui Ceauşescu* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2003). Although it does not explore the charismatic component of Ceauşescu's rule in view of Max Weber's theoretical perspective, the book provides a very informative reconstruction of Ceausescu state-organized cult of personality, made up of analytical reports written between 1978 and 1987.

[513] Nelson, "Charisma, Control, Coercion," footnote 44, p. 15.

[514] Shafir, *Romania*, p. 193.

[515] Robert Griffin, "The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies," *The Journal of Contemporary History*, 37 (2002) 1, p. 35.

[516] Examples include Nichifor Crainic, released from prison in 1962 and later editor of the propaganda magazine *Glasul Patriei,* distributed abroad; Ion Dumitrescu-Borşa, who renegated his Legionary convictions and authored propaganda articles in the official press; and even the late Constantin Noica, who was imprisoned until 1964 and then worked as a researcher at the Center for Logics. After his retirement, Noica built a philosophical discussion circle that gained considerable influence over the young generation. On the activity and personality of Constantin Noica, see Verdery, "The 'School' of Philosopher Constantin Noica," *National Ideology*, p. 256-300; and Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine*, Filozofie şi naţionalism: paradoxul Noica* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998).

The reintegration of former Legionaries into the propaganda machine of the communist regime led to the recuperation of elements of the Legion's charismatic-nationalist ideology, having as object Ceauşescu's messianic-revolutionary rule and adapted to the ideological framework of national communism: the myth of political rebirth and the creation of the "new man" (*omul nou*), the manifest destiny of the Romanian people and the predestined and revolutionary rule of the charismatic leader. The charismatic-messianic language employed in inter-war right-wing magazines such as *Porunca Vremii* or *Sfarmă Piatră* permeated leading communist journals, such as the official party newspaper *Scînteia* (The Spark).

Nicolae Ceauşescu became the subject of a fanatic state-sponsored personality cult, innumerable official volumes elaborating on the theme of his predestined rule. As Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in the inter-war period, Ceauşescu was portrayed as a historical figure, as part of a gallery of mythical Romanian leaders, with a special emphasis on the Moldovan prince Stephen the Great.[517] Other propaganda works celebrated Ceauşescu in various charismatic roles, as the first *Peasant, Worker* and *Intellectual* of the country, a "Genius of the Carpathian Mountains," and a political "Titan." For foreign consumption, a hagiographic work authored by the Greek writer Theodoros Katrivanos, suggestively entitled *Demiurgul României noi* (The Demiurge of the New Romania), portrayed Ceauşescu as a charismatic incarnation of the Romanian people's soul.

Moreover, although Marxism was a secular ideology, the communist leader was even celebrated as a God-like figure. His providential birthday in 1918 was interpreted as a divine sign, symbolically placed between the 1917 Soviet Revolution and the creation of Greater Romania. The writer Eugen Barbu, a leading orchestrator of the leader cult, confessed his temptation to compare Ceauşescu—called a "philosopher, statesman (and also athlete)"—with a saint, a comparison restrained only by his "fear of violating Marxist canons."[518]

Ceauşescu's personality cult differed nevertheless from Codreanu's charisma in several key aspects: First, while the latter's charismatic movement was built in a pre-power stage, Ceauşescu's cult was manufactured only after his arrival in power. Second, while Codreanu never occupied a position of power, Ceauşescu used the massive state apparatus for promoting his cult. This difference accounts also for the modification in scale: While Codreanu was compared—more modestly—to Hannibal or popular *haiducs,* Ceauşescu's cult of personality took a planetary dimension: he was compared to world statesmen such as "Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Pericles, Cromwell, Napoleon, Peter the Great and Lincoln."[519] Most importantly, Codreanu's charisma was based on voluntary adherence, since the leader did not dispose of means of coercion. In contrast, as Nelson pointed out, Ceauşescu's rule can be characterized as a "mixed leadership," concomitantly based on populism and coercion as means to "reinforce" charismatic authority.[520] Ceauşescu thus built up a powerful dictatorial charisma, linking autocratic powers with populist techniques of mass manipulation and state-sponsored idolatry.

Ceauşescu's rule introduced numerous political innovations into the Romanian political practice, linked to his Leninist conception of revolutionary leadership and his claims for charismatic authority. Initially invested as secretary general of the *Central Committee* of the Communist Party, Ceauşescu soon enlarged the popular basis of his leadership by proclaiming himself secretary general of the P*arty* itself, and could be removed only by a nationwide congress of representatives. For strengthening his control over the Party,

---

[517] *România Liberă*, 19 January 1978.
[518] *Neuer Weg*, 25 January 1987, cited in Gabanyi, *Cultul lui Ceauşescu,* p. 58.
[519] *Scînteia*, 29 November 1974, cited in Gabanyi, *Cultul lui Ceauşescu,* p. 59.
[520] Nelson, "Charisma, Control, Coercion," p. 8.

prominent older cadres were gradually eliminated from leading positions and a system of rotation into functions was implemented in order to prevent the development of dissident centers of power. This marked a change in the role of the unique Party itself, which evolved from an elite revolutionary nucleus to a mass-corporatist organization, representing all strata of the society.

In 1974, Ceauşescu became the president of the Republic, a newly created institution meant to further consolidating his leadership.[521] In order to create the illusion of popular consensus, the leader also revived the plebiscitarian tradition used for the first time by Prince Cuza and later by Carol II and Ion Antonescu. A constitutional amendment adopted in 1986 stipulated the organization of popular referendums for all questions of national interest, upon the initiative of the president of the republic. Presented as enhancing Romania's original "direct democracy," this measure contributed to the consolidation of the president's personal powers, since he was able to bypass the will of the Great National Assembly (the formally elected parliament) and appeal directly to citizens' approval.

The policy of the regime radicalized in the 1980s, when Romania experienced a general economic and socio-political crisis. The regime's mismanagement of the economy resulted in food rationing, shortages of electricity and medicines, which generated widespread popular discontent. Confronting an acute crisis of legitimacy and popular discontent, Nicolae Ceauşescu chose to increase repressive measures, transforming Romania into a veritable *Polizeistaat*, and to exacerbate nationalist propaganda. To explain this peculiar evolution of Romanian politics in its last decade, Vladimir Tismăneanu coined the concept of "national Stalinism," a term that refers to regimes that instrumentalize a nationalistic ideological framework while opposing any significant political change.[522] The main characteristics of nationalist communist propaganda in the 80s were xenophobia, autarchy, isolationism, hostility towards the West, anti-intellectualism and protochronism.[523] In this way, as Michael Shafir pointed out, "discontent and political dissent, instead of being channeled into the system, as inputs, were successfully deflected by the leadership towards external (Soviet and Hungarian) targets as outputs."[524]

Concomitantly, the official propaganda raised the cult of personality to new heights, marked by gigantic "popular celebrations" of the leader's birthday and other official anniversaries, comparable to the cult of Kim Ir-Sen in North Korea. Ceauşescu's charismatic claims were nevertheless further undermined by the decaying physical power of the leader, thereby raising doubts over his ability to provide adequate leadership, and by the growing power and influence exercised by his wife, Elena Ceauşescu, transforming the Romanian regime into a peculiar kind of "dual dictatorship." The regime's failure to provide charismatic "need satisfaction" to its subjects led to the 1989 popular uprising, which can also be

---

[521] An official painting representing Ceauşescu with a presidential scepter published in *Scînteia* occasioned an ironic congratulatory message from Salvador Dali, also reproduced by the official Romanian press: "I profoundly appreciate your historical act of instituting the presidential scepter." See *Scînteia*, 4 April 1974, cited in Gabanyi, *Cultul lui Ceauşescu,* p. 34.

[522] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej* (Bucureşti: Univers, 1995), p. 77.

[523] Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dan Pavel "Romania's Mystical Revolutionaries: The Generation of Angst and Adventure Revised," *East European Politics and Societies* 8 (1994) 3, p. 404. Protochronism, probably the most paradigmatic cultural phenomenon of the Ceauşescu-regime, asserted that all major achievements of European culture and society were invented by Romanians. See Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, p. 167-214.

[524] Shafir, *Romania*, p. 51.

regarded as a popular revolt against a highly inflated charismatic rule that lost its political vitality.

In December 1989, after experiencing more than fifty years of successive dictatorial regimes (1938-1989), Romania returned to a multi-party parliamentary political order. Although the new political regime is based on a legal-rational type of authority, the lack of democratic experience and consolidated institutions favored the emergence of charismatic leaders exploiting myths of collective salvation.[525]

The liberalization of political life also unleashed Legionary propaganda that had been suppressed by communist censorship previously. Once again, Codreanu is presented to the young generation as a hero model, an idealist fighter for social justice who fell victim to political betrayal and intrigue. Current attempts at reviving the Legion heavily exploit the messianic "hero image" of Codreanu. A brochure published in Romania in 1999 celebrating the centennial of Codreanu's birth argued that the Captain's personality has had a universal Christian vocation, offering to mankind "a variant of redeeming behavior": "We celebrate today the centenary of a man born not only for the salvation of his own people, but belonging to the history of the man, to the history of the mankind. Belonging to the history of the Christian man!"[526]

Supported also by certain historians, this campaign is meant to rehabilitate the Legion's political legacy.[527] Although nascent democracy in Romania has been successful in containing this danger, outbursts of anti-democratic charisma remain a challenge to the future.[528] As Vladimir Tismăneanu pointed out, post-communist societies characterized by

---

[525] For the role of political myths after communism, see Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-communist Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[526] Ion Coja, "Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, model şi icoană," (Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Model and Icon) in Doru Mihai, Ion Coja, Zahu Pană, Nicolae Nicolau, Constantin Iorgulescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, o sută de ani de la naştere: 13 septembrie 1899-13 septembrie 1999* (Bucureşti: Buna Vestire, 1999), p. 29, 34.

[527] For efforts of rehabilitating Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, see Kurt W. Treptow and Gheorghe Buzatu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu în faţa istoriei* (Iaşi: s.n., 1994). An idealized and uncritical presentation of Codreanu can also be found in a historical overview of Romania's history written in English for a foreign public, coordinated by Kurt W. Treptow and signed by leading Romanian and foreign historians: Kurt Treptow, (ed.), Ioan Bolovan, Florin Constantiniu, Paul E. Michelson, et. al, *A History of Romania* (Boulder, New York: East European Monographs; Iaşi: Center for Romanian Studies; distributed by Columbia University Press, 1996). In this work, Codreanu is portrayed in a positive light, as a fighter for social justice, no mention being made of his virulent anti-Semitism and anti-democratic views. For a sharp critique of these attempts at rehabilitaing Codreanu, see Constantinescu, *Despre exegeza extremei drepte româneşti*.

[528] See in this respect the strong political offensive of the ultra-nationalist Greater Romania Party, led by Corneliu Vadim Tudor. In the presidential elections held in 2000, Tudor captured 30 percent of the total number of votes, and qualified for a second ballot against Ion Iliescu. His main advantages in the electoral campaign were his TV "charisma" (understood here as personal magnetism) which brought him numerous voters, especially among the young, and his virulent anti-corruption and anti-establishment campaign, with powerful nationalist and xenophobic accents. Although Tudor's main political model is not Corneliu Zelea Codreanu but General Ion Antonescu, the program of the Greater Romania Party resembles certain elements of the radical right in inter-war Romania. Despite defeat in the presidential campaign, Tudor emerged as the main winner of the 2000 elections. Greater

incomplete democratic reforms, rampant corruption and the unaccountability of political elites offer favorable environments for the resurgence of *charismatic protest politics* based on neo-authoritarian, anti-Western and collectivist themes.[529]

Romania Party gained one-fifths of the parliamentary seats, and became the main opposition party. Its success clearly indicates the fact that economic depravation has a powerful impact on the public attitude toward democracy, fostering xenophobia and radicalism.

[529] See Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Hypotheses on Populism: The Politics of Charismatic Protest," *East European Politics and Societies* 14 (2000) 2, p. 10-17. For the general revival of the extreme right in contemporary Europe and the emergence of illiberal charismatic leaders, see Roger Eatwell, "The Rebirth of Right-Wing Charisma? The Cases of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Vladimir Zhirinovsky," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 3 (Winter 2002) 3, p. 1-23.

9. Conclusions

9.1. Weber's Ideal Type of Charismatic Authority: Heuristic Value and Limits

This paper has been designed as a theoretically informed empirical investigation into the nature of the Romanian fascist movement The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" in inter-war Romania. It proposes a reinterpretation of Legionary ideology and practice in view of Max Weber's theoretical perspective on the charismatic type of authority. It is argued that the Legion exhibited the archetypal genesis, message, structure and political trajectory of a charismatic movement. Its messianic type of legitimization, its leader cult, its elitist structure, its emphasis on a spiritual revival of a "new man," its obsession with collective salvation, its mysticism, its cult of the dead, its martyring and its inherent capacity for self-destruction, as well as its inefficiency in the exercise of power, are all, in various forms, expressions and configurations, characteristic of charismatic movements.

The employment of Max Weber's ideal type of charismatic authority has certain analytical limits, deriving mostly from the epistemological nature of ideal type models, which are theoretical constructions built mainly for comparative purposes. In Weber's own words, an ideal type "is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many (diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete) individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sided emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct." As such, an ideal type does not refer to averages, but involves an exaggeration of typical characteristics or patterns of behavior.

Although an ideal type is constructed from certain elements of reality, it nevertheless departs from it in several ways. Weber constructed many ideal type models in order to make them serve as analytical tools. In his view, an ideal type is "a conceptual device with which we can measure real development and clarify the most important elements of empirical reality." Ideal type models provide a basic method for comparative studies, assisting the researcher in his/her efforts to identify similarities as well as deviations in concrete cases. One needs to compare them to the "real world" through careful empirical research.

Building an ideal type of fascist charismatic leadership is a particularly debated analytical exercise. One of the main methods of intellectual history is to reconstruct a given ideological outlook by selecting and interpreting representative quotations and integrating them into an unitary view. The danger with this practice is the tendency to lose the critical distance to the ideology studied, taking it, as it were, at "face value". Another undesirable consequence may be the imposition of an "order" and coherence upon what actually is consisting in heterogeneous intellectual tendencies. The risk is even greater if one considers that fascist ideology was generally characterized not only by inherent contradictions but also by the great gap between stated principles and political practice. In the case of the Legion, an undifferentiated "ideal reading" of its most representative ideological productions would thus be dangerously close to Legionary propaganda, which unilaterally exploits the idealistic character of the movement, but downplays its terrorist activity.

In addition, while Weber's threefold typology of political legitimacy has revolutionized political theory, it nevertheless fell short of providing a full methodological apparatus for identifying and analyzing types of socio-political movements. In regard to charismatic authority, Weber directed research toward the study of the leader and his psychological qualifications. His theory of charismatic legitimacy proves more useful for the study of the first phase of development of a personalized movement, namely the establishment of its leadership and of the circle of the leader's close followers.

In coping with these challenges, while preserving the bulk of Weber's theory, the current paper complements it with recent sociological approaches of the Legion's structure and membership. It places the emergence of the movement within the larger context of inter-war Romania, emphasizing the role of ethno-religious and socio-political cleavages in fostering personality-centered movements of change. Greater Romania exhibited structural conditions for the emergence of charisma, such as radical political and institutional reorganization, the opening up of the electoral system, national unification and legal integration of disparate territories, massive land reform, elite transformation and citizenship emancipation of ethno-religious minorities. While at formal-legal level, the integration of newly annexed territories and the equalization of the status of formally subordinated groups advanced at a fast pace, rapid change generated numerous structural crises, bringing to the fore strong cultural and territorial cleavages. The enlarging of the suffrage to lower classes and the peasantry widened the conflict between the rural and the urban world, manifested as a cultural divide between ethno-religious loyalties, on the one hand, and secularization and cosmopolitanism, on the other hand. The new state was shaken by a harsh confrontation over radical visions of political organization between the new political establishment and nationalist and anti-systemic movements of protest led by low-status would-be elites, such as students.[530]

The paper redirects the study of the Legion toward the conflict of values between the official hegemonic culture and a resistant youth subculture. While students of the Legion have so far explained Codreanu's charisma in view of his personal magnetism and powers of attraction, the study asserts that Codreanu put forward claims for charismatic leadership, having as its main characteristics the belief in his messianic call for a divine mission and his promise of salvation. In analyzing Codreanu's leadership, the paper confronts it with comprehensive tests of charisma developed by Robert Tucker, such as sense of mission, capacity of mobilization and consistency of leadership, and evaluates witness accounts ranging from eulogies to inimical assessments.

In addition, it addresses the relationship between Codreanu's leadership and his movement. Codreanu's charismatic claims emerged in the context of nationalist student protest, which provided him with a political cause of national importance and a favorable environment of proselytizing that generated a nucleus of close followers. In analyzing the transformation of a regional student organization into a messianic nationalist movement of the "young generation," the paper rejects a "modernizing" perspective on charisma, according to which the appeal of Codreanu's leadership was due to the existence of a "magic-religious ambiance" or of "primitive mentality" in a developing country. Instead, it asserts that Codreanu's leadership exhibits a combination between "situation charisma" generated by the socio-political upheaval of Greater Romania, and a charismatic agency based on his own self-identification and Ion I. Moța's ideological creativity. The conjunction of state-building and mass politics produces an explosive form of charismatic nationalism. The Legion grew as a major challenge to Romania's parliamentary political system in part because representative institutions were too weak and disordered to serve as a stable basis for popular consensus.

The paper points out to the responsibility of members of the Romanian political elites, who sponsored the Legion with the intention of manipulating it for diverting it against their own enemies or for countering the communist "danger." It also explores the motivations behind the enrollment of young intellectuals within the Legion, ranging from the desire to improve their socio-economic status, to psychological predispositions and the ideological attraction exercised by the new form of "religious politics." Special attention is paid to the

---

[530] For types of protest alignments in "fully mobilized nation states" in inter-war Europe leading to fascism, see Lipset and Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures," p. 23.

Axa intellectuals who propagated Codreanu's leadership claims, actively contributing to the merger between the new generation's integral nationalism and the Captain's charismatic cult. This fusion resulted in a complex ideological syncretism among transcendental calls, local cultural codes—such as Orthodox ritualism and traditional nationalist symbols—and the messianic discourse on the young generation.

While emphasizing the mass response to Codreanu's charismatic claims, the analysis also exposes the religious, cultural and social limits of the Captain's charismatic authority. First, the Legion's message targeted mainly Orthodox Romanians; although it occasionally attracted Greek-Catholics believers, the movement was less successful in Catholic areas. Significantly, in 1936, Codreanu temporarily banned Catholics for entering the Legion, accusing their hostile attitudes displayed during elections. Second, the emphasis on Orthodoxy-oriented charisma was the Legion's strength as well as its weakness. The syncretism between Orthodoxy and nationalism placed the Legionary ideology at the very center of the local value system, challenging the political establishment to incorporate its main elements into the hegemonic culture. But the stronger the emphasis on Orthodoxy was, the more intense the accusations of blasphemy were, forcing Legionary ideologues to spell out their relation to the established Church, on the one hand, and to Christian morality, on the other hand. Third, although Codreanu's charismatic appeal was not strictly confined to ethnic Romanians, the Legion attracting at times individuals of various ethnic origins, its proselytizing powers were nevertheless weaker when confronted to believers in opposing "universalistic" ideologies, such as communism.[531] In the same vein, individuals located at the mainstream of the socio-political system and benefiting from the existing order resented the Legion's anti-establishment message. Fourth, the limits of the Captain's charisma were also related to the fact that he did not exercise political power. As such, Codreanu was in no position to employ means of propaganda available to state leaders, and was not subject to a state-sponsored personality cult during his life-time. This feature accounts for Codreanu's vulnerability in face of state repression. His uncertainty and passivity following the establishment of Carol's dictatorship undermined his charismatic aura, while his subsequent arrestment and elimination led to a public disillusionment with his charismatic infallibility.

The charismatic ideology shaped the organization of the movement, structured on Codreanu's leadership and personality and dominated by a circle of close followers, and a hierarchical line of command composed of charismatic leaders emerging at the local level. On the long run, the movement's evolution exhibited underlying tensions between its charismatic nature and the need for a more bureaucratic party organization, accounting for factional competition, experiments in the "routinization" of Codreanu's charisma, its violent ruling and rapid demise from power.

Although in the period 1933-1937, the Legion manifested itself as the main challenge to the parliamentary multi-party political system in inter-war Romania, once in power it ultimately failed in its transition from a "revolutionary movement" to a consolidated regime. The short rule of the Legion represents a third attempt to establish a fascist regime without foreign aid, similar to the paradigmatic cases of Italy and Germany.[532] But the Legion did not establish an autonomous rule, forced as it was to share power with the army. Moreover, it was not able to fully institutionalize and consolidate. The reasons for its failure are multiple, ranging from the charismatic nature of its ideology and its fragmented internal organization to its crisis of leadership and the effective blockage to full power exercised by the army. The program of the Legion was also undermined by King Carol's personal regime and the

[531] On this point, see Schweitzer, "Theory and Political Charisma," p. 149.
[532] Max Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," p. 103.

military dictatorship of General Ion Antonescu (1940-1944), which both utilized elements of Legionary ideology, inserting them into the political framework of authoritarian regimes.

9.2. The Legion and Generic Fascism: Toward a New Scholarly Consensus

What is the contribution of this case study to the scholarly debates on the nature of "generic fascism"? For decades, the heuristic relevance of the Legion was largely downplayed. Pioneering studies set the emphasis on the Legion's peculiar features, hesitating to fully locate it within the camp of European fascism. Eugen Weber, Peter Wiles and Renzo de Felice regarded the Legion as a populist rather than as a fascist movement,[533] while Romanian historiography treated it as a foreign offshoot of National Socialism.[534]

More recently, while accepting the Legion's undeniable fascist characteristics, numerous scholars argued that it stands alone in the comparative typology of fascism. For Henry Roberts, "The Iron Guard was merely the Rumanian manifestation of a European phenomenon. It had, in addition, certain more specifically Rumanian features."[535] Ernst Nolte concluded that the Legion "must not only be declared, but also plainly appears, to be the most interesting and the most complex fascist movement, because like geological formations of superimposed layers it presents at once both pre-fascist and radically fascist characteristics."[536] Stanley G. Payne asserted that the Legion "is generally classified as fascist because it met the main criteria of any appropriate fascist typology, but it presented undeniably individual characteristics of its own."[537] In his view, "What made Codreanu especially different was that he became a sort of religious mystic, and though the Legion had the same general political goals as other fascist movements, its final aims were spiritual and transcendental […]."[538] Roger Eatwell defines the Legion as an original form of "clerical fascism" typically developed "in highly peasant-based societies, where outside the radical Left there was little scope for parties which were not overtly religious."[539] Arguing that "increasingly during the 1930s Codreanu moved away from some of his early fascist radicalism towards an emphasis on the rebirth of a vaguely defined 'new man' and

---

[533] Peter Wiles argued: "There is very much populism in fascism. The most perfect example is the Rumanian Iron Guard, which was in essence a populist movement that went fascist because of the large number of Jews in Rumania, and because it was the fashionable thing to be in Europe at the time." See Peter Wiles, "A Syndrome, not a Doctrine, Some Elementary Theses on Populism," in Ghiță Ionescu, Ernest Gellner, eds., *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 176. According to Renzo de Felice: "Per limitarci a Codreanu, a mio avviso è difficile parlare nel suo caso di fascism nel senso vero del termine; o per lo meno le componenti fasciste del movimento di Codreanu sono quelle meno significative, meno caratteristiche. Piuttosto bisognerebee fare un discurso sul populismo." See Renzo de Felice, *Intervista sul fascismo*. A cura di Michael A. Ledeen (Roma: Laterza, 1999) 2nd ed., p. 82-84, 99-100, here 83. The same view is put forward by Kurt W. Treptow, "Populism in Twentieth Century Romanian Politics," p. 197-218. For a comprehensive critique of this thesis on populism, see Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail,"* p. 465-466.

[534] Fătu, Spălățelu, *Garda de Fier*.

[535] Roberts, *Rumania*, p. 228.

[536] Nolte, *Die faschistischen Bewegungen,* p 227, quoted in Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, p. 280.

[537] Payne, *A History of Fascism,* p. 280.

[538] Payne, *A History of Fascism,* p. 280.

[539] Roger Eatwell, "Reflections on Fascism and Religion," p. 154.

conservative mysticism," Eatwell states that "there are problems in unequivocally including the Iron Guard within a radical generic fascist pantheon."[540]

The current paper argues that the Legion was neither a hybrid of fascism and religion, nor an aberrant form of "peripheral" fascism. It was instead a secular movement of charismatic-revolutionary nationalism that extensively adapted the discourse and semiotics of Romanian Orthodoxy to express its vision of the renewal of Romanian society. The paper locates the Legion within mainstream fascism, each specimen of which incorporates or distances itself from traditional religion in a different way. There is thus a deep convergence between the current analysis and the incipient "new consensus" emerging in fascist studies, around the culturalist paradigms put forward by George L. Mosse, Stanley G. Payne and Roger Griffin, and Emilio Gentile's account of the sacralization of politics.[541]

A leading animator of this consensus, Roger Griffin, pleads for a more open framework of analyzing fascism recognizing "the primacy of culture" over politics, the revolutionary nature of fascism and its mass appeal based on the mobilizing "mythical core" of national rebirth, suggestively named *palingenetic myth*.[542] Surely, given the essentially contested nature of the concept of "generic fascism," the new consensus is bound to remain minimal and partial. In Griffin's words, the new framework is "a conciliatory 'offer,'" being "virtual rather than actual, its postulation programmatic rather than empirical."[543] More skeptic scholars point out that, although it is a move in the right direction, the new culturalist framework faces the challenge of effectively accommodating important research aspects, such as: the place of the symbolic dimension, in general, and of myth, in particular, within the fascist ideology and practice; the social basis of fascism; the relation between movements and regimes; and the functioning of fascist regimes.[544]

The debate over the "new consensus" has nevertheless the merit of stimulating the scholarly dialogue between historians and theorists, and the fruitful combination of "'macro' comparative investigations" and "'micro' case studies."[545] The research potential of this framework of analyzing fascism as a "cultural revolution in nationalist key" can lead to a deeper convergence in fascist studies, equilibrating the balance between theoretical works and empirical investigations, as well as between the attention paid to core case studies as opposed to "marginal" ones.

---

[540] Roger Eatwell, "Reflections on Fascism and Religion," p. 154.

[541] The claim that a "new consensus" was emerging in fascist studies was first made by Roger Griffin in "Introduction," in Roger Griffin, ed., *International Fascism. Theories, Cases, and the New Consensus* (London, Sydney, Auckland: Arnold, Oxford University Press 1998), p. 1-20. In a more recent article, Griffin argues that "in the four years since I postulated its existence, the evidence of the emergence of a consensual approach to fascism within anglophone academia has grown rather than faded." See Griffin, "The Primacy of Culture," p. 26.

[542] Griffin, "The Primacy of Culture," p. 23-24.

[543] Griffin, "The Primacy of Culture," p. 39.

[544] For critical assessments of Griffin's thesis, see David D. Roberts, Alexander De Grand, Mark Antliff and Thomas Linehan, "Comments on Roger Griffin, 'The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 37 (2002) 2, p. 259-274. On his turn, commenting on Gentile's view on fascism as a form of political religion, Roger Eatwell accepts a heuristic approach on the issue, but distances himself from an essentialist approach. See Eatwell, "Reflections on Fascism and Religion," p. 162-163.

[545] Griffin, "The Primacy of Culture," p. 24.

The Legion adds a third major example of a charismatic form of fascism, along the "paradigmatic" cases of Italy and Germany. In doing so, it underscores an important dimension of the mass-mobilizing capacity of fascism that has remained largely under-researched. Ian Kershaw, a prominent student of Nazi Germany, calls for, among other directions of research, more systematic comparisons between Hitler's charismatic rule and similar forms of contemporary leadership (among which he mentioned the case of Mussolini in Italy). To date, his call has not resulted in theoretically minded analyses of charismatic types of fascism in Eastern Europe. The current paper is one of the first attempts in this direction. This author believes that Codreanu's leadership offers a most relevant comparison to the two "core" examples of charismatic fascism developed in Italy and Germany. The neglect of the charismatic character of the Romanian fascism appears even more problematic if one considers that, as Ernst Nolte pertinently pointed out, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu greatly resembled Adolf Hitler in regard to both political fanaticism and personal magnetism.[546]

From a methodological point of view, the transcendental dimension of charisma sheds light upon the supranational process of the "sacralization of politics," generally characteristic of totalitarianism.[547] The Legion thus provides a historical example of Gentile's definition of political religions and totalitarian movements. The case study also points out the role of religion as a pervasive cultural force in inter-war Romania, and its interaction with lay charismatic movements. Until World War I, Romania had not experienced the politicization of established religions, giving birth to religious parties. Although the country's legal system emulated the French secular model embodied by the *Code Civil*, the traditional close political collaboration between the State and the dominant Orthodox Church appeased the hierarcs' resistance to secularization. In the inter-war period, radical institutional reorganization and increased religious pluralism led to the political activation of the dominant Church. The politicization of established churches coupled with charismatic movements of revolutionary nationalism, reinforcing ethno-religious conflicts.

The present case study also illustrates that students of inter-war political movements might benefit from additional theoretical tools enabling them to identify the specific features (such as charisma) of these movements and test them in non-Western societal contexts. Although they rarely made the object of scholarly investigations and informed comparisons, charismatic forms of politics were common in southeastern Europe, mostly during the region's transition to mass politics, leading to various political outcomes. In inter-war Greece, for example, a similar combination of international and local political trends led to generational and personality-centered politics based on calls for national regeneration and charismatic leadership imbued with Orthodox imagery and symbols.[548] However, while in Greece the charismatic model of leadership—embodied by Venizelos—remained confined within the limits of parliamentary multi-party system, in Romania it led toward fascism.

---

[546] See Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*; also Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, p. 117.

[547] Emilio Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25 (May-June 1990) 2/3, p. 229-251.

[548] Mazower, "The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie," p. 895.

10. Bibliography

10.1. Archival Collections

Magyar Országos Levéltár, Külügyminisztérium, Politikai Osztály: Bukarest, Budapest, Hungary.

Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères, Bucharest, Serie Ambassade, Legation 48, Nantes, France.

Alliance Israélite Universelle Archives, Roumanie, Bobine 1-32, Paris, France.

10.2. Newspapers and Journals

Neamul Românesc (1906)

Paix et Droit (1930)

Axa (1932-1933)

Pământul Strămoşesc (1927-1934, 1977)

Cuvântul (1940)

10.3. Articles and Book Chapters

Allardyce, Gilbert. "What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," *The American Historical Review* 84 (1979) 2, p. 367-388.

Barbu, Zeev. "Rumania," in S. J. Woolf, ed., *European Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 146-166.

Barbu, Zeev. "Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Iron Guard, the Fascist Movement of Romania," in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, Jan Petter Myklebust, eds. *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget; Irvington-on-Hudson: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 379-394.

Bendix, Reinhard. "Charismatic Leadership," in Reinhard Bendix, Guenther Roth, eds., *Scholarship and Partisanship: Essays on Max Weber* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 170-187.

Boyne, Roy. "Weber on Socialism and Charisma: A Comment," *Soviet Studies* 36 (October 1984) 4, p. 602-605.

Călinescu, Matei. "Ionesco and Rhinoceros: Personal and Political Backgrounds," *East European Politics and Societies* 9 (1995) 3, p. 393-434.

Carsten, Francis L. "Anti-Semitism and Anti-Communism: The Iron Guard," in *The Rise of Fascism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1967), p. 181-193.

Dobrincu, Dorin. "Legionarii şi guvernarea Ion Antonescu (1941-1944)," in Kurt W. Treptow, ed., *Romania: A Crossroads of Europe* (Iaşi, Oxford, Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002), p. 199-230.

Dow, Thomas E. Jr. "The Role of Charisma in Modern African Development," *Social Forces* 46 (1968) 3, p. 328-338.

Eatwell, Roger. "Reflections on Fascism and Religion," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion* 4 (Winter 2003) 3, p. 145-166.

Eatwell, Roger. "Fascism," in Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, eds. *Contemporary Political Ideologies* (London, New York: Continuum, 1999), p. 180-205.

Fabian, Johannes. "Charisma and Cultural Change: The Case of the *Jamaa* Movement in Katanga (Congo Republic)," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11 (1969) 2, p. 155-173.

Raphael Falco, "Charisma and Tragedy: An Introduction," *Theory, Culture and Society* 16 (June 1999) 3, p. 71-98.

Fischer-Galaţi, Stephen. "Fascism in Romania," in Peter F. Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States*, *1918-1945* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1971), p. 112-122.

Fischer–Galaţi, Stephen. "Romanian nationalism," in Peter F. Sugar, Ivo J. Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1969), p. 373–395.

Friedland, William H. "For a Sociological Concept of Charisma," *Social Forces* 43 (October 1964) 1, p. 18-26.

Gentile, Emilio. "Fascism as Political Religion," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (May-June 1990) 2/3, p. 229-251.

Gentile, Emilio. "The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion* 1 (Summer 2000) 1, p. 18-55.

Gerth, Hans. "The Nazi Party: Its Leadership and Composition," *American Journal of Sociology* 45 (January 1940) 4, p. 517-541.

Glassman, Ronald M. "Epilogue: Charisma and Social Structure—The Success or Failure of Charismatic Leadership," in Ronald M. Glassman, William H. Swatos, eds. *Charisma, History and Social Structure* (New York, Wesport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 180-203.

Gustin, Bernard H. "Charisma, Recognition, and the Motivation of Scientists," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (March 1973) 5, p. 1119-1134.

Gutmann, David. "Comment: The Uses of Reminiscence (in Charisma)," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14 (March 1972) 2, p. 188-192.

Griffin, Robert. "The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies," *The Journal of Contemporary History* 37 (2002) 1, p. 21-43.

Griffin, Roger. "The Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimization of Totalitarian Regimes in Inter-War Europe," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 3 (Winter 2002) 3, p. 24-43.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Citizenship and National Identity. Some Reflections on the Future of Europe," *Praxis International* 12 (1992) 1, p. 1-19.

Ioanid, Radu. "Nicolae Iorga and Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (July 1992), No. 3, p. 467-492.

Iordachi, Constantin, Trencsényi Balázs. "In Search of a Usable Past: The Question of National Identity in Romanian Studies, 1990-2000," *East European Politics and Societies* 18 (Summer 2003) 3, p. 415-453.

Iordachi, Constantin. "Charisma, Religion, Ideology: Romania's Interwar Legion of the Archangel Michael," in John R. Lampe, Mark Mazower, eds., *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), p. 19-53.

Iordachi, Constantin. "The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of 'Non-Citizens' in Romania, 1866-1918," *European Review of History* 8 (August 2001) 2, p. 157-186.

Iordachi, Constantin. "Politics and Inter-Confessional Strife in post-1989 Romania: From The Competition for Resources to the Redefinition of National Identity," *Balkanologie* III (September 1999) 1, p. 147-169.

Jowitt, Kenneth. "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes," *World Politics* 28 (October 1975) 1, p. 69-96.

Kershaw, Ian. "'Working Towards the Führer': Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship," in Ian Kershaw, Moshe Lewin, eds., *Nazism and Stalinism. Dictatorships in Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 88-106.

Linz, Juan J. "Some Notes toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective," in Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide: Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976), p. 2-103.

Lipset, Seymour Martin, Stein Rokkan. "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction," in Seymour M. Lipset, Stein Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 1-64.

Livezeanu, Irina. "A Jew from the Danube: Cuvintul. The Rise of the Right and Mihai Sebastian," in Liviu Rotman, ed., *SHVUT Jewish problems in Eastern Europe. First International Conference on the History of the Jews in Romania* (Tel Aviv: Diaspora Research institute The Goldstein-Goren Center for the History of the Jews in Romania, 1993), p. 297-312.

Madsen, Douglas, Peter G. Snow. "Recruitment Contrasts in a Divided Charismatic Movement," *The American Political Science Review* 81 (March 1987) 1, p. 233-238.

Mannheim, Karl. "The Problems of Generations", in: Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, (London: Routledge and Kegal Paul, 1952), pp. 276-322 [originally published in 1928].

Marcu-Balş, Petre. "Autohtonia ordinei juridice (Concepţia rationalistă şi concepţia istorică a codificaţiilor)," in *Gândirea* 6-7 (1928), reprinted in Iordan Chimet, ed., *Dreptul la memorie,* 4 vols., (Cluj: Dacia, 1992), vol. 3, p. 137-152.

Mosse, George L. "Introduction: The Genesis of Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (1966) 1, p. 14-26.

Ohana, David. "Georges Sorel and the Rise of Political Myth," *History of European Ideas* 13 (1991) 6, p. 733-746.

Pavel, Dan. "Legionarismul," in Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, ed, *Doctrine politice. Concepte universale şi realităţi româneşti* (Iaşi: Polirom, 1998), p. 212-228.

Paxton, Robert O. "Five Stages of Fascism," *The Journal of Modern History* 70 (March 1998), p. 1-23.

Roberts, David D., Alexander De Grand, Mark Antliff, Thomas Linehan. "Comments on Roger Griffin, 'The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 37 (2002) 2, p. 259-274.

Robinson, Jean C. "Mao after Death: Charisma and Political Legitimacy," *Asian Survey* 28 (March 1988) 3, p. 353-368.

Roth, Guenther. "Socio-Historical Model and Developmental Theory: Charismatic Community, Charisma of Reason, and the Counterculture," *American Sociological Review* 40 (April 1975), p. 148-157.

Sanders, Joseph. "Beauty and Charisma: A Comment on A. Schweitzer's 'Theory of Political Charisma' (in Charisma)," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (March 1974) 2, p. 182-186.

Schramm, Percy Ernst. "Sacral Kingship and Charisma (Review)," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (April 1963) 3, p. 357-360.

Schweitzer, Arthur. "Theory and Political Charisma," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (March 1974) 2, p. 150-181.

Schweitzer, Arthur. „Hitler's Dictatorial Charisma," in Ronald M. Glassman, William H. Swatos, eds., *Charisma, History and Social Structure*, p. 147-162.

Shils, Edward. "Charisma, Order, and Status," *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965) 2, p. 199-213.

Shils, Edward. "The Concentration and Dispersion of Charisma: Their Bearing on Economic Policy in Underdeveloped Countries," *World Politics* 11 (October 1958) 1, p. 1-19.

Smith, Anthony D. "Culture, Community, and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs* 72 (July 1996) 3, p. 445-458.

Tismăneanu, Vladimir, Dan Pavel. "Romania's Mystical Revolutionaries: The Generation of Angst and Adventure Revised," *East European Politics and Societies* 8 (1994) 3, p. 402-438.

Tismăneanu, Vladimir. "Hypotheses on Populism: The Politics of Charismatic Protest," *East European Politics and Societies* 14 (2000) 2, p. 10-17.

Treptow, Kurt W. "Populism in Twentieth Century Romanian Politics," in Joseph Held, ed. *Populism in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 197-218.

Tucker, Robert C. "The Theory of Charismatic Leadership," *Daedalus* 97 (1968) 3, p. 731-756.

Turczynski, Emanuel. "The Background of Romanian Fascism," in P. F. Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States*, *1918-1945*, p. 101-111.

Weber, Eugen. "Rumania," in Eugen Weber, ed. *Varieties of Fascism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 96–105.

Weber, Eugen. "Romania," in Hans Rogger, Eugen Weber, eds. *The European Right. A Historical Profile* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965), p. 501-574.

Weber, Eugen. "The Man of the Archangel," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (1966), p. 101-126.

Yavetz, Zvi. "An Eyewitness Note: Reflections on the Rumanian Iron Guard," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Special Issue: The Impact of Western Nationalisms: Essays Dedicated to Walter Z. Laqueur on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday, 26 (September 1991) 3/4, p. 597-610.

10.4. Books

Agathon, avec la collaboration de Vulfran Mory. *Codréanu et la garde de Fer*. Le dossier: *Le nationalisme roumain entre 1936 et 1940 vu par la presse de l'époque* (Paris: Francis Bergeron: 1991).

Alexandrescu, Sorin. *Paradoxul Român* (Bucureşti: Univers, 1998).

Antohi, Sorin. *Civitas Imaginalis. Istorie şi utopie în cultura română* (Bucureşti: Litera, 1994). French edition: *Imaginaire culturel et realité politique dans la Roumanie moderne: le stigmate et l'utopie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999).

Antohi, Sorin. *Utopica. Studii asupra imaginarului social* (Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1991).

Argetoianu, Constantin. *Memorii* (Bucureşti: Machiavelli, 1996), vol 6, Part VI (1919-1922); vol. 8, Part VII (1926-1930); vol. 9, Part VIII (1930-1931).

Aron, Raymond. *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).

Bach, Maurizio. *Die charismatischen Führerdiktaturen: Drittes Reich und italienischer Faschismus im Vergleich ihrer Herrschaftsstrukturen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990).

Bălan, Nicolae. *Biserica neamului şi drepturile ei* (Bucharest, 1927).

Banea, Ion. *Capitanul* (Sibiu: "Totul pentru ţară," 1936).

Bernea, Ernest. *Cartea Căpitanilor* (Bucureşti: Tipografia Bucovina, 1937).

Boilă, Zaharia. *Amintiri şi consideraţii asupra mişcării legionare*. Forward by Livia Tiţieni Boilă. Edited by Marta Petrea and Ana Cornea (Cluj: Biblioteca Apostrof, 2002).

Bracher, Karl Dietrich. *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structures, and Effects of National Socialism* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

Brădescu, Faust. *Cele trei probe legionare: elemente de doctrină* (Bucureşti: Majadahonda, 2000).

Brătescu, Faust. *Conducere şi disciplină: (problema conducerii în Mişcarea Legionară)* (Bucureşti: Majadahonda, 2000).

Brătescu, Faust. Corneliu-Zelea Codreanu, Erou Neo-Cosmogon (Madrid: Carpați, 1987).

Brubaker, Rogers W. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Brunn Geoffrey, Victor S. Mamatey. *The World in the Twentieth Century*, 4th ed., (Boston: Hearth, 1962).

Călinescu, Armand. *Însemnări politice* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990).

Cîncea, Paraschiva, Mircea Iosa, Apostol Stan. *Istoria parlamentului şi a vieții parlamentare din România pînă la 1918* (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1983).

Codreanu, Corneliu Zelea. *Cărticica şefului de cuib* (Bucureşti: 1933). 2nd ed.: (Salzburg: Colecția "Omului Nou," 1952); English edition: *Legion: The Nest Leader's Manual* (London: The Rising Press, 1984).

Codreanu, Corneliu Zelea. *Scrisori studenţeşti din închisoare. Văcăreşti, 9 Octombrie 1923-30 March 1924* (Iaşi: Biblioteca Generația Junǎ, 1925).

Codreanu, Zelea Corneliu. *Pentru legionari*, vol. 1 (Sibiu: "Totul pentru țară," 1936). 3rd ed: (Bucureşti: Editura Mişcării Legionare, 1940). German edition: *Die Eiserne Garde* (Berlin, Vienna: Deutscher Techtsverlag, 1939). English editon: (Ready West Virginia: Liberty Bell Publications, 1990).

Codreanu, Zelea Ion. *O mărturie* (Iaşi, 1941).

Cohn, Norman. *Histoire d'un mythe. La "conspiration" juive et les Protocoles des Sages de Sion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).

Cohn, Norman. *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (London: Pimlico, 1993).

Colescu, Leonida. *Analiza rezultatelor recensământului general al populației României din 1899* (Bucureşti: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1944).

Colescu, Leonida. *La Population de Religion Mosaïque en Roumanie. Etude Statistique* (Bucureşti: Imprimeria Independența, 1915).

Comandamentul Militar al Capitalei. *Asasinatele de la Jilava,..., Snagov şi Strejnicul: 26–27 noiembrie 1940, 2nd ed.* (Bucureşti: Scripta, 1992).

Conger, Jay A. *The Charismatic Leader. Behind the Mystique of Exceptional Leadership* (San Francisco, London: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989).

Constantinescu, Ioan. *Despre exegeza extremei drepte româneşti. Însemnări polemice*, 2nd ed. (Iaşi: Junimea, 1999).

Crăcea, Nicu, ed. *Dezvăluiri legionare,* 3 vols. (Bucureşti: Buna Vestire, 1997).

Crainic, Nichifor. *Zile Albe – Zile Negre* (Bucureşti: Gândirea, 1991).

Dumitrescu-Borşa, Ion. *Cal Troian intra Muros. Memorii legionare* (Bucureşti: Lucman, 2002).

Dumitru Stăniloaie. *Ose comprendre que Je t'aime. Témoin spirituel d'aujourd'hui,* edited by M. A. Costa de Beauregard (Paris: Cerf, 1983).

Durandin, Catherine. *Istoria Românilor* (Iaşi: Institutul European, 1998).

Eatwell, Roger. *Fascism. A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).

Eidelberg, Philip Gabriel. *The Great Romanian Peasant Revolt of 1907: Origins of a Modern Jaquerie* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

Eisenstadt, N. S., ed. *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago, London: Chicago University Press, 1968).

Eliade, Mircea. *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan. Études comparatives sur les religions et le folklore de la Dacie et de l'Europe orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1970). English edition: *Zalmoxis, the Vanishing God: Comparative Studies in the Religions and Folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

Eliade, Mircea. *Texte "Legionare" şi despre "Românism"* (Cluj: Dacia, 2001).

Erikson, Erik H. *Young Man Luther. A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (London: Faber, 1959).

Fătu, Mihai, Ion Spălăţelu. *Garda de Fier, organizaţie teroristă de tip fascistă,* 2nd, revised, ed. (Bucureşti: Editura Politică, 1980).

Fătu, Mihai. *Contribuţii la studierea regimului politic din România, septembrie 1940-august 1944* (Bucureşti: Editura Politică, 1984).

Federaţia Comunităţilor Evreieşti din România, Centrul pentru studiul istoriei evreilor din România. *Parlamentari evrei în forul legislativ al României*, (1919-1940) (Bucureşti: Editura Hasefer, 1998).

Felice, Renzo de. *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to its Theory and Practice* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1976).

Felice, Renzo de. *Intervista sul fascismo*. A cura di Michael A. Ledeen (Roma: Laterza, 1999) 2nd ed.

Florian, Alexandru, Constantin Petculescu, eds. *Ideea care ucide: dimensiunile ideologiei legionare* (Bucureşti: Noua Alternativă, 1994).

Freund, Julien. *Sociologie de Max Weber* (Paris: PUF, 1966).

Gabanyi, Anneli Ute. *The Ceauşescu Cult* (Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 2000); Romanian edition: *Cultul lui Ceauşescu* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2003).

Gheorghiu, Virgil. *Mémoires: Les témoin de la 25-eme heure* (Paris: Plon, 1986).

Glassman, Ronald M., William H. Swatos, eds. *Charisma, History and Social Structure* (New York, Wesport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986).

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (London: Pelican Books, 1968). Reprinted: (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

Griffin, Roger, ed. *International Fascism. Theories, Cases, and the New Consensus* (London, Sydney, Auckland: Arnold, Oxford University Press 1998).

Griffin, Roger. *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Griffin, Roger. *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1991).

Hamangiu, Constantin, Nicolae Georgean, eds. *Codul Civil Adnotat* 2 vols. (Bucureşti: All Beck, 1999).

Hamilton, Michael P. *The Charismatic Movement* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1975).

Heinen, Armin. *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien: soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986). Romanian edition: *Legiunea „Arhanghelul Mihail". Mişcare socială şi organizaţie politică. O contribuţie la problema fascismului internaţional*, translated from German by Cornelia Eşianu and Delia Eşianu (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1999).

Herseni, Traian. *Mişcarea legionară şi ţărănimea* (Bucureşti, 1941).

Hitchins, Keith. *Rumania, 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

Imbrescu, Ilie. *Biserica şi mişcarea legionară* (Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 1939).

Institutul Central de Statistică, *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1939-1940* (Bucureşti: Imprimeria Naţională, 1940).

Ioanid, Radu. *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania*. Translation by Peter Heinegg (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990). Romanian edition: *Sabia Arhanghelului Mihail. Ideologia fascistă în Romania* (Bucureşti: Diogene, 1994).

Ionescu Ghiţă, Ernest Gellner, eds. *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969).

Ionescu, Nae. *Convorbiri*, introduction by Mircea Eliade and George Racoveanu (Freising, 1951).

Ionescu, Nae. *Prelegeri de filosofia religiei*, edited by Marta Petreu (Cluj: Biblioteca Apostrof, 1994).

Ionescu, Nae. *Roza vînturilor* (Bucureşti: Roza Vînturilor, 1990).

Iorga, Nicolae. *Orizonturile mele. O viaţa de om aşa cum a fost,* edited by Valeriu and Sanda Râpeanu, introduction by Valeriu Râpeanu (Bucureşti: Minerva, 1972).

Ivan, Marcel. *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice, 1919-1932* (Sibiu: Krafft & Drotleff, 1933).

Jones, Charles Edwin. *The Charismatic Movement: A Guide to the Study of Neo-pentecotalism with Emphasis on Anglo-American Source*s. 2 vols. (Metuchen, London: The Scarecrow Press, 1995).

Jowitt, Kenneth, ed. *Social Change in Romania 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978).

Jowitt, Kenneth. *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development. The Case of Romania, 1944-1965* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971).

Kershaw, Ian. *Hitler* (London, New York: Longman, 1991).

Kershaw, Ian. *The 'Hitler Myth.' Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Laignel-Lavastine, Alexandra. *Cioran, Eliade, Ionescu: L'oubli du fascims. Trois intellectuels roumains dans la tourmente du siècle*. (Paris: PUF, 2003).

Livezeanu, Irina. *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1995).

Loewenstein, Karl. *Max Weber's Political Ideas in the Perspective of Our Time* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966).

Macartney, C. A. *Hungary and Her Successors: The Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences, 1919-1937* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

MacLinscott Ricketts. *Mircea Eliade: The Romanian Roots, 1907-1945* (Boulder: East European Monographs, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1988).

Marin, Vasile. *Crez de generație* (Bucureşti: Tipografia Bucovina I. E. Torouțiu, 1937).

Mavrogordatos, George Th. *Stillborn Republic. Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983).

Mazover, Mark. *The Balkans. A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001).

Michels, Robert. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1959).

Michelson, Paul E. *Conflict and Crisis. Romanian Political Development, 1861-1871* (New York, London: Garland, 1987). Enlarged and revised edition: *Romanian Politics, 1859-1871: From Prince Cuza to Prince Carol* (Iaşi, Oxford, Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1998).

Mihai, Doru, Ion Coja, Zahu Pană, Nicolae Nicolau, Constantin Iorgulescu. *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu – o sută de ani de la naştere – 13 septembrie 1899-13 septembrie 1999* (Bucureşti: Buna Vestire, 1999).

Mosse, George L. *The Fascist Revolution. Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999).

Moța, Ion I. *Cranii de Lemn. Articole, 1922-1936* (Sibiu: "Totul pentru țară," 1936). Reprinted: (Bucureşti: Editura Mişcării Legionare, 1940).

Moța, Ion I. *Protocoalele înțelepților sionului de Roger Lambelin* (Orăştie: Tipografia şi Editura Libertatea, 1923).

Muşat, Mircea, Ion Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, vol. 2, Part II: november 1933-September 1940 (Bucureşti: Editura Ştiințifică şi Enciclopedică, 1988).

Nagy-Talavera, Nicholas M. *Nicolae Iorga. A Biography,* 2nd ed. (Iaşi, Oxford, Portland: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998).

Nagy-Talavera, Nicholas M. *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1967). 2nd ed. (Iaşi, Oxford, Portland: Center for Romanian Studies, 2001). Romanian edition: *O istorie a fascismului în Ungaria şi România* (Bucureşti: Hasefer, 1996).

Nolte, Ernst. *Die faschistischen Bewegungen. Die Krise des liberalen System und die Entwicklung der Faschismen* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1968).

Nolte, Ernst. *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).

Nyomarkay, Joseph. *Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press**,** 1967).

Orlow, Dietrich. *The History of the Nazi Party: 1919-1933,* 2 vols. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969, 1973).

Ornea, Zigu. *Anii treizeci: extrema dreaptă românească* (Bucureşti: Editura Fundatiei Culturale Române, 1995). English edition: *The Romanian Extreme Right: the Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999).

Ostrogorski, Georgije. *History of the Byzantine State,* translated from German by Joan Hussey, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

Păcurariu, Mircea. *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române,1981).

Palaghiță, Ștefan. *Garda de Fier spre reinvierea României. Însoțită de o cronologie privind istoria mişcării legionare* (Buenos Aires: S. Palaghiță, 1951). Reprinted: (Bucureşti: Roza Vânturilor, 1993).

Papanace, Constantin. *Despre Căpitan, Nicadori şi Decemviri. Crâmpei de amintiri* (Cetatea Eternă: Armatolii, 1963).

Papanace, Constantin. *Destinul unei Generații* (Cetatea Eternă: Armatolii, 1952).

Papanace, Constantin. *Fermentul aromân (macedo-român) în sud-estul european.* Extract from *Noul Album Macedo-Român*, Biblioteca Română (Freiburg: Institutul Român de Cercetări, 1959).

Papanace, Constantin. *Martiri Legionari* (Cetatea Eternă: Armatolii, 1952).

Pătrăşcanu, Lucrețiu. *Sub trei dictaturi* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970). Reprinted: (Bucureşti: Editura 100 + 1 Gramar, 1996).

Payne, Stanley G. *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

Payne, Stanley G. *Fascism. Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).

Petculescu, Constantin. *Mişcarea legionară: mit şi realitate* (Bucureşti: Noua Alternativă, 1997).

Petreu, Marta. *Un trecut deocheat sau "Schimbarea la față a României*" (Cluj: Biblioteca Apostrof, 1999).

Pippidi, Andrei. *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI-XVIII* (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1983).

Popa, Nicolae. *Cuza? ori Codreanu? Scrisori autentice* (Cluj: Tipografia Gheorghe Chili, 1933).

Prost, Henry. *Destin de la Roumanie (1918-1954)* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1954).

Preşedinția Consiliului de Miniştri. *Pe marginea prăpastiei, 21–23 ianuarie 1941*. 2 vols. (Bucureşti: Monitorul Oficial şi Imprimeriile Statului, Imprimeria Centrală, 1941). Vol. 1: Partea 1: *Lovitura de stat din septembrie 1940*. Partea 2: *Guvernarea național–legionară*; Vol. 2: Partea 3–4: *Pregătirea rebeliunii*. Partea 5: *Rebeliunea*. Reprinted as: *Ion Antonescu şi "Garda de Fier". Pe marginea prăpastiei, 21–23 ianuarie 1941*, edited by Serafim Duicu (Târgu-Mureș: Casa de Editură "Rom-Edition," 1991).

Roberts, Henry. *Rumania, Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1969).

Rostás, Zoltán. *Monografia ca utopie. Inverviuri cu Henri H. Stahl (1985-1987)* (Bucureşti: Paideia, 2000).

Roth, Jack J. *The Cult of Violence: Sorel and the Sorelians* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980).

Sebastian, Mihail. *Jurnal 1935-1944* (Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas, 1996). English edition: *Journal, 1935-1944,* translated from Romanian by Patrick Camiller, with an introduction and notes by Radu Ioanid (London: Heinemann, 2000).

Shafir, Michael. *Romania: politics, economy and society* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1985).

Shils, Edward. *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

Sima, Horia. *Doctrina legionară* (Madrid: Editura Mişcării Legionare, 1980).

Sima, Horia. *Era libertății. Statul Național–Legionar*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Editura Mişcării Legionare**,** 1982–1986).

Sima, Horia. *Histoire du Mouvement Legionnaire* (Rio de Janeiro: Dacia, 1972).

Sturdza, Michael. *The Suicide of Europe. Memoirs of Prince Michael Sturdza, Former Foreign Minister of Rumania* (Boston, Los Angeles: Western Islands, 1986).

Tănase, Stelian. *Elite şi societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej, 1948-1965* (Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas, 1998).

Tharaud, Jérôme, Jean Tharaud. *L'Envoyé de l'archange* (Paris: Plon, 1939).

Tismăneanu, Vladimir. *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-communist Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1998).

Tismăneanu, Vladimir. *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej* (Bucureşti: Univers, 1995).

Tota, Ioan-Laurian, ed. *Cântece legionare* (Bucureşti: Editura L.A.M., 1997).

Traşcă, Ottmar, Ana–Maria Stan, eds. *Rebeliunea legionară în arhive străine: germane, maghiare, franceze* (Bucureşti: Albatros, 2002).

Treptow, Kurt W., Gheorghe Buzatu, eds. *"Procesul" lui Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (Mai, 1938)* (Iaşi: S.C. Dosoftei, 1994).

Treptow, Kurt W., Gheorghe Buzatu. *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu în fața istoriei* (Iaşi: s. n., 1994).

Troncotă, Cristian. *Eugen Cristescu. Asul serviciilor secrete româneşti* (Bucureşti: Roza Vânturilor, 1994).

Țurcanu, Florin. *Mircea Eliade. Le prisonnier de l'histoire.* Préface de Jacques Julliard (Paris: La Découverte, 2004).

Vago, Bela. *The Shadow of the Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936-1939* (Farnborough, Hants: Saxon House for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1975).

Veiga, Francisco. *La Mística del Ultranacionalismo. Historia de la Guardia de Hierron. Rumania, 1919-1941* (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1989). Romanian edition: *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului*,

Translated by Marian Ştefănescu (Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas, 1993). 2nd ed.: (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1995).

Verdery, Katherine. *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1991).

Verdery, Katherine. *Political Life of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Vitale, Giuseppe. *La Svastica e L'arcangelo Nationalismo ed antisemitismo in Romania tra le due guerre mondiali* (Rimini, Il Cerchio, 2000). In appendice: C.Z.Codreanu, *Lettere studentsche dal carcere*, 1923-24.

Volovici, Leon. *Nationalist Ideology and Anti-Semitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930's* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991).

Vulcănescu, Mircea. *Nae Ionescu aşa cum l-am cunoscut* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992).

Vulcănescu, Mircea. *Tînăra generaţie. Crize vechi în haine noi. Cine sunt şi ce vor tinerii români?,* edited by Marin Diaconu (Bucureşti: Compania, 2004).

Weber, Eugen. *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

Weber, Eugen. *France: Fin de siècle* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1986).

Weber, Max. *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, translated and with an introduction by H. P. Secher (New York: Citadel Press, 1990).

Weber, Max. *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretative Sociology.* 2 vols. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

Weber, Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated, edited and with an introduction, by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1998).

Weber, Max. *Political Writings*, edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Weber, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons; edited and with an introduction by Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1964).

Wohl, Robert. *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Zamfirescu, Dragoş. *Legiunea Arhangelului Mihail. De la mit la realitate* (Bucureşti: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997).

11. Annexes

11. 1. Tables

Table Five. Electoral Results of the Legion, 1927-1932 **(**The table includes only the 42 counties in which the Legion obtained votes, out of Romania's total number of 72 counties. The figures in bold indicate counties where the Legion won parliamentary mandates.)

County	**1927**		**1931**		**1932**	
	Number of Votes.	Percentage	Number of votes	Percentage	Number of votes	Percentage
1. Alba	262	0.73%				
2. Arad	2,916	3.77%			2,967	3.36%
3. Argeş					205	0.45%
4. Bălți					2,559	4.49%
5. Bihor			861	1.10%		
6. Botoşani	1,986	5.26%			2,169	5.82%
7. Brăila					590	1.70%
8. Cahul			6,039	24.08%	**4,360**	**18.32**%
9. Câmpulung			3,424	19.13%	2.123	12.04%
10. Cernăuți	586	1.37%				
11. Caraş					1,083	2.34%
12. Cluj			569	1.26%		
13. Covurlui			3,084	10.61%	**6,077**	**19.55**%
14. Dolj					1,626	1.82%
15. Dorohoi					1,827	4.95%
16. Făgăraş			237	1.33%	494	2.72%
17. Fălciu					815	4.01%
18. Fălticeni					371	1.31%
19. Gorj					492	1.24%
20. Hunedoara			1,352	2.08%	2,221	3.50%
21. Iaşi					1,011	2.58%
22. Ilfov					895	0.78%
23. Ismail			5,027	14.66%	2,822	8.67%
24. Maramureş			976	4.28%	175	0.77%
25. Mureş			1,070	2.23%		
26. Muscel					467	1.74%
27. Neamț			1,386	4.23%	**5,281**	**15.39**%
28. Prahova					389	0.56%
29. Putna					3,252	9.26%
30. R. Sărat					1,944	5.81%
31. Roman					363	1.32%
32. Storojineț					406	1.35%
33. Suceava	2,233	11.81%			**4,420**	**19.99**%

34. Tărnava Mare			328	1.11%		
35. Tecuci			1.189	4.58%	2,552	9.77%
36. Turda			2.537	8.21%	3,855	13.20%
37. Tighina			1.270	2.96%	4,419	12.00%
38. Tutova	173	0.75%	597	2.97%	**2,636**	**13.80**%
39. Vaslui	313	1.34%			713	2.96%
Total Romania	**10,761**	**0.39**%	**30,783**	**1.05**%	**70,674**	**2.37**%

Source: *Evoluţia partidelor noastre politice*, Table V.

Table Six. Electoral Results of the Party "All for the Fatherland," December 1937

County	Percentage	County	Percentage	County	Percentage
Alba	21.21%	Fărăraş	20.78%	Sălaj	11.02%
Arad	32.73%	Fălciu	3.14%	Satu-Mare	8.85%
Argeş	12.95%	Gorj	19.86%	Severin	21.68%
Bacău	8.57%	Hotin	3.99%	Sibiu	16.93%
Baia	10.68%	Hunedoara	25.13%	Someş	13.87%
Bălţi	3.50%	Ialomiţa	19.92%	Soroca	8.42%
Bihor	14.61%	Iaşi	4.50%	Storojineţ	14.08%
Botoşani	3.69%	Ilfov	3.71%	Suceava	23.55%
Brăila	25.60%	Ismail	4.65%	Târnava Mare	10.25%
Braşov	16.91%	Lăpuşna	3.51%	Târnava Mică	11.91%
Buzău	13.30%	Maramureş	17.56%	Timiş	19.00%
Cahul	12.00%	Mehedinţi	9.76%	Tecuci	27.96%
Caliacra	9.86%	Mureş	12.62%	Teleorman	16.72%
Câmpulung	32.85%	Muscel	9.47%	Tighina	6.07%
Cernăuţi	18.81%	Năsăud	20.03%	Trei Scaune	2.20%
Caraş	20.47%	Neamţ	35.79%	Tulcea	
Cetatea Albă	2.46%	Odorhei	5.05%	Turda	
Ciuc	2.57%	Olt	13.51%	Tutova	
Cluj	10.17%	Orhei	4.77%	Vaslui	
Constanţa	15.03%	Prahova	23.22%	Vâlcea	
Covurlui	35.93%	Putna	26.75%	Vlaşca	
Dâmboviţa	12.14%	Râmnicu Sărat	27.11%	Bucureşti	
Dolj	23.46%	Roman	2.63%		
Dorohoi	6.70%	Romanaţi	11.66%	Total Romania	**15.58**
Durostor	8.80%	Rădăuţi	32.40%		

Source: Monitorul Oficial, 1 (30 December 1937) No. 301, p. 1937- , quoted in Heinen, *Legiunea*, p. 478-480.

11. 2. Sources

Document 1
Ion I. Moța, "Autobiografie (în loc de introducere)" (Autobiography. Instead of an introduction) in *Cranii de Lemn. Articole 1922-1936* (Wooden Skulls. Articles, 1922-1936) (Bucharest: Editura Mişcării Legionare, 1940), Forth Edition, pp. 9-11.

I do not know how it happened but it seems that I broke loose from that cradle of humanity and strain, of bravery and peace that dominated the village of the Balşens. And, as this book proves, although it seems hardly believable, I have found myself another youth somewhere else, and I have plunged into another life. (It indeed proves true the story about the seven lives of the Romanian.) I have thus became a city dweller, I have taken another name and I have entered the whirlpool of today's life. Here, I struggled in a world alienated from the old costumes and invaded by pagans. I wrestled against it and against all its Kikes and scoundrels, in the same way that I jumped to the very heart of danger during the time I used to prop up oxen on the slopes of mountain gaps. Quietness and contentment in this world I could not find, I hated it and it hated me back deadly. It is clear that the fate of the revolted—but ultimately triumphant—slave was predestined to me, too, as to my forerunners.

In this fight, I used the pen as well. As such, mostly at random, for the needs of the battle, and not at all for giving Romanian writing unforgettable charm. It is only for the benefit of the fighters that I include here some of the articles from these years of fighting of the youth from 1922 until today. […] Not even a clean Romanian language should be sought for in here. I know that it will not be found, and this is the only criticism that I cannot take with a light heart. But it is myself who first makes this criticism here, openly, because rereading articles written fourteen years ago, and even the later ones before submitting them for publication, I was saddened by the multitude of foreign words ("cranii" … [skulls]) and of the foreign forms of writing which overwhelmed me as all the others, almost my entire generation. This alienation against which we are fighting, the calamity to which we react, penetrated even us, the "nationalists": in spirit, in faith, in our way of thinking, in mores, in language and in customs. It is fortunate that it did not terminate everything and that there still remains so much strength in us as to pull down the obstacles of this century of confusion and alienation, and to be able to return to our origins; and once returned there, to resume the broken line of our life in the Romanian house, community and spirit, and to elevate this people to the material and spiritual power and fruitfulness it deserves.

This is how it should be understood and received, this book, to which I have given the title of that article which evokes one of the most intense feelings of a fighting army: the burial of the comrade killed in battle.

Let me now abandon aristocratic language and return to myself. I was saying that I hated the world of this second life of mine. And it hated me back mortally, as it hated all my Legionary comrades and my Captain. The old world, that of Nuțu Doncii, in which are rooted all our feelings and longings, we do not find anywhere anymore. It was terminated by this new century with its politics and discord, with its denial of God and love for foreigners and for all it comes from others, the century which tramples underfoot our way of life, with its strengths, its qualities and its beauty.

As such, our soul, tied to another world, strolls around today in a life which is not ours. Faced with the world of today, we feel like strangers, we cannot find in it any other sense except

that of terminating it in order to revive the old times and to increase their beauty, their strength and rightful Romanian order.

It would thus seem that my comrades and I are a strange kind of beings with two lives, a kind of zombies risen in an extinguished world to bear the spirit of fear in today's world. This is exactly the way we are. We are uprooted souls who, carrying our restlessness over a ruined life, will not find peace in any grave until we don't re-elevate what others have scattered, wasted, and cursed.

The people of today's century should stop for a moment their lives of ease and indifference and listen to the strange noises that rack mysterious depths and yell like the night winds. And this is to be heard and known: The terrible rule of the zombies is approaching.

Document 2
Ion I. Moța, "La Icoană" (To the Icon) *Pământul Strămoşesc* (The Fatherland) I (August 1927) 1, pp. 9-10.

[...] We therefore want to build, and—with the help of God—we will build, a cell of shining light, which will act, in other words it will save, of itself. We are not creators of light. That is to be found only in God. We are thus not the creators of the desired salvation, but we want to be the recipients of this salvaging force, which we seek in a different place, in the only place where it is to be found: in God. Therefore: to the icon!

This house is—naturally—a system. It already exists. And, as every living system, it is moved by a force. In the system of human societies, the force can be captured only through an organization. Therefore our system has to have an organization, and it has one. Our organization cannot be born and developed in a healthy way without order, hierarchy, and especially, without a leader (*Conducător*). Thus our organization has a leader whom no one elected but who has the consensus of all those who, seduced by a mysterious force, have come to constitute, under the leader's direction, the disciplined nests of the organization. Our leader is Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.

Our system, with its own order and leadership, gathered around the pillar of its faith in God (its only supporting pillar) starts today, in front of the world, its work, its effort, to which is linked our only hope of salvation. We have the creed that, this time, we go straight to the target, and victory is assured. The people will be served and saved because we do not conceive to deviate a single moment from the icon and its order. It is not our work anymore, but is its own, and that is invincible.

As an ending, we imprint here a confession: We firmly believe, and see on the horizon, in the line of our path, unknown victories and divine wonders. We do not announce them here, for being believed at once (we know that even the contrary can happen), but because tomorrow, when they are fulfilled, when the unbelievable gifts of the divine mercy bearing salvation pour onto us, we should have proof that we have foreseen it, and that we have judged well.

Until then, to those who are strong enough in their soul to understand us, approve us and go together with us already from now, we send our call: *To the icon!* The others, the numerous ones, will come later, but they will surely come.

Document 3
Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* (For My Legionaries) (Bucharest: Editura Mişcării Legionare, 1940), Third Edition, Vol. I, pp. 275-276.

Confronted with the situation described above, I decided to go together with none of the parts. Nor did I want to renounce it [the fight], but to start the organization of the youth on my own responsibility, by my own head and soul, to continue the fight and not to capitulate.

During these hours of agitation and dilemmas, we remembered the icon that protected us in the Văcăreşti prison. We decided to sit closer and to continue the fight under the protection of the same Holy Icon. To this end, it was transported from the shrine of Saint Spiridon, where I had left it three years ago, to our center in Iaşi.

The Văcăreşti group joined immediately in these thoughts. After several days, I called the Văcăreştens and the few students who remained tied to us for a meeting in Iaşi, on Friday 24 June 1927 at ten o'clock, in my room at 20 Florilor Street. Several minutes before the meeting, I wrote in a chronicle the following order, registered as Number One:

Today, Friday, 24 June 1927, (Saint John the Baptist) 10 p.m. "The Legion of Archangel Michael" was established under my leadership. Let he who has unlimited faith come here. Let he who has doubts step aside. I name Radu Mironovici as the chief of the guard at the Icon.

This first meeting lasted one minute, as long as I was reading the above order, after which the participants withdrew in order to decide if they felt determined and spiritually strong enough to enter such an organization which had no program, the only program being my previous life of fighting and my comrades' life in prison.

Even for the members of the Văcăreşti group I allowed time for reflection and introspection of their consciousness, to see if they had any doubts or reservations, since once they stepped on this path, they had to continue for their entire lives without any hesitation.

This was our intimate state of mind which gave birth to the Legion: We were not interested if we survived, if we fell exhausted or if we died. Our aim was different: to go ahead, united. Going together, united, along with God and with the justice of the Romanian people, no matter what fate this would give us, defeat or death, it would be blessed and would bear fruit for the Romanian people. There are defeats and deaths that resurrect a people to life, as well as there are certain kinds of victories that weaken it, Professor Iorga once said.

[…] We were now alone as in a desert, and we had to find a way in life by our own power. We gathered together even closer around the Icon. And the more life's hardships overwhelmed us and the blows of the world hit us, the more we would stay under the shield of Saint Archangel Michael, and under the protection of his sword. For us, he was not a photograph on an icon anymore, but we felt that he was alive. There, at the icon, we guarded day and night, with a lit candle.

Document 4
Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, "Programul şi sufletul" (The Program and the Soul) *Pământul Strămoşesc*, V (1 February 1933) 2, pp. 2-3.

I avoided developing a complete program. Its major lines are drawn and well-known (naturally, with the risk of seeing them stolen). Programs are based on national realities, and if there are realities that remain, there are realities that change from one day to another.

A program cannot be a combination of theories put together from the sky. It has to be based on those realities that affect our Romanian people. Their wounds have to be healed. They are on the lips of the masses. Better look for people. Because at night anyone can make a program, but we do not feel the need for them in this country, but for people and for the will to implement them. There are movements that have no program. They live from speculating about diverse problems that appear in life. For example: usury. They devour this and then die. But they do not find more prayers in front of them.

There are other movements that have a program. There are others that have more than a program, they have a doctrine, and there are still others that have more than a doctrine, they have a religion. It is something of a superior spiritual kind (*de ordin superior sufletesc*) which mysteriously collects thousands of people determined to create another fate for themselves. If the man of the program or of the doctrine serves with inner conviction, the Legionaries are people of a great faith and they are ready to die for it at any time. They will serve this faith until the end.

No matter how nice and complete the program of Lupuists seems, or that of the Peasantists, or that of the Liberals, you can be assured that no Lupuist is ready to die for Lupu's program, no Georgist for his own program, and so on!

Therefore, I put less emphasis on people gathered on the basis of programs and who would abandon you in difficult cases, than on those recruited on the basis of great faiths who do not abandon you until death. Our Legionary movement has the character of a great spiritual school. It tends to light unknown faiths, to transform, to revolutionize the Romanian soul. Shout in all corners that the evil, the ruin, comes from the soul. The soul is the cardinal point on which we have to work at this moment. The soul of the individual and the soul of the mass. All new programs and social systems pompously displayed to the people are lies, if in their shadow laughs that soul of a thief, that lack of sense of duty, that spirit of betrayal of everything that is Romanian, the same immorality, the waste and luxury.

Call the soul of the people to a new life. Do not look for electoral success if it does not mean at the same time the victory of the organized forces of the renewed soul.

Programs? How come? Do you think we cannot dry marshes? We cannot collect energy from mountains and electrify the country? We cannot erect Romanian cities? We cannot make our lands produce four times as much? We cannot, on our rich land, provide bread to every Romanian? We cannot make laws for assuring the good working of a state mechanism appropriate for today and for our national character? Quinquenale? We cannot erect here, in the midst of the Carpathians, a country that can glitter as a light in the midst of Europe? We can.

But the great mistake of many politicians was that they disclosed their programs in detail before having the possibility of implementing them.

We have programs in our pockets as well. They are being studied continuously, but are kept for their time. People are asking you what you will do. Tell them that the people of revenge can do a lot of things. For the time being, our program is:

1) To achieve force; 2) To moderate this force to defeat all hostile forces; 3) and then, to apply the measures of our proper program.

We employ legal means. Anyway, the details, be they tactical or programmatic ones, are part of the operational secrets of the fighting forces.

Document 5
Ion Banea, "Căpitanul" *Axa* II (29 October 1933) 21, p. 1.

The Captain!

This word was captured from the world of thoughts by a fighter in order to denote the one who is totally appropriate for it, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the chef of the Iron Guard.

From that time on, this name started to travel around the Romanian land, and to be said with profound love by the Captain's soldiers, either employed in sweet or stormy Legionary songs or told with irony and mockery by enemies.

But he imposed himself due to his personality and his legendary deeds.

He encompasses hope, trust, élan and courage.

Merely speaking his name elevates you.

He penetrated souls, calling them with an unusual power to a new life. To a life warmed by another faith, ennobled by great deeds.

The Captain!

He is a landmark, a border. A sword in-between two worlds. An old one, whom he courageously confronts, destroying it; and a new one, whom he creates, animates, brings to light.

His figure within the national movement, from the war on, appears as a line of fire, around which revolve all great events. He was the leader (*conducătorul*) and the animator.

He always took the most advanced position on the front line, full of faith and determination, never hesitating or avoiding responsibility.

His life is interconnected with the fight and the nationalist movement to such an extent that nothing remains for life, but he identifies with continuous and great action in the service of the nation's interests.

Predestined to sacrifices, he lived intensely and agitatedly. His existence was full of deeds and threatened by dangers. He reached peaks as rare as anybody could wish, and he descended depths from which only God's power, in which he so much believes, could rescue him.

He faced the perspective of life-long forced labor, and the greatness of the Romanian people's solidarity with his deeds.

Harsh prison days destroyed his health, while great moments gave him shivers when tens of thousands of people surrounded him.

He has walked hand in hand with his own time, smiling at offenses of flatteries. Loving the fight, he dedicated his life to courage. He gave himself fully to the cause, asking for nothing in return.

While his enemies wanted him dead, *he rose higher and higher*.

The Captain!

He blessed the country's prisons with his suffering. He lived in chains five hundred four days. He lived them doubly, as he alone confessed.

V*ăcăreşti, Galata, Focşani, Severin,* form the foundation of the sacrifice on which the edifice of the new world is rising, one that he builds.

In their musty walls, in those moments of great attempts was born the faith which today dominates the nationalist youth, the Legionary youth.

There, behind the locks, deprived of freedom and kept away from people, the Captain thought of the great *Freedom* which he now prepares for the Romanian people.

The Captain!

Thought. Determination. Courage. Action. Life.

We love him. We obey him. We are at his command.

He is our hope today and Romania's tomorrow.

Through him we are strong. Through him we are feared: THROUGH HIM WE WILL WIN.

Document 6

Vasile Marin, "Crez de generaţie: Ideologia faptei" (Credo of a Generation: The Ideology of the Action) in *Crez de generaţie* (Credo of a generation) (Bucharest: Tipografia Bucovina I. E. Torouţiu, 1937), pp. 187-189.

"Soyez durs, mes frères!" (NIETZSCHE)

It would seem that we are living through the end of a century. There are signs.

The cradles of the old world are broken down everywhere. The men of the world which is fading away have confused eyes: Their disorientation gives them hallucinations that play as in the water for the dead. From the depths of national life, from where the nucleus of the future order boils, the flow carrying a threat springs toward the surface. Great renewals are being prepared. Because, against everybody, these renewals will soon come to light, because no matter how desperately the people of the old order would wish for it, communities do not commit suicide and do not stand still in lethargic states of mind.

Nations experience crises, similarly to isolated individuals, but do not give in: Slowly, through evolution, and suddenly, through revolution, they surely overcome crisis. Renaissance through revolution cannot scare anybody anymore: Peoples without revolution are eliminating themselves from the history of the world, in the same way as individuals who do not experience profound crisis during their lifetime are burying themselves consciously in the gray clay of anonymity.

The generation in the hands of which there is the command of the community is on its deathbed: not because of fulfilling its mission, but because of its physical and moral inability. It dies alone: It dies because of a lack of breath, because of its incapacity to understand the age and the paralysis of its creative will.

Their ousting from power has to be enacted as soon as possible. The age requires strong people and the preceding generation cannot provide them. The age demands complete men, with the urge for sacrifice, full of credo, steeled with temerity: a dynamic generation of credo and deed; it requires people who do not hesitate on the eve of great decisions, but reach them fully

and directly; who do not take in ideals foreign to the soul of this nation and do not work for projects against its interests. And these people can be provided only by our generation.

Where young people work for the benefit of the revolution, the destiny of our society is in the hands of our vigorous generation. Everywhere, the control tower and the places of responsibility are occupied by the privileged guard of youth, by the aristocrats of ethical authority, by the casts of those who have understood in time that, without the spirit of the brave sacrifice of a conscious elite, the world would have long been a perfectly catalogued museum, a factory of robots or an immense morgue.

The young generation of all countries which enacted their great reforms understood the historical moment of their call. With a trust clear of any doubt, it was fulfilled directly and fully, despite mortal danger. "*Vivere pericolosamente*" is the dynamic formula of youth, cast in the most lapidary enactment of creative virility.

Our generation does not constitute a political dowry in the hands of anybody. It has long ago become aware of its own existence and has understood that it cannot serve as political capital to be exploited. It is a physical and moral entity with its own patrimony of ideas and feelings. The people of our generation do not appear only as the terminators of a past: The demiurges of the new world carry in one hand the pickax, and in the other hand the trowel for building another world.

The Nietzscheian principle of existence got to fertilize the spirit of our Romanian generation. Looking for its formula of activism within the general horizon of the age, it found it not in economy, as the panicked people of the crises thought, nor in cultural spiritualism, as preach the defeatists interested in the maintenance of the current order, but in politics, through the fights which started for the achievement of the authentic state, purified of the rotten forms of democracy, and through the integration of the undifferentiated nation within the framework of the new ethical state.

The nation cannot endlessly tolerate being led by the infamies of the current political parties, pots filled with the same content, but the command of the state should be taken from debilitated hands articulated on asthmatic bodies.

We believe in the ethical value of force. To the so-called state of law, which allows the free play of the egotism of sporadic individualism, we oppose the ethical state, built on the legality of morality, in which only the aspirations and interests of national communities find themselves harmonized and justified. We throw away in disgust the corpse of the demo-liberal state, because we proclaim instead not a state that protects clan interests, but a state fertilized by the principle of moral authority, within which the maximal development of the entire nation is to be achieved.

In the firm fight there is no place for social philanthropy or for the mysterious texture of cheap nationalism and sentimental tolerance; but for full intransigence, the determined trust in the first and foremost virtues of men, the rock-like strength of warriors. In our fight we will abolish the mockery of the political scoundrel and the skepticism of invalid intellectuals. The amateurs of diversions in political life have to withdraw into holes as soon as possible. […] Romania needs in this age tragic and synthetic people. Therefore, the skeleton intellectuals gathered in the arches of communisating democracy have to be aware: Great transformations are not prepared with the deluded soup of confusing conferences or with the pen filled with the ink of indifference. These are achieved beside and above them through the firm, conscious, organized and disciplined action of those who are the followers of a single ideology: Action.

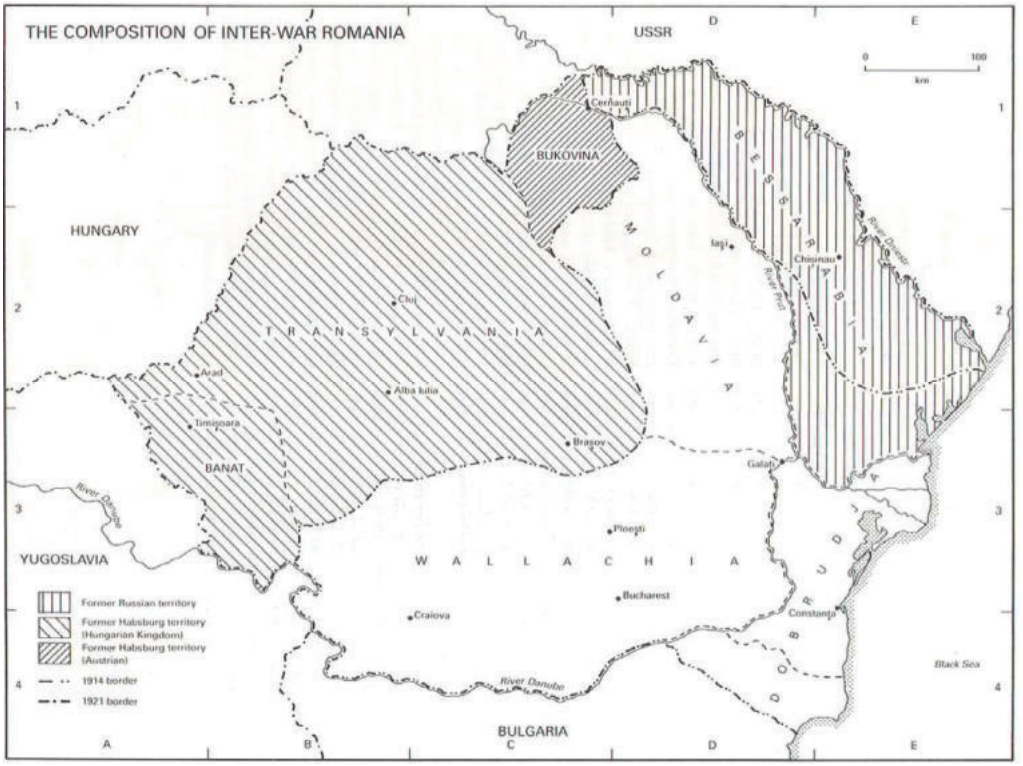
Document 7
Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe, zile negre. Memorii (I)* [White Days, Black Days. Memoirs I] Edited by Nedic Lemnaru (Bucureşti: Gândirea, 1991), p. 237-239.

I have motivated Corneliu Codreanu to deliver a speech in the parliament. The movement was growing fast and the public needed to be informed about its aims. He was to give an exposé of the doctrine and the cardinal points of the program, framed by the discussion over the royal message of autumn 1932. In my house on Polona Street, I have dictated to him the speech for an entire afternoon, me walking and smoking while he was writing. It was an exposé of a constructive nationalism, animated by a new spirit, without attacks against other parties and without any Cuzist element [influenced by the politician A. C. Cuza, *note C.I*]. It was to be a credo of the new generation. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu agreed with it entirely. He wanted to add a small episode with a bread made of sawdust, brought from Maramureş, and to lay it on the ministerial bench, so that the government sees what the Romanian people eat. He thought this gesture would have a powerful impact. The next day, Corneliu Codreanu came to me with his speech learned by heart. It lasted for an hour and a quarter. He did not have the gift of oratory. But he nicely declaimed it. His turn to speak came during an evening when I was working in the editorial office. After a while, my parliamentary reporter entered the door in a disappointed mood: "The Captain spoke, Mr. Director!" "So, how was it?" I asked him. "A disaster!" "What are you saying, my boy? He had a very nice speech. He declaimed it to me. For how long did he speak?" "Ten minutes, after which he lost the thread of his ideas and left the rostrum."

But here is Codreanu entering: "What did you do, Corneliu?" I asked him, after we remained alone. Then he made a very strange confession to me.

"When I took the floor"—he recollected, "an idea fixated in my mind, and did not go away. What do I do if, now when I have the floor, a deputy shouts at me from the bench: 'You Murderer!' What do I do? I leave the floor without answering back or I take out the revolver and I shoot? Because I always walk with my revolver on me. This thought darkened my mind. While I was uttering a sentence from the speech, I was waiting for the shout: 'You Murderer!' But the cry did not come and I forgot the speech. I went away from the floor, happy that I did not use the revolver."

I was distraught that the speech was lost and a good opportunity for the new movement to make itself conspicuous was wasted. But the story with the revolver frightened me. In other words, he did not renounce it [the revolver, *note C.I*], as he had pretended in his first confession, when he narrated for me the killing of Manciu. On another occasion, a year later, we were in a garden kept by Legionaries, at the periphery of the city. He took the hat of Dragoş Protopopescu—who was in a hurry to adopt the green shirt [to convert, *note C.I*], as he was to be in a hurry to abandon it—and transformed it into a target. He then took out the revolver and shot several times in the same hole. He explained to us that the distance to the hat was very long for a precise revolver shot. "We know how to shoot, Mr. Dragoş," he concluded, returning him his ruined hat.



Source: Richard & Ben Crampton, *Atlas of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 112

Previous issues of TSEECS

No. 1 Michael David-Fox, Masquerade: Sources, Resistance and Early Soviet Political Culture. May 1999
No. 2 Gábor Klaniczay, The Annales and Medieval Studies in Hungary. August 2000
No. 3 Mark B. Adams, Networks in Action: The Khruschev Era, the Cold War, and the Transformation of Soviet Science. October 2000
No. 4 Frode Overland Andersen, Fragile Democracies: A Study of Institutional Consolidation in Six Eastern and Central European Democracies 1989-1997. November 2000. ISBN 82-995792-0-1
No. 5 Jon Raundalen, Indianeren som westernhelt. En studie av den østtyske westernfilmen (The Indian as a Western Hero. A Study of the East German Western-films). In Norwegian, with an English Summary of 11 pages. February 2001. ISBN 82-995972-2-8
Nr. 6 György Péteri, ed., Intellectual Life and the First Crisis of State Socialism in East Central Europe, 1953-1956. November 2001. ISBN 82-995792-3-6
Nr. 7 Victoria de Grazia, American Supermarkets versus European Small Shops. Or how transnational capitalism crossed paths with moral economy in Italy during the 1960s. ("Approaches to Globality" sub-series). March 2002.
Nr. 8 Catriona Kelly, "The Little Citizens of a Big Country": Childhood and International Relations in the Soviet Union ("Approaches to Globality" sub-series). March 2002
Nr. 9 Scott M. Eddie & Christa Kouschil, The Ethnopolitics of Land Ownership in Prussian Poland, 1886-1918: The land purchases of the Aussiedlungskommissionen. May 2002.
Nr. 10 Knut Andreas Grimstad, The Globalization of Biography. On Multilocation in the Transatlantic Writings of Witold Gombrowicz, 1939-1969 ("Approaches to Globality" sub-series). June 2002.
Nr. 11 Vjeran Pavlaković, Sabrina P. Ramet, and Philip Lyon, Sovereign Law vs. Sovereign Nation: The Cases of Kosovo and Montenegro. October 2002.
Nr. 12 Ingmar Oldberg, Uneasy Neighbours: Russia and the Baltic States in the Context of NATO and EU Enlargements. December 2002.
Nr. 13 György Péteri, ed., Patronage, Personal Networks and the Party-State: Everyday Life in the Cultural Sphere in Communist Russia and East Central Europe. March 2004. ISBN 82-995792-4-4
Nr. 14 John Connelly, Reflections of Social Change: Polish Rural Sociology, 1930-1965. September 2004.

ISSN 1501-6684