

THE ARCHANGEL'S CONSECRATED SERVANTS. AN INQUIRY IN THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE
IRON GUARD (1930-1941)

IONUȚ FLORIN BILIUȚĂ

A DISSERTATION

in

History

Presented to the Faculties of the Central European University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Budapest, Hungary

2013

Supervisor of Dissertation

Associate Professor Matthias Riedl

Copyright in the text of this dissertation rests with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European Library. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the written permission of the Author.

I hereby declare that this dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions and no materials previously written and/or published by another person unless otherwise noted.

Abstract

The relationship between the Romanian Orthodox Church and interwar Romanian fascist movement, the Iron Guard had been a Pandora's Box for both the lay and Church historians. The focus of this thesis will not fall on presenting the reader with a history of the Iron Guard or a history of the Church through the lenses of the Romanian fascist movement. Rather, by emphasizing the interplay between different layers of authority both in the Legion and in the Church, the present undertaking presents a net of negotiations and careful retreats from both sides. Working around the concepts proposed by Roger Griffin, that is fascism "as a palingenetic form of ultra-nationalism" regarding the movement, and "religious fascism" regarding the Orthodox Church's low clergy derailment to the extreme right, I will show that on terms of ritual and theology the Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church were able to meet by making compromises.

The thesis discusses the risk in assuming that the Orthodox Church acted as one, coherent institution, with a clear cut top down decision making process in its relation to the Iron Guard which as its turn cannot be regarded as one but a plurality inside the label. I have thus identified at least four distinct groups, three being active in the devising of this relationship. There is a distinction in how the low and the high clergy interact with the Legion. With regards to the Legion I have focused on an intellectual group that comprised religious minded individuals with direct or indirect ties with the institution of the Church. There was a side in the Legion and also one in the Church who did not involve itself in this relation. The most ambiguous game among all three factions was played by the high clergy. Acting individually in support of the movement or giving the movement the feeling that in the end they will join in officially, the high clergy used the movement in order to further their own political agenda.

The most interesting outcome of these relations was the creation of a legionary theology. By projecting the Christian narrative of redeeming the individual to national proportions, the legionary priests and ideologues created something unparalleled in the history of European fascism: a theological synthesis in which the clergy brought its ideas and performed the sacerdotal function of the movement and the fascists brought the promise of a national salvation in the beyond. The coexistence of Christian sacraments with the sacrament of the movement, the need to couple the Gospels with the legionary writings of the Captain, the emphasis on a redeemed community in the beyond, these are few of the elements of this legionary theology.

The thesis is shaped into seven parts that move chronologically through the narrative of this relationship. The first two parts discuss the intellectual and religious context of pre and post-unification Romania. The third chapter is focused on the Legion's first years. Chapter 4 and chapter 5 look into the activity of the Iron Guard after 1934, especially the working camps and the development of legionary theology. Chapter 6 and 7 will deal with the Legion confronted with Moța-Marin burial and the National Legionary State.

Acknowledgements

While engaged in the research and writing process for the thesis I benefited from the exceptionally generous institutional support of several foundations, research institutes, and individuals. I would like to express my gratitude to the Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz, Germany, the Oxford Brookes University's Department of History, to the Modern European History Research Center in Oxford and the New Europe College in Bucharest, Romania for supporting periods of work on this research project.

I would like to express my profound respect and gratitude to Professor Roger Griffin. It is a complicated web of entanglements European fascism and he guided me through the theory towards understanding the phenomenon as a cultural and social *Weltanschauung*. Our discussions in Oxford influenced considerably this thesis' outcome.

My professors and my readers have helped immensely in bringing this thesis to fruition. I am particularly grateful for the advice and suggestions of Mr. Sorin Antohi, professor Balazs Trencsenyi, professor Constantin Iordachi, professor Paschalis Kitromilides, professor Robert Evans, professor Marius Turda, Dr. Philip Vanhaelemeersch, professor Sergio Luzzatto, professor Leon Volovici.

I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues: Valentin Săndulescu, Cristian Vasile, Narcis Tulbure, Răzvan Pârâianu, Narcis Tașcă, Chris Davis, Roland Clark, Oana Mateescu, Norbert Petrovici, Mirel Bănică, and many others with whom I have discussed my research hypotheses and the outcomes of my research.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Matthias Riedl who took the pains of reading several versions of this thesis, revised and commented on pieces of writing that were imperfect or simply impossible to understand. Much of the comments that I have received and his input furthered my understanding of the intricate mechanism of religion.

Finally, I would like to thank Anca for taking the time to listen and to read my text. Her comments and our lively discussions about the topic have sometimes took over our family life and kept us awake until the early hours of morning. During the process of writing the thesis, she was my “drill sergeant”, my source of inspiration, my public and most times my best and most exigent reader. The thesis is dedicated to her.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Aim and Research Questions	1
2. Fascism as Political Religion – The State of the Art	8
3. Iron Guard as a Political Religion	20
4. Sources and Methodology	34
5. The Structure of the Thesis	36
I. The cultural debate in modern Romania and the rise of religious right-wing radicalism	40
I. 1 Preliminaries	40
I. 2 “The Great Debate” over Romanian Ethnicity. Religion and Nationalism in 1920s Romania	41
I. 3 Religious ‘Traditionalism’? The Origins of the Interwar ‘Traditionalist’ Movement	48
I. 4 Radical Political Expressions and Religion	62
I. 5 Final Remarks	70
II. Surviving Modernity? The Orthodox Church Negotiation of its Position in Public Life	73
II. 1 Preliminaries	73
II. 2 From the Servitude to Constantinople to the <i>Babylonian</i> Servitude to the Romanian State. The Romanian Orthodox Church in the 19 th Century	76
II. 3 The Romanian Orthodox Church after 1918	86
II. 4 Final Remarks	95

III. “In the Beginning was the Word!” The First Stages in the	98
Development of the Legionary Movement (1930-1933)	
III. 1 In Jassy (1927-1930)	101
III. 2 Courting the High Clergy. The First Legionary Bishop?	112
III. 3 The First Political Foray	116
III. 4 Meeting Nichifor Crainic. The Movement’s First Ideologue	121
III. 5 From the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to the Tomb of a Prime Minister. The Legion of Archangel Michael between 1932 and 1933	129
III. 6 Final Remarks	141
IV. Seducing the “Bride of Christ”. Legionary Propaganda and the	144
Romanian Orthodox Church (1934-1937)	
IV. 1 From Prisons to Resurrection. The Imprisoned Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church	151
IV. 2 The Archangel’s Temples. Working Camps as Means to Seduce the Orthodox Church	162
IV. 3 Final Remarks	179
V. The Foundation of the Iron Guard’s <i>Theology</i> (1934-1937)	183
V. 1 On the Nature of Legionary Theology	186
V. 2 “Love Thy Neighbour”? On Legionary Violence	191
V. 3 An <i>Archangelic Theology</i> of the Iron Guard	201
V. 4 Codreanu as National Messiah. The Generalization of His Cult	208
V. 5 The Movement’s <i>Sacrament</i> . The Importance of Martyrdom	222
V. 6 Final Remarks	232
VI. The Moța-Marin Burial (13th of February 1937) and the <i>Fascization</i> of	235

the Romanian Orthodox Church

VI. 1 Preliminaries	235
VI. 2 From Fallen Soldiers to Martyrs for the Movement	237
VI. 3 The <i>Proto-Martyrs</i> . Antecedents to the Moța-Marin Burial	243
VI. 4 The Moța-Marin Funeral - Constructing the Ritual	247
VI. 5 After Moța-Marin. Nae Ionescu on National Orthodoxy	265
VI. 6 The Positive Reaction of Orthodox Hierarchy towards the Iron Guard	271
VI. 7 Final Remarks	272

VII. “The National Funerary State.” The Iron Guard in Power 274**(September 1940-January 1941)**

VII. 1 Preliminaries	274
VII. 2 Taking the Political Power Seriously. The Reaction of the Orthodox Clergy	277
VII. 3 The Sacrament of the Next World. Commemorating the Dead, Indoctrinating the Youth in Martyrdom	290
VII. 4 Epilogue. The Break between the Legion and the High Clergy	298
VII. 5 Final Remarks	302

Final Remarks 304**Bibliography** 314

Introduction

“From now on, we are the true Orthodox Church.” These were the words Corneliu Codreanu, the leader of the Romanian fascist movement voiced on 10th of February 1938 when hearing about the nomination of the Orthodox Patriarch Miron Cristea as Prime Minister in the authoritarian cabinet of King Carol II of Romania. For almost 20 years, Codreanu had been involved in shaping numerous radical right-wing movements, the most famous being the Legion of Archangel Michael, known as the Iron Guard from 1930. This radical expression of Romanian fascism had an ideological particularity which singled it out from the interwar family of fascist movement and parties, the profound religious character synthesized in its ideological core. Unlike any other interwar political movement, Codreanu’s Legion placed an important emphasis on the Christian theology and rituals serving fascist ideology and the presence of large numbers of Orthodox priests in the legionary political meetings and legionary rank and file assured the rapid expansion and extension of the movement’s political agenda.

1. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the present thesis is to explore the nature of the relationship between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Fascist ideology of the Iron Guard in Romania (1930-1941). More precisely, I will analyze and contextualize the way in which the Orthodox Church shaped and influenced the ideology of the Iron Guard by emphasizing the interchange of ideological and theological motifs between the Iron Guard and the

Church. Considered by most historians as a “mystical” fascist movement,¹ the Iron Guard remained throughout the interwar period a peculiar mix between fascism and Orthodoxy interpreted by the traditionalist intellectual circles as a form of national revolution.² Furthermore, the present undertaking aims to see how the Orthodox clergy and the Romanian fascists met on theological grounds, how/ whether a theological exchange was possible between different layers of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Iron Guard. I will argue collaboration between Romanian fascists and clergymen was not just a pragmatic relation, but rather it was a process of mutual approximation unfolded over time on both an institutional and a theological level, with different stages of reciprocal theological exchanges and theological synthesis. Therein rests one of the key points of originality of the thesis, in emphasizing not just the institutional interplay between the Church and the Iron Guard, but also a conceptual back and forth circulation of intellectual and theological ideas and rituals between the Orthodox Church and the Romanian Iron Guard.

My initial research question deals with how the Iron Guard was perceived within the ecclesiastic environments and the understanding of Orthodox Church by the Romanian fascists. The main assumption takes into consideration that, at different levels of the Church hierarchy, the perception of the Iron Guard differed. The high clergy’s project for the collaboration with the movement was destined to support Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and his followers as a political expression of the Orthodox Church, regaining

¹ See Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului* [The History of the Iron Guard. The Mystique of Ultra-nationalism] translated by Marian Ștefănescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993).

² Orthodoxy was an intellectual trend led by the theologian and poet Nichifor Crainic (1890-1972) emphasizing the capital role played by Christian Orthodoxy for the culture and the spiritual development of the Romanian people. For a scholarly account, please see Keith Hitchins, “Gîndirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise” in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania 1860–1940. A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978).

the Church's political ground lost in the 19th century, when in the process of national building the Orthodox Church was nationalized and pushed the Church into proclaiming its autocephaly from Constantinople. The Orthodox prelates timidly accepted to support the movement in the beginning of the 1930s because of its Christian political agenda and the religious revival brought about and imposed upon the youth by Codreanu's followers. However after a state decree in 1936 against the legionary benevolent work in the service of the Church, the hierarchy started to distance itself from Romanian fascists, if only for a short period.³

The Moța-Marin burial (13th of February 1937) marked the return to a harmonious relationship between the high clergy and the Iron Guard, a change of pace materialized in the decisions of the Holy Synod on 11th of March 1937 condemning freemasonry and its implications in the Romanian public life. The coming to power on 10th of February 1938 of the authoritarian and conservative dictatorship of King Carol II and the beginning of the movement's repression was followed subsequently by a new and more severe distancing of the high clergy from the Legion. During the short lived National Legionary State (14th of September 1940 - 21st/23rd of January 1941), because of the projects to reform the Church supported by the low clergy and Iron Guard's intellectuals, the high clergy led by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania sided with General Antonescu instead of supporting the Legion.

The adherence to the movement of the low clergy after 1932 was gradually growing, especially after the media campaign that specifically targeted them led by newspapers like *Calendarul*, the event of 24th of January 1933 in Carol Park at the tomb

³ When speaking about the "fascist" character or the "fascist" movement, the present thesis refers only to the Legion of Archangel Michael, also known as the Iron Guard, the Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's Group or the "All of Fatherland" Party (Totul Pentru Țară).

of the unknown soldier, the fervent activity of the legionary working camps that benefited the Orthodox Church, and the Moța-Marin burial. The uses the low clergy found of their association with the legion differed from those of the high clergy. Their joining the movement was directed both against the State's injustices inflicted on the lay clergy and against the high clergy, who possessed too much institutional power over the common priests. The hierarchy was richly rewarded for the services they provided to the political power while the low clergy virtually starved during the years of economic crisis in the early 1930s. Their reasons in joining the Legion's ranks were both nationalistic and religious. The radical and anti-Semitic part of the lower clergy considered that all the secular parties are too lenient towards ethnic minorities and in implementing a radical process of nationalization of the Romanian culture and the Romanian Orthodox Church. The lower clergy involved themselves in the organization of the movement taking up different positions such as county leader, garrison commander, and secretary of the movement in order to carry out their plan of reforming the Church. If the high clergy regarded the movement merely as a political tool to represent the political interests of the bishops, the lower clergy, the Theology students and their professors perceived the movement as a Romanian nation's return to the Christian millennial precepts and a counter revolution to the "Satanic", Bolshevik anti-Christian menace from the East.

Adherence to the movement can be seen in terms of reassessing the relation between higher and lower clergy with regards to ecclesiastical discipline. It would also provide solutions to the salary problem of the lower ranks in the Church, to see to fruition the comeback of the high clergy into party politics, to combat the privileged status of the high clergy and the complete lack of interest coming both from the hierarchy and the state towards the lower clergy's needs and grievances. The contribution of the current thesis

relies precisely ascertaining in this conflict of clashing interests between the lower and the higher clergy in order to show that in the relationship with the Iron Guard there was not only an Orthodox Church negotiating with the Romanian fascists, but several layers of the Church (the high clergy, the low clergy, the students, the laymen, theologians) engaged in different types of negotiation with different layers in the fascist movement and different outcomes and for different reasons enjoying different statuses and positions within the movement.

The presence of Christian spirituality in the ideology of the movement and the important role attained by Orthodox clergy in the movement's rank-and-file particularized the Iron Guard among other fascist movements. Except for the Serbian case⁴, no other fascist movement developed a symbiosis between radical-right wing ideology and Orthodox theology with an emphasis on religious rituals to play such an important role for its ideological core. For Nazism "positive Christianity"⁵ held an unclear and ambiguous value, as is the case with their Italian counterpart, where the rather hostile behavior towards different Christian denominations is noted.⁶ As in the case of the paradigmatic fascist movements such as German NSDAP and the Italian fascists, in its rise to power the Iron Guard intended to use the clergy and the Church for their own interest, but this use of the clergy and the institution of the Church did not evolve into persecution as in the above mentioned cases. Instead, the Romanian fascists continued the

⁴ Maria Falina, "Between 'Clerical Fascism' and Political Orthodoxy: Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Interwar Serbia" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (June 2007), pp. 247-258.

⁵ Richard Steigman-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 20-25.

⁶ For the Italian case see Emilio Gentile, *Contro Cesare. Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010), pp. 81-108.

process of “synthesis”⁷ of Orthodox theology with secular nationalism, that started during the 19th century, with the formation of the autocephalous, national Church. According to this “synthesizing, *syncretic* mode of ‘clerical fascism’”, the fascists and the clergy altered the Church ritual, canon law and doctrine and reinterpreted Orthodox theology through their nationalist lenses in order to establish their own understanding of theology. In order to construct this theological expression of the nation, the theological acculturation between the Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church continued the 19th century process of nationalizing the Orthodox Church, a process developed in multiple stages along the years.

They imagined a new Covenant between God and his *chosen people* that came to life in a new fascist social contract. The theology of the Iron Guard was shaped according to Christian theology, profiting from the developments already present in the Orthodox theology at that particular time. Fr. Serge Boulgakov already spoke about the Church as the chosen people identifying itself with the nation,⁸ a synthesis between Orthodox doctrine and the nationalist intellectual agenda similar to that presented by the Iron Guard.⁹ The *fascist theology* was thought to be a Christian theology of the church completed with a nationalist theology, providing a theological framework to redeem not just the individual, but the nation as a whole.¹⁰ To the seven sacraments of the Orthodox Church providing the divine immortality, the Iron Guard “theologians” provided one

⁷ I use Roger Griffin’s idea of synthesis. See Roger Griffin, “The ‘Holy Storm’: ‘Clerical Fascism’ through the Lens of Modernism” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (June 2007), p. 220.

⁸ Fr. Sergei Boulgakov, *Ortodoxia* [The Orthodoxy] (Bucharest: Paideea, 1997), p. 80.

⁹ Although the doctrine of *sobornost* remained a popular theological metaphor among lay and consecrated theologians, in the Romanian case it faded away, leaving its place to the metaphor of the nation as the chosen people.

¹⁰ The same perception of the collective sins of the Nation as a collective entity that have to be expiated through prayer can be found in Poland. Please see Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland. Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 55, 242.

more sacrament destined to insure the immortality of the individual in the collective memory of the people and the final immortality of the nation. As this thesis will show with ample documentation the sacrament of martyrdom represents the cornerstone of the Iron Guard's theology. Drawn up mainly by Ion Moța and Alexandru Cantacuzino it was presented as the *eight sacrament* which ensured the nation a place in the kingdom of heavens. The thesis will show how this re-adaptation, systemization, and incorporation of Christian theology of martyrdom for faith to a nationalist worldview had as a direct consequence the legionary re-interpretation of Christian dogma and ritual, sometimes contrary to the canons of Orthodox theology.

I will argue that in their effort to draw up a modernization project, Romanian fascists set out to modernize not solely the political sphere and the production of national culture, but the Church and its theology as well. The emphasis placed on a theology according to the legionary ideological canons was molded on a legionary institutional design that used the Church seen as a unified and unifying structure that was present in all Romanian provinces to embark on a process of nationalization. This relationship was perceived differently by the Iron Guard's leaders, the low clergy and the bishops. While the Iron Guard's men considered the Romanian Orthodox Church as an institution that provided a sense of unity for the Romanian people, the low clergy considered the Iron Guard as a political higher appellate court against the State's harsh measures threatening the clergy's income and their political involvement, but also against the discriminatory and sometimes tyrannical behavior of the bishops.¹¹

¹¹ In the Romanian case, “collusive’ clerical fascism” coexisted with “*syncretic*’ clerical fascism”. For the terminology, please see Roger Griffin, 2007, p. 219-220.

Looking at the Orthodox high clergy the thesis will reflect how the relationship with the Iron Guard was understood differently, from one particular case to another. If Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan and Metropolitan Gurie Grosu of Bessarabia embraced the ideals of the movement in order to curb the patriarch's claims for the centralization of authority and the patriarchal hold on power inside the higher hierarchy and subsequently the decrease of the bishops' power in their bishoprics, other bishops like Metropolitan Nicodim Munteanu of Moldavia, Bishops Vartolomeu Stănescu of Craiova, Lucian Triteanu of Roman or Auxiliary Bishop Vasile Stan or Veniamin Pocitan embraced the movement and participated in various legionary ceremonies out of their anti-Semitic and highly nationalist personal beliefs, considered to be politically best embodied by the Iron Guard.

2. Fascism as Political Religion - the State of the Art

The present research will be constructed around two important concepts used in fascism and totalitarian studies: political religion and sacralisation of politics¹². I use political religion in order to map the transformation of Eastern European politics after the formation of the national states. More exactly, starting from different definitions of various scholars in this particular research field I will present different understandings of this concept and the changes operated by scholars like Eric Voegelin, Robert O. Paxton,

¹² Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralisation of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996) and Emilio Gentile, "The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 1, no. 1 (2000), pp. 18-55.

Roger Eatwell, Emilio Gentile, Roger Griffin, George L. Mosse, and others in their use of political religion.

The concept of fascism as political religion will be applied to the case study of the Romanian Iron Guard. I emphasize that although the Iron Guard had a number key-concepts that it shared with the official fascist ideology, there are several differences between the Italian-German case studies of fascism as a political religion. The first lies in the close relationship between the Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church. The second relates to the leader's cult being built mainly on a Christian understanding of the saint or chosen man with a national particularity, a leader-saint that does not save humankind but Romania.

The origins of the concept of political religion can be traced according to Stanley Payne¹³ and Michael Burleigh¹⁴ to the French Revolution when a new approach of politics was built by the Jacobin regime. In order to shape a different understanding of political reality and to secularize any perception of politics, the Jacobins fabricated a religion based on Reason which was used for political purposes.

The first scholar who applied the term political religion to the German fascist movement was Eric Voegelin in his epoch-making book, *The Political Religions* (1938).¹⁵ He defined fascist ideology as a political religion inspired by as secular, "inner-worldly" religious experience, described by chiliasm, an apocalyptic vision, anti-clericalism and other anti-modern Christian myths. Nevertheless, for Voegelin political

¹³ Stanley Payne, "On the Heuristic Value of the Concept of Political Religion and its Application", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* vol. 6, no. 2, (2011), p. 166.

¹⁴ Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers. Religion and Politics in Europe from the Enlightenment to the Great War*, (New York: Harper & Collins, 2006), p. 48. For an interesting deconstruction of the myth of atheist Nazis see Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conception of Christianity 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁵ I use the following edition Eric Voegelin, "The Political Religions" in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 5 (Columbia & London: Missouri University Press, 2000). First edition 1938.

religion is a direct reaction to the secularized political project brought by modernity in which there is no alliance between a spiritual and a political head. Accordingly,

Wherever a reality discloses itself in the religious experience as sacred, it becomes the most real, a *realissimum*. This basic transformation from the natural to the divine results in a sacral and value-oriented re-crystallization of reality around that aspect that has been recognized as being divine. Worlds of symbols, linguistic signs and concepts arrange themselves around the sacred center; they firm up as systems, become filled with the spirit of religious agitation and are fanatically defended as the ‘right’ order of being.¹⁶

As Klaus Vondung pointed out, Voegelin foretold about “the sacralization of politics” actually using the term.¹⁷ Nevertheless, by considering Nazism a “inner-worldly religion” (*innerweltlich Religion*) “that find the divine in the subcontents of the world”¹⁸ as opposed to “trans-worldly religions” (*uberweltliche Religionen*) like Christianity and Judaism based on a transcendent meaning, Voegelin denied Nazism any access to a higher, out-of-this world sense of transcendence, confining Nazism to a purely secular essence. The articulate separation between secular Nazism and transcendental religions cannot stand as a conceptual tool for the Romanian Iron Guard for which the membranes separating transcendence from secular are porous and indistinguishable.

Another seminal approach to the theory of political religion was presented by Emilio Gentile. Inspired by the efforts of George L. Mosse,¹⁹ Emilio Gentile stated that “fascism constructed its own system of beliefs, myths and rituals, centered on the

¹⁶ Eric Voegelin, 2000, p. 32.

¹⁷ Klaus Vondung, “What Insights Do We Gain from Interpreting National Socialism as Political Religion” in Roger Griffin, Robert Mallet and John Tortorice (eds.), *The Sacred in the Twentieth-Century Politics. Essays in the Honor of Professor Stanley G. Payne* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008) p. 110.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁹ George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Also see George L. Mosse “Towards a general theory of fascism” in George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution. Towards a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), pp.10-11.

sacralization of the state.”²⁰ In other words, “fascist religion placed itself alongside traditional religion, and tried to synthesize it within its own sphere of values as an ally in the subjection of the masses to the state, although it did stress the primacy of politics.”²¹ This primacy of politics that Gentile discusses is nothing more than a “lay religion”, a consequence of the historical development of Italy.

Elements such as the quest for a secular religion in order to break up with the Conservative Catholic Party, experience and rebirth of the nation were present for quite a long time in the Italian history. When Mussolini came to power in 1922, this lay religion became a political, “secular religion which was founded on the myth of the nation”.²² Fascism as a political religion is to be found in the leader cult and the need for a regeneration of the Italian race. Other elements that account for this translation from lay religion to political religion were “a new ‘moral community,’”²³ the “*experience of faith*”,²⁴ the cult of the leader (*il Duce*),²⁵ myths, symbols and public rituals, stressing the newly coagulated national community of the Italian people.²⁶ Another important feature was the cult of the martyrs. Even if they had died for the fascist cause or had fallen in the WWI, the cult of the martyrs was present during fascist ceremonies.

Fascism tried to give an answer to the problem of death through the exaltation of a sense of community, which integrated the individual into the collectivity. Whoever died believing in fascism became part of its mythical world and thus acquired immortality in the view of the movement’s collective memory, which was periodically updated in commemorations.²⁷

²⁰ Emilio Gentile, “Fascism as Political Religion” in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, no. 2-3 (1990), p. 230.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 231.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

In the framework of the political religion, fascism placed a high importance on the martyrs' cult because they were perceived both as a source of legitimization for the movement but also as the seeds of new conversions to the fascist cause. By constantly highlighting the virtues of heroism and the concrete materialization of the *faith* in the fascist religion all impersonated in martyr's figure, Mussolini's movement attempted to overcome the last bastion of the Catholic Church that is the privilege over the afterlife. All these features of the fascist, political religion emphasized, according to Emilio Gentile, the "socialization of the fascist religion" and had as purpose the "sacralization of the state"²⁸ in which the nation, *il Duce* and the State became one entity. According to Emilio Gentile, 'political religion' is

a type of religion which sacralises an ideology, a movement or a political regime through the deification of a secular entity transfigured into myth, considering it the primary and indisputable source of meaning and the ultimate aim of human existence on earth.²⁹

In the context of the 'political religion' theory, Gentile's position towards traditional religion positioned the (Catholic) Church on a subordinate place. The fascist

interest in religion was exclusively political and not theological, just as its privileged recognition of the Catholic Church was due to the pragmatic use of religion as an *instrumentum regni*. ... Fascist religion placed itself alongside traditional religion, and tried to syncretize it within its own sphere of values as an ally in the subjection of the masses to the state, although it did stress the primacy of politics.³⁰

Therefore, any traditional religion was subjected to pragmatic political purposes and finally incorporated in the fascist system of values, beliefs and myths. According to

²⁸ Ibid., p. 248.

²⁹ Emilio Gentile, "Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections of an Interpretation" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (Winter 2004), p. 328.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 230.

Gentile's understanding, the "syncretic" character of the fascist party in Italy manifested in the co-optation and assimilation of Christian theology in the fascist ideology. It also stressed the subsidiary and supporting role of the Catholic Church and its clergy for the new fascist political establishment.

In 2001 Emilio Gentile published another corner-stone monograph on the relation between religion and politics refining his understanding on political versus civil religion. *La religione della politica: Fra democrazie e totalitarismi*³¹ comes with new definition of fascism as political religion in connection with a different understanding of civil religion. The distinction between the two concepts represents a direct answer to some of Gentile's critics who accused him of not defining accurately a distinction between democratic and totalitarian regimes.³²

As a political scientist, Emilio Gentile draws this particular distinction between the two in order to encapsulate in one of his definitions the whole political specter. Accordingly,

*a political religion is a form of sacralization of politics that has an exclusive and fundamental nature. It does not accept the coexistence of other political ideologies and movements, it denies the autonomy of the individual in the relation with the collectivity, it demands compliance to its commandments and participation to its political cult and it sanctifies violence as a legitimate weapon in the fight against its enemies and as an instrument of regeneration. In the relation with traditional religious institutions, it either adopts a hostile attitude and aims to eliminate them, or it attempts to establish a rapport of symbiotic coexistence by incorporating the traditional religion into its own system of beliefs and myths while reducing it to a subordinate and auxiliary role.*³³ [my Italics]

³¹ Emilio Gentile, *La religione della politica: Fra democrazie e totalitarismi*, Roma: Gius. Laterza&Figli, 2001. For this research I use the following English translation: Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

³² For definitions of different political terms, please see Hans Maier, "Concepts for the comparison of dictatorships: 'totalitarianism' and 'political religion'" in Hans Maier (ed.), *Totalitarianism and Political Religions. Volume I: concepts for the comparison of dictatorships* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 188-203.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

Gentile's view about the absolute subordination of any sort of traditional religion to the fascist secular remained unchanged. The only aspect that seemed to be re-evaluated and the re-asserted by Emilio Gentile is related to the usage of the term "symbiotic coexistence" rather than the previous "syncretic" attribute of the relationship between fascism and traditional religions. The idea of a "symbiotic coexistence", although preserves untouched the subordination of the institutionalized religion towards the fascist religion presupposes a peaceful process of Christian theology's appropriation in the fascist religion.³⁴

Also, Gentile touched upon the issue of fascism represented as a secular religion by focusing his scholarly attention on a historical metaphor, i.e. "the sacralisation of politics" which describes best his view on the rise of a new form of secular religion. Consequently, he clarified his terms as an outcome of the debate enriching the context of the debate through a clear separation taken from political science between totalitarian and democratic regimes.

Accordingly, for Emilio Gentile,

The term 'the sacralisation of politics' means the formation of a *religious dimension in politics that is distinct from, and autonomous of, traditional religious institutions*. The sacralisation of politics takes place when politics is conceived, lived and represented through myths, rituals and symbols that demand faith in the sacralised secular entity, dedication among the community of believers, enthusiasm for action, a warlike spirit and sacrifice in order to secure its defense and its triumph.³⁵

Gentile's emphasis placed on the "sacralisation of politics" assured that politics was conceived fully through secular lenses, as a part of a historical process starting in the 19th century and continued up to the fascist age. In relation with traditional religion, Gentile

³⁴ The same argument can be found in Emilio Gentile, 2004, p. 329.

³⁵ Emilio Gentile, 2000, pp. 21-22.

maintained his previous views about the subordinate, autonomous character of the secular, fascist religion in comparison with the Christian Church.

The sacralisation of politics is a modern phenomenon: it takes place when politics, after having secured its autonomy from traditional religion by secularizing both culture and the state, acquires a truly religious dimension. For this reason, the sacralisation of politics should not be confused with the politicisation of traditional religions.³⁶

The sacralization of the modern state following the process of modernization and secularization started in the 19th separated the secular religion of the state from the revival of traditional religion. By rooting itself in the revolutionary, syndical socialism and the troubled maze of modernity, fascism continued on the path set out by Italian liberals and created their own religion of the state. In conformity with the clear-cut separation between secular and transcendental forms of religiosity, traditional religion was assimilated and incorporated in the new system of beliefs and rituals promoted by the fascist state.³⁷ Following Gentile's argument, there are three models according to which the appropriation of traditional religion takes place in the case of secular, political religion. If the *mimetic* and *ephemeral* models are overrated and not fitting the fascist case, the *syncretic* model seems to be the more appropriate to the fascist religion in general and closest to the Romanian case in particular:

syncretic, in that it incorporates the traditions, myths and rituals of traditional religion, transforming and adapting them to its own mythical and symbolical universe.³⁸

Gentile's undertaking of fascism as a secular, political religion was neither unnoticed nor unchallenged by different scholars in the field of fascist and political studies. On the contrary, the concept of 'political religion' associated with fascism was

³⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 24.

overtly challenged by different scholars. Skeptical about Gentile's understanding of fascism as political religion, Roger Griffin questioned the scholarly usage of such terms when speaking about totalitarian, extremist right-wing expressions of politics such as fascism. By defining fascism as "a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism"³⁹ and denying the primacy of the religious element in the creation of fascist ideology, Roger Griffin considered the concept of political religion a sub-category of the secular political ideology and not a heuristic tool in describing the ideological traits of fascist phenomenon.⁴⁰

Another poignant critique of Emilio Gentile's view on fascism as political religion is Roger Eatwell's.⁴¹ He argues that there are several issues Gentile discarded on his way to shape up his theory. First of all, he states directly against Gentile's view that "fascism-as-a-political-religion thesis is not simply about issues such as ritual and creed. It also raises the question of how people continued to view the churches."⁴² In other words, to speak about concepts like fascist religion and fascism as a political religion was not enough when one considers that religion does not imply only politics, but also brings in questions on the relevance of institutional Catholicism for members of the fascist religion.⁴³

³⁹ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 26.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴¹ Roger Eatwell, *Fascism. A History* (London: Pimlico, 2003). For other poignant critics of "political religion" theory, see R. B. J. Bosworth, "Introduction" in R. B. J. Bosworth (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 1-11 and Neil Gregor, "Nazism. A Political Religion? The Voluntarist Turn" in Neil Gregor (ed.), *Nazism, War and Genocide. New Perspectives on the History of the Third Reich* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), pp. 5-23.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴³ In the Nazi case the question has been raised by Richard Steigmann-Gall, "Rethinking Nazism and Religion: How Anti-Christian were the 'Pagans'?" in *Central European History*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (2003), pp. 75-105.

Eatwell goes further and argues that even this issue is not clear because the ways in which different people regarded the Church and the attitude of the Church towards fascism are ambiguous. Roger Eatwell's statement leaves no space for a perspective about fascism as political religion: "to the extent that a linking essence can be identified, fascism was a political ideology rather than a political religion."⁴⁴ For Roger Eatwell the most important feature of fascism is represented by the connection with a certain political ideology and not to a sacralization of politics. Emilio Gentile pointed out that the whole debate was related to the understanding of the concept of *religion*:

The fundamental assumption of the scholars who deny the validity of the concept of political religion is the same as the one we have already seen in the case of civil religion, that is, we do not deal with a 'true' religion, but only with a political use of metaphors, symbols and rituals of a religious kind in order to reach utilitarian goals. Consequently, these scholars do not consider the use of the term 'religion' legitimate in order to define totalitarian political regimes which, in their turn, either openly or secretly, were effectively anti-religious or 'political anti-religions', according to Hermann Lübbe's expression. It is obvious that the answer to the question of whether political religion and civil religion could be considered 'true religions' depends on the definition of what a 'true' religion actually is. Not even the definition of 'true' religion enjoys an extensive consensus among scholars.⁴⁵

Stanley Payne is on the same page with the definition of the role of religion and what religion *is* in the analytical framework of 'political religion' theory. In his review of the Italian edition of Gentile's book he showed that, in order to transform the political religion concept into a universal ideal type Gentile accepted Roger Griffin and Roger Eatwell's criticisms and enlarged the framework of debate.⁴⁶ More clearly, Payne identified the principal problem of the ancient concept of political religion used by Gentile in the misinterpretation of the concept of *religion*:

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 163

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 164.

⁴⁶ Stanley Payne, "Emilio Gentile's Historical Analysis and the Taxonomy of Political Religions" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2002), p. 123.

The concept of political religion, whose usage has become increasingly frequent, has nonetheless been criticized as confusing and conflating. Critics contend that religion refers to a transcendent spiritual reality, and hence cannot be used coherently to describe secular political movement, or that religion refers to a code of personal and spiritual conduct that should not be conflated with the official state organization.⁴⁷

Stanley Payne implies that Emilio Gentile's view of the concepts of religion and political religions become more expansive because at a certain stage of the research Emilio Gentile took notice of the criticisms brought forth by different scholars in the field about the narrowness of his investigation. Somehow he had to take into account also a secular reality that has nothing in common with totalitarian movements.⁴⁸

The Gentilian understanding of fascism as 'political religion' and the clear-cut separation between fascist and traditional religions found not only critics, but also defenders and converts. Roger Griffin's defense of Emilio Gentile's position also emphasized the character of fascism as a secular religion experience. First, Roger Griffin revised his earlier rejection of a direct relation between fascism and religion and tried to enlarge the framework of debate by accepting Emilio Gentile's political religion approach.⁴⁹ However, Griffin points out that a certain emphasis on clustering the theory and an effort towards interdisciplinarity is mandatory for any scholar from the field.⁵⁰ Furthermore, he stresses a difference between civil religion and political religion in order

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 125. For another critical view of Emilio Gentile's understanding of "religion" see Mathias Behrens "'Political religion'—a religion? Some remarks on the concept of religion" in Hans Maier (ed.), *Totalitarianism and Political Religions, Volume II. Concepts for comparison of dictatorships* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 225-245.

⁴⁸ The same understanding in Hans Maier, "'Political religion': the potentials and limitations of a concept" in Hans Maier (ed.), *Totalitarianism and Political Religions, Volume II. Concepts for comparison of dictatorships* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 272-282.

⁴⁹ For a résumé of the critiques addressed to Emilio Gentile's understanding of fascism/ totalitarianism as political religion see Roger Griffin, "Introduction: God's Counterfeiters? Investigating the Triad of Fascism, Totalitarianism and (Political) Religion" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2004), p. 304.

⁵⁰ Roger Griffin, "Cloister or Cluster? The Implication of Emilio Gentile's Ecumenical Theory of Political Religion for the Study of Extremism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2005) p. 41.

to bring into discussion issues which never came out before. He is not content only with fascism, but he rather would expand the theory to the relation between religion and politics. He argues that:

the important contribution of Gentile's cluster to clear up the many misunderstandings of the aspects caused by this aspect of totalitarianism (and hence of political religion) is that it specifically links the horrific human destructions involved in these campaigns to the revolutionary quest to create a *new civilization* based on the *palingenetic myth*.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Griffin's undertaking on Gentile was filtered through the lenses of his theoretical view on fascism that accommodated Gentile's view on political religion into his own already-fashioned theory on fascism:

Once Gentile's concept of political religion is applied to generic fascism it becomes possible to see it in its disparate manifestations as a *totalitarian movement* driven by a *revolutionary variant of ultra-nationalism*. As such is manifest itself, at least in the inter-war Europe and some of other Europeanized societies, as a *political religion*, by the utopia of regenerated national community saturated with *mythic* and *palingenetic thinking* reminiscent of the early modern forms of European millenarianism without being a direct perpetuation of them.⁵²

Roger Griffin reads Emilio Gentile's theory through the lenses of his own theory trying to integrate it into his own view on fascism as a "core myth of the reborn nation"⁵³ a revival of the "palingenetic myth"⁵⁴ Roger Griffin's main contribution to fascist studies. Roger Griffin has a different target in mind than that of Emilio Gentile. If Gentile proposed his theory starting from the field of political studies which facilitated the

⁵¹ For a critic of the palingenetic myth associated with the impact of modernism, see Geoff Eley, *Nazism as Fascism. Violence, Ideology, and the Ground for Consent in Germany 1930-1945* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 210-211.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵³ Roger Griffin, "Fascism" in Roger Griffin (ed.), *International Fascism. Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (London: Arnold Publishing House, 1998), p. 37.

⁵⁴ For the palingenetic myth and its relationship with fascism as a political religion in Roger Griffin's work see Martin Durham, "The Upward Path: Palingenesis, Political Religion and the National Alliance" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 5, No. 3 (2004), p. 454 – 468.

research into any ideological phenomenon, fascist studies are linked to a certain historical age and are not able to extend their range of interest. Starting from a historical background, Roger Griffin understood Emilio Gentile's separation between political and civil religions represents the breakthrough the narrowed fascist studies needed in order to expand their research target. By using Gentile's theory and stressing up the importance of the concept of *palingenesis*,⁵⁵ Griffin was able to actualize and to apply his theoretical insights regarding Italian and German fascisms to different totalitarian movements and regimes like Islamic Iran or Communist Korea.⁵⁶ There still are critics⁵⁷ who underlined the fact that fascism as a political religion became more a politicized religion rather than a political religion. So far, there is no clarifying answer from Emilio Gentile to this critique.⁵⁸

3. Iron Guard as a Political Religion.

The emergence in 1927 of the Romanian fascist movement is a well-researched phenomenon.⁵⁹ Applying this concept to the Romanian case and in effect labeling the

⁵⁵ For Roger Griffin–Emilio Gentile's understandings of the whole issue at stake see Martin Blinkhorn, "Afterthoughts, Route Maps and Landscapes: Historians, "Fascist Studies" and the Study of Fascism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 5, No. 3 (2004), p. 510.

⁵⁶ For a critique against this attempt of Roger Griffin who tried to consider Communism as a political religion see Francois Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion. The Communist Idea in the 20th Century* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), p. 108. Also, Christel Lane, *The rites of rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society-the Soviet case* (Camidge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Khamaludin Gadshiiev, "Reflections on Russian Totalitarianism" in Hans Maier, *Totalitarianism and Political Religions. Vol. I: concepts for the comparison of dictatorships* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 53-57. Klaus Georg Riegl, "Marxism-Leninism as Political Religion" in Hans Maier, *Totalitarianism and Political Religions, Volume II. Concepts for the comparison of dictatorships* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 61-112.

⁵⁷ For example, Renato Moro, "Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularization: The Sacralization of Politics and the Politicization of Religion" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 6, No. 1, 2005, p. 71–86; Roger Eatwell, "Reflections on Fascism and Religion" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol.4, No. 3 (2003), pp. 145-166.

⁵⁸ For a summary of the debate see Stanley Stowers, "The Concepts of 'Religion', 'Political Religion' and the Study of Nazism" in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 42, no. 1 (2007), pp. 9-24.

⁵⁹ Nicholas M. Nagy–Talavera, *O Istorie a Fascismului în Ungaria și România* [A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996); Radu Ioanid, *The Swords of the Archangel*, (New York,

Iron Guard a political religion has to be carefully considered. While some authors are quick in calling the Iron Guard a classic example of political religion⁶⁰ one has to tread carefully over such arguments. On theoretical grounds, it would be challenging to compare the contemporary understandings of *political religion* of Emilio Gentile to the case of Romanian fascism to see the possible similarities and dissimilarities. Is the Iron Guard a classic example of a political religion or not? Is it an example of a secularized religion used for political purposes by a fascist movement? According to Roger Griffin the Iron Guard was not a fully-fledged fascist movement, because Corneliu Codreanu and his followers never gain absolute power.⁶¹ Constructed as a nationalist organization with terrorist means to achieve power, the Legion of the Archangel Michael was suppressed several times (1933, 1938 and 1941) and although it participated in General Ion Antonescu's government for a short time (6 September 1940–January 1941) it never achieved control over the means to revolutionize the Romanian society. Therefore, Roger Griffin considered the Romanian fascism movement a “parafascist” movement⁶² because they were never able to gain absolute control over the Romanian society and thus never implemented the *palingenetic* project while in power.

The most compelling definition of fascism as a political religion which can be applied to the Romanian Iron Guard is Emilio Gentile's definition. Viewing the Romanian blend of fascism a political religion represents a possible answer to the “mystical” character that was attributed to it which made the Guard unique for different

1990), Armin Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihail'. Mișcare socială și organizație politică. O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional* [The Legion of Archangel Michael. Social movement and political organization. A contribution to the field of international fascism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999).

⁶⁰ According to Mihai Chioveanu the Iron Guard was a classic example of political religion. See Mihai Chioveanu, “Legionarismul ca religie politică” [Legionary ideology as political religion] in *Ideii în dialog* Year 9, no. 24 (September 2006), pp. 48-49.

⁶¹ Roger Griffin, 1993, p. 126.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

scholars.⁶³ According to Gentile,⁶⁴ when fascism develops a political religion it meets several characteristics: a leader's cult with a stress on the leader's charisma, the cult of martyrs, the importance awarded to ceremonies and symbols, the cult of the Nation, the subordination of the society, the belief in the movement, etc. Applying this definition to the Romanian fascist movement offers several helpful insights into its research.

Regarding the leader's cult and leader's charisma in the Iron Guard, several historiographical attempts were made to demonstrate that Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu embodied the values present in the person of other fascist leaders a God given mission to reform history and to lead the Romanian people into a new age.⁶⁵ Codreanu's charisma was cultivated by Nae Ionescu and Ion I. Moța who were the main ideologues of the Iron Guard. In his *Testament*⁶⁶ Moța endowed Codreanu with an messianic investiture. Codreanu was depicted as the true leader of the Romanian people, as a providential person sent from above to help the Romanian people. He was the *Captain of the Romanian people* a title considered of encapsulating a divine mission.⁶⁷ Codreanu's cult cultivated by the movement "syncretized" the cult of the archangel Michael with the cult of Codreanu. The legionary divinization of their leader was also intertwined with the idea of reconnecting their present history with the glorious historical past, i.e. Codreanu being presented by legionary intellectuals like Ernst Bernea either in a tradition of the

⁶³ Radu Ioanid, 1990, pp. 139-148.

⁶⁴ Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 229-251.

⁶⁵ See Stephen Fischer-Galați, "Codreanu, Romanian National Traditions and Charisma," in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 7, No. 2, 2006, p. 245-250; for a comprehensive presentation see Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the 'Archangel Michael' in interwar Romania*, (Trondheim: Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004), pp. 72-75. Radu Ioanid, "The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (Winter 2004), pp. 429-435.

⁶⁶ Ioan Moța, *Testament*, (Salzburg: Colecția „Omul Nou”, No. 8, 1951) p. 17.

⁶⁷ Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 236. Emilio Gentile, 1996, pp. 132-139.

Romanian people's "captains"⁶⁸ or as "builder" of churches (ctitor), in the tradition of the Romanian princes of the Middle Ages.⁶⁹

The new fascist *ecclesia*⁷⁰ as the "new moral community"⁷¹ of the Romanian people was experienced by the legionary members in the working camps, where the new principles of legionary doctrine were internalized through sessions of political indoctrination.⁷² The working camps were places where the legionary members were called to behave as "a missionary order"⁷³ or as "apostles and soldiers of the 'fascist religion'".⁷⁴ In order to impose discipline and to provide guidelines for educating the young generation of fascist adherents Codreanu published a set of principles, which stated clearly what the duties of the legionary were.⁷⁵ The provided *fascist Gospel* and fascist canon law had a clear purpose to instill the legionary virtues (faith, courage, willingness for self-sacrifice, the stern belief in the glorious future awaiting the Romanian nation, etc.) in order to create the newly *ecclesia*/ "new moral community".⁷⁶

One of the emblematic characteristics that comprised all the features that could define the Iron Guard as political religion was the martyrs' cult. Although the legionary fascination with the martyrs for cause started the during persecution of 1933, its "classical" *mise en scène* took place during the burial of the Iron Guard's martyrs Ion I.

⁶⁸ Ernst Bernea, *Cartea Căpitanilor* (Bucharest: Serviciul de Propagandă, 1940). Initially published in 1937.

⁶⁹ For the idea of a "legendary time" see Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 245. The legionary case will be developed in Chapter III.

⁷⁰ The term belongs to Eric Voegelin, 2000, pp. 32-33.

⁷¹ Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 233. For an exploration of national community in the Nazi case see Thomas Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide. Hitler's Community, 1918-1945* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 32-54.

⁷² Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 248.

⁷³ Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 238.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239. For the "missionary" aspect of the Legion of Archangel Michael, see Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulare si manifeste* (Bucharest: Blassco, 2010), p. 47.

⁷⁵ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib* (Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 2000), p. 35.

⁷⁶ For the new theological understandings of "national ecclesiology" please see Brian Porter-Szűcs, 2011, p. 17-36.

Moța and Vasile Marin (13th February 1937).⁷⁷ This event had all the characteristics which would enable scholars to consider the Iron Guard a clear example of fascism as political religion. The request addressed by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu to the Romanian Orthodox Church to consider Moța and Marin as martyrs and saints who died for Christianity, the combined rituals and the use of religious/ fascist symbols during the burial were all encompassed into a liturgy of the nation praising its martyrs in which the clergy and the Orthodox theology of the dead blended with the fascist rituals and speeches.⁷⁸

In what concerns the relationship between Iron Guard as a secular, political religion and the traditional Romanian Orthodox Church, according to Radu Ioanid ‘the sacralisation of politics’ did not mean an attempt “to politicize religion”⁷⁹ which marked every secular, fascist religion imposed the same auxiliary, subordinate role for the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Despite its pronounced Orthodox character, Legionary mysticism did not simply mean the total assimilation of Orthodox theology by a fascism political movement, but on the contrary, an attempt at subordinating and transforming that theology into a political instrument. Through an abusive extrapolation all the Legion’s adversaries became in the writings of its followers adversaries of the Church, Christ and God.⁸⁰

The Iron Guard seen as a political religion according to Emilio Gentile’s definition represents a typical way of applying an ideal type developed in fascist studies to the Romanian fascism movement. However, one may argue that the Legion of the Archangel Michael had peculiarities that set it aside from other fascist movements from Europe, i.e., that in the case of the Iron Guard any form of anti-clericalism or exclusion from its ranks

⁷⁷ For details see Armin Heinen, 1999, 293–295 and Valentin Săndulescu, „Sacralised Politics in Action: the February 1937 Burial of the Romanian Legionary Leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 8, No. 2 (2007), p. 259 and following.

⁷⁸ Radu Ioanid, 2004, pp. 435, 438-439.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 420.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2004, p. 439.

of the clergy is missing. Stemming from these particular traits is the question: what happens when the followers of a fascist movement are Christian clergymen, practicing believers, acting politically according to their Christian involvement? More precisely, when the members of a fascist movement are priests what concept can describe their forays into extreme-nationalist political involvement?

Although I embrace the understanding of the Iron Guard's secular political goals analytically mapped in Gentile's "sacralisation of politics" I argue that, a certain reinterpretation of the Voegelinian/ Gentilian concept of political religion to fit the empirical case of the Iron Guard is necessary in order to capture how Christian theology and the Orthodox clergy inspired the legionary ideology. The importance given to Orthodox Christianity and the close relation with the Orthodox clergy are characteristics which cannot be simply explained through the formal categories of fascism as sacralized politics and the building-up of a completely secular world-view. More precisely, Roger Griffin and Emilio Gentile based their views about fascist as a political religion on a Durkhemian concept of religion where any form of transcendence was inexistent and the term religion was defined as a link between different layers of the social corpus. For the two scholars religion is the social glue which assures the connection and the adherence of different individuals into one holistic representation of the social organism.

If in these cases the society had a secular, already disenchanting worldview, where the pre-modern God's decapitation⁸¹ was a consequence of modernity, the case of the Iron Guard's relationship with the Orthodox clergy remains outside this conceptual framework. Because of the delayed process of assuming modernity in terms of theological and conceptual constructions, the Romanian case presents a particularity

⁸¹ Eric Voeglin, 2000, p. 29.

which comes both from the lack of separation between Church and state and the presence of religion in all layers of society, including politics. The claim of my thesis is that the Iron Guard presented itself as a political religion. However the clergy joining its ranks were already politicizing religion, a version of politics for which the transcendental God has not (yet) been decapitated, and represented the linchpin between moderate nationalism and religion. If the western experience of the political body was meant to provide an *Ersatz* religiosity seen as the replacement of institutionalized religion,⁸² in the case of the Iron Guard the rejection of the metaphysical, the out of this world experience does not occur. The Iron Guard's theologians and clergymen's intentions were not only to produce a form of secular theology, but rather to accomplish their nationalistic mission, that is in order to peacefully integrate their traditional religious doctrine within the framework of their secular ideology. The movement aimed to offer the Romanian nation a comprehensive symbolic representation where political and religious expressions were no longer separated, but associated and merged in the Romanian fascist ideological kernel.

The politicization of the sacred was also a reaction of the Church to the late 19th century secularization coming from the State modernizing drive and the process of industrialization and urbanization witnessed in the beginning of the 20th century. It was a response to the attempt to completely exclude religion from the cultural milieus. Threatened with political and cultural isolation, with the rise of a secular culture advocating for the virtues of individuality and braking-up with the past and an emphasis placed on the atomizing, secular city rather than the traditional religious village, led to the Church reaction. In order to hinder secularization and the dissolution of the rural

⁸² For this understanding please see Juan J. Linz, "The religious use of politics and/or the political use of religion: ersatz ideology versus ersatz religion" in Hans Maier (ed.), 2004, pp. 102-119.

traditional world where the Church retained its strength under the impact of modernization, Orthodox clergymen engaged in a “mazeway resynthesis”, mixing together their theology with the nationalism of the state in order to preserve the traditional world and the threatened status of religion in society.⁸³ The clergy took a radical decision to involve itself in party-politics and to forge a quasi-religious, heretical political speech associated with secular nationalism.⁸⁴

After the end of WWI, fascism in Italy and Germany after an initial cohabitating with the religious establishment became increasingly anti-clerical to reach even persecution of the Christian denominations or to absorb the Church in its own structures in order to marginalize traditional religion. The attempt of post-WWI intellectuals like Nichifor Crainic or Nae Ionescu to search for a new cultural “mazeway resynthesis” between Orthodoxy and cultural nationalism to keep the dangers of secularization, social and cultural anomie, distrusted in progress, and the loss of meaning at bay attracted many Orthodox clergymen, who were already involved in politics. Using especially the ideas of Crainic, the Iron Guard perceived the politicization of the sacred occurring in the Orthodox Church as a religious phenomenon although it was display of secular nationalism in religious guise and integrated into its own “sacralisation of politics”. For these intellectuals and Romanian fascists Orthodoxy became “an ethnocultural label”, an “identity marker”, just as Catholicism in Poland became

⁸³ I use the term of Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp. 106-108. The same story can be found in Poland. See Brian Porter-Szücs, 2011, p. 244.

⁸⁴ Paschalis Kitromilides, “The legacy of French Revolution: Orthodoxy and nationalism” in Michael Angold (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 5. Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 232-233. For a similar reaction of the Catholic Church in 19th century Germany see Christopher Clark, “The New Catholicism and the European culture wars” in Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (eds.), *Culture Wars. Secular–Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth–Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 44.

... empty of theological meaning; it can become a category of social practice or identity rather than one of doctrine and faith. For sort of purpose this definition is sufficient; for many self-defined Catholics the theological and ideological teachings of the Church are distant memories from childhood Sunday School, and the sermons at mass are things to be endured, ignored, or simply avoided. These are the people who can, without any sense of self-contradiction, call themselves Catholics while using birth control, denying papal infallibility, even questioning the existence of God.⁸⁵

As this thesis will show the Romanian fascist movement achieved a nationalist synthesis in which the church and the movement were not mutually exclusive, but presupposed each other: the movement was the political expression of the church and the church was the spiritual expression of the movement. Even more, the Iron Guard used religious rituals to antecede its own political rituals which coexisted in the ideology of the Iron Guard and embarked for electoral reasons but also to stress its nationalist and organic character in a process of seducing the benevolence of the hierarchy and clergy for the movement's ideology. Even more, unlike other fascist movements, the Romanian Iron Guard was formed under the banner of a celestial presence, the archangel Michael whose cult was central to the Iron Guard's theology. The *archangelic theology* of the movement hybridized the Christian theology of martyrdom with the fascist cult of those fallen for the movement into a new sacrament of immortality, the martyrdom for Fatherland.⁸⁶ Although imported from the 19th century trend of creating martyrs of the nation, the inner significance of martyrdom for the movement was inspired and shaped by the legionary intellectuals and theologians according to a national soteriological view. The reason behind the centrality of martyrdom was political. As in the case of early Christianity, the expansion and the rise to power of Codreanu's movement was marked by periods of repression and extension and martyrdom became an important propagandistic tool of the

⁸⁵ Brian Porter-Szücs, 2011, pp. 12-13.

⁸⁶ The sacrament was accurately depicted in Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 244.

movement, especially among the youth. The Iron Guard was an example of fascist movement interested in developing a “theology” and influencing the rituals and doctrines of the Church in order to present itself as a Christian political expression, acting according to the Church’s teachings and not against it.⁸⁷ Moreover, the politicization of religion by the Orthodox Church which was re-evaluated and enriched by various lay intellectuals after WWI, while it did not constitute the ideological essence of the fascist political religion of the Iron Guard it mediated its successful impact on the Orthodox clergy who were already in search of a viable political party to support.

I argue that the radical, extremist politicization of the sacred as expressed by the Romanian Orthodox clergy after 1918 in relation to the Iron Guard’s fascist “sacralisation of politics” can be better understood through the lenses of “clerical fascism.”⁸⁸ Following Roger Griffin’s assumptions I argue that the Romanian Orthodox lower clergy adherence to the Iron Guard is a typical example of “*syncretic* ‘clerical fascism’” in which the Orthodox clergy internalized the fascist beliefs and synthesized them with the teachings of Christian theology.⁸⁹ This theoretical construct works for those priests teaching in theological schools, for the young students in Theology, lay intellectuals and the large majority of priests and hieromonks, members of the Iron Guard. In the same time, the Orthodox bishops and some of the leading Orthodox priests, fellow-travelers of the Iron

⁸⁷ For the Croatian case see Rory Yoemans, *Visions of Annihilation. The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), pp. 81-125.

⁸⁸ The *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 2007 issue was dedicated to this concept. For a complete analysis of the career of the term see Roger Griffin, “The ‘Holy Storm’: ‘Clerical Fascism’ through the Lens of Modernism” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2007), p. 213-217. For a critique of the concept see James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator. Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 352, footnote 13: “Griffen has argued for restricting ‘clerical fascism’ to clerics who range from tactically supporting fascism to internalizing its values. While a welcome intervention for bringing analytical clarity for the concept, Griffen’s approach to my mind still fails to capture Tiso’s characteristically ambivalent relationship with revolution.”

⁸⁹ Roger Griffin, 2007, pp. 220.

Guard, interested in satisfying their mundane interest and use the fascists for their own purposes could be described with the concept of “collusive ‘clerical fascism’”.⁹⁰

Although the “syncretic” approach to clerical fascism seems to describe best the Orthodox clergy’s internalization and synthesis of fascist and Christian ideas, I will argue that the abovementioned clear-cut concepts do not accurately describe different clergymen’s and lay intellectuals’ personal political itinerary in or outside the movement. People like Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu, Fr. Grigore Cristescu, Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, and many others supported the movement publicly and internalized the fascist ideas without formally joining the movement or without remaining in its ranks throughout the interwar period. I will argue against James Mace Ward⁹¹ that not ambivalence was the driving force behind their itinerant political career, but, similar with the clergy from the Roman-Catholic Church, a certain border-crossing ability, due to their sophisticated intellectual training.⁹²

The present undertaking shifts from the literature of the relationship between the clergy and fascism that comes from the German Nazism or Italian fascism cases. For the Iron Guard the case of Nazi Germany where religion played a role only in the beginning of the movement⁹³ with the Nazi party members inside the Protestant Church of an inferior rank⁹⁴ does not apply. The institutionalized religion and Orthodox theology played an important role in the ideological crystallization of the Legion’s political view with Codreanu himself, a practicing Orthodox Christian. Unlike the Protestant and

⁹⁰ Ibidem.

⁹¹ Please see footnote 83.

⁹² John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother. The Revolution in Catholic Teachings on the Jews, 1933-1965* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 63-64.

⁹³ Derek Hastings, *Catholicism and the roots of Nazism. Religious identity and National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), especially chapter 3, “Embodying Positive Christianity in Catholic München. The Ideal of Religious Catholicism and Early Nazi Growth, 1920-1922”, pp.77-106.

⁹⁴ Richard Steigmann-Gall, 2003, p. 87.

Catholic theology's subordination to the Nazi or Fascist regimes⁹⁵ and the fragmentation of the clergy in groups siding or opposing fascist regimes,⁹⁶ the Iron Guard intended not to subordinate, but to integrate the theologians and the clergymen within its ranks, without compromising their religious creed.⁹⁷

The literature on the intersection between Romanian fascism and the Orthodox Church focused more on the institutional relationship between the two, by emphasizing a quantitative/ sociological perspective counting the number of priests joining the movement, the hierarchical participations at different Iron Guard's rituals, the impact of the movement in the Orthodox Church, etc.⁹⁸ Almost entirely the literature is concentrated on the negotiation between the high clergy and the Iron Guard⁹⁹ and the subordination of the clergy towards the movement's ideology.¹⁰⁰ In order to explain the influence of Orthodox doctrine over the ideology of the movement, the Legion was understood either as "blasphemous,"¹⁰¹ heretical¹⁰² or as having "a religious structure."¹⁰³

⁹⁵ See Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Emilio Gentile, "New Idols: Catholicism in the face of Fascist totalitarianism" in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* Vol. 11, no. 2 (2006), pp. 143-170.

⁹⁶ For pro-fascist clergy see Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1996); Kevin P. Spicer, *Hitler's Priests. Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); Emma Fattorini, *Hitler, Mussolini and the Vatican: Pope Pius XI and the speech that was never made* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011). For the opposing groups see Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy. A Righteous Gentle* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010) and John Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism: A Study in Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁹⁷ This was not the case of Nazism where the Nazi party diluted the Christian theology according to its ideological goals see Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁹⁸ Armin Heinen, 1999, pp. 302-305.

⁹⁹ Constantin Iordachi, 2004, pp. 114-117. Constantin Petculescu, *Mișcarea legionară. Mit și realitate* [The Legionary movement. Myth and reality] (Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1997), p. 65.

¹⁰⁰ Radu Ioanid, 2004, p. 439. Mirel Bănică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română, stat și societate în anii '30* [The Romanian Orthodox Church, State and Society in the 1930s] (Jassy: Polirom, 2007), p. 204.

¹⁰¹ Constantin Iordachi, "God Chosen Warriors. Romantic paligenesis, militarism and fascism in modern Romania" in Constantin Iordachi (ed.), *Comparative fascist studies: new perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 350.

¹⁰² Constantin Iordachi, 2004, p. 117; Constantin Petculescu, 1997, p. 53.

¹⁰³ Radu Ioanid, 1990, p. 140.

The Legion also incorporated “popular Orthodoxy”¹⁰⁴ in its attempt to sacralize its ideological political core and to transform Orthodoxy in a category of racial exclusion of the Jews from the Romanian nation.¹⁰⁵

The novelty of the current research comes from the fact that the literature makes no reference to the theological questions debated by the Romanian fascists and Orthodox clergymen. Iron Guard integrated Orthodox theology in its own version of theology, adapting Christian concepts in order to create a nationalist theology. Going beyond personal/ individual salvation seen as a mark of Liberal individualism, the Legion sought to envisage a beyond for a collective redemption of the Romanian nation. In order to achieve this beyond, the sins of the nation had to be cleansed by an elite suffering for the nation’s imperfections and for its sins brought on by their earthly existence. The movement, through a joint effort of its intellectuals and clergy introduced another sacrament next to the seven acknowledged by the Orthodox Church and considered valid according to the legionary doctrine and necessary. Thus self-sacrifice (*jertfă*)/ martyrdom became the *eight sacrament*. Through the sufferings of the legionary elite, the sins of the nation were to be redeemed and the nation to earn its place in the final resurrection of the Nations.¹⁰⁶

Unlike in other fascist movements where elements of Christian theology were integrated yet the clergy played no role in the fascist movement’s rituals, in the case of the Iron Guard the clergy performed most of the movement’s rituals, including the public

¹⁰⁴ Rebecca Anne Haynes, “The Romanian Legionary Movement. Popular Orthodoxy and the Cult of Death” in Mioara Anton, Florin Anghel, Cosmin Popa (eds.), *Hegemoniile trecutului. Evoluții românești și europene. Profesorul Ioan Chiper la 70 de ani* [The Hegemonies of the Past. Romanian and European Evolutions. Professor Ioan Chiper at his 70th anniversary] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2006), pp. 113-126.

¹⁰⁵ Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of the Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991), p. 59.

¹⁰⁶ This idea, although presented in historical terms, was present in Catholic Poland as well. See Brian Porter-Szücs, 2011, p. 225.

display of the martyrdom sacrament. The novelty of the present approach lays in the transition from a quantitative approach regarding numbers of priests and hierarchs joining and sympathizing with the movement to a more analytical, qualitative research method. I argue that the Iron Guard was able to generate a theology by projecting Orthodox theology from an individual to a national scale. This mutual approximation process between theologians and fascists, between consecrated priests and lay-theologians set a common ground of discussion and a regular source of inspiration for the movement and for the Church.

The importance of the institutional aspect and the pragmatic negotiation between the Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church is discussed in the thesis. However, the present undertaking presents the relationship between different layers of the Orthodox Church (such as low and the high clergy) and different directions in the Legion (a more secular and a more religious group). For every group the negotiation had its specificities and the appearance of a single Church negotiating with a single/ coherent group of Romanian fascists while seductive, it is rather reductionist and essentialist. The low clergy understood the Iron Guard as a revival of Christian devotion and a solution to their problems, such as remuneration, the need for new parishes, and a restriction of the State's and the high clergy's abuses. The high clergy was comfortable with the role the Iron Guard played on the rebirth of Christian devotion and sought to transform the Iron Guard into a clerical party, a political expression of the Church in Romanian politics, defending the clergy from the dangers of Communism, secularism and immorality. The educated clergy thought the movement as a theological expression of the Christian people, as a reaction of the Christian laity against the injustices coming from a secular state and directed towards the Church and that inferred in the nation's destiny.

The religious group within the movement surrounding Codreanu thought the Church a national asset. Its presence in Romanian society bolstered nationalism and highlighted the appeal of the historical past in comparison with the grim present. The secular group in the Iron Guard considered that Orthodoxy had a role until the formation of the Romanian state and the fulfillment of the national dream that is the unification from 1918. From that point onwards, the mission of enlightening the masses belonged to the young generation of Romanian fascists.

4. Sources and Methodology

I analyze the ideology of the Iron Guard as expressed by its ideologues in books, speeches, letters and newspaper articles. For the thesis I went through the collections of *Pământul strămoșesc*, *Axa*, *Iconar*, *Vestitorii*, *Revista mea*, *Garda Bucovinei*, *Calendarul*, *Însemnări sociologice*, *Cuvântul Argeșului*, *Buna Vestire*, *Cuvântul*, and other similar interwar press. These writings have numerous references about the importance played by Orthodox spirituality in the Nation's rebirth, the leader's cult or the creation of the New Man. For the Iron Guard's ideologues Orthodox spirituality and the traditional society of the village joined hands in order to emphasize the particularities of the Romanian nation. Starting with some of the most important texts coming from Ion Zelea Codreanu, Ion I. Moța, and other important members of the legionary hierarchy, I will try to emphasize the relationship between Orthodox ideas and fascist ideology.

The response of the Orthodox Church's hierarchs, theologians and clergy is traced via church newspapers (*Telegraful Român*) and journals (*Revista Teologică*, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, *Mitropolia Moldovei*), biographies and oral interviews. Their

penetration into the legionary press was also investigated along with various church regulations, legislative proposals, parliamentary answers to legislative proposals, and reform projects. They make up a corpus of writings that mirrors closely a discourse of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards the Romanian fascist movement, the nationalist projects of the state, the church and the Iron Guard.

The State's archives are meant to supplement the archives of the Church. Detailed reports coming from the Secret Police (*Siguranța Statului*) and the Gendarmerie (*Jandarmerie*), but also from the department for Religious Denominations offer important information regarding the way in which the inner-mechanism of the Church functioned, how the members of the Church and the Guard effectively worked together in electoral campaigns or in organizing different fascist event.

To integrate the Romanian case into a larger framework, I use “asymmetrical comparison” (Jürgen Kocka)¹⁰⁷ and compare the Legion's relationship with the Orthodox Church with the case of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany where the relationships between the fascists, the Catholic, and respectively the Protestant Church can shed light on a more general aspect regarding the influence of Christianity over fascism and vice versa. Despite collaboration with the fascists, by establishing this comparison I look at a pattern in the Church's reaction when confronted with a totalitarian regime. A direct comparison with the Serbian case will also be undertaken. Because of the same approach regarding the role of the secular state in its relationship with an Orthodox Church, the relation

¹⁰⁷ Jürgen Kocka, “Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The case of the German *Sonderweg*,” in *History and Theory* 38(1999), pp. 40–51.

between the Orthodox Church and different Serbian fascist movements¹⁰⁸ will be brought into the discussion in order to broaden the frame of analysis.

5. The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has a chronological structure that will ease understanding of the evolution of the relationship between the Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church. The first part will discuss the intellectual context for the relationship, its ideological precursors (Junimism, Orthodoxism, religious nationalism, etc.) that facilitated the interwar intermingle between fascist ideology and theology of the Church. I argue that in the context of interwar Romania these intellectual turned ideological trends led to a certain polarization of the cultural life under the banner of cultural and religious nationalism, a background that is present all over Eastern Europe after the end of WWI. In this foggy and diverse intellectual picture, the position of the Church and the change of its political theology under the impact of State's patronized nationalism will also be considered as an important factor that has made things easier for the Romanian Orthodox Church to adopt a violent, anti-Semitic, ultra-nationalist discourse.

A different chapter will be dedicated to the Romanian Orthodox Church. This chapter is structured to offer a historical overview of the relationship between Orthodoxy and the national state from the mid-19th century to the Second World War. It will discuss the reassessment of the institutional religion after the fall of the Empire and the transformation of the Imperial Orthodoxy into a national church, the constant negotiation

¹⁰⁸ Maria Falina, "Between 'Clerical Fascism' and Political Orthodoxy: Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Interwar Serbia" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 8, 2 (2007), p. 248-253.

of the Church's position in Romanian society with the advent of modernization and the reasons for the relationship that the Church had with the Iron Guard.

The third chapter will dwell on the beginnings of the Iron Guard's movement and how a certain category of clerics went from being members in a mainstream anti-Semitic party such as A. C. Cuza's Christian National Defense League to Codreanu's radical solution. A closer look will be given to the issue of the connection between religious and political ritual in terms of propaganda and how the Church has institutionally reacted to the increasing propaganda of the Iron Guard. This chapter will be also focused on the Iron Guard's efforts to propagate its ideology through different newspapers such as *Pământul strămoșesc*, *Calendarul* and *Garda Bucovinei*. It will analyze the reaction of the Orthodox clergy in the first stages of the movement's expansion, the input of the hierarchy on the first legionary propaganda campaigns, and an account of the first clergymen joining the movement.

The thesis goes on to map the relationship between Iron Guard and Romanian Orthodox Church after 1934 in 'the labor camp' stage. In re-directing the manpower of the movement toward working on different sites belonging to the Church, Codreanu stroke a decisive blow in winning the sympathy of the Orthodox clergy for his movement. The chapter will focus on the establishment and the dissemination of the Archangel's cult by building churches with him as patron saint and the set-up of a ritual of the movement through the observation of religious rituals performed by the young men and women inside the working camps. The chapter will focus on participation of the clergy and the support of the Orthodox hierarchy for the legionary building project, accepting and promoting the legionary work in the benefit of the Church. At the same time the condemnation of the assassination of I.G. Duca and subsequently the rejection of the

movement's benevolent work in favor of the Church at the State's intervention will also be tracked.

An important part of the thesis will be consecrated to the establishment of a *legionary theology*. I argue that corroborated with the numerous changes operated in the Orthodox doctrine and ritual, the most important contribution to the elaboration of a fascist theology was the sacrament of martyrdom. The leader cult, the cult of the Archangel, the veneration of the national religious tradition and the devotion towards the Orthodox Church were united in the melting pot of martyrdom for movement and for fatherland. The purpose of this theological maneuver was to unify the movement and to produce a secret initiation type brotherhood for the young followers of the movement, but also to point out the divine nature of the movement in eyes of the peasant voters.

The Moța-Marin burial (13th of February 1937), and its funeral ritual best expressed the link between theology and ideology, between faith and propaganda that was preserved to the movement's very end. A special chapter is devoted to this Moța-Marin moment in the life of the legion. The burial marked a turning point in the relation between the Romanian Orthodox clergy and the Iron Guard. Even the high clergy started to shift their stance towards the movement in the aftermath of the funeral.

The last chapter will be focused on the legionary taking power after 6th of September 1941 and subsequently with their relationship with the Orthodox Church during their short government. While the low clergy putted into practice its aims of reforming the Church and restricting the authority of the Holy Synod through a project of law intended to reorganize the functioning of the Church, the high clergy chose to reject the project and ally itself with the most important enemy of the Guard, general Ion Antonescu. This period was also representative for it was the moment when the Iron

Guard put into practice the sacrament of martyrdom in an elaborate ritual, combining both the religious and the legionary funerary ceremonies as experienced during Moța-Marin burial.

CHAPTER I

The Cultural Debate in Modern Romania and the Rise of Religious Right-Wing Radicalism

I. 1. Preliminaries

Between 1920 and 1940 the relationship between culture and ethnicity constituted one of the most dominant political themes in Eastern Europe. The cultural, historical, anthropological debates shaped national identity in every country in the region. After 1918 the building of the national state in East Central Europe had as a principal consequence a quest to define the nation. The political regimes engaged in an official sponsored project to define nationhood. The main reasons behind this political attitude were the inhomogeneous population inside their borderlands or the revisionist tendencies of their neighbors. This was the time political conservatism, artistic avant-garde, anti-modernism, and fascism were fashioning a right-wing definition of the nation on racial nationalistic grounds based on an anti-Semite exclusivist ideology which eventually led to an explosive state of facts.

The menacing rise of Soviet Russia on the one hand and fascist Italy and Germany on the other had a tremendous effect on Eastern Europe: in the conflict between the god of the Nation and the idol of the class, these countries avoided a political partnership with the revolutionary states and engaged in different regional and international alliances to safeguard their recent advent to nationhood. But these political alliances were powerless in front of the appeal of the fascist states: by the end of the 1930s, under the strain of the economical crises, the god of the Nation ruled over Eastern Europe, as well.

After shaping the framework of the debate between the Westernists and the traditionalists, chapter will focus on Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu and the chapter will frame the association between religion and politics and culture in the traditionalist camp. Finally this chapter will present the radical racist ancestry of the Romanian Iron Guard, the creation and evolution of The League of National Christian Defense and A.C. Cuza as a precursor of Codreanu's political construction. This will ease into a discussion on the "Orthodoxist" movement¹ of interwar Romania.

I. 2. "The Great Debate" over Romanian Ethnicity. Religion and Nationalism in 1920s Romania

The 1918 unification with the Romanian provinces in the Russian and Austrian empires brought a sense of fulfillment to the Romanian nationalist elites. But it also questioned the understanding of Romanianness: the new state was confronted with social realities that were not at all encouraging and the Romanian government in Bucharest response to them was feeble.² Around 30% of the Romanian population was represented by different ethnic minorities (Hungarians, Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Gypsies, etc.) and the State had to deal institutionally with this complicated situation. New institutions had to be founded in the newly acquired provinces in an effort to nationalize them and reinforce state's authority over conflicting ethnic minorities. One can question if it was

¹ I put this term in inverted commas because this cultural direction was never unitary grasped by its members. Major distinction existed between Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu or Lucian Blaga regarding how they envisaged the importance of Orthodox Christianity for developing an organic Romanian culture. This is the reason why I preferred through out the thesis to use the terms "traditionalism/traditionalists" rather than "Orthodoxism" or "Orthodoxists".

² For the historical context after 1918 see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 320–332 and Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 29–48.

possible to speak about a Romanian ethnicity when this was contested in the country given the fact that in the new provinces the economic and cultural elite and the bourgeoisie was not ethnically Romanian.³ Another striking aspect was represented by various assumptions regarding minorities in the newly-acquired Romanian provinces, a fact that led to different radicalisms in the Romanian nationalist agenda.

The Romanian State engaged in the unification of the new provinces, a process of centralization, “nationalizing” the ethnic minorities and imposing a Romanian centralized apparatus in order to cope with ethnic diversity and bridge the Romanian societal layers. Laws concerning public education and the creation of a homogeneous/ centralized administration were introduced to achieve these goals, with sometimes a problematic response at the local level.

The Romanian State embarked into a large cultural and historiographical campaign to legitimate the Romanian claims over the newly acquired territories. A series of academic publications advocated for a specific Romanian ethnic character in the newly acquired provinces. These books were in most part the product of historians and archeologists.⁴ Accordingly, large archaeological digs were initiated in all the Romanian provinces in order to prove the homogeneity and the unity of the Romanian past across the country. Vasile Pîrvan became the most famous Romanian archaeologist, his book “Getika” (1925) the direct result of this archaeological excavations. As Philip

³ Stephen Fischer-Galați „The interwar period: Greater Romania,” in Dinu C. Giurescu and Stephen Fischer-Galați (eds.), *Romania. A Historical Perspective*, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998), pp. 293–295.

⁴ Ștefan Ciobanu, *Basarabia. Monografie* [Bessarabia. Monograph] (Chișinău: Imprimeriile Statului, 1926), Ștefan Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei. Studiu și documente cu privire la mișcarea națională din Basarabia în anii 1917-1918* [The Union with Bessarabia. Study and documents regarding the national movement in Bessarabia between 1917 and 1918] (Bucharest: Cartea românească, 1929); G. Popa-Liseanu, *Basarabia. Privire Istorică* [Bessarabia. Historical Outlook] (Bucharest: Tipografia Jockey-Club, 1924); *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul 1918-1928* (Bucharest: Cultura națională, 1929).

Vanhaelemeersch pointed out, archaeology was the most important historical tool accessible to the Romanian state to prove solid both historical and national claims for the Romanians living in the newly acquired provinces, but also to shed light on a sense of historical unity bounding together the Romanian nation.⁵

Starting from archaeological findings, the Romanian state was able to encourage the building a narrative regarding its historical origins boasting of the Latin origins of the Romanian nation.⁶ Former Austro-Hungarian universities from Cluj-Napoca or Cernăuți changed their Hungarian/ German names and were nationalized by the Romanian state, extending the State's project of ethnic homogenization through education. New academic institutions were created in Oradea (Law) and Chișinău (Theology and Agronomy) to supplement the already-existing universities and to disseminate the nationalistic creed of the Romanian State among the new *Romanian* citizens. Their goal was to fashion a Romanian elite to fill the state apparatus or to engage in the liberal arts, able to take the place of the former Hungarian, Saxon, Austrian or Russian intelligentsia.

Especially in the former kingdom the students coming from a poor social background felt challenged/ confronted on the University benches by an ethnic other, who came from the urban middle class: the Jewish minority. In the near future, especially after the 1922 student riot, the presence in the universities of a Jewish minority with its ethnic and class difference will cause permanent turmoil, rapidly speculated by radical political

⁵ Philip Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation "without Beliefs" and the Idea of Experience in Romania (1927 - 1934)*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 23.

⁶ Vasile Pârvan, *Începuturile vieții românești la gurile Dunării* [The beginning of Romanian life at the end of Danube river] (Bucharest: Cultura națională, 1923).

groups such as the League of National Christian Defense led by A.C. Cuza,⁷ later Legion of Archangel Michael.⁸

Unlike the pre 1918 period, when Romanianness was defined only in cultural terms, in interwar Romania there was a constant renegotiation of the ethnic understanding and identity building on at least three fundamental dimensions: political, cultural and historical. From a political perspective, the ethnical building process was seen as completed with the 1918 unification. The state financed different nationalist projects, and some intellectuals decided to join hands with the State and subordinate their academic expertise to the nationalist project patronized by the National Liberal Party or the Royal House. Other intellectuals embraced a more radical agenda, by going against the moderate nationalist one of the ruling party or the royal house.

The debate over the character and the nature of Romanian ethnicity went back to the discussion in the 19th century regarding the national building process. In the interwar period two main understandings of Romanianness shaped the future conflict between a more liberal and a more nationalist, radical intellectuality. On the one hand, the thinkers inspired by the West like Eugen Lovinescu⁹ and Ștefan Zeletin¹⁰ thought that the

⁷ A.C. Cuza (1857-1947) was a Professor of Political Economy in the Law Faculty of Jassy and one of the staunchest advocates of anti-Semitism. Before the war he joined Nicolae Iorga's Democratic Nationalist Party, but because Iorga anti-semitic stance changed dramatically after the 1918, he founded in 1922 his own political group, The National Christian Union. This political organization will be the core of the future LANC.

⁸ The Romanian fascist movement was known over the years as The Legion of Archangel Michael, The Iron Guard, Corneliu Codreanu Group, All for Fatherland, The Legionary Movement, etc. All these names refer to the same political organization.

⁹ See Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne* [*The History of the Romanian Modern Civilization*], (Jassy: Institutul Cultural Român, 1998). Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943) was a Romanian literary critic, who authored the famous theory of "synchronicism" as a correlation between Romanian and Western culture.

¹⁰ Ștefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română: Originea și rolul ei istoric* [*The Romanian Bourgeoisie: Its origins and historical role*], (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005). For Ștefan Zeletin see Balázs Trencsényi, "The 'Münchansenian Moment': Modernity, Liberalism, and Nationalism in the Thought of Ștefan Zeletin" in Balázs Trencsényi, Dragoș Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi, Zoltán Kántor (eds.), *Nation-*

Romanian cultural and social destiny had to be fulfilled by borrowing and adapting the institutions and customs from the West. They were continuators of both the 1848 generation and of the *Junimists* from Jassy. As Keith Hitchins argued, the sympathizers of this trend “treated Romania as a part of Europe and insisted that she had no choice but to follow the path of economic and social development already taken by the urbanized and industrialized West.”¹¹ This tendency was rapidly associated in economic terms with the advent of liberalism and industrial modernization and in cultural terms of continuing the implementation of cultural models from abroad. Dadaism, futurism, and supra-realism spread in the intellectual circles from Romania in a search for a more modern attitude towards art and culture.¹²

In questioning why this Western path was adopted by a large number of Romanian intellectuals, although several theories were offered explaining the cultural polarization, I think that the first explanation was related to the association between intellectuals and the Romanian Liberal Party, the main advocate of following the West, was in power (1923 - 1928). Furthermore, their goal was to establish a nationalist culture an expression of the bourgeois city and industrial and financial development of Romania embodied in the political ideology of the National Liberal Party. As Thomas J. Kiel noted

Building and Contested Identities. Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies (Jassy: Polirom, 2001), p. 61–80. Ștefan Zeletin (1882-1934) was the penname of Ioan Motăș, a Jassy University professor of sociology and economy. In his masterpiece *Burghezia română, originea și rolul ei istoric* against the agrarian tendencies from the Romanian political arena he advocated for role of Romanian bourgeoisie in the path for an industrial society. Daniel Chirot, “Neoliberal and Social Democratic Theories of Development: The Zeletin-Voinea Debate concerning Romania’s Prospects in the 1920’s and its contemporary Importance” in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), 1978, pp. 31-52.

¹¹ Keith Hitchins, 1994, p. 292.

¹² Irina Livezeanu, “Windows towards the West’: New Forms and the ‘Poetry of true Life’” in Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker and Christian Weikop (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines. Volume III, Europe 1880-1940 Part II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1157-1183. For Dadaism, see Irina Livezeanu, “From Dada to Gaga’: The Peripatetic Romanian Avant-Garde Confronts Communism” in Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu (ed.), *Littératures et Pouvoir Symbolique* (Bucharest: Paralela 45, 2003), p. 239-253.

the National Liberal Party looked towards building a state stimulated, state organized, and state protected capitalism under the leadership of a Romanian bourgeoisie to carry out its economic modernization agenda. The National Liberal Party realized that its own political success depended on it being actively engaged in building a larger bourgeoisie in Romania. Despite the economic growth of the late 19th century and early 20th century, the Romanian bourgeoisie remained small, especially that portion of the of the bourgeoisie who were “Romanian” by ethnicity.”¹³

Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943), the most influential literary critic of his time became after 1918 one of the first intellectuals supporting the official nationalist ideology of the Romanian Liberal government. Lovinescu’s theory about the synchronism between Romanian and Western culture¹⁴ suggested that Romanianness had to be constructed based on Western models and the Romanian society was called to adjust itself according to Western customs,¹⁵ but, despite the 19th century Europeanists, this process had to be carried on according to the needs of the Romanian society. He believed that the assimilation period (1848 - 1918) had to be followed by a certain period of integration of different borrowings coming from the West.¹⁶

Lovinescu was convinced that the after the unification from 1918 the time came to developed a genuine Romanian culture, one that would define the Romanian character. Behind this intellectual project of building the nationalist canon there is also a political project, that of the Romanian Liberal Party. Lovinescu and Zeletin’s ideas were developed during the political hegemony of the Romanian Liberal Party (1922–1928) and these ideas echoed a political ideology that wanted to adjust Romania to Western

¹³ Thomas J. Kiel, *Romania’s Tortured Road towards Modernity* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006), p. 113.

¹⁴ For a thorough description of this concept in the Romanian culture and its relation with building the national canon, see Virgil Nemoianu, “Variable Socio-political Functions of Aesthetic Doctrine: Lovinescu vs. Western Aestheticism” in Kenneth Jowitt, (ed.), 1978, p. 174-207.

¹⁵ For a description of Lovinescu’s *synchronism* in Romanian society see Keith Hitchins, 1994, p. 334 – 335.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

standards. Privileging the modern Romanian town, the capital of heavy industry, good schools and modern political parties were among the main social concern of the Europeanists. Accordingly, the Romanian character had to be build starting from these Western values in order to overcome the social and political backwardness of the young Romanian State. This alignment of Romanian culture and defining the Romanian national character according to Western standards came with an emphasis on a secular approach of the State and a proposed clear-cut Church–State separation. Their counterparts thought the debate in antithesis, revolting against the appeal to reason brought in the political sphere by the French Revolution, thus expanding on the Romanian 19th century Conservative tradition of revolt against foreign imports in the Romanian culture by adding a religious twist.¹⁷ Following the assumptions of Paul A. Hanebrink, I argue that in rural societies where cultural import could not be followed immediately by a wave of rapid industrialization, an unfilled gap remained in the collective mind of the nation, opened to religious imagery and the presence of rituals and religious symbols.¹⁸ The economic backwardness of Romania in both centuries and the slow pace of modernization and industrialization before and after WWI were also responsible for the persistence of traditionalist ideas, especially in the world of the Romanian village.¹⁹

¹⁷ Brian Porter depicts the wave of anti-Semitism associated with political right-wing as a radicalization of secular nationalism, in Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Begin to Hate. Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defence of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 3 and after.

¹⁹ For Romania's economic backwardness and underdevelopment, see Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis. Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1998), p. 23.

I. 3. Religious ‘Traditionalism’? The Origins of the Interwar ‘Traditionalist’ Movement

As seen in Hungary in the late 19th century and early 20th century, in this crevice between the lines of different groups supporting miscellaneous views on the nature of political and cultural modernization and Western acculturation, a splinter group appeared which associated radical politics with religious devotion and anti-Semitism with a (secular) theology.²⁰ Grouped around Aurel C. Popovici²¹, Nicolae Iorga²² and A.C. Cuza, this splinter group of intellectuals cultivated devotion for national organic tradition, the cult of historical past and of the village as the cultural matrix of the Romanian nation.²³ They were also the first to rediscover the importance of religion for their political discourse in modern Romania. It was Aurel C. Popovici who firstly brought the idea of associating religion with nationalism in the public discourse, an idea extremely

²⁰ I use the term “secular” in parenthesis to show that in the Romanian case, due to the large extension of clergymen and theologians supporting this newly approach to politics, the distinction between secular and religious is hard to be traced.

²¹ Aurel C. Popovici (1863-1917), a Romanian lawyer and politician from Transylvania advocating for the rights of the Romanian minority in Austro-Hungary. From 1906 he became one of the most fervent supporters of the federalist idea in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as a solution for the increasing nationalistic dissent among ethnic minorities, especially in the Hungarian parts of the Habsburg Empire. See Grigore Nandriș, *Aurel C. Popovici (1863-1917)* (Cernăuți: Tipografia Silvestru Mitropolitul, 1937). See Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology & Antisemitism. The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991), pp. 39-41.

²² Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) was a Romanian historian, politician, university professor. He was Prime-Minister (1931-1932), president of Romanian Senate, member of several academies and honorary doctor of several universities. Before the beginning of WWII he was involved in an anti-Semitic and anti-Western politics and advocated for a Romanian effort to unite all the Romanian provinces outside Kingdom of Romania’s borders. After the end of war with the national ideal fulfilled, he became a moderate nationalist and renounced his later anti-Semitic stance from the Democratic Nationalist Party’s platform, a change that will cause A.C. Cuza’s departure from Iorga’s party.

²³ For Iorga pre-war political and cultural agenda, see Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga. A biography* (Jassy: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1996) pp. 65-139; Effi Gazi, “Theorizing and Practicing ‘Scientific’ History in South-Eastern Europe (Nineteenth-Twentieth Century): Spyridonos Lambros and Nicolae Iorga” in Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (eds.), *Nationalizing the Past. Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 204-208; William O. Oldson, *The Historical and Nationalistic Thought of Nicolae Iorga* (Boulder: East-European Quarterly, 1973).

popular in the Transylvanian context, the place of his origin. In an article from *Semănătorul*, Aurel C. Popovici said

...only the gospel of Christ transformed us from a multitude of individuals *ex toto orbe romano* into a people. After an almost bi-millennial moral preparation only the faith in the gospel can transform us into a nation as it did for others peoples as well. Because many tribes and peoples are *called* by God in the world, but few are *chosen*. Only a few peoples had or have the celestial gift to enter into God's kingdom, into the kingdom of human worthiness of the *nations*, into the kingdom of heavenly worthiness of *immortality*.²⁴

In Aurel C. Popovici's discourse the reader can find a similar theme, dear to the future legionary intellectuals i.e. that of the Romanian nation's *mission* as divine calling. Replacing of Nicolae Iorga as director of *Semănătorul*, Aurel C. Popovici re-framed the traditionalist poetry from its pages in a nationalist and irredentist fashion.²⁵ Hiring Transylvanian refugees into the editorial staff and introducing a radical political agenda coupled with a traditionalist cultural one Aurel C. Popovici brought to the Old Kingdom the confessional, radical and nationalist values of the Transylvanian Romanian political discourse in the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.²⁶

Historian and advocate of national unity, Nicolae Iorga was the first anti-Semite agitator of the student body at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th. He tried to revive the nationalist pride by idealizing the Romanian village and the peasant as the carrier of the true Romanian identity but he refrained from adding to his traditional

²⁴ Aurel C. Popovici, "Religiune și naționalitate" [Religion and Nationality] in *Semănătorul*, Year VII, no. 53 (28th of December 1908), p. 1160.

²⁵ It was one of the main criticisms addressed by Iorga's supporters, who felt compelled to consider their mentor as the uncontested fore-father of the Romanian nationalism. For a critic opinion on how Aurel C. Popovici has lead the publication see Dan Smântânescu, *Mișcarea Sămănătoristă. Studiu istoric-literar* [The Sămănătorist Movement. Historical and Literary Study] (Bucharest: Bucovina, 1933), p. 16.

²⁶ See Marius Turda, *The Idea of National Superiority in Central and Easter Europe, 1880-1918* (Lewinston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

mix the ingredient of religion or religious confession.²⁷ However Iorga's readers such as Nichifor Crainic who heard him speak at the University²⁸ during their studies or those people who read Iorga's newspaper articles from *Neamul Românesc* [The Romanian Nation] were inspired by his emphasis on the Romanian village culture and anti-Semitism as means of Romanian nation's affirmation.²⁹ Continuing with his pre-WWI positive attitude towards the Orthodox Church,³⁰ Nicolae Iorga stood against the Uniate Church³¹ or any form of "clericalism"³² and advocated for a "Romanian Orthodoxy"³³.

Iorga was not alone in extolling praises for the Romanian Orthodox Church. He opened the pages of his publication to the Orthodox clergy to express its opinions and sometimes even its bitter criticisms against the Church's hierarchy and the political parties. Iorga's newspaper was also one of the first public rostrums for the Romanian clergy to vent their grievances about the reorganization of the public funds for schools

²⁷ Iorga wrote several articles on the medieval history of the church and a two-volume history of the Romanian Orthodox Church (1908). For his stern nationalist views, see Radu Dragnea, "Creiatorul naționalismului" [The creator of nationalism] in *Omagiu lui Nicolae Iorga* [Homage to Nicolae Iorga] (Craiova: Ramuri, 1921), pp. 115-120.

²⁸ Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe, zile negre. Memorii* [Good days, bad days. Memoirs] Volume I, (Bucharest: Gîndirea, 1991), p. 87.

²⁹ Radu Ioanid, "Nicolae Iorga and Fascism" in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 27, no. 3 (July 1992), p. 472. In 1910 he founded with A. C. Cuza the Democratic Nationalist Party (PND) which had in its political program the "numerus clausus" for ethnic minorities (the Jews being directly targeted) in schools, universities, and liberal professions.

³⁰ Nicolae Iorga, *Tulburările bisericești și politicianismul. O cuvîntare și articole* [The ecclesiastical turmoil and the politicianism] (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia Neamul Românesc, 1911), pp. 13-19, 22: he speaks about the degradation of the clergy and calls the 19th century autocephaly a "schism". His criticism targeted Spiru Haret and his reform of education, imposing that every priest and bishop needed a certain degree in Theology in order to fill in a position in the Orthodox Church. For Haret's reply, see Spiru C. Haret, *Criza bisericească* [The Crisis of the Church] (Bucharest: Carol Göbl, 1912), p. 6 and forward. For a critical commentary of what happened during the polemic between Haret and Iorga, please see C. Cernăianu, *Biserica din Regat 1908-1918* [The Church from the Old Kingdom] (Bucharest: Tipografia Apollo, 1920), pp. 5-20.

³¹ Nicolae Iorga, "O refacere contra tradiției" [A Reconstruction against the Tradition] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIII, no. 209 (31st of July 1918), p. 1.

³² Nicolae Iorga, "La moartea unui ireductibil" [At the death of an irreducible] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIII, no. 246 (6th of September 1918), p. 1.

³³ Nicolae Iorga, "Împărțirea Bisericii bucovinene" [The split of the Church from Bukovina] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIII, no. 229 (20th of August 1918), pp. 1.

and churches,³⁴ to offer pastoral messages for those returning from the front,³⁵ to argue for the necessity of the Christian idea in the system of public education,³⁶ and the lack of representation in the Romanian Parliament of the Orthodox priests.³⁷

Following up the topics raised by the representatives of the Orthodox clergy, one of the most interesting problems they were confronted with after 1918 unification was the political influence in the life of the Church and the politicization of the clergy.³⁸ In the pages of Iorga's newspaper Orthodox priests like Fr. Constin Moisiu deplored the lack of political support for the Romanian Orthodox clergymen in the Romanian Parliament³⁹ and the intrusion of the Liberal Party in the internal affairs churchly⁴⁰ suggesting a complete autonomy for the clergy.⁴¹

Along with his staunch conviction in the national role of Romanian Orthodoxy, he heralded a vivid anti-Semitism expressed in the pages of his publication. In an article from 1918, answering an accusation of anti-Semitism from a Jewish newspaper Iorga expressed his views without restraints:

We have nothing against the true or racially-mixed Semites and the Jews in whom there is Semite blood. We are against those *whom despite the nature of their race feed themself in Romania without wanting to assimilate/assume a true and honest*

³⁴ Fr. Anton Popescu, "Eforiile. Recomandările unui preot" [The Boards of Trustees. The Suggestions of a Priest] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIII, no. 204 (26th of July 1918), p. 3.

³⁵ C. G. Vartolomeiu, "Către vremuri noi" [Towards another era] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIII, no. 206 (28th of July 1918), p. 2.

³⁶ Auxiliary Bishop Gurie Grossu, "Educația creștină" [The Christian education] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIII, no. 318 (17th of November 1918), p. 2.

³⁷ Fr. Econ. C. Furtună, "Dar noi preoții?" [What about us priests?] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIII, no. 353 (23rd of December 1918), p. 2.

³⁸ The priests followed up in Nicolae Iorga's footsteps, 1911, p. 30 who also criticized the advancement of future Orthodox bishops out of lay clergy only because of their allegiance to a specific political party.

³⁹ Fr. Constantin Moisiu, "Preoțimea și partidele politice" [The clergymen and the political parties], in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIV, no. 3 (5th of January 1919), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰ Fr. Constantin Moisiu, "Preoțimea și partidele politice II" in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIV, no. 21 (28th of January 1919), pp. 1-2. Supporting his ideas was also Fr. I. D. Petrescu, "Ce fac preoții" [What the priests do], in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIV, no. 24 (31st of January 1919), p. 1.

⁴¹ Fr. Constantin Moisiu, "Preoțimea și partidele politice II" in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIV, no. 71 (27th of March 1919), p. 2.

*Romanian soul. [...] With its national past, with its grounding reasons for which it was created, with its national purpose Romania has no meaning of existence if it does not stay strictly and exclusively national.*⁴²

In Iorga's view any minority living in Romania had only one solution to ward off the wave of nationalist discontent and racial hatred against them: to become fully assimilated in the Romanian nation. In the opposite eventuality Iorga had no problem asking for more radical solutions for ethnic minorities, such as expulsion or even a complete segregation of these ethnic groups.⁴³

This highly-nationalist narrative with its emphasis on messianic nationalism, Orthodoxy as an organic national marker and radical anti-Semitic views was passed on by Nicolae Iorga to a younger generation of Romanian intellectuals and theologians, who from 1918 published constantly in his newspaper.⁴⁴ One of these intellectuals was Nichifor Crainic, who began his career as a nationalist publicist and advocate of the Romanian project for ethnic homogenization in the newly acquired Bessarabian province of Bessarabia.⁴⁵ He used the opportunity offered by the columns of Iorga's newspaper to embrace his criticism against Orthodox bishops, later a trademark for Nichifor Crainic.⁴⁶

⁴² Nicolae Iorga, "Antisemiți..." [Anti-Semites] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIII, no. 238 (29th of August 1918), p. 1. Iorga re-enacted in this polemic the previous arguments from another place. See Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Evreilor în Țerile noastre* [The History of the Jews in our Principalities] (Bucharest: Socec, 1913), pp. 35-41.

⁴³ Nicolae Iorga, "Destigănire" [Unromanization] in *Neamul Românesc*, Year XIV, no. 74 (30th of March 1919), p. 1.

⁴⁴ He even participated to the annual artistic calendar of *Neamul Românesc* with a nationalist poem: Nichifor Crainic, "Patria" [The Fatherland] in *Calendarul nostru pe 1918* (Bîrlad: Tipografia C. D. Lupascu, 1918), pp. 53-54.

⁴⁵ Nichifor Crainic, "Un mijloc de propagandă: teatrul" [A means for propaganda: the theater] in *Neamul românesc*, Year XIII, no. 195 (17th of July 1918), p. 1; Nichifor Crainic, "Din România de peste Prut" [From the Romania beyond the Prut river] in *Neamul românesc*, Year XIII, no. 200 (22nd of July 1918), p. 1.

⁴⁶ Nichifor Crainic, "Fostul mitropolit primat" [The former primate Metropolit] in *Neamul românesc*, Year XIII, no. 345 (14th of December 1918), p. 1.

Iorga's departing from a radical nationalist agenda to supporting "democratic nationalism" deprived of any religious or anti-Semitic flavours,⁴⁷ his disciples became disappointed with his moderation and superimposed on his traditionalist view on Romanian culture the religious trait and radicalized the anti-Semitic stance of their master. The traditionalists following in Iorga's footsteps were a generation younger than their mentor. They had directly experienced the trauma of WWI in the trenches or witnessed the carnage in the hospitals. After the war ended, this "generation of experiences"⁴⁸ responded to this attempt of building the Romanian national canon by shifting their views in the opposite direction from the pro-Liberal intellectuals. If the Europeanists wanted to define the Romanian character starting from Western borrowings, they preferred to search for the premises of the national canon at home. By joining avant-garde ideas emphasizing the importance of archaic art⁴⁹ with a Romantic *Volkgeist* already present in Romanian culture envisaged by their intellectual predecessors like Iorga, the traditionalists focused on the Romanian village and the Orthodox spirituality it encapsulated. The Romanian village with its culture, the organic character of Romanian history overlapping with the sacred time of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the folklore preserving ancient myths seen through the lenses of Orthodoxy, all these elements became the place where they started building a national unifying culture. The idea of national culture as a matrix of national unity and homogenization was translated into political agenda, i.e. that only from a unitary national culture as the expression of an

⁴⁷ For Iorga's change see Nicolae Iorga, *Doctrina națională* [National Doctrine] (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1922), p. 3. This was a lecture presented by Iorga on 10th of December 1922, the day when the student riot began in Cluj-Napoca, a riot out of which the Iron Guard would eventually emerge. Nevertheless, between the two positions, that of the students and that of Iorga, at the time a generational gap began to form.

⁴⁸ I am using the term of Philip Vanhaelemeersch, 2006, pp. 11-17.

⁴⁹ For avant-garde, please see Norbert Bandier, "Avant-gardes in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: New Perspectives", *Contemporary European History* 14/3 (2005), p. 393.

unified Romanian nation as a source of inspiration could an honest and nationally-dedicated political life emerge.⁵⁰

Accordingly, it should surprise no one why intellectuals grouped around masterminds the likes of Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu and started their claims for building a national creed in a religious key.⁵¹ Their highlight of the centrality of the traditional village and the importance of religion was personal⁵² but also a means to emphasize the idea of national community that could be experienced only “in terms of dual modality of the *sub-historical* ethnic community and the *supra-historical* ecclesiastical community”⁵³ as in the case of Crainic. Interpreting Lucian Blaga,⁵⁴ Nichifor Crainic believed that only by uniting the peasant community with the celestial community of heavens had Romania a chance for a national cultural unity.⁵⁵ The exploitation of the notion of Slavophile category of *sobornost*⁵⁶ as the transcendental

⁵⁰ Răzvan Pârâianu, “Cultural Nationalism and Anti-Semitism in Fin-de-Siècle Romania” in Paul Weindling and Marius Tuda (eds.), *Blood and Homeland. Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1945* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), p. 365.

⁵¹ Keith Hitchins, “Orthodoxism: Polemics over Ethnicity and Religion in Interwar Romania” in Ivo Banaç and Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven, CN: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), pp. 135-156.

⁵² For the religious inspiration of Nae Ionescu see Philip Vanhaelemeersch, 2006, pp. 205-206. He was inspired by this during his time spent in a war camp in Germany when he had contact with different Catholic orders. In the case of Crainic, the village and Orthodoxy were part of his biography. Also see Dora Mezdrea, *Nae Ionescu. Biografia 1919-1930* [Nae Ionescu. The Biography], Volume 2 (Bucharest: Acvila, 2002), p. 383.

⁵³ Balázs Trencsényi, *The Politics of “National Character”. A study in interwar East European thought* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 50.

⁵⁴ Lucian Blaga (1895-1961) was a Romanian philosopher and poet, member of Romanian Academy (1937), one of the most outspoken supporters of traditionalism in its secular variant.

⁵⁵ Nichifor Crainic, “Sensul Tradiției” [The Meaning of Tradition] in *Gîndirea*, Year IX, no. 1-2 (1929), pp. 1-11.

⁵⁶ The word *sobornost* meant in the 19th century Russian Slavophile philosophy both the fact that any decision in the Orthodox Church was taken by a synod of bishops (sobor) but also it was a synonym for Greek word *catholon*, describing the universal aspect of the Orthodox Church. For more details see William Leatherbarrow, “Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I” in William Leatherbarrow and Derek Offord, *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 110. G. M. Hamburg & Randall A. Poole, *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830–1930. Faith, Reason and the Defense of Human Dignity*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 46-48. For a theological understanding of term see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Tradiția creștină. O istorie a dezvoltării doctrinei. Volumul 5. Doctrina creștină și cultura modernă, de la 1700* (Iași: Polirom, 2008), p. 314.

community of all people in the grace of the Holy Ghost strictly related with the national community was not unique for the Romanian or the Orthodox Church.⁵⁷

There are several explanations why the Romanian intellectuals turned to religion and Orthodox confession in order to theorize the future path of the Romanian culture, and thus Romanian ethnicity. One of these reasons was provided by the intellectual cultural context in which they developed their insights about tradition and spirituality. They lived in an age saturated with the pessimism of Oswald Spengler⁵⁸ and the death of any spirituality in front of the mechanized industrial environment from the bourgeois city, where the focus on Freudian unconsciousness and on Heidegger's existentialism were important Western intellectual challenges. These major changes in the European culture were deeply influential for the Romanian intellectuals:

In their search for new values they [the traditionalists] eagerly embraced all things Eastern. A veritable wave of irrationalism and mystical ideas seemed to break across Rumanian intellectual life. They came from Asia, especially India, but from Europe, too. Alongside Buddhism and Yoga, Christian and mystical philosophy, as expounded by the Fathers of the Church, Kierkegaard and Berdyaev exercised a profound influence on Romanian thought.⁵⁹

Keith Hitchins noted that in their search for something authentic people around Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu or even Lucian Blaga started to look where their predecessors and some of their contemporaries failed to see any significance. Eastern

Jassy: Polirom, 2008) pp. 313-314 and Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), pp. 92-95.

⁵⁷ Under the influence of Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) developed an understanding of national community in religious terms in the Protestant Germany, extremely influential for other theologians such as Karl Adam. For Troeltsch see Jaroslav Pelikan, 2008, p. 315 and Hans-Georg Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch. His Life and Work* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 222-248. For the idea of a national community as a consequence of WWI in Weimar Germany, see Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation. A History of Germany 1918-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 66-95.

⁵⁸ For Oswald Spengler's critique of modernity see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary modernism. Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 49.

⁵⁹ Keith Hitchins, 1994, p. 299.

Orthodoxy and the village/ peasant became the embodiments of authenticity and the assurance of keeping up or rejoining a historical and religious tradition in which the Romanian people lived and formed himself.⁶⁰ Taking up Roger Griffin's interpretation, I argue that under the pressure of modernization, the progress myth's exacerbation, the highlight of a secular world, disenchanted of any metaphysical sense, and the atomization proposed by their intellectual counterparts Nichifor Crainic and traditional intellectuals forged a "mazeway resynthesis"⁶¹ based on Orthodoxy in order to build a new "sacred canopy"⁶² to defend the religious cultural "nomos" against the dangers of secularization and pure nihilism:

...religion in its manifold forms originated when the socially constructed nomos was 'cosmicized' and projected communally unto the universe as a higher order, thus forming a 'sacred canopy' over the abyss of meaningless. The opposite of the sacred is thus not just the profane, but, at a deeper lever, chaos, the intimation of nothingness.⁶³

Against this individualist ethos associated with the State's emphasis on rapid industrialization and atomization of the society as expressed in the secular cities of Europe,⁶⁴ but also the disturbing news coming from Bolshevik Russia or Bela Kun's Communist Hungary where religion was persecuted and the importance of national

⁶⁰ Keith Hitchens, "Gîndirea: Nationalism in Spiritual Guise" in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, 1978), pp. 140-173.

⁶¹ Roger Griffin, "Modernity, modernism and fascism. A 'mazeway resynthesis'" in *Modernism/modernity*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (January 2008), pp. 9-24. Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 106-108.

⁶² The term has been coined by Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (London: Anchor Books, 1967). I understand here this term as in the reading of Roger Griffin, 2007, p. 74-80.

⁶³ Roger Griffin, 2007, p. 74.

⁶⁴ For the tension between city and village in Prussian Germany, please see Hans Otte, "'More Churches More Church Goers'. The Lutheran Church in Hanover between 1850-1914" in Hugh McLeod (ed.), *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 89-116. Please this with Shelley Baranowski, *The Sanctity of Human Life. Nobility, Protestantism & Nazim in Weimar Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.102-116.

community tended to disappear rapped in the red banner of revolution,⁶⁵ traditionalists like Nichifor Crainic and his group started to search for a new source of transcendent meaning. As in the case of Poland or post-WWI Austria, the traditionalists constructed their view based on a pre-existence of an “ethnoreligious community” present in the rural world, opposed to the industrial city and unaffected by the anomie of modernity and voiced a “religious discourse”, comparable with that of the “religious institution” (the Orthodox Church)⁶⁶ they sought to impress and to rely on their cultural undertaking for building a new source of meaning against the exterior or internal anomy building against the Romanian people’s very existence.⁶⁷

This relation with the Romanian Orthodox Church was not always smooth. Sometimes, the “religious discourse” of traditionalist intellectuals clashed with that of the Church, like on the change of calendar (the *Paschalia* affair).⁶⁸ This tested an ancient theological theorem. In the Orthodox Church the actual Church is composed not only by its clergy (as in the case of the Roman Catholic Church) and not only by its congregation

⁶⁵ For the impact of Hungarian revolution from 1919 see Leonard Paukerow, *Experimente bolșevice. Ce am văzut în Ungaria Comunistă. Bilanțul Regimului Bolșevic în Ungaria* [Bolshevik Experiments. What I saw in Communist Hungary. The Survey of the Bolshevik Regime in Hungary] (Cluj: Tipografia Ardealul, 1920). For Bolshevik Russia’s impact on Romania, Maxim Gorki, *Un an de revoluție rusească* [A year of Russian Revolution], (Bucharest: Reforma sociala, 1919). For the aftermath of the Hungarian Bolshevik Revolution, see Thomas Lorman, *Counter-Revolutionary Hungary, 1920-1925. István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2006), pp. 5-42.

⁶⁶ N. Colan, “Apologetii ortodoxiei” [Supporters of Orthodoxy], in *Revista Teologică*, Year XV, no. 7 (July 1925), p. 195 called Nichifor Crainic and his fellow-traditionalists from *Gîndirea* “apostles” of the Orthodox Church for their commitment to promote the Orthodox Church in the cultural space.

⁶⁷ I took the terms and the conceptual framework from Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland. Catholicism, Modernity and Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 4-15, 167. For Austrian Conservative thinking’s ideas which seem to share a common ground with some ideas of the traditionalists, see Stefan Jonsson, *Crowds and Democracy. The Idea and Image of the Masses from Revolution to Fascism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 1-50.

⁶⁸ N. Colan, “Reforma calendarului,” [The calendar reform], in *Revista Teologică*, Year XIV, no. 8-9 (August-September 1924), pp. 260-261. For Nae Ionescu’s theological campaigns see Constantin Mihai, *Biserica și elitele intelectuale interbelice* [The Church and the interwar intellectual elites], (Jassy: Institutul European, 2009), p. 27 and passim. Also see Dora Mezdrea, “Nae Ionescu-Teologul” [Nae Ionescu- The Theologian], in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia. Integrala publicisticii religioase* [Theology. The Complete Edition of the Religious Articles] (Sibiu: Deisis, 2003), pp. 5-14.

(as in the case of most Protestant Churches). For the Orthodox Church, both the clergy and the people are the Church,⁶⁹ a characteristic which invested the people of the congregation with the same theological rights as those of the clergy.⁷⁰ The intersection between Church's theology and intellectual discourse produced heated discussions between hierarchy and simple laymen with or without theological training such as Nae Ionescu, Mircea Vulcănescu,⁷¹ Gheorghe Racoveanu,⁷² Sandu Tudor, Paul Sterian among others. The laity fighting against the views of the Holy Synod on the date of Easter's issue, asked for an opinion from St. Serge Theological Academy in Paris, the most prestigious Russian school of theology from exile, appealing to the principle of sobornicity⁷³ of the Orthodox Church.⁷⁴ When Paul Sterian interviewed Fr. Florowski, he stated that

By engaging itself in such a reform [the change of the religious calendar] the national Church forgets the principles of Christian solidarity, communion and the

⁶⁹ Sergei Boulgakov, *Ortodoxia* [The Orthodoxy] translated from French into Romanian by Nicolae Grosu (Bucharest: Paideea, 1997), p. 82. First edition 1933.

⁷⁰ The interesting thing is that certain professors of theology such as Fr. Grigore Cristescu, a future Iron Guard's leading members, asked for the involvement of the laity as the "elite" of the Church when confronted with the secularizing atmosphere of the intellectual world. Fr. Grigore Cristescu, "Nevoia apostolatului laic in zilele noastre" [The need for secular apostolate during present times], in *Revista Teologică*, Year XIV, no. 10-11 (October-November 1924), pp. 273-275.

⁷¹ Mircea Vulcănescu (1904-1952) was a Romanian philosopher, sociologist and economist. Student of Nae Ionescu, he was also attached to Dimitre Gusti's "monographic school", as his research assistant. He collaborated with Nichifor Crainic's *Gîndirea* and with Nae Ionescu's *Cuvîntul*.

⁷² Gheorghe/ George Racoveanu (1900-1967) was a Romanian lay theologian and journalist for Nae Ionescu's *Cuvîntul* and for his own theological review *Predania* [The Tradition]. Supporter of the Legionary movement, he was never a full-fledged member. He authored an important book, "Biserica și mișcarea legionară" [The Church and the Legionary movement] out of his conferences in German camps after the legionary coup-d'état against General Antonescu (21-23 of January 1941).

⁷³ "Sobornicity" was a direct application of the concept of *sobornost*, i.e. that although separated by national or geographical boundaries, the doctrinal truth of the Orthodox Church remains the same in all the national churches.

⁷⁴ Paul Sterian, "Declarațiile celor mai de seamă profesori ai Academiei Ruse de Teologie din Paris. O convorbire cu profesorul de drept canonic Kartachoff" [The Statements of the most important professors of the Russian Theological Academy from Paris. A talk with professor of canon law Kartachoff] in *Cuvîntul* Year V, no. 1435 (21st of April 1929), pp.1-2. For the Russian exile, see Thomas Bremer, *Cross and Kremlin. A Brief History of the Orthodox Church in Russia* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 104-108. For Florovsky, see Paul Gavrilyuk, "Florovsky's Neo-Patristic Synthesis and the Future Ways of Orthodox Theology" in George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), *Orthodox Constructions of the West* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 102-124.

Church's universality. In every local church it must rule a spirit of solidarity [because] every church is only a small part of the Great Church.⁷⁵

Paradoxically, although it embarked in a nationalist undertaking to forge a unitary Romanian culture, in religious and theological terms the traditionalist camp proved to be more opened to universal ideas circulating in the Western theological milieus. In the context of the neo-patristic revival⁷⁶ with its emphasis on the return to the basic principles and sources of Christianity and the rediscovery of a common doctrinal ground for Orthodox churches spread all-across Europe, the traditionalists were recovering the ecclesiological universalism of the Russian immigration in Paris.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, they associated this theological category of *sobornost* with a sense of national “ethnoreligious community” in a search for a new nationalist ecclesiology, where the national community stood for them as *ecclesia* for the first Christians.⁷⁸

Furthermore, another important factor which led the traditionalists to assimilate in their cultural discourse the village depicted as the matrix of the Romanian spirituality was a sociological reality: 72% of Romanian population lived in rural areas⁷⁹ and the peasant

⁷⁵ Paul Sterian, “Declarațiile profesorului Florowski de la Academia rusă de teologie ortodoxă din Paris” [The Statements of professor Florowski from the Russian Theological Academy in Paris] in *Cuvântul*, Year V, no. 1441 (27th of April 1929), p. 3.

⁷⁶ For the neo-patristic revival see Andrew Louth, “The neo-patristic revival and its protagonists” in Marry B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 188-202. For Fr. George Florovsky's theology see Peter E. Chamberas, “Some aspects of the Ecclesiology of Father Georges Vasilievich Florovsky” in D. Neiman and D. Schatkin (eds.), *The Heritage of the Early Church. Essays in honor of Rev. George V. Florovsky* (Rome: Orientalia Christiana Analecta 195, 1973), pp. 421-436.

⁷⁷ For the development of a universalist ecclesiology see Aidan Nichols, *Theology in Russian Diaspora. Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanas'ev (1893-1966)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 83-93.

⁷⁸ I am using the terms of Brian Porter Szücs, 2011, pp. 16-53, 232-271. For an Orthodox Christian understanding of the term, see Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (New York, NY: Holt/Rhinehart/Winston, 1963), pp. 8-18.

⁷⁹ For a complete statistic see Irina Livezeanu, 1995, p. 36. For the Slovak case see James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator. Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 64-88.

issue was most problematic in modern Romanian state.⁸⁰ After 1918 the peasant problem caught the attention of different Romanian parties and governments. The national building process was directed especially towards this electorate.⁸¹ The Occidental intellectuals considered that the Romanian village had to be mechanized and the illiterate peasants educated in order to overcome their backwardness.⁸² However, between 1923 and 1928 the Liberal government failed to encourage an economical revival of the Romanian peasantry which turned eventually to their political rivals, Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache's National Peasants Party.⁸³ Alongside the nationalist discourse of the State, since the most important representatives of the traditionalist intellectual trend were coming from the village⁸⁴ they wanted to offer a cultural discourse which reflected the majority of the Romanian population in the absence of a political party which defended their national identity.⁸⁵

Coming from a rural environment and criticizing vehemently the positivist and mechanized West, the traditionalists embraced the idea of an "organic" development of the Romanian state and of a traditional national community, which rejected imports from the West a future Romania and the Romanian ethnicity was to be shaped according to the social and cultural realities of the majority of the Romanian population, the peasantry. This gave birth to a virtual conflict between a national community based on traditional

⁸⁰ Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania. Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (Yale: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 89.

⁸¹ John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe. A Century of War and Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 91: "Article 1 [of the Romanian Liberal Constitution from 1923] proclaimed Romania a 'unified and indivisible national state'. At least it spoke of the population as individual citizens rather than ethnic Romanians."

⁸² For Romania's backwardness, see Keith Hitchins, 1994, p. 342.

⁸³ Henry L. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 108

⁸⁴ For example, Crainic came from a small village called Bulbucata (Vlașca county); for this please see Nichifor Crainic, 1991, p. 1. Also, Lucian Blaga was the son of an Orthodox priest from the village Lancrăm (Alba county).

⁸⁵ For the cultural idea of representing the masses, see Stefan Jonsson, 2013, pp. 67-73.

values, shaped as an “ethnoreligious community” of the rural periphery and the liberal, modernizing central society later embodied in the black-and-white myth of the two opposing generations, two antithetic Romanias and two incompatible political systems (totalitarianism versus democracy). The conflict between the two terms was based on an economical reality which was a paradoxically consequence of the Romanian society. As Andrew C. Janos has pointed out,

In the West, social mobilization implied the rising public awareness of masses who had been already detached from the norms of the traditional *Gemeinschaft* [community] by the experience of the market economy. There the ‘masses’ were wage earners and small producers who had learned to live in a world of give-and-take and to fend for themselves without the emotional support of the kinship groups, communities, and extended families. In other words, the masses had been rationalized before being mobilized; they have been acculturated to the impersonal norms of the modern *Gesellschaft* [society] before entering onto the political stage... In Romania, the acculturating experience of the market had largely been lacking. The images of the modern world had been transmitted through the medium of education, and hence had been reduced to a form of vicarious experience. Thus while the lower classes of the West were modern both socially and politically, those of Romania became modern politically (in that they could formulate and articulate demands) but not socially (for they continued to look for the moral and emotional support of kinship, household, and community).⁸⁶

Someone could say that traditionalists opposed the modern world and society within a framework of a political expression of the nation based on a national community and not dispersed societies. In this formula, religion and peasant culture, but also the emphasis on artistic authenticity and search for the true Romanian were the glue intended to keep together the national body. This search for a new national and political community under the protective banner of the Christian Church would be ideal and later picked up and developed substantially by the legionary ideology.

⁸⁶ On the economical consequences of this attitude see Andrew C. Janos, “Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: The Case of Romania” in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), 1978, p. 100–101.

I. 4. Radical Political Expressions and Religion

The traditionalist camp was not the only group whose intentions were to re-unite religion with stern nationalism in order to define the nature of being Romanian. They were not the only ones to pick up the discussion about the anti-Semitic nature of nationalism from where it had been left by the 19th century intellectuals and Nicolae Iorga.⁸⁷ This group intended to act in its defining process upon a direct comparison with national minorities, especially with the Jewish minority. This particular minority was perceived by students as a threat for Romania's future, due to their large presence in liberal professions and universities, especially in the departments training for these professions.⁸⁸ According to Vladimir Solonari, the Romanian state itself had to ease up and tone down the politics on nationalization of the largest towns in newly united provinces when confronted to the large non-Romanian urban elite living and contributing financially and economically to the functioning of these cities.⁸⁹

Together with the events in Soviet Russia and the stereotype spread among the students that any Jew/ student from Bessarabia was also a Communist the feeling of

⁸⁷ For the 19th century anti-Semitism and links with the 20th century, please see Victor Neumann, "Repere culturale ale antisemitismului din România în secolul XIX" [Cultural landmarks of anti-Semitism in Romania in the 19th century] in *Ideea care ucide. Dimensiunile ideologiei legionare* [The Idea that kills. The Dimensions of the legionary ideology] (Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1994), pp. 49-52.

⁸⁸ For a broader picture about this see Irina Livezeanu, "Fascists and conservatives in Romania: two generations of nationalists" in Martin Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives. The radical right and the establishment of twentieth-century politics* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 228-232. For a situation of Jewish students and Jewish Minority also see Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România. De la emancipare la marginalizare 1919-1938* [The Jews from Romania. From Emancipation to Marginalization] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2000), p. 46-70.

⁸⁹ Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation. Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 14-15.

unease was also boosted by the formation of a new political party.⁹⁰ After the departure from Nicolae Iorga's organization, A.C. Cuza⁹¹ and Dr. Nicolae Paulescu⁹² founded "Uniunea Național Creștină" [The National Christian Union], a party having as main prerogative the opposition to the removal from the Romanian Constitution of the famous article 7, which prohibited Jews from acquiring Romanian citizenship.⁹³ Their electoral bases consisted of a generation of young students who considered themselves as fighting a war for national homogeneity and predominant representation in the state's apparatus and universities against internal enemies embodied by the ethnic minorities (especially, the Jews). By using the anti-Semitic and warrior-like rhetoric of both Cuza⁹⁴ and Paulescu,⁹⁵ the generation of Codreanu internalized the "myth of the war experience"⁹⁶

⁹⁰ "Bolșevismul este Judaism" [Bolshevism is Judaism] in *Apărarea Națională*, Year I, no. 2 (15th of April 1922), p. 8. For a view over the Jews in Eastern Europe involved in the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, see Heiko Haumann, *A History of East European Jews* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2002), p. 208-210.

⁹¹ For Cuza, see Pamfil Șeicaru, *Un junimist antisemit A. C. Cuza* [An Anti-Semite Junimist] (Madrid: Carpații, 1956). See Leon Volovici, 1991, pp. 24-28.

⁹² He is most famous for his book Dr. Nicolae Paulescu, *Spitalul, Coranul, Talmudul, Kahalul și Francmasoneria* [The Hospital, The Quran, the Kahal, and the Freemasonry] (Bucharest: ?, 1913). For his anti-semitic views, see Lucian Butaru, *Rasism românesc. Componenta rasială a discursului antisemit din România, până la Al Doilea Război Mondial* [Romanian Racism. The Racial Feature of the Anti-Semitic Speech in Romanian up to WWII] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2010), pp. 183-194. Leon Volovici, 1991, pp. 28-30.

⁹³ Cristian Sandache, *Doctrina național-creștină în România* [The National-Christian Doctrine in Romania] (Bucharest: Paideea, 1997), p. 17.

⁹⁴ A. C. Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă. Principii, fapte, concluzii. Introducere la doctrina naționalistă creștină* [Nationhood in the arts. Principals, deed and conclusions. Introduction to the Christian nationalist doctrine], 3rd Edition (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1927), p. 33, 58, 68. A. C. Cuza, "Știința antisemitismului" [The science of Anti-Semitism] in *Apărarea Națională*, Year I, no. 16 (15th of November 1922), pp. 1-5. In this article Cuza asks for the "elimination" of the Jews and "putting an end to their existence" (p. 5). The most important books was A. C. Cuza, *Învățătura lui Isus. Judaismul și teologia creștină* [Jesus' Teaching. Judaism and Christian Theology] (Iași: Editura 'Ligii Apărării Național Creștine', 1925) where he propagated an "Aryan Jesus" theology, asking theologians to exclude Old Testament from the corpus of the Christian Scriptures and any hint of Jewish influence from theology. For the "Aryan Jesus" hypothesis in the Third Reich's case, see Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus. Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (New Haven, CT: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 26-66. For the French speaking anti-Semitic milieu where Cuza was trained, see Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor left. Fascist ideology in France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 32-65.

⁹⁵ Nicolae Paulescu, *Tălmăcirea Apocalipsului. Soarta viitoare a Jidănimii* [Translating the apocalypse. The future fate of the Jews], (Bucharest: Atelierul de Arte Grafice "Oltenia", 1911), pp.15-22. The theme of the apocalyptic war between Christians and Jews was popularized in LANC newspapers, especially from Paulescu's commentaries to "The Protocols of the Elders of Sion": Nicolae Paulescu, "Protocoalele Sionului" [The Protocols of Sion] in *Apărarea Națională*, Year I, no. 2 (15th of April 1922), pp. 1-6. Dr.

and represented itself as a “generation of postmemory” of WWI.⁹⁷ Following Marianne Hirsch and Maria Bucur’s interpretation, by post-memory I understand “the identification by someone in a generation that has not lived through a particular event, with that event that helps construct the self-understanding of this later generation.”⁹⁸ In other words, although they did not experience the war on the front, Codreanu’s generation constructed its self-understanding as a generation at war and their mission as a continuation of those who fought in WWI to achieve the national unity by reclaiming the territories outside the Old Kingdom.

According to this understanding, Codreanu’s generation can be perceived as the intellectual traditionalists’ counterpart. While the traditionalist intellectuals intended to provide a sense of transcendence as a “sacred canopy” against the secularist and modernizing tendencies embedded in the “terror of history”, Codreanu’s generation engaged in an internal war directed against racial “decadence” and the menace of ethnic minorities threatening the very existence of the Romanian state, from which the most dangerous were always the Jews.⁹⁹

Paulescu, “Extrase din Protocoale” [Excerpts from the Protocols] in *Apărarea Națională*, Year I, no. 3 (1st of May 1922), pp. 6-12.

⁹⁶ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 7.

⁹⁷ For the concept of post-memory see Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames. Photography narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 22. For “the generation of postmemory” see Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 30-52. An interesting re-interpretation of the concept can be found in Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims. Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 11-12.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁹ For a general view of the issue of degeneration, see Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp. 24-31. Marius Turda, “Fantasies of Degeneration: Some Remarks on Racial Anti-Semitism in Interwar Romania” in *Studia Hebraica* Issue 3 (2003), p. 342-348.

Under the strong impression created by this anti-Semitic Christian party and the persistence of an “official anti-Semitism” patronized by the Romanian state,¹⁰⁰ on the 10th of December 1922 the Romanian university students, later on known as “the generation of 1922,”¹⁰¹ went on strike, arguing against the large presence of the Jewish element in universities and for protecting the nation from what they believed to be the rule of Jewish minority over Romanian majority.¹⁰² Led by impulsive and violent leaders such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu¹⁰³ in Jassy, Ion I. Moța in Cluj-Napoca, Tudose Popescu in Cernăuți, the student rebellion from 1922 had as the main reason fighting the enemy inside,¹⁰⁴ the Jewish minority.¹⁰⁵ The students asked the Romanian government for a

¹⁰⁰ Carol Iancu, *Les juifs en Roumanie (1919-1938). De l'émancipation à la marginalization* (Paris-Louvain: Peeters, 1996), p. 165-194.

¹⁰¹ Irina Livezeanu is using this term which will be created by the nationalist/legionary studentship only much later. Irina Livezeanu, 1995, p. 265.

¹⁰² Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For my legionaries] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994), pp. 77-82. First edition 1936. The same happened in Poland in the same year. See Natalia Aleksion, “Christian Corpses for Christians! Dissection the Anti-Semitism behind the Cadaver Affair of the Second Polish Republic” in *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. XX, no. 10 (2011), pp. 1-11.

¹⁰³ For Codreanu’s violence see Francisco Veiga, *Mistica Ultranationalismului. Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941* [The Mistique of Ultrnationalism. The History of the Iron Guard] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), p. 82. For Codreanu’s violences during the time he was a student see Stelian Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței. Viața universitară ieșeană interbelică* [The triumph of reason over violence. The Interwar University Life from Jassy] (Jassy: Junimea, 1977), p. 82. For a fresh approach see Horia Bozdoghină, *Antisemitismul lui A.C. Cuza în politica românească* [The anti-Semitism of A.C. Cuza in Romanian politics] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2012), p. 91. See Lucian Butaru, 2010, pp. 157-182.

¹⁰⁴ This idea of a war with an enemy inside the country would lead this generation to externalize the frustration caused by the fact that they could not participate in WWI to help in realizing the national dream, but also to manifest themselves as the “sacrificed generation”, able of the same sacrifices as the generation from the war.

¹⁰⁵ For a study regarding the Jewish presence in the Romanian universities see Lucian Nastasă, “Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919-1939)” [The university anti-Semitism in Romania] in Lucian Nastasă (ed.) *Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919-1939. Mărturii documentare* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale/Kriterion, 2011), for Faculty of Law, pp. 62-65; for Faculties of Medicine p. 67-70; in the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, pp.73-76 and for Faculty of Sciences, pp. 77-81. See also Iancu Brauștein, *Evreii în prima universitate românească* [The Jews in the first Romanian university], (Jassy: Dan, 2001), pp. 113-152. For an first-hand account of the 1922 Cluj student riot, see Ion Fleșeriu, *Amintiri* [Memories] (Madrid: Artes Gráficas Benzal, 1977), pp. 32-37.

numerus clausus for the Jewish students and refused to return on University benches until this request, together with other student grievances, were met.¹⁰⁶

According to Zaharia Boilă,¹⁰⁷ the revolt of the students against the Jewish colleagues that started in Cluj was nothing more than a governmental counter-maneuver to Iuliu Maniu's plan to overthrow Ionel Brătianu's Liberal cabinet by an appealing to the masses to rise in open revolt against the government.¹⁰⁸ The burning of the newspapers *Aurora* (associated with the National Party of Transylvania), *Opinia*, *Lumea*, *Mișcarea* by Corneliu Codreanu and his group was perceived by Zaharia Boilă as ideas suggested by the Liberal government in power.¹⁰⁹

On 4th of March 1923 A.C. Cuza and his followers including most of the leaders of the student organizations in the country founded "Liga Apărării Național Creștine" [The League of Christian National Defense] (LANC) as a political party.¹¹⁰ From the very beginning, some of the members of LANC, especially among the youth, had an openly professed a religious affiliation. Thus "Actul de constituire al Ligii Apărării Național Creștine" [The Foundation Act of LANC] that spoke about the Jassy ceremony of creating the new movement was preceded by a religious service commemorating those dead in the WWI and the blessing of the flags at the Metropolitan Cathedral from Jassy in

¹⁰⁶ Irina Livezeanu, 1995, pp. 267. See Henry Eaton, *The Origins and Onset of the Romanian Holocaust* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013), pp. 23-28.

¹⁰⁷ Zaharia Boilă (1892-1976) Transylvanian lawyer and journalist related with Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the Romanian National Party from Transylvania. County prefect in 1928 and member of Parliament from 1932, was one of the closest friends and associates of Iuliu Maniu.

¹⁰⁸ Zaharia Boilă, *Amintiri și considerații asupra mișcării legionare* [Memoires and opinions on the Legionary movement] (Cluj-Napoca: Biblioteca Apostrof, 2000), pp. 22-23.

¹⁰⁹ Corneliu Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For my legionaries] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994), pp. 44-45. Codreanu fails to remember *Aurora*, but this was as well burnt down.

¹¹⁰ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, pp.118-120.

the presence of all the delegates and the leaders, and then followed by an oath of loyalty.¹¹¹

This founding ceremony of LANC was Codreanu's idea¹¹² and it came as a response to those members of the movement with religious training or an openly admitted religious affiliation. Ion I. Moța, the leader of Cluj student organization and translator of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" was the son of an Orthodox priest from Transylvania and Tudose Popescu, one of the leaders of Cernăuți student centre imprisoned afterwards with Corneliu Codreanu and other students in Văcărești prison was a student in Orthodox Theology.¹¹³ More over, among the leading student members from Bucharest University who took the oath of allegiance to the movement was also Haralambie Roventța,¹¹⁴ the leader of the student organization of the Faculty of Theology.¹¹⁵ These Theology students and sons of Orthodox priests in the Romanian nationalist movements such as LANC will later be seen in the Iron Guard.¹¹⁶

How can this allegiance between nationalism, anti-Semitism and Orthodox theology be explained? Constructing upon Irina Livezeanu's theoretical underpinnings, I argue that in interwar Romania an "integral nationalism" (Irina Livezeanu) was developed in order to achieve a certain ethnical homogenization of the minorities living in the newly acquired provinces. The direct allegiance between Orthodoxy and nationalism in

¹¹¹ ASRI, section D, file 3085 special, p. 94. in Ioan Scurtu, Cristian Troncotă, Natalia Tampa, Dragoș Zamfirescu, Ion Bucur (eds.), *Totalitarismul de dreapta în România. Origini, Manifestări, Evoluție 1919-1927* [The right-wing totalitarianism in Romania. Origins, Manifestation, Development] (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 1996), pp. 311-312.

¹¹² Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, p. 119.

¹¹³ For Tudose Popescu see "Un an de la moartea lui Tudose Popescu," [A year since the death of Tudose Popescu], in *Garda Bucovinei*, Year I, No. 1 (18 November 1932) p. 2

¹¹⁴ Fr. Haralambie Roventța (1898-1946) was a Professor of New Testament in Bucharest's Faculty of Theology.

¹¹⁵ ASRI, D, file 4058, p. 77 in Ioan Scurtu (ed.), 1996, p. 320.

¹¹⁶ Eugen Weber, "The Men of the Archangel" in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 1, No. 1(1966), p. 107.

Romanian traditionalism based against a strong Jewish minority proves her thesis. By nationalizing all the sectors of public administration, including the low and high clergy and by infusing the fear of the spreading Communist ideology, especially in newly acquired provinces from eastern Romania such as Bessarabia, and Bucovina and in Moldavia, the Romanian State succeeded in determining the clergy and theology students to be more permeable to a radicalized anti-Semitic discourse.¹¹⁷ Always associating stereotypically the Jewish minority with the danger of Communism or the universal plot attempting to wipe out the Christian Church, the clergy injected itself with a serious dose of anti-Semitic nationalism which later only paved the way for the rise of a religious fascist movement such as the Iron Guard in Romanian politics after 1930s.¹¹⁸ As Susannah Heschel has pointed out in her monograph dedicated to the Nazification of Protestant theology under the Nazi impact, the temptation of anti-Semitic views for the clergy rooted also in the avantgardist, challenging innovations brought by such an approach to the development of Christian theology.¹¹⁹

Nevertheless, Irina Livezeanu is not alone in pointing out that, in the early stages of Romanian fascism's development, Orthodox Christianity was depicted and perceived by most of the nationalist intellectuals as a genuine cure against the Jew minority. When speaking about the relevance of religious Orthodoxy for Nichifor Crainic and other intellectuals in the 1920s Leon Volovici states:

Nichifor Crainic found in Christian theology his main argument for advocating the fight against Judaism and elimination of Jews from Romania's social and

¹¹⁷ For religious causes of anti-Semitism, see William I. Brustein, *Roots of Hate. Anti-Semitism in Europe Before the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 49-94.

¹¹⁸ Irina Livezeanu, 1995, pp. 12–13. See William I. Brustein, "Anti-Semitism as a Response to Perceived Jewish Power: The Cases of Bulgaria and Romania before the Holocaust" in *Social Forces*, Vol. 83, no. 2 (December 2004), pp. 691-708.

¹¹⁹ Susannah Heschel, 2008, p. 19.

intellectual life. His arguments were not new by any means; what was new was his polemical aggressiveness, unprecedented in Romanian theological exegesis.¹²⁰

In other words, the theological training of Nichifor Crainic and the anti-Semitic language of the Orthodox Church were useful tools in shaping a nationalist and anti-Semitic cultural discourse about Romanianness. At the beginning of his career, Crainic dismissed the anti-Semitic ideology of nationalism, but under the burden of his growing ambitions to become a *Mentor* of the nationalist youth, Crainic started to plunge into theological anti-Semitism, going beyond usual theological stereotypes such as deicide.¹²¹

Distancing from Irina Livezeanu and Leon Volovici, one can argue in line with Thomas J. Kiel's interpretation that

Anti-Semitism was not a creation of nationalism. Rather, it was assimilated into Romanian nationalism as one of its key elements. The modern Romanian nationalist project struggled with the 'origins' of and the identity appropriate to the Romanian people.¹²²

Nevertheless, Romanian anti-Semitism had proved to be a common shield for the secular and the religious nationalists in their thrust to crystallize a nationalist exclusivist ideology. Anti-Semitism linked under the same banner two different generations of nationalists. A.C. Cuza stood as the representative of the *fin-de-siècle* intellectual elite, who tended to abandon the idealism of socialist convictions and to harbor nationalist and extremist feelings. Corneliu Codreanu was the young student, coming as his fellow colleagues to LANC from a traditional background. Influenced by the writings of the first

¹²⁰ Leon Volovici, 1991, pp. 97–98.

¹²¹ Carol Iancu, *Miturile fondatoare ale antisemitismului. Din antichitate până în zilele noastre* [The Founding Myths of Anti-Semitism. From Antiquity until the present age] translated by Țicu Goldstein (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2005).

¹²² Thomas J. Kiel, 2006), p. 127.

generation of nationalists, the first *palingenesis* of the Romanian history,¹²³ the generation of young nationalists who would later found the Legion of Archangel Michael appropriated anti-Semitism as an answer to the country's problems, including political unrest, social and economic backwardness and religious disarray. In the first stages of development, the Romanian fascist movement will keep itself on this track of anti-Semitism, attempting to rely on the same ideals as shared by the student movement from 1922.

I. 5. Final remarks

The debates over the understandings of Romanian ethnical character set the cultural and intellectual stage for the development of the Romanian fascism movement. In the interwar period, the interest towards building the national canon from Orthodoxy and Christian spirituality is a certain feature of the Romanian debate over ethnicity. The need of transcendental meaning insuring a sense of safety to the national community when confronted with external or internal challenges represented the main target of the intellectuals after the end of WWI. In this search for authenticity and transcendence people like Aurel C. Popovici, Nicolae Iorga or A.C. Cuza engaged themselves both in fabricating an internal racial enemy in comparison with whom the nation had to survive and prosper or be extinct. Their social Darwinism and Conservative craving for organic historical development and the emphasis on tradition was coupled with an abstractly appeal to the Orthodox Church perceived both as an ethnical cultural marker and a source

¹²³ The idea is picked up from Constantin Iordachi, "God's Chosen Warriors: Romantic Palingenesis, Militarism and Fascism in Modern Romania" in Constantin Iordachi (ed.), *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 322-327.

of transcendental meaning, legitimizing their efforts to defend and serve Romanian culture in the making. Continuing the 19th century polemics between Europeanists and traditionalists and bringing in their support the religious feature until then absent from the debate, these intellectuals moved away from the secular, “degenerate”, decadent, atomizing ethos of the West, claiming a Romanian nation’s approach to history according to its traditional values. Through a generation of intermediaries such as Vasile Pârvan this particular undertaking was passed on to a new generation of traditionalist intellectuals underlining even more the traditionalist character of the Romanian culture and tiding even more their meaningful relationship with the Orthodox Church understood not as an institution, but as a key-preserver of the Romanian national authentic spirit. After 1918, in searching for a traditionalist way for the Romanian national culture, these intellectuals such as Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu or Lucian Blaga privileged the role of Orthodoxy during the centuries in safeguarding the traditional peasant culture and the role of the Orthodox Church in the major historical events sealing the faith of the Romanian nation. Especially Nichifor Crainic advocated for a close-bonding between clergy and politics, assuming that a clerical politicization of the sacred should necessarily follow the sacralization of the state/politics. The constant reminder addressed by Crainic on the importance of the national community as intimately associated with the Church’s *ecclesia* was another key-feature picked up and expanded by the future legionary discourse. I argued in this chapter that all these generations of intellectuals, by associating politics with religion and legitimizing this entanglement between the Orthodox Church, cultural nationalism and party-politics, set the stage for the apparition of the Iron Guard with its peculiar interest in attracting the Romanian Orthodox Church in its ranks.

After 1927, the traditionalist discourse was heavily employed by the Iron Guard and some of the leaders of the traditionalist movement started to collaborate directly with the Romanian fascist movement because they thought that this was the direct political incarnation of their nationalist creed. Nichifor Crainic's implication as the movement's *éminence grise* in the beginning of 1930s and the constant efforts attract in its ranks the radical right-wing clergymen or Theology students and to move itself away from A. C. Cuza's LANC will represent the main targets of Codreanu's initial initiatives in consolidating his political organization dedicated to Archangel Michael.

CHAPTER II

Surviving Modernity? The Orthodox Church Negotiation of its Position in Public Life

II. 1 Preliminaries

The Romanian Orthodox Church is a young institution in Greater Romania. Its institutional history followed closely that of the national state that the church at the same time legitimized, helped in defining and subordinated itself to. A push and pull relationship unfolded from the mid-19th century that responded to the pressures of a secularized state elite but also to the needs of the new state in its efforts of identity building. This paradoxical relationship was translated into the new century and impacted greatly the actions of the hierarchy of the church in the public sphere at a larger scale and responded to several new stimuli related to the new structure the church had after 1918. This chapter look closely at the position of the church in the new state following it well into the 19th century where the negotiation with the secular power was initiated and discussed the possible avenues that the church took in renegotiating its position in the public life of the new state after 1918 all in an effort to lay out the contexts that would explain the reactions met inside the church to the courtship of the far right movements in the interwar.

I construct my chapter around the secular versus religious confrontation in creating national identity. The cultural debate on the Romanian ethnicity is a pivotal moment in Romanian history. After four centuries of Ottoman dominations, the Romanian elite of the principalities became involved in a process of constructing their ethnical identity.

After the 1859 unification, a quest for a Romanian understanding of ethnicity, of what it took to be Romanian started to animate the spirits of the Romanian intellectuals. As with the Russian Slavophil movement,¹ the 19th century Romanian intellectuals began their ethnical adventure by improvising a cultural identity for their own people.

The present chapter will show the relationship between statist nationalism and Orthodoxy spanning from the 19th century to the Second World War. In the context surrounding the debate regarding the Romanian ethnicity and its character that stems from the efforts of the Junimists in the 19th century to the interwar period there was a shift in the way religion was used in the process of nation building. The “Junimea” circle in Jassy, emphasized the importance of ‘organic’ historical development, a secular, Romantic nationalism emerged excluding the religious participation in the national “civil religion” of the newly-created Romanian state.² The Orthodox Church was confined to its liturgical duties, its guiding principles prescribed and approved by the secular State. The chapter looks at how the church renegotiated its position as an ethnical marker and how the debate regarding the definition of Romanianess influenced the rise of the Romanian fascist movement.

The chapter is divided chronologically into two major parts. The relationship between Orthodox Church and the Romanian State after the union of Moldavia and Wallachia (1859) under the rule of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866) and King Carol I³ (1866-1914) will be discussed in the first part of the chapter. Under the influence

¹ See Andrej Walicki, “Russian Social Thought: An Introduction to the Intellectual History of 19th Century Russia”, *Russian Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1977, p. 1-20.

² See Brian Porter, *When Nationalism began to Hate. Imagining Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 3-36.

³ In 1866 he was elected as Prince of Romania and in 1881, after the conquest of Romania’s independence acknowledged by the Congress of Berlin after the end of the Russian-Ottoman war (1878) and acquire of the former Ottoman territory known as Dobrudja, was proclaimed as King of Romania.

of the French Revolution's ideas, Cuza embarked in a campaign to centralize the state apparatus and to curtail the influence of the all-powerful Orthodox Church, perceived by Cuza's inner circle as a "retrograde" institution and a landmark of the *Ancien Regime*. His brutal measures to secularize the Orthodox Church's estates donated to different holy places of Christianity (the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, to the monasteries from mount Athos, to the Constantinople Patriarchy, etc.) under the pretext of taking the land from the hands of foreigners that led to almost extinguishing the Orthodox monasticism were only the beginning of the Church's torments. Later on King Carol I inspired by the Lutheran political theology of the Prussian Kaiser towards the Churches, taking after the Greek case as well, issued and sanctioned a legislation transforming the Orthodox Church from a self-governing entity in a mere State dependent one under the supervision of a State department.

The second part of the chapter will discuss the post 1918 attempts of renegotiation of public position of the Church and its return in the public sphere. It will also account for the different political agendas intruding the ecclesiastical sphere that began to be felt constantly. The emergence of the Romanian Church as a Patriarchate (1925) and the changes this brought in its legislation changes imposed on the church by the secular sphere complicated even more its position in the Romanian society. Due to differences in understanding the State - Church relationship, the process of ecclesiastical unification proved to be difficult and sinuous. The generalization of Metropolitane Șaguna's⁴ administration reform and particularly the introducing in all ecclesiastical structure of a

⁴ Archbishop of Transylvania, Andrei Șaguna (1809 – 1873) instituted one of the most coherent administrative reforms of the Romanian Orthodox Church from within. See Keith Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality: Andreiu Șaguna and the Rumanians of Transylvania 1846-1873*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

larger proportion of laymen had as direct consequence the transformation of the ecclesiastical body into a political tool for the dominant party. The abuses in the ecclesiastical administration and the constant economic problems of the clergy will constitute problems that will facilitate later a fruitful relation between the clergy and the Iron Guard.

II. 2 From the Servitude to Constantinople to the *Babylonian* Servitude to the Romanian State. The Romanian Orthodox Church in the 19th Century

The 1859 unification of the two Romanian provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia marked the beginning of the Romanian modern state. It was the first step in the national building process, in crystallizing the conditions for creating a Romanian national state. Unified under the rule of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza I (1859-1866) at the express request of the Great Powers (especially, France), the two provinces were confronted from the beginning with a sensitive problem, i.e. finding a common institutional ground in order for the new state to function as such.⁵ Cuza's governments embarked in a determined campaign of legislative unification of laws and regulations, and in settling the most important and critical problems facing the newly appointed Romanian unified executive.⁶ Unification of the armed forces, of public administration and communications' system was quickly followed by the Porte's decision to acknowledge Prince Cuza as Prince of the two separate provinces.⁷

⁵ Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians 1774-1866* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 273-318.

⁶ A. D. Xenopol, *Domnia lui Cuza Vodă* Vol. 1 (Iași: Dacia, 1903), pp. 120-135.

⁷ Constantin Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă* (Bucharest: Științifică, 1966), p. 157.

The Orthodox Church represented by its Metropolitans Sofronie Miculescu of Moldavia and Neofit of Wallachia and the bishops under their supervision actively participated in the 1859 consultative Councils (Divanurile ad-hoc) from Jassy and Bucharest called to pronounce about the unification's utility in the case of the two principalities. When asked about their decision, though stressing their canonical unity with the Church of Constantinople, the Orthodox bishops enthusiastically supported the idea that Romanian principalities had to be unified under the same rule.⁸

During Cuza's reign, the Orthodox Church enjoyed the same privileges and rights as it did during the Phanariot and the Romanian princes before the unification.⁹ Nevertheless, as Lucian Leuștean has pointed out, the subordinate position of the ruler in front of the Ottoman court in comparison with the Bishops and the boyars determined the Prince to act and curtail the Church's political influence, wealth, and autonomy in relation with State's institutions.¹⁰ Cuza's administration had to embark in a process of modernizing Romanian state institutions, in channeling the internal unrest through efficient policy-making decisions and to adopt a viable set of legislative measures to ensure the durability of the union between Moldova and Wallachia. This speedy process of modernization touched upon the privileged position in the Romanian political arena of the Orthodox Church. Perceived by most of Cuza's trusted advisors, a great part of them former liberals formed during the revolution from 1848, as a remnant, retrograde institution of the medieval *Ancien Régime* the Orthodox Church became part of this

⁸ Archimandrite Neofit Scriban, *Unirea și neunirea Principatelor române* [The unification and the lack of unification of the Romanian Principalities], (Jassy: Tipografia Buciumului român, 1856), pp. 5-8. Fr. Flor R. Teodorescu, "Chestiuni de organizare bisericească în secolul XIX" [Issues of Church administration in the 19th century] in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 1-2 (January-February 1970), p. 163.

⁹ For a comparative perspective, see Ipek Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties. Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878-1908* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 169-208.

¹⁰ Lucian Leușteanu, "The Political Control of Orthodoxy in the Construction of the Romanian State 1859-1919" in *European History Quarterly*, Issue 37, no. 1 (2007), pp. 61-80.

modernization drive, its public influence curtailed, according to the State wishes. Following the French Enlightenment's and Romanticism's ideals, but also the example provided by the French monarchy under Napoleon III (1852-1870), in its efforts to build a civil religion of the modern Romanian based on the values of the social contract Prince Cuza excluded the Church from this process and pushed it out of public sphere and the political arena. By tailoring an anti-ecclesiastical legislation inspired from the French example of "laïcité", the Romanian executive reduced the Church to a simple department of the State, governed by laws imposed by the state, and led by people who owned their ecclesiastical ascendance to the good-will of the Prince.¹¹

Therefore, when in 1859 the sovereign power, the Ottoman court decided that all religious property will be exempted from any taxes from the Romanian principality, boosting the Greek abbots' revenue from the Romanian lands, Cuza's government decided to act and confiscated the income coming from the Church's properties donated to different Greek monasteries from Mount Athos or the sacred places of Christianity such as Mount Sinai and the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.¹² Furthermore, in 1863 a law was passed which imposed the Romanian language as the only acknowledged language in the Church's liturgy, a measure which determined the foreign abbots of Romanian monasteries donated to different holy places from abroad to finally decide to leave the country. The Minister of Religious Denominations, Dimitrie Bolintineanu in government led by Mihail Kogălniceanu, passed on 17th/29th of December 1863 another law through the Romanian parliament, secularizing all the ecclesiastical land property regardless if the

¹¹ For the emergence of this ideas in the Balkan space, please see Paschalis Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution. The Making of Modern Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 260-290.

¹² A.D. Xenopol, 1903, pp. 335-365.

property belonged to a foreign or a local monastery or bishopric.¹³ Although the inclusion of the Church's land property was done by the Romanian government under the pretext that it should be used by the government to curtail the Ottoman foreign influence in the Romanian territory and the departure of large sums of money produced by the Romanian land abroad, the reason behind was to decapitate the Romanian Orthodox Church's political influence and its prestige. This law was followed quickly by others in 1864 through which Cuza dismantled the monastic life and transferred the payment of the clergy from the state to the Orthodox Christian communities.

Accordingly, in 1864 a law (*Lege sinodală*) was proposed by the central government and sanctioned by the parliament on the 3rd of December the same year which stated the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church from Constantinople and gave formal authority to lead the Church to a leading organism, the Holy Synod headed by a Metropolitane Primate.¹⁴ This law was followed by the one from 11th of May 1865 imposing that all the bishops had to be nominated and confirmed by the Prince.¹⁵ This last legislative initiative of Prince Cuza infuriated the bishops and the low clergy who perceived the State's interference in the life of the Church as contrary to the Orthodox tradition and the canon law. The opposition towards Cuza's ecclesiastical policy, known in the literature as "the struggle for canonicity" (*lupta pentru canonicitate*), was led by to

¹³ Fr. Nicolae Șerbănescu, "150 de ani de la nașterea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza" [150 years from the birth of Alexandru Ioan Cuza], in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 3-4 (March-April 1970), p. 378.

¹⁴ Constantin Pîrvu, "Autocefalia Bisericii Ortodoxe Române" [The Romanian Orthodox Church Autocephaly], in *Studii Teologice*, Year VI, no. 9-10 (October-November 1954), p. 223. For the law, see Fr. Gabriel Cocora, *Legea sinodală din 1864. Sinteză a concepției clerului contemporan* [The Synod law of 1864. Synthesis of the thinking of contemporary clergy], in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year LXXXVII, no. 3-4 (March-April 1969), pp. 400-401.

¹⁵ C. Drăgușin, "Legile bisericesti ale lui Cuza Vodă și lupta pentru canonicitate" [The Church Laws of Prince Cuza and the fight for canonicity], in *Studii Teologice*, Year IX, no. 1-2 (January-February 1957), pp. 92-93.

Moldavian brothers the bishops Filaret and Neofit Scriban who opposed the autocephaly from Constantinople and the Prince's intrusion in the bishops' election.¹⁶ According to Paschalis Kitromilides, as in the Greek case, the process of autocephaly

Paradoxically, what had been originally an Erastian Church settlement on the Protestant model underlay this transformation, while the ecumenical patriarchate, once its own requirements were satisfied, supplied the canonical sanction for turning regional churches into instruments of secular authority. The latter in turn used the churches for the enhancement of its own power by enlisting them in a leading role in nationalist projects.¹⁷

Although Prince Cuza was forced to abdicate by a military coup instigated by both Romanian major parties (the Liberals and the Conservatives), the newly elected prince, Carol I von Hohenzollern (1866-1914) continued to govern according to Cuza's legislation. In light of increasing discontent among both the low and the high clergy, Carol ended the struggle for canonicity by signing in December 1872 a new law stating the principles according to which new bishops elections had to be conducted.¹⁸ It stated that bishops had to be elected by a Holy Synod constituted from the Metropolitans, the bishops, the auxiliary bishops, and by all the Romanian members of the Parliament whose religion was Orthodox.¹⁹ The Prince would later sanction the election by signing the appointment decree issued by the government. The religious legislation was inspired from the German Reich's religious legislation, being nothing more than, as in the Greek case

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 94-97.

¹⁷ Paschalis Kitromilides, "The Legacy of the French Revolution: Orthodoxy and nationalism" in Michael Angold (ed.), *Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 5. Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 236.

¹⁸ "Lege pentru alegerea mitropoliților și a episcopilor eparhioți precum cum și a constituirii Sântului Sinod al Sântei Biserice auto-cefale Ortodoxe Române" [The law to elect archbishops, bishops and for the creation of the Holy Synod of the Holy Autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church] in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year I, no. 2 (November 1874), pp. 81-86.

¹⁹ C. Drăgușin, 1957, p. 97.

previously²⁰, a translocation of a legislative set of laws which transformed Carol I in the actual head of the Romanian autocephalous Orthodox Church.²¹

By placing the right of electing bishops into the hands of Parliament members who were representatives of a certain political party in power at that time a Pandora's Box was opened ensuing a constant influence and interference of the political in the life of the Orthodox Church. Because the bishops were members of the Parliament and they enjoyed important power, especially since they had the right to vote different law projects in the legislative, most of the bishops began to be elected or deposed according to political reasoning. The same was true for the Orthodox Church's central and territorial administration, where the bishops' counselors and advisers were directly appointed by the bishops according to their political masters' will. This institutional crisis encouraged internal corruption in the competition for the bishoprics' sees, bribery for obtaining different positions in the Church's administration and rich parishes, and a lack of any real independence and autonomy for the Orthodox Church in the Romanian state.

Also, by giving the right to different Parliament's members mostly unqualified and indifferent to religious matters to elect the leading organism of the Church, the state maintained in place the lack of separation between Church and state. In the same time through this law the State insured that the institution of the Church kept an incompetent episcopate in both arguing with its constant intrusions in and overbearing control of the ecclesiastical internal affairs, and not capable to lead the Church.

²⁰ Charles Frazee, *The Orthodox Church in Independent Greece, 1821-1852* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 89-124.

²¹ Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict. Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 17-76.

The state was not content with only regulating the Church election of bishops. Any aspect of the Church life was carefully defined and regulated, from how a Christian cemetery should look like to the analytical curricula of the theological schools. The State's control focused especially on theological schools and faculties of theology from Jassy (founded in 1860) and Bucharest (founded in 1881).²²

Paradoxically, these bishops, Filaret and Neofit, were most committed to the nationalist, unionist cause and became the harbingers of the newly created Romanian state.²³ Even after the state's inflammatory policies were implemented, the two brothers continued to see the 1859 unification as a major historical achievement and, by using the framework provided by the emergence of Romantic nationalism started to tackle Cuza's anti-ecclesiastical policy by claiming that a concentric attack both from Cuza and the Church of Constantinople against the institution of the Church could jeopardize the interests of the Romanian people as a Christian nation.²⁴

Both Neofit and Filaret Scriban embraced the values of nationalism and through its lenses wrote the national history of the Romanian Orthodox Church in order to prove the Orthodoxy's role in both provinces in maintaining a common culture and a common

²² Chiru C. Costescu, *Colecțiune de Legi, Regulamente, Acte, Deciziuni, Circulări, Instrucțiuni, Formulare și Programe privitoare la Biserică, Culte, Cler, Învățământ religios, Bunuri Bisericești, Epitropii parohiale și Administrații religioase și pioase* [Collection of laws, regulations, acts, decisions, circular letters, instructions, forms and programs regarding the Church, religious denominations, clergy, Theological education, Church possession, parishes and pious religious administrations], (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice C. Sfetea, 1916), p. 91-117. For Jassy Faculty of Theology, see Fr. Mihai Manuca, "Facultatea de Teologie din Iași 1860-1864" [The Jassy Faculty of Theology], in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year LXXVIII, no. 9-10 (September-October 1960), pp. 871-904.

²³ Auxiliary Bishop Neofit Scriban, *Răspuns Gubernului și Sinodului românesc din 1865 adică Explicăciunile a trei Arhiepiscopilor Moldoveni în contra legiuirilor necanonice ocrotite de Puterea civilă din Principatele Unite de la Dunăre* [Answer given to the government and the Romanian Synod of 1865. The explanations of three Moldovian hierarchs against the non-canonical legislations imposed onto the Church by the secular power in the Danubian United Principalities] (Bucharest: Ióne Weiss, 1866), pp. 6-8.

²⁴ Nicolae Dobrescu, *Studiu de Istoria Bisericii Contemporane. Istoria Bisericii din România 1850-1895* [Study in the history of the contemporary church. The history of the Church in Romania 1850 – 1895], (Bucharest: Bucharest Tagblatt, 1905), p. 18-19.

language. By associating intimately the Romanian Church's history with that of the nation the aforementioned theologians teaching their students in the newly united principalities intended to show both their subjection to the State's political resolutions, but also to instill in their auditorium a sense of national mission of Orthodoxy in both provinces.²⁵

I argue that at this point, the Scriban brothers, but also Metropolitte Sofronie Miclescu of Moldavia, who rebelled in 1866 against the authorities in Bucharest, realized that the only option available for the already subjected Church was to challenge the nefarious legislation imposed upon the ecclesiastical institution. Also, in order for the bishops to gain recognition and access to the institutional tiers helping them to at least partially undo the effects upon the Church brought on by Cuza's legislation they emphasized their national role and public involvement, both in the unification of the Principalities and the construction of the Romanian modern state.

There was another category of bishops like Melchisedec Ștefănescu, appointed by Cuza in 1865 bishop of Izmail, who militated both in favor of the autocephaly and the implementation of Cuza's legislation.²⁶ Trained in Theology in Kiev and influenced by the relationship between the Russian authoritarian, divine monarchy and the Orthodox Church after Peter the Great's reforms, but also by the circulating ideas of late Enlightenment and the French Revolution, Melchisedec Ștefănescu sought to envisage a close-relationship between the Romanian Church and Prince Cuza, perceived as a

²⁵ Auxiliary Bishop Filaret Scriban, *Istoria Bisericească pe scurt* [Abridged Church history], (Jassy: D. Gheorghiu, 1874), p. 178. For the Scriban brothers, see Constantin Erbiceanu, *Viața, activitatea și scrierile Prea Sfințitului Filaret Scriban tratate din punct de vedere religios, moral și literar* [The life, activity and writings of His Excellency Filaret Scriban reviewed with religious, moral and literary lenses], (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărilor Bisericești, 1892), pp. 37-60.

²⁶ For Melchisedec Ștefănescu, see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/S/MelchisedecStefanescu.html>. (Internet Accessed on 3rd of November 2013).

sovereign, ruling according to the divine will.²⁷ A stern unionist and a dedicated nationalist, he welcomed Cuza's ecclesiastical reforms in order to stop at bay the insinuating appeals to liberty and equality of French Revolution and to keep in place a moderate Liberal worldview.²⁸

Although influenced by Russian political theology, Bishop Melchisedec of Izmail was the first representative of the Romanian Orthodox Church who under the impact of modernization and the laic state endeavored to politicize his discourse by setting a nationalist tone in his writings, especially in his manuals of Theology. However, against the conservative and defensive attitude of the Scriban brothers, he was one of the first members of the high clergy understanding that the tide changed and a bishop had to follow the State, even when the State was hostile towards the Church. Condemned to a submissive attitude towards the State, bishop Melchisedec used his influence and made his way in the public political arena, being nominated by Cuza for a few days as Minister of Religious Denominations (1860) and leading in 1868 during Prince Carol I an important diplomatic mission to St. Petersburg and Moscow.²⁹

After the demise of the first generation of bishops who struggled against Cuza's reforms and had to accustom themselves with Carol I's return to a sense of normalcy in the relationship between the Church and the state, a new generation of bishops emerged. Under the pressure of electoral bodies at local and central levels, with the Romanian Orthodox Church officially earning its autocephaly from Constantinople (25th of April

²⁷ For the Russian Church after Peter the Great see Simon Dixon, "The Russian Orthodox Church in imperial Russia 1721-1917" in Michael Angold (ed.), 2006, pp. 325-347. Also see Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy in the Eve of the Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 12-16.

²⁸ For this version of nationalism, see Paschalis Kitromilides, 2013, p. 200-229.

²⁹ Nicolae Ciachir, "Cu privire la misiunea diplomatică a episcopului Melchisedec în Rusia în anul 1868" [Regarding the diplomatic mission of bishop Melchisedec in Russia in 1868], in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year LXXXIII, no. 11-12 (November-December 1965), pp. 1079-1082.

1885), the Orthodox clergymen found themselves at the State's mercy, leaving the Church with no appellate court. The fact that Carol I was a devoted Roman Catholic hindered even more any attempt from the Church's hierarchy to appeal to the Prince (King from 1881) as a neutral arbitrator between the Church and the political parties. The State administration established the clergy's revenues, the academic curricula in seminaries and faculties of theology, the foundation of new parishes or bishoprics, the election of both the high and low clergy and the ecclesiastical administration. The intrusion of political parties in the process of electing bishops or metropolitans and the ascension of young clerical elites in new parishes determined the clergy to adopt a change of course and to stand out of its political stately imposed isolationism in its entanglements with the institutions of the national state. As Pedro Ramet pointed out, this shift was a direct consequence of the changing political theology occurred when the State subjected the Church through legislative coercion and annulled the Byzantine political theology according to which the Church follow the state in political matters, but the state has to protect Church's autonomy expressed in its canon law and its inner doctrine.³⁰ In the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, under the impact of these rapid changes in religious legislation imposed by the state over the Church, the clergymen sought to integrate more and more in the complicated game of politics and to chose sides with different political parties. Although a fully-crystallized and unitary position of the Orthodox clergy towards a single party or a political trend failed to exist, the clergy learned that engaging in politics was their Christian and citizenly national duty. In their

³⁰ Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commisar. The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 178. For the initial political theology of the Orthodox Church, see Philip Sherrard, "Church, State and the Greek War of Independence" in Richard Clogg (ed.), *The Struggle for Greek Independence* (London: Anchor Books, 1973), pp. 182-199.

minds politics and religion started to be associated as inseparable categories, one whole, and they were linked under the same nationalistic idea. Under the influence of the nationalization of the pastoral theology classes from the seminary and faculty of theology teaching the students to believe in nationalism as duty and not heresy, more and more clergymen and Theology graduates ran for offices in the Romanian Parliament, joined as members the Romanian Academy, participated in the War for Independence (1877-1878), in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) or in WWI as chaplains or as simple recruits. In the process of involving in party politics these priests politicized their sacred faith and along with their political convictions developed their political expertise.

II. 3 The Romanian Orthodox Church after 1918

The connection between confession and nationality was not a novelty in the 19th century Balkan region, especially for the subjects of the Austro–Hungarian monarchy and Ottoman Empire.³¹ In the case of Romanian Orthodoxy, it was not solely the intellectuals that tried to define the Romanian nation according to the principles of Eastern Christianity. The Orthodox Church itself became an important actor in the national building process and attempted to institutionalize its own project of building the Romanian nation.³² After 1918 the Church was prepared to play a major role on the main scene of the political debate by refashioning itself as “national church” of the Romanian

³¹ See Emanuel Turczysky, *Konfession und Nation. Zur Frühgeschichte der serbischen rumänischen Nationsbildung* (Dusseldorf: Schwamm, 1976), p. 7; Also see Peter F. Sugar, “Nationalism and Religion in the Balkans since the 19th Century” in Peter F. Sugar, *East European Nationalism, Politics and Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 11.

³² Katherine Verdery, “National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania”, in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995) p. 105.

people, especially after 1925 when the Romanian Patriarchate was proclaimed and, therefore, the Romanian Orthodox Church became an independent entity separate from the Patriarchate in Constantinople. Through its clerical and schools apparatus the Church became one of the most supportive actors in the State nationalist propaganda.³³

However, the Church chose to play a double role: on the one hand, the Church supported the nationalist discourse of the State. However in the same time the Church started to develop its own nationalist speech. The election of the Orthodox bishop of Caransebeș Miron Cristea³⁴ from former Austro-Hungarian Transylvania as Primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church (31st of December 1919) and his enthronement as Romanian Patriarch (1st of November 1925) could not hide under the waves of celebrations the deep rifts inside the Church.³⁵ The choice of King Ferdinand for the seat of Metropolitane Primate in Bishop Miron Cristea was not uncontested, even in Transylvania where Nicolae Bălan picked up steam as a contender.³⁶

While cautiously reading Flor Strejnicu's account on the election of Miron Cristea to the highest position in the Orthodox Church his statement that Cristea's election was insured by his anti-Romanian stance during WWI expressed in *Telegraful român* and his reluctance to salute the crowd gathered to cheer the unification of Transylvania with Romania matches other similar descriptions.³⁷ According to the same account, important

³³ Lucian Leuștean, "For the glory of Romanians': Orthodoxy and Nationalism in Greater Romania, 1918-1945" in *Nationalities Papers* Vol. 35, no. 4 (September 2007), p. 720.

³⁴ Miron Elie Cristea (1858-1938) was the first Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the first high-ranking Orthodox clergyman to accept the Prime-Ministership (10th of February 1938-6th of March 1939).

³⁵ Archimandrite Titu Simedrea, *Patriarhia românească. Acte și documente* [Romanian Patriarchy. Official Papers and documents] (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1926), pp. 23-25.

³⁶ Elie Miron Cristea, *Note ascunse. Însemnări personale (1895-1937)* [Hidden Notes. Personal Lines] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1999), p. 52.

³⁷ According to Flor Stejnicu the election of Miron Cristea for this high dignity in the Romanian Orthodox Church was due to the fact that he could be blackmailed by the Liberals with his own anti-Romanian press

in Miron Cristea's election as Metropolitan Primate and later on as Patriarch of Romania was the possibility of his blackmail, a trait speculated by the Liberal Prime-Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu.³⁸ The election of Cristea as Metropolitan Primate and Patriarch generated strong resentment among his fellow bishops, including Bishop Visarion Puiu of Argeş who felt passed over for the promotion and argued that the Romanian Church can live without being a Patriarchy.³⁹ This fracture between Patriarch Miron Cristea and Bishop Visarion Puiu was only the first in a long series of discords between the Patriarch and various other members of the Holy Synod. These differences in opinion between the Patriarch and the hierarchy created inside the Orthodox Church several poles of authority, with different sides always betting their odds against the other.

The establishment of the Patriarchal See came with serious challenges for the Romanian Orthodox Church, especially in terms of the unification of canon law coming from different perceptions regarding the Church, handling the public funds for paying the clergymen, especially those in the newly united provinces, or the intrusion of the state in the life of the Church.⁴⁰ On the agenda of the Church one would still find problems stemming from the legislative agenda regarding the functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church (46 articles) and the Statute of organization of the Romanian Orthodox Church (178 articles), approved by the Romanian parliament on the 6th of May 1925. Although the law and the statute favored the Transylvanian idea of correlating clergymen (1/3) with laymen (2/3) in all the decisional assemblies and administrative structures of

articles written during WWI. See Flor Strejnicu, *Creştinismul Mişcării Legionare* [The Christianity of the Legionary Movement] 2d Edition (Sibiu: Imago, 2008), p.183-185.

³⁸ Elie Miron Cristea's own record confirms partially Strejnicu's account. See footnote 43.

³⁹ Elie Miron Cristea, 1999, p. 95.

⁴⁰ Fr. Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885 și 2000. Biserică, Națiune, Cultură* [The Romanian Orthodox Church between 1885 and 2000. Church, Nation, Culture] Vol. 3, I. (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 2006), p. 211.

the Church and offered the bishops places in the Romanian Senate and high salaries, the state's interference in the affairs of the Church opened the Pandora's box for the future years.⁴¹ The involvement in the life of the church of different political parties eager to appoint their own clientele in the ecclesiastical echelons of the Church, especially in Walachia and Moldavia, but also in Bessarabia, created a state of uncertainty and frustration among high and low clergy alike.⁴² As an example, both Patriarch Miron Cristea and Metropolitane Pimen Georgescu of Moldavia became increasingly discontented with the political intrusion of the laymen in the matters regarding Church property. They asked the priests for a complete abstinence in joining political parties. If Patriarch Miron used discretely his own influence in convincing priests not to join parties,⁴³ Metropolitan Pimen of Moldavia issued a pastoral letter, urging the priests from his diocese to refrain from any involvement in party politics, due to its malicious influence in the Church.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, not all theologians and priests followed the appeals and pastoral letters of their bishops. The Transylvanian clergy inherited political activism from the Austro-Hungarian times when the Orthodox clergy, in order to keep in check the Greek-Catholic Church's pretensions to be the only representative of the Romanian nation in Austro-Hungary, allowed its representatives the privilege of engaging into party-

⁴¹ The Transylvanian canonical idea was shaped in the 19th century by Metropolitan of Transylvania Andrei Șaguna (1808-1873). Bishop of Transylvania from 1847 and Metropolitan from 1864, under a Protestant influence he designed a "Organic Statute of the Romanian Orthodox Church from Transylvania" (28th of May 1869) assured a strong collaboration between lay and clergymen in all levels of church's activity. For Șaguna see Keith Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality*. Also see Johann Schneider, *Der Hermannstädter Metropolit Andrei von Șaguna. Reform und Erneuerung der orthodoxen Kirche in Siebenbürgen und Ungarn nach 1848* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2005); the Romanian translation (Sibiu: Deisis, 2008), pp. 230-252.

⁴² An example is the situation in Moldavia presented by Arhim. Emilian Nica, *Aduceți-vă aminte de înaintașii voștri. Arhiepiscopia Iașilor între anii 1900-1948* [Remember your predecessors. The Archbishopric of Jassy between the years 1900-1948] (Jassy: Doxologia, 2009), p. 117-119.

⁴³ Elie Miron Cristea, 1999, p. 68.

⁴⁴ Pimen Georgescu, "Către preoțimea din cuprinsul Mitropoliei Moldovei", Pastoral Letter from 15th of July 1925 [To the priests from the Metropolis of Moldavia] in *Mitropolia Moldovei* Year I, no. 8 (1925), p. 1-3.

politics.⁴⁵ Accordingly, the Transylvanian clergy through the voice of Professor Nicolae Colan from Sibiu's Theological Academy stated that:

... the Orthodox priest not only can he interfere in politics but it is his duty to bring the apostolic spirit of love and self-sacrifice for the common good in the political aspect of human life. He is bound to urge his flock 'to obey the rulers', to take part in public meetings and to speak from the Parliament's rostrum. Even more, when he is convinced that a political party is ready to serve better of Church's and its believers' interests he can openly support this party. [...] 'The Church should not interfere into politics!' No, sirs, the Church interfered in the past and she interferes now not to adjust its ideals according to politics, but to spiritualize the ideals of politics and to show the true way which leads from *civitas terrenis* to *Civitas Dei*.⁴⁶

If one looks at the traditionalist group's interest in *sobornost* and the universalist development in Russian theology from exile one could say that Romanian Orthodox theologians were not at all interested in conceptualizing their discipline beyond the national discourse and the national function of the institution which they were serving. It seems that the primary goal of the Orthodox clergy and theologians was to preserve the national character of their church and to contribute in forging the national community.⁴⁷

As N. Terchilă emphasized.

Out of the Romanians from everywhere our Church has forged a well-coagulated community with a united spirit proving itself one of the most important factors of social pedagogy.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ As Brian Porter-Szücs argues this was true for Poland and Slovakia, see Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland. Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 174, 178. Also see James Ramon Felak, "At the Price of the Republic". *Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1929-1938* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), pp. 39-54.

⁴⁶ Nicolae Colan, "Biserica și politica" [Church and Politics], in *Revista Teologică* Year XVI, no. 5-6 (May-June 1926), p. 119.

⁴⁷ According to an article in *Cuvîntul* Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania donated large sums of money for founding a daily newspaper of the Patriarchy and, eventually, a clerical party. See "Un partid clerical?" [A Party of the Church?] in *Cuvîntul*, Year V, no. 1477 (3rd of June 1929), p. 6.

⁴⁸ N. Terchilă, "Biserica ca factor al pedagogiei sociale" [The Church's social teachings] in *Revista Teologică*, Year XVI, no. 5-6 (May-June 1926), p. 136. This was similar with the teaching of German Roman-Catholic theologian Karl Adam. For Adam, see Robert A. Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2004), pp. 83-106 and John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother. The*

Theology as an academic discipline followed the State in encouraging the writing of national history and plunged in a mission to re-cast and re-fashion the historiographical narrative of the Orthodox Church according to the new realities of the national unitary state.⁴⁹ Although the neo-patristic turn animated Orthodox theology leading to the rediscovering of its roots in the writings of the Church's Fathers, the development of Christian doctrine and the ecclesiological emphasis placed on the unity of the Church, the theologians teaching in theological departments across Romania seemed uninterested in this scholarly approach.⁵⁰ Even in the ecumenical dialogue which started to crystallize among the Christian denominations, the lack of academic theology did not constitute a problem for Romanian Orthodox theologians:

The West continually asks us for doctrinal books of our orthodoxy. *We do not have them and we do not miss them. The faith of the first seven Ecumenical Councils is enough for us.*⁵¹ [my Italics]

This lack of interest in developing a conceptual doctrine of the Orthodox Church continued until the late 1920's when that the influence of ecumenism, the impulses coming from laity⁵² and former students returned after studying and researching abroad was felt in the pages of the theological journals. An interest in sociology of religion,⁵³ and

Revolution in the Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 19-22.

⁴⁹ Ștefan Meteș, *Mănăstirile românești din Transilvania și Ungaria* [The Romanian monasteries in Transylvania and Hungary], (Sibiu: Diecezană, 1934).

⁵⁰ The only exception was the publication of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Viața și opera Sf. Grigore Palama* [The life and work of St. Gregory Palamas] (Sibiu: Diecezană, 1928), the first neo-patristic monograph.

⁵¹ N. Colan, "Ortodoxia și esența ei" [Orthodoxy and its essence] in *Revista Teologică*, Year XIV, no. 2-3 (February-March 1924), p. 61. The text is a translation of the Russian theologian Gloubokovsky, and represents the position of both Orthodox Churches to the advent of academic theology.

⁵² This was the case of the theological journal *Logos* which appeared in 1929 only four times under the leadership of Nae Ionescu. It was a rostrum for different theologians such as Fr. George Florovski, Fr. Pavel Florensky and Stefan Zankow.

⁵³ G. Cronț, "Sociologia franceză și religia" [The French sociology and religion] in *Raze de lumină*, Year I, no. 1 (1929), pp. 13-17.

French Catholic theology,⁵⁴ the religious philosophy of the Russian exile,⁵⁵ and the emergence of mystics,⁵⁶ preoccupied the Orthodox students in Theology. Nevertheless, as in the Polish case, the Orthodox Church's conceptual a connection to Modernity was slow and marked by a rooted distrust in its benefic impact on the Church.⁵⁷

The remuneration of the lower clergy⁵⁸ and the constant interference of different political parties in the ecclesiastical electoral assemblies, in the process of electing new bishops and consecrating new priests, disrupted for several years the activity of the Orthodox Church, creating a state of constant displeasure among its clergy.⁵⁹ The problem of the interference of the political factor in churchly affairs, the bribes given by different candidates for priesthood to corrupt ecclesiastical administration, the election of bishops according to political criteria and the Church's party-politics, the administrative abuses of the bishops over the priests on political grounds, dissatisfaction with the theological education in theological schools and faculties led the lower clergy to question the benefits of the democratic state.⁶⁰ Even as early as the 1920's many Orthodox priests deserted the democratic parties (the National Liberal Party, the Peasant Party or the

⁵⁴ "Din Biserica Franței" [From the Church of France] in *Raze de lumină*, Year II, no. 1 (January-February 1930).

⁵⁵ N. Berdiaeff, "Despre natura credinței" [On the nature of faith] in *Logos*, Year I, no. 1 (1929), pp. 15-22.

⁵⁶ Fr. Grigore Cristescu, "Iubirea care caută" [The Searching Love] in *Raze de lumină*, Year III, no. 2 (March-April 1931), pp. 87-93.

⁵⁷ For the Polish case see Brian Porter-Szücs, 2011, pp. 81-117.

⁵⁸ The decrease in remuneration of low-clergy can be noticed in the descendent slope of the financial allotment of the Ministry of Religious Denominations which continued to decrease until 1933, due to economic crisis. Lucian Leuștean, 2007, p. 731.

⁵⁹ Vasile Goldiș, *Subvenționarea Cultelor în Statul Român* [The Financial Subsidize for Religious Denominations in the Romanian State] (Arad: Diecezană, 1927), p. 1-19. This situation was not new; even before founding the Patriarchy, the problem of the State's intrusion and of clergy's remuneration was a problem for the Orthodox clergy. See Alexandru Lapedatu, *Statul și Biserica. Cuvântare rostită în Senat la 29 Decembrie 1923* [The State and the Church. Speech in the Senate delivered on the 29th of December 1923] (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1924), pp.19-24.

⁶⁰ For a testimony regarding this situation in the Church please see Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, "Apostrofa unui Teolog. Biserica și Mișcarea Legionară" [The Reprimand of a Theologian. The Church and the Legionary Movement] in *V-am scris vouă, tinerilor! Gândurile și încercările unui preot mărtirisitor* (Bucharest: Gutenberg, 2011), pp. 71-73.

National Party from Transylvania) and began to search for a more radical political alternative to represent their problems. Especially the Orthodox Theology students and the priests from Bucovina and Bessarabia confronted with a large Jewish minority and the spreading of Communist ideas in a backward and poor social environment internalized the state's nationalizing project and began to radicalize their political views. One can note the words of Fr. Pomponiu Morușca, at that time a member of the Sibiu's Archbishopric ecclesiastical administration, during a pilgrimage he took in Bucovina:

The large numbers of Kikes who walk on the town's streets prove us that the poor Bukovina is invaded by a gang/mob draining away its health and stripping its inhabitants of their work energy and of anything they could save aside. No matter how much human kindness our soul of priests and Christians might have, he grows sad to see how the Romanian's work and goods goes to the foreigner's pocket. [And this happens] because of our weakness and impotence if we do not have the wits to remove them from commerce and to move them forcefully from their shops to there, to the field, to hard work.⁶¹

The staggering number of problems the Romanian Orthodox Church was confronted with after 1918 stemmed not only from complying with the State's unifying strategy but from the intellectual traditionalist trends found in the Romanian political culture during the 1920s. The 1923 Constitution stipulated in its 22nd article that the Romanian Orthodox Church was "a national Church" just as the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church of Transylvania was "a national Church," with the provision that the Orthodox Church was the "dominant Church in the Romanian State." The Greek-Catholic Church, although a national Church, was only "privileged in comparison with other

⁶¹ Fr. Pomponiu Morușca, "Un drum de reculegere" [A journey of meditation] in *Revista Teologică* Year XV, no. 8-9 (August-September 1925), p. 275.

denominations.”⁶² This refusal to inscribe the importance of the Orthodox Church into law revealed the asymmetrical relationship between state and *official* church.

The position of the state with regards to the association between nationality and religious confession became manifest in 1927 on the occasion of the promulgation of the Concordat with the Vatican.⁶³ Because of the large amounts of land properties and financial subventions granted to the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches by the Liberal government at the request of the dying King Ferdinand,⁶⁴ the Orthodox Church responded in the Romanian Parliament through the voice of the Metropolitane Nicolae Bălan who, in his speech “The national Church and its Rights,”⁶⁵ called the Orthodox Church the only church able to contribute to the development of the Romanian nation.⁶⁶ Although the Orthodox Church protested vehemently against the Concordat, this was later adopted by the Parliament and left the Church hierarchy with a wounded pride and self-aware of their negotiating position within the national state.⁶⁷

⁶² According to Miron Cristea he is to be credited with the idea of the Constitutional statute of the Greek-Catholic Church, Elie Miron Cristea, 1999, p. 74.

⁶³ For a brief summary of the debate before the signing of the Concordat with the Vatican see N. Colan, “Concordatul cu Vaticanul” [The Concordat with the Vatican] in *Revista Teologică*, Year XIV, no. 5 (May 1924), pp. 134-136.

⁶⁴ King Ferdinand of Romania was a Roman Catholic by baptism but he baptized all of his children in the Orthodox faith, as a part of the agreement signed by King Carol, when he became Prince of Romanian in 1866. This measure disrupted the relations with the Pope in Vatican who refused to administer to the dying King the last communion. Wanting to receive his last rights from the Catholic Church, the King signed secretly a Concordat with Vatican, giving the Roman and the Greek Catholic Churches from Transylvania huge tracts of land and numerous financial concessions. For a complete inventory of the property entrusted by the Romanian State to the Roman-Catholic Church from Romania see Onisifor Ghibu, *Acțiunea Catolicismului Unguresc și a Sfântului Scaun în România Întregită. Raport înaintat M.S. Regelui Carol II* [The activity of Hungarian Catholicism and the Holy See in Greater Romania. Report forwarded to His Majesty King Carol II], (Cluj: Institutul de Arte Grafice “Ardealul”, 1934).

⁶⁵ Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, *Biserica neamului și drepturile ei* [The Church of the Nation and its Rights] (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1928), pp. 32-34.

⁶⁶ For more details about this struggle see Fr. Mircea Păcurariu, 1981, pp. 401 – 405.

⁶⁷ See I. Mateiu, *Valoarea Concordatului încheiat cu Vaticanul* [The value of the agreement with the Vatican], (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1924); Fr. V. Nistor, *Să se facă dreptate! Revendicările Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [Let justice be done! The Grievances of the Romanian Orthodox Church] (Sibiu: Asociația Clerului “A. Șaguna”, 1934), pp. 16-19.

The disappointment relating to the adoption of the Concordat and legal provision that recognized the Romanian character of the Greek–Catholics who considered the promulgation of it as its own is visible in Nichifor Crainic’s and Nae Ionescu’s articles and as a direct consequence they offer their unrestricted support to the Church.⁶⁸ The 1927 Concordat strained even more the relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Greek-Catholics, and had direct consequences in a right wing radicalization inside the Orthodox Church. The anti-Catholic direction inside the Church revealed by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan’s manifesto found echo outside the Parliament walls in the pages of Nae Ionescu’s writings,⁶⁹ a professor of Bucharest University, and an exponent of a then moderate political right-wing. He wrote a series of texts arguing against the Greek Catholic Church’s constitutional claim to be “national”⁷⁰ and its right to interfere in the organic relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Romanian State.⁷¹ I argue that this was the turning point for launching the debate about religion and ethnicity which will dominate 1930.⁷²

II. 4 Final Remarks

The Romanian Orthodox Church was already politicizing its discourse in the late 19th century, searching for a way to meet the state’s nationalizing project and its

⁶⁸ Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right. The Nineteen Thirties* (Colorado: Boulder, 1999), p. 79.

⁶⁹ Nae Ionescu (1890-1940) Philosophy Professor in Bucharest University and mentor of a generation of young scholars such as Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Mircea Vulcănescu, Constantin Noica.

⁷⁰ For this claim of the Greek Catholic Church and its ancestry see Hans-Christian Maner, „Die ’rumänische Nation’ in den Konzeptionen griechisch-katolischer und orthodoxer Geistlicher und Intellektueller Siebenbürgens im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert” in Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa*, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), pp. 76-85.

⁷¹ Nae Ionescu, “Concordatul” in *Cuvântul* Year IV, no. 1039 (8th of March, 1928), p. 1. This article was followed by another seven on the same topic.

⁷² Keith Hitchins, 1995, pp. 146-150; Katherine Verdery, 1995, pp. 119-126. Nevertheless, this polemic will not be important for the legionary movement, many leading intellectuals such as Ion Banea or clergymen being Greek-Catholics.

modernization drive. The autocephaly from the Church of Constantinople left the Romanian Orthodox Church without its center, captive to the interests of party-politics and the State's designs forging national building process. The sheer number of changes affecting the Church's institution and its position in the 19th century Romanian society determined changes not just in institutional terms but also in the clergymen's Conservative mentality regarding the realm of their present world and their involvement in the historical and political affairs of the state. With bishops such as Melchisedec Șerbănescu as their frontrunner in the political arena, the hierarchs and the priests sought to distance themselves from the framework of a defunct Byzantine political theology with its unchallenged financial and political privileges attributed to the clergy and to win back what they lost in terms of influence and financial security from the secular state. By accepting to involve the Church as an institution and themselves in politics, the clergy decided that in order for the Church to survive the shock produced by Prince Cuza's unfavorable legislation dully sanctioned by Prince Carol I it had to politicize itself and join different parties.

This nationalistic politicization of the sacred envisaged by the clergy went hand in hand with the Romanian state's sacralization of politics and building a modern civil religion through the means of modernizing the state's institutions, achieving ethnic homogeneity, and nationalizing through cultural measures the minds and souls of its citizens. In the process of creating "Romanians" the Church contributed through its network of parishes, monasteries, seminaries and Faculties of Theology to disseminate the state's nationalistic agenda. Participating in politics and participating to the general effort of building the Romanian nation, the Romanian Orthodox Church made itself useful to the State's interests. Resisting the general trend of secularization and

modernization pushed the Church into some creative ways in which to preserve its stay in the public sphere making it a willing partner for far right groups like the Iron Guard that could ensure a renegotiation of the centrality of its position in Romanian society.

CHAPTER III

“In the Beginning was the Word!”¹ The First Stages in the Development of the Legionary Movement (1930-1933)

“Today, Friday, 24th of June 1927 (The feast of St. John the Baptist), at 10 o’clock in the evening, ‘The Legion of the Archangel Michael’ is founded under my leadership. Let anyone who believes without reservation, join our ranks. Let he, who has doubts, remain on the sidelines. I hereby appoint Radu Mironovici as leader of the icon’s guard.”² It was with these words from a daily order that Corneliu Codreanu founded the Legion of the Archangel Michael, one of the most atypical expressions of “generic fascism” of interwar Europe. He placed the movement under the protective sign of the Archangel Michael and made his icon the most important paraphernalia of the Legion. Codreanu’s political innovation stated clearly that the movement in itself was a completely different political development, that an attempt to “seduce” the all-powerful Romanian Orthodox Church was undertaken. Due to the involvement of the Romanian Orthodox clergy with different political parties, including the rival LANC, the Iron Guard had to advertise itself as a suitable political option for the Orthodox clergy.

The present chapter discusses the first stages in the development of the Iron Guard and its first attempts to storm the Romanian political life. The involvement into and the support brought to the movement by the Orthodox clergy are accounted so as to defend the hypothesis that the first contribution received by the movement in order to conquer the political scene has come from the Romanian Orthodox Church’s rank and file. The

¹ The sentence is taken from The Gospel of John (I, 1).

² Corneliu Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For my legionaries] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994), pp. 295-296.

connection between political ideology and religion/ theology as embodied in the religious rhetoric employed in the early stages of the movement for propaganda purposes will come under a close scrutiny in order to show the creation of a new political expression, different from the ideologies present in the Romanian public sphere. In the incipient stages of the movement's development one finds the seeds for the future "fascist theology" that will reach completion after 1934.

Furthermore, this chapter intends to highlight the interactions between different layers of the Romanian clergy and the fascism movement. A first section will be focused on the intersections between the Romanian Orthodox clergy and the original members of the Romanian Legion of Archangel Michael before 1930. There are several research questions addressed by the chapter regarding the intricate relationship between the rising Legion of the Archangel Michael and the already ossified structures of the Romanian Orthodox Church. I will look therefore at how this connection was reflected by the movement's first periodical, *Pământul strămoșesc*³ [The Ancestral Fatherland] and in the Romanian archives. Who were the first representatives of the Romanian Orthodox clergy to take stance towards the movement and what was the political and ideological interplay between different layers of the ecclesiastical institution embracing the incipient political creed of the movement? What were the social and political ties bounding together the radical extremists and the Orthodox clergymen? How was this relation of causality and symbiosis represented by the low and high clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Church? The chapter will concentrate on a short timeframe between 1930 and 1932 focusing on

³ The first issue of *Pământul strămoșesc* was printed on 1st of August 1927. It was a bi-monthly journal of the Legion of Archangel Michael. It was issued with multiple interruptions due to financial reasons or the movement's bans from political life by the government until 1933. It was edited by Corneliu Codreanu and by those close to him (Ion I. Moța , Ioan Banea, Corneliu Georgescu, Radu Mironovici, etc.).

several chronological markers that highlight this marriage between the church and the extreme right. This period represented the foundation of the Iron Guard as an anti-communist wing of the Legion of Archangel Michael and the departure of Codreanu and his staff from Jassy to Bucharest, the official entry of the movement in the political arena of interwar Romania.

The impact of Nichifor Crainic's influential articles in *Gîndirea* in the late 1920s and subsequently his adherence to the movement manifested in his pro-legionary stance in *Calendarul* newspaper, the positive reaction of many Orthodox theologians to the movement's ideology in the aforementioned paper or during different public events such as the "Romanian Christian Student Association" (UNSCR) procession in 24th of January 1933 to lay a cross on the tomb the Unknown Soldier, were among the first actions in which the Romanian Orthodox clergy was involved alongside with the Romanian Iron Guard.

Furthermore, due to the December electoral campaign and the open support of the Orthodox Church for the Iron Guard, the year 1933 will prove decisive in the economy of the relationship between Orthodox clergy and Romanian fascists. By advocating the religious character of the movement and seeking to enlarge the framework of the relationship with the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Iron Guard and the people involved in the movement, laymen, Orthodox priests or professors of Theology, have strenuously attempted to build the relation with the church and to adjust the ideological agenda of the movement to the Church's political expectations. The formative years of the movement will pave the way for the future encounters between Romanian clergy and the Iron Guard.

III. 1 In Jassy (1927-1930)

After leaving A.C. Cuza's political organization and exhausting all attempts for reconciliation,⁴ Codreanu and his few following comrades from LANC have engaged in a new kind of politics, different from the ideology professed so wholeheartedly by their former professor and mentor.⁵ The newly founded political organization under the protective icon of the Archangel Michael⁶ had but a few members, according to Codreanu's own account. They were mostly Codreanu's inmates during his detention in the Văcărești prison.⁷ After they requested to be relieved from their oaths of loyalty to Cuza and his movement, they embarked in a propagandistic effort to win adherences to the newly formed party's creed.⁸

Even from these early stages, Codreanu's movement expressed its Christian character and the partiality to Christian values and Orthodoxy in particular.⁹ As Codreanu

⁴ I. C. Cătuneanu, "Atitudinea noastră" [Our position] in *Înfrățirea românească*, Year III, no. 16 (15th of June 1927), p. 1.

⁵ For A.C. Cuza and his political stance towards the movement, please see Horia Bozdoghină, *Antisemitismul lui A. C. Cuza în politica românească* [The anti-Semitism of A.C. Cuza in Romanian politics] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2012), p. 212.

⁶ The Archangel Michael, please see the Book of Revelations, 12. 7-8 where he leads the angel's army against the armies of Satan, defeating them.

⁷ Corneliu Codreanu, 1994, p. 296. Codreanu said that "all the Văcăreșteni" joined in his home to go to A. C. Cuza to ask him to release them from their oaths of fidelity. Codreanu was not particularly accurate since Tudose Popescu was not with them, so not all the former inmates participated in this meeting. For the 1924 plot and the myth of those imprisoned in Văcărești prison please see Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, p. 168-182. Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence. The Legion of the „Archangel Michael” in the Inter-war Romania* (Trondheim: Trondheim Studies in East European Cultures and Societies, 2004), pp. 32-35; Irina Livezeanu, "Fascists and conservatives in Romania: two generations of nationalists" in Martin Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives. The Radical Right and the Establishment in the twentieth-century Europe* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 224.

⁸ Dragoș Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail de la Mit la Realitate* [The Legion of Archangel Michael from Myth to Reality] (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1997), pp. 87-88.

⁹ Paul A. Shapiro "Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church" in Kevin P. Spicer (ed.), *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 137: different Romanian fascist groups "embraced anti-Semitism and Orthodoxy as fundamental elements of their political creeds."

bluntly stated, the first principle of the four guiding the newly created Legion of Archangel Michael was:

The faith in God. We all believed in God. In our midst there was no atheist. The more surrounded we felt and more alone, the more our thoughts were directed to God and the contact with our dead and the dead of the nation. This gave us an invincible force and luminous serenity when confronting the all blows against us.¹⁰

Unlike any other fascist movement, the Legion considered faith in God equally important for political success as the faith in the movement and its leader, a feature which particularized the Romanian case. The initiative of associating faith in God with a political idea was not invented in 1927 and neither was faith in God put into practice once the Legion of Archangel Michael came into being. Rather, faith in God was a result of the personal background of the founding members of the Legion, already made use of while they were members of LANC.¹¹ Representatives of it counted among Nichifor Crainic, Traian Brăileanu or Nae Ionescu.¹² What particularized Codreanu was the emphasis on the creation of a “new man” in accordance with this Christian matrix and the embodiment of the traditionalist view in a youth movement, living according to the traditional spirituality of the Romanian people.

This staunch preoccupation with religion permeated the pages of the party’s newspaper, *Pămîntul Strămoşesc*, and the whole membership of the newly created party, including the youth organization (The Cross Brotherhoods) were asked to find more

¹⁰ Corneliu Codreanu, 1994, p. 302.

¹¹ Please see chapter I, section 4.

¹² Armin Heinen, *Legiunea „Arhanghelul Mihail“ Mişcare socială și organizație politică. O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional* translated by Cornelia Eșianu and Delia Eșianu [The Legion of “Archangel Michael” Social movement and political organization. A contribution to the topic of international fascism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), p. 130.

subscribers to the paper so as the word would be spread.¹³ However, according to Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, the newspaper never had more than 2,586 subscriptions, with all the efforts invested by students and school children in popularizing its apparition on the market.¹⁴

The first issue of the publication was opened with an appeal in 12 points signed by the founding members of the Legion Corneliu Codreanu, Ilie Gîrneață, Ion I. Moța, Corneliu Georgescu, and Radu Mironovici.¹⁵ Addressed to LANC members that were concerned with their departure from Cuza's organization, the text provided the reader with an explanation for the break of the young revolutionary generation with the movement of Cuza deemed "corrupted" by domestic enemies inside.¹⁶ These enemies, guilty of discrediting LANC and determining some of the members to leave Cuza's organization led the authors of the manifest to "stay in the church, praying for everyone's absolutions from their sins."¹⁷ They inaugurated the new movement through a ritual of self-purification and asking forgiveness from God for their sins and the sins of those still LANC.

The same text witnessed a shift in the attitude of the young founders of the Legion from a forgiving and redemptive one to a more revolutionary stance as it changed into a

¹³ Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului* [The History of the Iron Guard. The Mystique of Ultra-nationalism] translated by Marian Ștefănescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), p. 109. For a history of the newspaper, please see Armin Heinen, 1999, pp. 133-135.

¹⁴ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *O Istorie a Fascismului în Ungaria și România* [A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania] translated by Măriuca Stanciu and Ecaterina Geber (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), p. 380. According to Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 138 from these subscribers 1790 were not capable of paying their fees for the newspaper they received.

¹⁵ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, National Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 187.

¹⁶ Corneliu Codreanu, Ilie Gîrneață, Ion I. Moța, Corneliu Georgescu, Radu Mironovici, "Pămîntul strămoșesc" in *Pămîntul strămoșesc* Year I, no. 1 (1st of August 1927), p. 3-5.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

call to joining the ranks of the newly created political organism patronized by the Archangel Michael:

Regardless of their allegiance to themselves those who feel tied up to the flags [of our common struggle] and who know how to love their country and God more than their parents, will follow us. Let us proceed not to words and neither to small talk, but to deeds.”¹⁸

The authors of this first article inaugurating the movement’s publication intended to break out of Cuza’s organization and to point out to those reading their newspaper that they were not responsible for the scission of LANC. Even more, by paraphrasing the Gospel of Matthew¹⁹ when asking those dissatisfied in the development in Cuza’s political organization to join them, the Legion of Archangel Michael started to use extensively religious imagery or even Scriptures inspired texts to galvanize the interest of the Orthodox clergy and the young generation already animated by the same ideals as the former students’ leaders, now leaders in the Legion.²⁰

The usage of Gospel and religious inspired rhetoric was not limited to this manifesto addressed to the former members of LANC. In the same issue of the newspaper, Ion I. Moța published what was to stand out as the religious statement of the movement: namely that the movement was inspired by the Archangel himself, during their imprisonment in Văcărești prison. According to Moța, the new political organization was not a political party, but rather it originated in something beyond the grasp of other nationalist groups, as expression of a sacred calling:

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 5.

¹⁹ I have used the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The text in question is Matthew 10:37 “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”

²⁰ According to Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian intra muros. Memorii legionare* [Trojan horse inside the walls. Legionary Memoirs] (Bucharest: Lucman, 2002) p. 127 this was not the first time Codreanu used New Testament’s arguments embedded in his political discourse.

It is the icon in the altar the place where we started... Now, with heavy hearts, dispersed, torn, we gather... at the feet of Jesus Christ, on the threshold of heaven's blinding brilliancy, at the icon... We have not been engaged in politics and we were not engaged in politics a single day in our lives... We have a religion we are the slaves of a faith. We consume ourselves in its fire and, totally subjected to it, serve it to the limit of our strength. For us there is no defeat of disarmament because the force [The Archangel, God, Jesus Christ], whose tools we want to be, is eternally invincible.²¹

Ion I. Moța is pointing out that Codreanu's movement and his departure from Cuza's organization followed God's will. An Orthodox priest's son,²² Moța was probably very much aware of this religious rhetoric that he used in his first articles from *Pămîntul Strămoșesc* in order to both legitimize the mission of the movement in terms of religious faith and highlight the differences from Cuza's more secular movement. The path paved by Moța continued with the challenge of seducing the Orthodox clergy and using it to spread out Codreanu's ideological propositions. This would have ensured the reach of the legionary propaganda to the peasant and urban low-middle class bourgeoisie.²³ The next issue of *Pămîntul strămoșesc* printed a small platform, containing the organization of the movement into four sections. When it came to the movement's leadership and the leading bodies of the organization, one of the most important roles together with the legionary Senate was designed for

the Legion's counsel, with the purpose to debate and to establish the broad directions of the Legion is comprised from all the former leaders of the students, who enter legitimately the counsel by simply joining and adhering to the Legion's principles. The presidents of the student centers also belong to the counsel, having a consultative, individual vote until the end of their studies when they will become

²¹ Ion I. Moța, „La icoană!” [To the Icon!] in *Pămîntul strămoșesc* Year I, no. 1 (1st of August, 1927), p 9.

²² Dean Ion Moța (1868-1940) was one of the leading Romanian patriots in Transylvania fighting against Austro-Hungarian oppression in the late 19th and beginning of the 20th century. In Orăștie he edited *Libertatea* [The freedom], one of the first newspapers expressing the movement's ideals. For Ion Moța, please see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/M/IoanMota.html>, Internet accessed 18th of December 2012.

²³ Please see Flor Strejnicu, *Creștinismul Mișcării Legionare* [The Christianity of the Legionary Movement] (Sibiu: Imago, 2000), pp. 13-16.

active counselors, but not as representatives of the [student] associations. In this counsel will join through cooptation elements from all social categories (*priests* [author's highlight], school teachers, etc.) that have proved their faith and unwaveringness.²⁴

The manifest of the Legion's leaders was directed towards both the young generation and the priests and teachers as the "enlighteners of the villages." Their propaganda was not directed yet towards the high clergy or the university professors. The emphasis placed on priests and the important role assigned to them in the early stages of the movement was the sign that the main goal on the Legion's agenda was the rapid expansion into the rural areas, using the networks of country priests.

The appeal to Christianity, unshaken faith, resurrection as political categories and bringing forth the role of the Orthodox clergy in the activities of the movement had an immediate echo in the Orthodox milieu, especially among the priests in Bukovina, a place already visited by Codreanu while a disciple in the Cuza's organization.²⁵ The reactions of the priests were enthusiastic. They expressed publically their support towards the newly formed political body. The Orthodox priests who immediately responded to the call of the movement were listed in the newspaper's pages, the reader able to find out about the existence of one Fr. George Prelci from Cîmpu-Lung praising the journal.²⁶ Similar cases are those of Fr. Orest Malcinschi from Cojoacea,²⁷ or Fr. Ioan Tonigariu.²⁸ In addition to these priests, the young Orthodox Theology students seemed especially

²⁴ Corneliu Codreanu, Ion I. Moța, Ilie Gîrneată, Corneliu Georgescu, Radu Mironovici, „Legiunea „Arhanglelul Mihail” [The Legion Archangel Michael] in *Pămîntul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 2 (15th of August 1927), p. 2.

²⁵ Dragoș Zamfirescu, 1997, p. 159.

²⁶ „Cum e primită revista noastră și cu ea Legiunea ‘A. M.’” [How is our journal received and with it the Legion ‘A. M.’] in *Pămîntul strămoșesc* Year I, no. 3 (1st of September 1927), p. 14.

²⁷ „De prin țară” [From the country] in *Pămîntul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 4 (15th of September 1927), p. 13.

²⁸ „Cum e primită revista noastră și cu ea Legiunea ‘A. M.’” in *Pămîntul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 5 (1st of October 1927), p. 14.

attracted by the idea of the newspaper and its articles tackling vital issues such as Romanian nationalism and anti-Semitism.²⁹ In the article “Din țara lui Decebal” [From Decebal’s country] several young Transylvanians expressed their allegiance to Codreanu’s movement. Their gesture showcased their nationalistic feelings. They were to “show our Hungarian, Saxon and Jew masters that they are not in their own country and the Romanian people that only has the ‘doina’ is not dying.”³⁰

Among the authors of the manifest two were school teachers (I. Rădulescu and Petru Cimponeriu), one was a public servant (Alimpie Copăceanu) a Law student (Iustin Gherman) and two Theology students “student teolog” (Valer Nicola and Victor Stoicoiu). There is no mention of the confession of the two Transylvanian Theology students. Seeing that the Legion Archangel Michael was attracting both Orthodox and Greek-Catholics into its rank and file³¹ their confessional identity is hard to trace.

However, the religious identity of another student contributor *Pământul strămoșesc*, Nicolae/ Nicolae Bolea, is known. He was a Romanian student in Orthodox Theology from Sibiu.³² According to N. Bolea’s letter sent to the editors, the adherence to the movement’s mission of guarding the Nation against the “invaders” was the moral duty of any student preparing to become an Orthodox priest, stern nationalism, Orthodoxy and anti-Semitism being closely interrelated:

²⁹ Ilie Imbrescu, *Biserica și Mișcarea Legionară* [The Church and the Legionary movement] in Ilie Imbrescu, *V-am scris vouă, tinerilor! Gândurile și încercările unui preot misionar* [I wrote to you, the youth! The thoughts and the trials of the missionary priest] (Bucharest: Gutenberg, 2011), p. 31.

³⁰ Iustin Gherman, I. Rădulescu, Valer Nicola, Petru Cimponeriu, Victor Stoicoiu, Alimpie Copăceanu, “Din țara lui Decebal” in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 3 (1st of September 1927), p. 8-9.

³¹ The most important Greek-Catholic in the movement was Ioan Banea. An interesting Greek-Catholic clergyman affiliated with the LANC, LANC-statutory and later with the Iron Guard was Fr. Titus Mălai from Cluj-Napoca.

³² Nic. Bolea, „De la studenții Academiei de Teologie din Sibiu. Se adună tinerimea țării” [From the students of the Sibiu’s Theological Academy. The country’s youth joins together] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 7 (1st of November 1927), p. 6-7.

Brothers! Your forlorn cry, your cry of alarm, which you have voiced from your hearts so loving towards the land in which sleep eternally our ancestors has shaken our souls. As future servants of God's altar, but especially as defenders of the sacred temple where the fire of love for the nation and fatherland should burn, we could not remain indifferent to the danger that threatens to plunge our nation in the abyss of extinction.³³

Bolea's sympathetic attitude towards the movement's ideals and his anti-Semitism were clearly expressed in his letter. By enveloping his discourse into a quasi-religious rhetoric, N. Bolea reconstructed the conflict between Romanian Christianity and Judaism coming from abroad, especially from Bolshevik Russia in terms of scriptural discourse and according to an already existing spiritual war inside the Nation's soul that reproduces the human soul, between good and evil:

The soul of our nation is in great danger. It is endangered by the virulent poison, which the enemies of the humankind (i.e. the sons of Judas, the betrayer) give to our nation in high dosage. It is endangered by the venom these importers of social poisons pass in their smuggler's suitcases from the country of terror and crime through the borders into our beloved fatherland. The soul of our nation is endangered by the jackals with ringlets who invade our fatherland, bringing with them the plagues (*molimă*) of lust, dishonesty, quackery, corruption, thievery and all the social diseases, extremely dangerous, whose spreading agents they are. There is only one more possibility of escape that is what you have imagined: the mobilization of all the living forces of the nation.³⁴

The idea considering the Jewish minority as responsible for the social malaises and propagated by the Iron Guard failed to be original in the eyes of the Romanian public eye. Rather than opening a new topic for free discussion, the movement intended to re-address an ongoing debate regarding the attitude towards Jewish minority which was already raised by a generation of intellectuals active even before WWI. Describing the perils of the expansion of Jews in terms of "infection" and representing the Jews as "agents of

³³ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁴ Ibid.

infestation” was hardly a new approach in interwar Romania. Both A.C. Cuza and Nicolae Paulescu shared it.³⁵ The latter established a quasi-complete social medicine, in which ethnic minorities such as Jews, Gypsies, Hungarians or Saxons were considered to be social viruses, spreading different diseases and exploiting weaknesses in the national souls according to a world plot instigated by Freemasonry and Jewish Qahal.³⁶ The bodily passions (*patimile*), thought Paulescu, were the reason why Romania was incapable to flourish economically and culturally. Encouraged by the Jewish minority to thrive, the passions imagined as personal sins were perceived by Paulescu and his followers as signs of imminent national decay and racial degeneration and they were held responsible for keeping the country poor and backward.³⁷

It is little wonder that the Romanian Orthodox clergy and theologians felt represented by the virulent anti-Semitic propaganda of the Legion. Both these categories, the priests and the students in Theology were educated in this thinking by living in this context that pre-existed the movement and their reaction to the articles from *Pământul strămoșesc* were nothing more than collecting the benefits of nationalistic and anti-Semitic propaganda undertaken by the precursors of Codreanu among the clergy. Before him, A.C. Cuza and Nicolae Paulescu have already been read and internalized by numerous Orthodox clergymen present in all LANC activities.³⁸ The legionary propaganda picked up the topic of anti-Semitism and fused it with the narrative of a

³⁵ For Nicolae Paulescu, please see Flor Strejnicu, 2000, p. 49.

³⁶ Nicolae Paulescu, *Spitalul, Coranul Talmudul, Cahalul Francmasoneria* [The Hospital, The Quran The Talmud, The Quahal The Freemasonry] (Bucharest: ?, 1913), p. 36.

³⁷ Horia Bozdoghină, 2012, p. 165. For Paulescu’s impact of Codreanu during the time he spent in LANC please see Paul A. Shapiro, 2007, p. 140.

³⁸ For the presence of the Orthodox clergy in LANC, ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/*Diverse*, file 12/1930, pp. 82; 285. Priests Iliuț chief of Storojineț county participated in the LANC events related to the funeral of student Popescu and priest Dominic Ionescu (Duminică Ionescu?) spoke to the LANC student reunion in the year.

religious, national re-awakening of the Romanians, undertaken by the young generation. The clergy were not able to discern sometimes until 1931-1932 that Codreanu's political organization was something different from the old nationalist formation of A.C. Cuza.³⁹ This is hardly surprising seeing that even the Romanian Secret Police made little distinction in that period between the two movements. There were also exceptions from the rule, like the priests who left LANC for the Iron Guard, the case of the Greek-Catholic priest Titus Mălai from Cluj-Napoca.⁴⁰

The movement profited from this ambiguity they continued to champion ideas in *Pământul strămoșesc* that were destined to seduce the clergy. In 1928, due to the incidents during Oradea student congress, some students were imprisoned in Cluj-Napoca military prison where they waited for their public trial. During this detention, on a Saturday evening, 11 legionary students locked in this prison claimed that they had a revelation, Jesus Christ appearing in their midst.⁴¹ The author's conclusion was put bluntly said and represented a direct appeal to Orthodox priests to acknowledge the Legion as a revelation from God:

Jesus Christ, you, who have descended in this night in our midst, help us with your divine power to defeat the enemies of our beloved fatherland. You, Archangel Michael, who with your sword shut down the gates of Eden, letting the thief carrying the cross on his shoulders to go to heavens and you who defeated Satan, please send to our Captain in Jassy a drop from the fire of your sword for him to defeat Satan's descendents with celestial help and the help of the legionaries.⁴²

³⁹ Please see ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/*Diverse*, file 12/1930, p. 119. The Iron Guard's supporters are considered supporters of the Archangel (*Arhangheliști*), but they are treated by the *Siguranța Statului*, the Romanian Secret Police as a faction from LANC. In the same file, p. 161 the Piatra Neamț police mentioned the existence of an anthem named "The Hymn of the Iron Guards of LANC" and a manifesto signed by "The Iron Guards of LANC".

⁴⁰ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Suspendarea de la Catedră a Părintelui Titus Mălai" [The suspension from Teaching of Fr. Titus Mălai] in *Pământul strămoșesc* Year II, no. 2 (15th of January 1928), p. 9.

⁴¹ Un viitor legionar din Inchisoarea de la Cluj [A future legionary from Cluj Prison], „MINUNEA CEREAȘĂ petrecuta zilele trecute în închisoarea Clujului. Cu cine e Isus!” [The CELESTIAL MIRACLE happened in the last days in Cluj's prison. Whom is Jesus with!] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year II, no. 3 (1st of February 1928), pp. 1-2.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 2. See Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 134.

The significance of the text for the primordial theological vision of the movement is. Christ revealing himself to students in Cluj-Napoca prison was nothing more than the irrefutable proof that Codreanu's movement was in accordance with the divine will and that against all the dangers that threatened the country, there was hope for redemption and national re-awakening mediated by the movement. The most important part of the article focused not on Jesus, but rather on the theology of the Archangel Michael, the Legion's holy patron. The invocation of Archangel Michael has a double purpose. On the one hand, the author of the text connected the movement with a divine, transcendental figure to show that this divine patronage gave the movement a divine nature, proximity with the celestial hierarchy unmatched by any other political expression. In doing this, the author of the text sets propagandistically to attract those believers and clergymen still in doubt about the Legion's character and means.

The most seminal issue was however the setting up of the mystical bond between the Archangel Michael and the Captain, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. I argue that this text was the first in which the cult of the Captain is tied up unambiguously with that of the Archangel, with the Captain as the terrestrial vicar of the Archangel Michael. The myth of the Archangel sword, the sword which stroke Satan out of the heavens after his revolt against God, finds itself a parallel in the person of the Captain, who, as the Archangel in heavens before him, has to cleanse the world from Satan's representatives.⁴³ This theological bond between the Captain and the Archangel would be the cornerstone and

⁴³ The idea of Satan's representatives embodied by the Jewish minority was already presented by other people. Nicolae Paulescu, *Tălmăcirea Apocalipsului. Soarta viitoare a jidănimii* [The Interpretation of the Book of Revelations. The future faith of the Jewish people] (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Oltenia, 1911). For Paulescu, Paul A. Shapiro, 2007, p. 140. Please see Nicolae Roșu, „Noul Canaan” in *Cuvântul studentesc*, Year IV, no. 2 (4th of December 1927), p. 1.

the ideological/ theological basis for any further political actions of the movement, but also to develop a theological expression in a legionary key.

III. 2 Courting the High Clergy. The First Legionary Bishop?

In addition to the propaganda coated in religious undertones and laid out in various journals and publications, from its early stages, the movement cultivated a privileged relationship with the Romanian Orthodox Church and some of the first propagandistic actions of Codreanu and his followers winning new members towards the movement were supported and even encouraged directly by important figures of the Romanian Orthodox Church. One of the main actors coming into the picture at the early stages of the movement was Auxiliary Bishop Nicodim Munteanu (1864-1948), the future Patriarch (from 1938).⁴⁴

Forever a contender for higher bishopric sees, this ambitious hierarch was profoundly dissatisfied with the constant intervention and the interference of the political factor in the appointment and changing of Orthodox hierarchs and the instability that seemed to define the Romanian Orthodox Church hierarchical core. Beneficiary of an exquisite theological education at Kiev Theological Academy and coming from a conservative background, Nicodim Munteanu understood his task as Orthodox bishop as promoter both within the Romanian state and the Orthodox Church of an exceedingly nationalistic agenda, both in Bessarabia where he was appointed in June 1918 as deputy-Archbishop of Chişinău and at the Neamţu Monastery where he retired in 1923 as the

⁴⁴ Fr. Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885 și 2000. Biserică, Națiune, Cultură* [The Romanian Orthodox Church between 1885 and 2000. Church, Nation, Culture] Vol. 3, I (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 2006), p. 267.

monastery's abbot.⁴⁵ Disappointed with his *cursus honorum* in the ecclesiastical echelons of the Romanian Orthodox Church, he began, like many other Orthodox clergymen, to search for a political alternative to the Liberal hegemony which was considered especially by the clergy from the newly acquired provinces as a full-scale dictatorship and extremely unfavorable towards the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Nicodim Munteanu, at that time a retired bishop and abbot of one of the richest and important monastery in the country, was the first religious sponsor of the movement. In the summers of 1927 and 1928, together with Corneliu Codreanu and Ion I. Moța, he organized and hosted the first reunions of the Legion of Archangel Michael's youth at Neamț monastery.⁴⁶ According to the Romanian Police reports to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Bucharest, almost 70 people have attended this student congress from 1st to 4th of August 1927. These meetings witness the incipience of the ritual of the movement. The morning and evening prayers that start and end the day, physical work in the monastery, common meals with the monks and the propagandistic and ideological sessions offered by Corneliu Codreanu, Ion Banea or Ion I. Moța will later be propagated to all the movement's meetings, re-assessed and re-shaped, especially in the 1934 - 1937 working camps' legionary project.

The use of Orthodox Church's ritual in order to gain momentum over other competing political organisms and to disseminate the party's Christian ideological agenda

⁴⁵ Fr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church] Vol. 3 (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1981), p. 421.

⁴⁶ DANIC, Ministerul de Interne/*Direcția Generală a Poliției*, file no. 30/1927, pp.15-16 in Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România 1927-1931* [Ideology and right-wing organizations in Romania] (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2000), p. 56. According to Florin Zamfirescu, 1997, p. 157 the Neamț convention was a meeting of the Medicine Student's Society from Jassy and held between 1st and 6th of August 1927 at Neamț Monastery. Some student leaders rebuffed Codreanu as a murderer and as spreading disunity among the nationalist student body by breaking up with professor Cuza.

especially among the rural peasantry was common for the movement.⁴⁷ As Michael Mann, has correctly observed, in this early stage of development

The style, the rhetoric, and the ritual practices were profoundly religious – for example, the wearing of bags of soil around the neck to symbolize the earth of the forefathers. The legion made little reference to the doctrines of Orthodox Christianity, yet its rituals drew heavily on the Orthodox ones.⁴⁸

The emphasis on religious rituals and drawing inspiration from church's rituals is a characteristic of generic fascism.⁴⁹ The difference between Codreanu's movement and other fascist organizations, as Michael Mann poignantly shows, was precisely this symbiosis between religious and political rituals, bounded together in order to legitimize one another. There was no rejection and no need to subordinate religion to the political goal, but in the Legion's case through ritualistic performances, religion and politics became interchangeable categories of the same national discourse.

Therefore, this idea of ritual combining popular religion and nationalist ideology was enacted even before the beginning of the Legion. Codreanu's wedding in 1925 was followed by the baptism of 100 children near Focșani, in Southern Moldavia with the newlyweds as Godparents in order to maintain the appeal of the movement following his prison release in 1925. With the permission and blessing of Abbot Bishop Nicodim Munteanu, Ion I. Moța married in 1928 Codreanu's sister Iredenta at Neamț Monastery, strengthening the ties with Codreanu's family and boosting the Legion's popularity among the peasants from Neamț.⁵⁰ As in Codreanu's case, the religious ceremony was

⁴⁷ "Nunta lui Moța" [Mota's wedding] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 7 (1st of November 1927), p. 4.

⁴⁸ Michael Mann, "The Romanian Family of Authoritarians" in Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 269.

⁴⁹ For fascist rituals, please Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self. The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 63.

⁵⁰ Francisco Veiga, 1993, p. 121.

followed shortly-afterwards by a nationalist gathering where the extremist propaganda followed the religious ritual.⁵¹

The centrality of Neamț Monastery and the influence of its abbot, a personage who in the next eight years will become one of the key-figures of the Romanian Orthodox Church as initially Metropolitan of Moldavia (1935) and later on Patriarch (1938) upon the movement, would in turn bestow legitimacy upon the Legion ensuring a strong influence amongst the Orthodox clergy from Bucovina and Moldavia.⁵² One of the first follow-up actions of the movement was to buy a truck out of public subscriptions and to use it for delivering vegetables to the monasteries from the region.⁵³

Using the religious rituals of the Orthodox Church as an introduction to political gathering but also as pretext for political activities and by constantly advertising the movement as a Christian, rejuvenating, palingenetic society of young people, the Legion was embodying a fresh devotion towards the rituals of the Orthodox Church and presented itself as the solution for the Romanian clergy's grievances and fears. Taking into account the constant appeal of Communism among the young generation and the aggressive involvement of party politics in the affairs of the Orthodox Church, the clergy disaffected by the Liberal government and disenchanted with the National Peasant Party's incapacity to deal with the economic crisis started to shift their political views towards the Legion. Especially the Orthodox low clergy from Transylvania, where the Concordat with Vatican (1927) left the Church empty-pocketed in comparison to Roman Catholic and Greek-Catholic Church, but also those from Bucovina, Moldavia and Bessarabia were

⁵¹ Please see footnote 48.

⁵² Florin Zamfirescu, 1997, p. 159. According to this source, Codreanu used the Monastery's press to edit manifests he intended to use in his propaganda campaign.

⁵³ Armin Heinen, 1999, pp. 137.

faced with financial issues and underpayment and felt constantly that they were unheard by the central structures from Bucharest and their bishops. Slowly, through its press and their propaganda meetings the Legion embarked in a campaign of advocating for the clergy's privileges, an attempt which was not overlooked by the low clergy.

III. 3 The First Political Foray

The immediate purpose of the Legion was to individualize the movement, to make it stand out of a bulwark of political parties either secular as the Liberals or asserting a Christian claim as their most immediate rival, Cuza's LANC. Meanwhile, another important reason to use religious discourse and to approach the rural clergy was to achieve popularity among the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie from the small villages and cities and to win over the regions controlled politically by different parties or alliances, even if these organizations were singled out as nationalist and anti-Semite.⁵⁴ By implementing an almost military offensive strategy, Codreanu and his followers embarked, from 1929 onwards, on a political journey out from his hinterland in Neamț County making forays into other regions, like Bessarabia and Transylvania. Codreanu was putting to good use the contacts he and his comrades earned during their former activity in LANC and afterwards.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu Borșa, p. 42.

⁵⁵ According to Horia Bozdoghină, 2012, p. 117, in 1928 A.C. Cuza was also involved personally in a huge propaganda tour around Bukovina and the Legion wanted to profit from Cuza's propaganda for its own interest.

His actions started out in Covurlui county, southern Moldavia, a region already secured during Codreanu's father candidature to Parliament in the 1926 elections.⁵⁶ On the 15th of December 1929, Codreanu and his supporters attended a meeting in the town of Berești followed by the promise of a march in Bessarabia.⁵⁷ With the help of his followers from Covurlui led by Mihai Stelescu and others from Jassy, Codreanu crossed Prut River and made two trips to Bessarabia (the first time on the 21st of January 1930 and the second on the 10th of February), a province inhabited by a large Jewish minority.⁵⁸ At a huge gathering in Cahul, among the speakers like Ion Zelea Codreanu or delegates from Cluj-Napoca and Timișoara, one can find an Orthodox priest, Isaia.⁵⁹ They planned to follow the march with another one in July the 30th to consolidate their electoral progress made the previous year but due to the events in Maramureș and the assassination attempt made by George Beza against a member of the cabinet which sent Codreanu to prison resulted in the cancelation of the march.⁶⁰ According to Francisco Veiga, Codreanu's electoral trip to Bessarabia had more reasons than the presence of a large Jewish population. It was also linked to the 1928 decision of the Holy Synod in Bucharest to change the old ecclesiastical calendar for an updated version, a decision bolstering confusion in the Church, especially in those areas such as Bessarabia where the old calendar was sacrosanct.⁶¹ Codreanu wanted to capitalize electorally on his movement this internal dissatisfaction of the Bessarabian clergy and population and to turn the

⁵⁶ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, p. 370-376. Please also see Francisco Veiga, 1993, p. 112.

⁵⁷ Florin Zamfirescu, 1997, p. 160.

⁵⁸ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, p. 39

⁵⁹ „Notă a Siguranței Statului privind activitatea lui Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și activitatea legionară de la Cahul” [Siguranța Statului's Minute about the activity of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and the legionary activity from Cahul], ASRI, D, file 1 152/1930, p. 309 in Ioan Scurtu (ed.), 2000, p. 221.

⁶⁰ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, p. 385-386.

⁶¹ Francisco Veiga, 1993, p. 115-116.

dissent of population to the Iron Guard's advantage. It also proves that it is not just the politics but also the politics of the Church that Codreanu is interested in.

According to Armin Heinen interpreting Codreanu's statements, Codreanu had two purposes in mind not just to promote his movement in a ritualistic way by wearing a cross in his hand and coming on a white horse, dressed in Romanian folk costume, followed by legionaries on foot wearing white crosses and flags. He wanted also to provoke confrontations with authorities and to stir the anti-Semitic feelings.⁶² On the other hand, the marches and propagandistic gatherings were also thought as means to test the vitality and the endurance of his followers and to check the social impact of the movement's anti-Semitic agenda.⁶³

The event that caught the eye of the Orthodox clergy throughout the country was the incident in Borșa, Maramureș, where an Orthodox priest Ioan Dumitrescu and Greek-Catholic priest Andrei Berinde together with student Constantin Dănilă were accused first of inciting the Romanian people against the Jewish minority and afterwards of provoking a revolt against the Jewish minority that set the city ablaze.⁶⁴

While discussing this three year period several questions stand out. Why the Romanian Orthodox clergy veered in the direction of Codreanu's totalitarian ideology and his radical anti-Semitism? The incendiary atmosphere in Maramureș was fueled by a series of articles regarding the situation of the Romanians in Maramureș published by Codreanu and his fellow-editors from *Pământul strămoșesc* having as result an attempt to

⁶² Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 182.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 183. ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 12/1930, p. 21.

⁶⁴ ANIC, Ministerul Justiției/Direcția Judiciară, file 111/1930-1932, Vol. II, p. 663-665 in Ioan Scurtu (ed.), 2000, pp. 229-232. For an overview of the events and the legionary campaign in the area, see Constantin Iordachi, 2004, pp. 111-114.

set on flames the Sighet Synagogue in flames.⁶⁵ Aware that Romanian authorities wanted to throw them in prison, the two priests headed to Jassy to meet Corneliu Codreanu and to ask for his help.⁶⁶ The story of Fr. Ion Dumitrescu that later affixed his name with “Borșa” as an honorary title was popularized and disseminated among the Orthodox priests increasing the popularity of the movement among the Orthodox clergy. Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa became close with the Captain and was the first clergymen to be nominated to run for a place in Parliament by the Legion in two counties (Sălaj and Bihor).⁶⁷ This plan from the Iron Guard came as a response to the LANC initiative to attack all the Orthodox priests sympathizing with the Jews, especially Fr. Grigore Pișculescu from Bucharest labeled a freemason⁶⁸ but also against the Fr. I. Popescu and Fr. V. Cordeanu for authoring a manifesto against Cuza⁶⁹ and signing an official statement of the Romanian Jews Union against Cuza.⁷⁰

The totalitarian temptation marginalizing religious and ethnic minorities and extolling the Orthodox specificity of the Romanian people was an extremely popular narrative among the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Legion had only to pick up the banner dropped by LANC and highlight even more the relevance of Eastern Christianity in order to win new allegiances from the church and clergy alike. Why was

⁶⁵ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “Legionari!” [Legionaries] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year III, no. 1 (15th of June 1929), p. 8: „Tens of thousands Romanians from Maramureș are fleeing to other countries, sucked by leeches because they have nobody to defend them.” See “Un strigăt de alarmă! Maramureșul rămâne în întregime Jidanilor” [A shout of panic! Maramureș remains entirely to the Kikes] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year III, no. 1 (15th of June 1929), pp. 10-11. Please also see Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, „Chemare către purtătorii duhului nou al vremii” [Calling for the bearers of the new spirit of the age] in ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1929, p. 29.

⁶⁶ Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, pp. 25-26. The story is also confirmed by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, pp. 379-380. Their situation was discussed during a meeting of the Iron Guard in Jassy on Sunday, 2nd of November 1930. Please see ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 12/1930, p. 72.

⁶⁷ “Candidații Gărzii de Fier” [The candidates of the Iron Guard] in *Legionarii*, Year II, no. 3 (10th of May 1931), p. 2.

⁶⁸ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 12/1930, p. 55.

⁶⁹ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 12/1930, p. 33.

⁷⁰ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 12/1930, p. 32.

this emphasis so important and why did it sharpen the differences between the Legion and other nationalist organizations can be noted openly in Fr. Ilie Imbrescu's testimony, at that time a young student in Orthodox Theology. Recounting his first meeting with A.C. Cuza, Imbrescu pointed out that during the discussion Cuza violently attacked the person of Jesus Christ and asked for a complete Aryanization of the Gospels, an attempt received with skepticism by the audience and Fr. Imbrescu.⁷¹ This public stance regarding religion troubled many of the clergymen following Cuza, be them Orthodox or Greek-Catholic, and consequently they departed to a more radical and a closer to the Christian values organization, the Legion of Archangel Michael. This is the case with two of the most representative voices coming from the Romanian clergy who shared the same totalitarian temptation through writing for a well-known LANC'S newspaper, the theologian Emilian Vasilescu⁷² (Orthodox) and Fr. Titus Mălai⁷³ (Greek-Catholic). Dissatisfied with A.C. Cuza's political organization, the two changed sides and enrolled in Codreanu's Iron Guard.

Why was this stream of religious nationalism taking over the young generation around Codreanu and why suddenly Orthodoxy becomes such an important category for the construction of a radical, nationalist discourse such as that expressed by the Iron Guard? The answer was provided by Leon Volovici who argued that

Orthodoxy was not a chance choice, but rather because picking religious confession as ethnical marker draws a clear-cut distinction between Romanians and Jews, helping nationalists to separate them more clearly. They [...] sought to define the

⁷¹ Ilie Imbrescu, 2011, p. 38. For Imbrescu, please see Adrian Nicolae Petcu "Slujitorii altarului și Mișcarea legionară. Studiu de caz: Preotul Ilie Imbrescu" [The Altar's Servants and the Legionary Movement. Case study: Ilie Imbrescu] in *Partidul, Securitatea, Cultele* [The Party, The Securitate, The Denominations] (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005), p. 65-71.

⁷² For Emilian Vasilescu (1904 - 1985), please see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/V/EmilianVasilescu.html>, Internet accessed March 21st, 2013.

⁷³ For Fr. Titus Mălai, please see http://www.procesulcomunismului.com/marturii/fonduri/foanitoiu/biserici/preoti_greco_catolici_3/preoti_greco_catolici_3.pdf, Internet accessed March 21st, 2012.

Romanian ethnic spirit as an element of Orthodoxy, which was incompatible with the model of the existing liberal state. Only a totalitarian state could secure ethnic creativity and the promotion of Christian values.⁷⁴

In other words, just as Michael Mann has shown before, Orthodoxy was not perceived through doctrinal lenses, but rather in this particular instance served the interest of the Legion in convincing the priests that the Legion was the utmost Christian political expression. The Iron Guard used this illusion as the utmost Christian organization also in order to distinguish itself from other political organizations such as LANC or other, more secular parties, which advocated complete State-Church separation. This emphasis placed on Orthodoxy and traditionalist spirituality of the Legion paved the way and opened the door of movement to the most en vogue traditionalist intellectual of that moment: Nichifor Crainic.

III. 4 Meeting Nichifor Crainic – the Movement’s First Ideologue

After 1930, Codreanu moved the Legion to Bucharest to spread the fundamentalist precepts to and from the center, proselytize the largest city of the country and attract the student body of Bucharest University to his movement.⁷⁵ That year, Codreanu changed the agenda by incorporating a political program and deciding to participate in the

⁷⁴ Leon Volovici, *National Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991) p. 56. Please see Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel. Fascist Ideology in Romania*, translated by Peter Heinegg (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1990), p. 41 and forward.

⁷⁵ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 173.

electoral process in order to garner political power. The man behind Codreanu's swift ascension was Nichifor Crainic, at that time director of *Gîndirea* journal in Bucharest.⁷⁶

From the late 1920's Crainic was the advocate of a spiritual, organic nationalism based on the perennial values of Orthodoxy. The reason Crainic began to radicalize his views and chose Codreanu as a political option related to his endeavor to become a political regime's ideologue. He considered fascism and its totalitarian temptation the perfect scenario for his claim. This idea of the intellectual turned regime ideologue was common throughout the period. Heidegger's or Carl Schmitt's entanglements with the Nazi regime, as well as the ideological involvement of Marinetti's pro avant-gardism circle in Mussolini's fascist party are perfect examples for this intellectual trend of the interwar period.⁷⁷

Under the impact of the Legion, in the 1930s Crainic added to his discourse another feature motivated by the emergence of a new generation of Romanian intellectuals: the youth. He offered his stern nationalist project to the Legionary young elite which surfaced especially at the end of the 1920s in Romania. When he encountered the movement in early 1932, the Legion was no longer a small political movement, it was already a party with two interdictions by the government (3rd of January 1931 and March 1932) and with two representatives in Romanian parliament.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ For Crainic, please see Keith Hitchins, "Gîndirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise" in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania 1860–1940. A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978). Katherine Verdery, "National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania" in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995).

⁷⁷ For Marrinetti intellectual impact, please see Zeev Sternhell, Mario Sznajder & Maia Asheri, *The Birth of the Fascist Ideology. From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 28–30.

⁷⁸ Corneliu Codreanu was elected in 31st of August 1931 with 11 301 votes as member of the Parliament on behalf of Neamț county and on 17th of April 1932 Ion Zelea Codreanu, the Captain's father is elected as member of the Parliament on behalf of Tutova county. Please see Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 489.

He was very much aware of the fact that the drive behind the young, revolutionary generation was close to Fascist ideology, especially with the Iron Guard's view of politics. Crainic attempted not just to seduce the movement, but to attract the adherence of the Romanian young elite already involved with the Legion to his traditionalist view based on the importance placed on Orthodoxy by speculating their interest in Orthodox tradition. This in turn would have made him as Iorga in the ideologue of the Romanian young generation.⁷⁹ In having Crainic as their advocate in the press, advertising the movement in *Calendarul*, the Legion won over an intellectual whose prestige was unmatched at that time by other figures in the movement like Ion Banea or even Ion. I. Moța.⁸⁰

By 1932 it became clear that Crainic changed his discourse in *Gîndirea* for a more fascist focalized narrative and the reason for this change was related to the collapse of democracy and lingering effects of the economic crisis in Romania, but also to the dissipation of the National Peasants Party in different wings under the instigations of King Carol II.⁸¹ The affinity towards fascism of the Romanian King and his financial support for the Iron Guard after his coronation in hope that he could subordinate the movement to his authoritarian purposes coupled with Nichifor Crainic's sympathy towards King Carol, led Crainic to understand that the placement of his last stakes on the

⁷⁹ He tried to attract the young generation by writing in the student organizations journals. Please see Nichifor Crainic, "Naționalismul realist" [The realistic nationalism] in *Cuvântul studențesc*, Year VI, no. 1 (22nd of March 1931), p. 1.

⁸⁰ Paul A. Shapiro, 2007, p. 152.

⁸¹ Please see Stephen Fischer-Galați, "The interwar Period" in Dinu C. Giurescu and Stephen Fischer-Galați (eds.), *Romania. A Historical Perspective*, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998), p. 307.

National Peasants Party and Carol II failed and he needed to find another outlet for his ambitions.⁸²

Already accustomed with the inner workings of the movement, Crainic began to radicalize his views according to the fascist ideological canon and embarked himself in a complex undertaking of converting the Orthodox clergy to the newly founded religion of the Legion.⁸³ On 25th of January 1932, he became director of *Calendarul* newspaper, generally known as one of the first dailies advocating openly in favor of the Legion of Archangel Michael and the movement's official voice in Bucharest. Many of the young contributors of *Gîndirea* like Dragoș Protoponescu, Radu Dragnea joined this enterprise. New figures like Vasile Vojen, Emil Cioran, or Mihail Polihroniade were the main contributors of this newspaper. Due to Nichifor Crainic's influence, but also to the presence in the editorial staff of well-known legionaries such as Ion Banea, this young generation of contributors would eventually end up by enrolling in the Iron Guard.⁸⁴

According to Zigu Ornea, *Calendarul* was shaped according to other two newspapers from Bucharest, *Cuvântul* led by Nae Ionescu and *Curentul* led by Pamfil Șeicaru and it was destined to surpass their public success and their influence among the youth.⁸⁵ The two newspaper directors mentioned above succeeded to convince newspaper distributors not to sell *Calendarul*, thus Crainic appealed to the Iron Guard's youth and

⁸² For Nichifor Crainic during the beginning of 1930s, please see Roland Clark, „Nationalism and orthodoxy: Nichifor Crainic and the political culture of the extreme right wing in 1930s Romania” in *Nationalities Papers* Vol. 40, no. 1 (2012), pp. 111-116.

⁸³ Paradoxically, Crainic started to radicalized his extremist views in the same time as Karl Barth began to openly criticize in his sermons the “pagan” and anti-Christian character of Nazism. For Karl Barth's homiletics during 1932-1933, see Angela Dienhart Hancock, *Karl Barth's Emergency Homiletics 1932-1933. A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 237-320.

⁸⁴ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 118.

⁸⁵ Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian extreme right: the 1930s* (Boulder, CO: East European Monograph, 1999), p. 244.

students to distribute his journal in Bucharest and LANC students to distribute it in Jassy.⁸⁶

He invited many of his friends from the Orthodox Church to publish in *Calendarul* in order to boost the impact of the Legion in the Orthodox milieu. Professor I. G. Savin (1885-1973),⁸⁷ Fr. Paternie Matei, the leader of the Orthodox priests' organization, Ioan V. Emilian, at that time a Theology PhD student in Paris, Victor Medrea,⁸⁸ an Orthodox theology graduate were among those, together with Crainic, doing propaganda in a religious key for Codreanu's movement.⁸⁹ Emilian and Medrea were former members of LANC dissatisfied with the secular outlook of Cuza's organization and Fr. Partenie Matei was a symbolical figure for Bucharest's clergy due to his position as professor at the Central Seminary and the Bucharest Faculty of Orthodox Theology.⁹⁰ While *Calendarul's* impact on the Romanian political scene was minimal,⁹¹ Hitler's political

⁸⁶ Roland Clark, 2012, pp. 111.

⁸⁷ For Ioan G. Savin, <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/S/IoanGhSavin.html>, Internet accessed March 21st, 2013. See Ioan Gh. Savin, *Iconoclaști și apostatați contemporani* [Iconoclasts and contemporary apostates] (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1932). Published with the financial support of P.S. Visarion Puiu, the Orthodox Bishop of Hotin, the book was a rejection of Communism, atheism, freemasonry, occultism, "historical Jesus". It served as a modern catechism challenging the intricate agenda of modernity and had a tremendous impact on the young generation of Orthodox graduates of Theology. For the Nazi infiltration in the faculties of Theology in Germany, see Susannah Heschel, "For 'Volk, Blood, and God': The Theological Faculty at the University of Jena during the Third Reich" in Anson Rabinbach and Wolfgang Bialas (eds.), *Nazi Germany and the Humanities* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), pp. 365-394. For Göttingen's Faculty of Theology, see Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust. Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 61-93.

⁸⁸ For Victor Medrea, see http://www.zelea-codreanu.com/Personalitati/2_Comandanti_Legionari/Victor_Medrea.htm, Internet accessed March 21st, 2013

⁸⁹ By attracting different university professors like himself to write in the newspaper, Crainic also intended to "convert" other university professors, especially from the humanities branch to the new values of fascism. For Nazi Germany, see Georg Bollenbeck, "The Humanities in Germany after 1933: Semantic Transformations and the Nazification of the Disciplines" in Anson Rabinbach and Wolfgang Bialas (eds.), 2006, pp. 1-20.

⁹⁰ For Fr. Partenie Matei, please see *Intellectualii și Mișcarea Legionară. Mari Conștiințe Românești* [The Intellectuals and the Legionary Movement. Great Romanian Consciences] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Buna-Vestire, 2000), p. 131.

⁹¹ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 159. Roland Clark, 2012, p. 112.

rise in Germany gave Crainic the feeling that the tide had turned. So, he decided to ally himself with the Iron Guard in the last months of the 1932.⁹²

Crainic used his intuitiveness and his skills to direct the message of the daily publication to those who were his public. He created special pages for students (*Calendarul studentului*)⁹³ and another one dedicated to the Church and school (*Școala și Biserica*)⁹⁴, seen as primordial institutions of the Romanian nation. The first article written by Crainic mentioning explicitly the Iron Guard was a direct comparison between Codreanu's movement and LANC.

Calendarul is neither belonging to LANC or to the Iron Guard, but these two vigorous branches of Romanian nationalism interest us equally. Born out the same social and national necessities and aspiring to the same Christian ideal which sometimes even I understand differently, LANC and the Iron Guard are organic expressions of the Romanian millennial creed, beyond the factionalisms which we consider temporary.⁹⁵

His text let the reader look into his intellectual project at that moment was the reunification of the Romanian right-wing movements into a single party. By equating LANC with the Iron Guard, Crainic was not ready yet to express his preference, although

⁹² Armin Heinen, p. 173.

⁹³ „The Student's Page” was inaugurated from the beginning of the newspaper and it was usually page 2 from the Saturday edition. In its pages Ion Banea wrote “Credința noastră” in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 20 (12th of February 1932), p. 2; Ion Banea, “Universitatea și spiritul creștin” in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 56 (19th of March 1932), p. 2; Teodor Bodogae at that time president of Sibiu Student Centre wrote “More religiousness!” in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 254 (23rd of December 1932), p. 3; Ilie Imbrescu, “Studentul român-creștin” [The Romanian Christian Student] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 229 (4th of November 1932), pp. 3-4; Traian Cotigă, “Studentul creștin: faptă și credință” [The Christian student: deed and faith] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 265 (6th of January 1933), p. 3.

⁹⁴ Nichifor Crainic “Biserica și Școala” [The Church and the School] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 163 (19th of September 1932), p. 4. This page inaugurated by Crainic's article appeared every Monday at page 4. The necessity of the page was already prepared in the legionary newspapers, please see Fr. Niculae M. Burlăcescu, “Pe calea cea dreaptă” [On the right path] in *Garda Râmnicului*, Year II, no. 2 (5th of May 1932), p. 2. For the necessity of approaching also the schools and not the churches in the Nazi case, see Charles B. Lansing, *From Nazism to Communism. German Schoolteachers under two Dictatorships* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 25-60.

⁹⁵ Nichifor Crainic, “Biruința naționalismului” [The triumph of nationalism] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 104 (22nd of July 1932), p. 1. Crainic's article was already prepared by different articles signaling the electoral activity of the Iron Guard. Please see “Garda de Fer candidează la Putna” [The Iron Guard runs for office in Putna] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 86 (4th of July 1932), p. 4.

in the pages of his newspaper people like Mihail Polihroniade already preached about the role of the Iron Guard.⁹⁶

The decisive step was taken by Nichifor Crainic a month later when he wrote a programmatic text about what was expected from a leader of the nation.

In these circumstances a leader is not only a man with a clear vision of the material things and a program to achieve those things, but a great animator to break the soul's locks and to release his creating waters over the sad decay of whole country. The doctrines and programs mean nothing without spiritual belief, without collective enthusiasm, the engine of all the grand salvage actions.⁹⁷

Crainic spoke about the necessity of a nation's savior, able to redeem the Romanian people from the decay where democracy led him. Crainic's innuendo about the lack of political programs and the emphasis on regenerating the Romanian souls hinted towards Codreanu as the providential man, able to lead Romania and to rescue the country from moral and political disaster. Crainic will be less subtle in future texts and I argue that even before Ioan Banea wrote his piece on the Captain, the cult of Codreanu as the providential leader had two artisans. While it was Ion I. Moța that named Codreanu Captain, in the early 1930s it was Crainic's task to bolster the Captain's public image.

On the 10th of December, a symbolic date for the Romanian students when the nationalist 1922 student strike was commemorated, Crainic wrote a text which, I argue, represents the first manifestation of the Captain's cult as envisaged after Ion I. Moța's programmatic title. Praising the young generation, Crainic stated

From this new persecution endured by the first student generation of Great Romania an invaluable and rare thing was born in the Romanian political life: the character, moral and strong as steel! This is the greatest good achieved on the 10th

⁹⁶ Mihail Polihroniade, "Rostul Gărzii de Fier" [The purpose of the Iron Guard] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 100 (18th of July 1932), pp.1-2. Republished in *Garda Râmnicului*, Year I, no. 2 (23rd of December 1932), pp. 2-3.

⁹⁷ Nichifor Crainic, "Redați poporului încrederea!" [Give back to the people his confidence!] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 125 (12 of August 1932), p. 1.

of December! That was the moment since I have known these boys with iron souls, I have watched them over the years and I find them today unshaken on their position. Ten years of persecutions, of prisons, of temptations cultivated by the Levantine villain, the Romanian politics have verified, fortified and disciplined them. This heroism structured in time was embodied in the tall and emaciated face of a young man with eyes like the sky and iron vigor. His name is on everybody's lips.⁹⁸

The generation of 1922 was the main focus of Crainic's undertaking and that the figure that surfaces at the end of the text was Corneliu Codreanu as the earthly embodiment of this generation. Nichifor Crainic was the first outside the Legion to make this close-connection between the sacrament of suffering for the nation and cult of the Captain as the embodiment of the 1922 generation's collective sacrifice. The Captain was an embodiment of a decade old tradition of persecutions directed against the youth, against the student generation and now this generation was ready to challenge politically the authority of its executioners one of whom, Nicolae Iorga, was mentioned by name in the article.

Nichifor Crainic's praise of Codreanu continued the next year, when the Iron Guard grew from two representatives in the Romanian Parliament to five.⁹⁹ Profiting from the benevolent attitude of the Romanian government led by Ion Vaida-Voevod¹⁰⁰ the Iron Guard launched itself in a vast propaganda campaign which amazed all the political adversaries, including LANC.¹⁰¹ All these elements and especially the electoral

⁹⁸ Nichifor Crainic, "10 Decembrie" [December 10th] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 244 (11th of December 1932), p. 1. Crainic is re-taking the topic developed early by A. Vântu, "Note din închisoare. Însemnările unui student" [Notes from Prison. Records of a Student] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 29 (20th of February 1932), p. 2.

⁹⁹ For the general expansion of the organizations see Armin Heinen, 1999, pp. 208-209. For the electoral success on 17th of July 1932 achieved under the name „Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu Group” which gave the Iron Guard 2.3 % of the votes and 5 seats in the Parliament, see Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 207.

¹⁰⁰ The Vaida-Voevod government came to power on the 6th of June 1932. Regarding the government's protection for Iron Guard, see Constantin Petculescu, *Mișcarea legionară. Mit și realitate* [The Legionary movement. Myth and reality] (Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1997), p. 80.

¹⁰¹ According to Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 223, losing the young generation's appeal to Codreanu's more dynamic movement, A. C. Cuza even attempted to reach unification agreement with his former students.

success were immediately noticed by Crainic, whose decision to support the Legion with the newspaper he was running was thus confirmed. In the beginning of 1933, he wrote another article eulogizing Codreanu, presented here as creator of a new world, resembling the celestial heavens.

A new year and a new enigma rising at the horizon look far way to a mountainous ridge: a young man with a bronze craven face awoke from his sleep and he is worshipping your world. Bless him! He is the only one we trust and in which we recognize ourselves.¹⁰²

Depicted by Crainic as “the young men with a bronze craven face”, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu seems like a frightening figure and as a creator of a new world. Codreanu’s profile was gigantic. The impression intended to awe upon his readers was one of greatness, characteristic to a future ruler of the country, rather than just a party leader. Crainic’s endorsement for Codreanu as a leader and as a Christian reformer of the Romanian society was probably the repayment of the offer made by the Legion at the end of 1932 or early beginning of 1933 to run for Parliament on their lists.¹⁰³

III. 5 From the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to the Tomb of a Prime-Minister. The Legion of Archangel Michael between 1932 and 1933

The breaking point that changed the perspective over the movement was represented the rather prosaic ceremony organized by the student body of Bucharest University in order to place a cross at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and thus to

¹⁰² Nichifor Crainic, “Cealaltă Românie” [The Other Romania] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 261 (3d of January 1933), p. 1.

¹⁰³ Roland Clark, 2012, p. 112.

Christianize the tomb.¹⁰⁴ The ceremony was meticulously organized by the students, the cross being sanctified in the student's church of St. Anthony from Bucharest and kept in the altar for several day.¹⁰⁵ Ilie Imbrescu, at that time a PhD student in Theology in Bucharest, was to be the second to carry the cross on his shoulders in the procession. This was meant to express the Christian character of the student youth and served as propaganda for the Legion of Archangel Michael. All the students present were members.¹⁰⁶ The procession took place on the 24th of January 1933 when the legionaries from Bucharest led by the Orthodox priest Georgescu-Edineți, the chaplain of the Bucharest University and the students of Bucharest student center affiliated with the Legion headed by Mihail Stelescu¹⁰⁷ a young member of the Romanian Parliament attempted to put a cross on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier¹⁰⁸ and were brutalized by the Romanian police.¹⁰⁹ According to an eye-witness, after a short speech by Fr. Georgescu-Edineți, the students left in procession for Carol Park, where the tomb of the Unknown Soldier was, but found it closed. Present at the scene, the first prosecutor

¹⁰⁴ Constantin Petculescu, 1997, p. 86. For the significance played by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Romanian History, please see Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims. Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 119-125.

¹⁰⁵ Ilie Imbrescu, 2011, p. 112.

¹⁰⁶ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 414.

¹⁰⁷ Mihai Stelescu (1907-1936) was a legionary commander and the youngest member of the Romanian Parliament (1932). Unsatisfied with the 1933 admission of the *Axa*, group of intellectuals in the Legion and their increasing influence on Codreanu, he left the party in 1934 and founded *Cruciada Româniismului* [The Crusade of Romanianness]. Because of his attacks in the press against Codreanu and the movement, on the 16th of July 1936 a commando of ten Theology students, members of the Iron Guard, went to the hospital where he was recovering from an operation and killed him with 120 bullets. Still, he is considered the archetype of the traitor in legionary environments.

¹⁰⁸ A reaction on the significance of this action comes from Mircea Vulcănescu, "O Cruce pe Mormântul Eroului Necunoscut" [A Cross on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier] in *Dreapta II*, No. 5 (1933), p. 3. Reprinted in Mircea Vulcănescu, *Bunul Dumnezeu cotidian. Studii despre religie* [The Good God of Everyday. Studies about religion] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), p. 358-360.

¹⁰⁹ The information comes from the staunchest opponent of the Iron Guard who at that time was State Secretary in the Ministry of Interior. Armand Călinescu, *Însemnări Politice 1916-1939* [Political Diary] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), p. 140. According to Maria Bucur, 2009, pp. 110-111 the date of 24th of January was not chosen randomly by the Iron Guard. The celebration of the unification between Moldavia and Walachia in 1859 was also followed by religious services which were performed in the memory of those dead in WWI.

Procop-Dumitrescu told the students that he had governmental orders to prohibit the cross on the tomb. Some of the students forced the police barriers and entered the park but they were stopped with police batons and the priest's ritual vestments and the cross were torn apart. Retreating from the park, after a short speech by Stelescu, the students kneeled and sang "God is with us!" The police replied with a volley of fire, hitting student Gogu Stănescu. The students left in procession for *Calendarul* editorial offices where a demonstration took place. Stelescu and Nichifor Crainic talked to the students, encouraging them to continue the protest.¹¹⁰ According to Ilie Imbrescu, a participant in the events, after the speeches of Stelescu and Crainic, Codreanu and his father came to thank the students for their sufferings for the Cross.¹¹¹

Immediately after the demonstration was over and the students in procession took the broken cross back to the student's chapel, Fr. Georgescu-Edineți was arrested and a delegation led by Mihail Stelescu, the leader of the students and a member of the Parliament went to the Police to ask for their priest's release.¹¹² Three hundred students remained in the church to pray for Georgescu-Edineți's freedom. Corneliu Codreanu came to the church, asking them to retire and to refrain from any act of provocation against the police.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ „Creștinismul în conflict cu masoneria” [Christianity conflicting with freemasonry] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 280 (27th of January 1933), p. 3. For the importance of this edition, see USHMM, RG 25. 023M.0001.00000046.

¹¹¹ Ilie Imbrescu, *Biserica și Mișcarea legionară* [The Church and the Iron Guard] in Ilie Imbrescu, *V-am scris vouă, tinerilor!* p. 123. Fr. Imbrescu was sent afterwards to Cernăuți where in 29th of January 1933, after a short religious service in the Orthodox cathedral, he spoke to 100 nationalist students about the 24th of January events from Bucharest. See USHMM, RG 25. 023M.0001.00000056. This resulted in the adherence of mostly of Bukovina students to the Iron Guard. See USHMM, RG 25. 023M.0001.62.

¹¹² A manifesto of UNSCR asked for the same thing. See USHMM, RG 25. 023M.0001.00000041.

¹¹³ „Creștinismul în conflict cu masoneria” in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 280 (27th of January 1933), p. 3.

The police brutality and the tearing apart of the cross scandalized Nichifor Crainic who wrote several articles in support of the legionary students.¹¹⁴ In his articles, Crainic criticized the violence of the police as means of occult freemasonry to prohibit a manifestation of Romanian nationalism and saw this as a direct attack on the Orthodoxy of the Romanian nation. He defended the students from the Police's accusation of provoking chaos during the skirmish with the authorities in Carol Park and during the demonstration from *Calendarul* headquarters and accused freemasonry for causing chaos.¹¹⁵

Crainic did more than just write articles in favor of the legionary students beaten by Police in the events from Carol Park. As a professor in the Bucharest's Faculty of Theology, on the 25th of January (the day of St. Gregory the Theologian, the patron-saint of the theological school) he attended the traditional lunch with the professors and Patriarch Miron Cristea. He raised the problem with the Patriarch and his fellow colleagues from the faculty. The Patriarch reacted positively to Crainic's position and condemned Police brutality against the students and promised Crainic that he will do all the necessary inquiries at the Ministry of Internal Affairs to allow the cross on the Unknown Soldier's tomb and to drop the charges against Fr. Georgescu-Edineți and the students arrested by the Police. The Patriarch's speech was followed by Fr. Ioan Mihălcescu, the future Metropolitane of Moldavia, who condemned the sacrilege of tearing up the cross and the impiety of not having a cross on the Unknown Soldier's tomb.

¹¹⁴ Nichifor Crainic, „Cavalerii sfântului mormânt” [The knights of the sacred tomb] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 280 (27th of January 1933), p. 1; Nichifor Crainic, „Sacrilegiul împotriva Crucii” [The sacrilege against the Cross] in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 281 (28th of January 1933), p. 1 this article was re-written in a new version: Nichifor Crainic, „Steaua polară” [The Northern Star] in *Cuvântul studențesc*, Year 8, no. 1 (25th of February 1933), p. 1; Nichifor Crainic, „Țara se mișcă” [The country is moving] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 282 (29th of January 1933), p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Nichifor Crainic, „Cine a provocat dezordinea?” [Who caused the chaos?] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 284 (4th of February 1933), p. 1.

Crainic summarized the two speeches and asked for a procession of Bucharest's Orthodox priests headed by the Patriarch to place the cross on the tomb, a proposal accepted by all those present.¹¹⁶

The decision of the Patriarch and his speech was followed by a communiqué of the Orthodox priests in Bucharest in which they condemned the act of 24th of January when an Orthodox priest was beaten, expressed their solidarity with the legionary students that were brutalized and with the Patriarch's decision to preside a procession of the Bucharest Orthodox priests to the grave of the Unknown Hero to place a cross there.¹¹⁷ The author of the statement, Fr. D. George-Dușumea, and representatives of Bucharest priests such as Fr. Grigore Cristescu and Fr. Haralamb Roventă both professors at Bucharest's Faculty of Theology handed their written protest to Patriarch Miron and later on paid an official visit to the Minister of Internal Affairs, G. G. Mironescu to protest about what happened in Carol Park.¹¹⁸ The legionary clergy was not alone in petitioning the Patriarch. The representatives of the legionary student organizations Ștefan Cămpineanu, the president of UNSCR [The Union of the Christian Students from Romania], Mihail Stelescu, the leader of Bucharest Student Centre and M. Ștefan, the president of the Society of Theology Students paid a visit to Patriarch Miron Cristea to share their point of view.¹¹⁹

The Iron Guard's intellectuals from *Axa* speculated the favorable movement, even after the official conclusion of the events with the placement of a wooden cross was placed on the grave of the Unknown Soldier by a procession of the legionary youth and

¹¹⁶ All the information are taken from „Protestul împotriva sacrilegiului de la Parcul Carol. Cuvântarea Părintelui Patriarch” [Protest against the sacrilege from Carol Park. The Speech of the Patriarch] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 281 (28th of January 1933), p. 5.

¹¹⁷ „Comunicat” in *Calendarul*, Year I, no. 282 (29th of January 1933), p. 5.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹¹⁹ Ibidem.

Bucharest clergy.¹²⁰ They followed the story about the Patriarch's promise that he will do all the diligences to the authorities and he will place the cross personally on the grave of the Unknown Soldier. Fr. Georgescu-Edineți¹²¹ was praised and advertised as a martyr for the Cross.¹²² Mihai Stelescu, the student leader who participated in the 24th of January events defined the students action and the *Axa* campaign in the following terms

The fight for the cross... will lead to placing the holy cross on the frontispiece of the Romanian state.... From now on the battle has begun. Who will be the stronger will triumph and maybe those who will suffer the most will triumph.

According to Stelescu, the action from 24th of January 1933 was the beginning of the legionary Christianization of the Romanian state, but also the commencement of the movement's sufferings in its fight for the cross.¹²³ The tomb of the Unknown Soldier became a place to be Christianized a point from where the legionary revolution could start enveloping the country. The campaign ended with two articles praising Fr. Georgescu-Edineți and the legionary youth and beholding Patriarch Miron Cristea responsible for the delay in placing the broken stone cross on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

There is someone in this Christian country, made by people, yet sanctified by God to see the preserving the Heaven's way and the defending of Christ's cross. He blessed the 24th of January action and the blood spilled by the Priest and he promised that a monumental cross worthy of our national Hero's tomb will be placed there without delay. Following his intervention, everybody complied and waited. From that moment until now five months passed, the deadline has passed a

¹²⁰ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 211.

¹²¹ Fr. Georgescu-Edineți replied to the nice words said about him by eulogizing the young, Christian generation of the Iron Guard. Please see Fr. N. T. Georgescu (Edineți), "Cinste Studențimei creștine! Slavă lui Dumnezeu!" [Honor to the Christian students! Glory to God!] in *Cuvântul studențesc* Year 8, no. 1 (25th of February 1933), p. 3.

¹²² „Fr. Georgescu-Edineți” in *Axa*, Year I, no. 6 (5th of February 1933), p. 2. The priest Georgescu-Edineți was defended in by A. Vântu, „Duhovnicul studenților și Patriarhia” [The students confessor and the Patriarchy] in *Axa*, Year I, no. 7 (19th of February 1933) when the Patriarchy intended to take disciplinary actions against him for inciting the students to violence.

¹²³ The press campaign was also supported by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, “Partidele politice și crucea” [The political parties and the Cross] in *Telegraful roman*, Year LXXXI, no. 13-14 (11th of February 1933), pp. 1-2.

long time ago and we see no positive achievement except the judicial action on charges of rebellion filed against the Priest and the students.¹²⁴

The revolt against Patriarch Miron Cristea was not joined by *Calendarul* or by Nichifor Crainic. Crainic preferred an alliance with Metropolitae Nicolae Bălan in the pages of *Calendarul* who started a campaign of galvanizing the Orthodox lay-intellectuals around the Orthodox Church.¹²⁵ Crainic's campaign was already preceded by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, a professor in Sibiu's Faculty of Theology, who, in the special page "Biserica și Școala" in *Calendarul* addressed an appeal to all the Orthodox lay intellectuals to join Metropolitae Bălan in the 5th of March meeting to found an association for Orthodox laity under the blessing of Orthodox Metropolitae from Ardeal.¹²⁶ "Frăția Ortodoxă Română" [The Romanian Orthodox Fellowship] founded in Cluj-Napoca on the 5th of March 1933 was intended to emphasize that for the Romanian intellectuals from Transylvania "race and orthodoxy are the original constitution of the Romanian national essence."¹²⁷ The statement of Metropolitae Nicolae Bălan was meant to galvanize the Romanian nationalist elite from Transylvania in support of the Orthodox Church and many of those who answered to Bălan's appeal (Sextil Pușcariu for instance) became later on sympathizers of the Iron Guard.

¹²⁴ "O provocare și o întrebare" [A challenge and a question] in *Axa*, Year I, no. 14 (15th of June 1933), p. 8.

¹²⁵ Nichifor Crainic, "Semnalul Ardealului" [Transylvania's Signal] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 307 (27th of February 1933), p. 1. Dragoș Protopopescu, "Cruciada ortodoxiei" [Orthodoxy's crusade] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 317 (11th of March 1933), p. 1.

¹²⁶ Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, "Chemarea intelectualilor ortodocși din Ardeal" [The Summon of the Orthodox Intellectuals from Transylvania] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 278 (23d of January 1933), p. 3. He addressed the same invitation in "În Duminica Ortodoxiei să fim la Cluj!" [In the Sunday of Orthodoxy let us be in Cluj!] in *Telegraful român* Year LXXXI, no. 20-21 (4th of March 1933), p. 1.

¹²⁷ Metropolitae Nicolae Bălan, *Ortodoxia în mijlocul frământărilor de azi. Orientări programatice pentru Frăția Ortodoxă Română* [The Orthodoxy in today's turmoil. Programmatic Guidelines for the Romanian Orthodox Fellowship] (Sibiu: Diecezană, 1933), p. 14.

The legionary youth had an extreme positive reaction to the constitution of the fellowship since it was viewed as the return of the old generation to Christ and his Church, re-adopting and, thus, acknowledging the legionary young generation's efforts to preserve Christianity from secularism or Communist atheist influences.¹²⁸ The positive reaction of the young generation did not pass unnoticed by the Orthodox clergy in Metropolitane Bălan's entourage. Fr. Grigore T. Marcu, a professor in the Sibiu's Faculty of Theology replied to the kind words of Bucharest's student organization by saying:

The students' faith might be Christian, but there is one more thing missing, that is for them to feel as Christian as they believe. This is the thing the faithful students still have to pursue.¹²⁹

The reprimand addressed to the nationalist students was a direct warning that they fell short in being accepted fully by the Orthodox Church. Although the words seemed to condemn the Legionary movement and its youth, it was the first time a clergyman addressed the young generation directly and openly and giving advice.

According to Patriarch Miron Cristea's memoirs, the press campaign from *Calendarul* directed towards the Romanian lay intellectuals, but also supporting Metropolitane Bălan in his undertaking to shape an Orthodox fellowship of laity and to challenge the organic law of Romanian Orthodox Church's organization was supported financially from Metropolitane Bălan's own pockets.¹³⁰ It was the first time a member of the Holy Synod took personal interest in the movement's press and financed it when this press was acting on his behalf.

¹²⁸ Cuvântul studentesc, "Frăția Ortodoxă Română" și studențimea" [The Romanian Orthodox Fellowship and the students] in *Cuvântul studentesc* Year VIII, no. 2 (12 of March 1933), p. 3.

¹²⁹ Grigore T. Marcu, "Noui zări pentru studențime" [New horizons for students] in *Calendarul* Year II, no. 331 (27th of March 1933), p. 3.

¹³⁰ Elie Miron Cristea, *Note ascunse. Însemnări personale (1895-1937)* [Hidden notes. Personal Lines] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1999), p. 147.

The year 1933 marked the apogee of the movement and witnessed political changes in terms of strategy. For the first time, the Orthodox clergy felt that a political movement is taking their side against the state. The presence of the Orthodox priests in this particular phase in the movement's political expansion has ensured that the Iron Guard's political message was well received in the ecclesiastical structures and by so doing ensured the penetration of its political message in the sermons and the teachings of the Orthodox clergymen. By covering in minute details the events from 24th of January and 5th of March, the editorial staff of *Calendarul* paid a huge service in transmitting the message of Codreanu's movement towards the Orthodox clergy. For the first time, the clergy felt that a political movement was taking interest in its problems and undertook steps in to represent it in front of the authorities. Also, *Calendarul* was the public rostrum where all the issues of the clergy (the remuneration problem, the danger of a Communist, atheist revolution, the unjust character of the State's legislation regarding the clergy, the intrusion of the bishops and of the political parties in the life of the Church, etc.) were brought to light by Nichifor Crainic and his fellow-editors. One of the clergymen converted to fascism after experience of 24th of January events and by joining *Calendarul* editorial staff, was Ilie Imbrescu. A PhD student in Theology at Bucharest University and from February 1934 a priest in Bazargic, in southern Dobrogea, he was seduced by the emphasis the legionary placed on the veneration of the Christian cross and the respect the legionary students showed to Orthodox clergy. During the summer of 1933, he adhered to the Legion shortly after the events of 24th of January, while participating at the construction works at Casa Verde [The Green House], the legionary headquarters in Bucharest.¹³¹

¹³¹ Ilie Imbrescu, 2011, p. 65.

In this quality of Iron Guard member, Ilie Imbrescu made his debut¹³² in the prodigious newspaper *Axa*, seen as the rostrum of legionary secular intellectuality.¹³³ He published one of the programmatic texts about the relation between Orthodox theology and the Iron Guard, between Orthodoxy and fascism.¹³⁴ In the pages of his text, Fr. Imbrescu speaks about the Legion as the embodiment of the Church's doctrines considering the legionaries as

‘fools for Christ’ who, because of their love to see the heavens on earth, live of the legitimate enthusiasm of work, under a single slogan, that is Sincerity conditioned by the only means to succeed: Sacrifice. Their resilience towards the world's mockery and temptations, their power to change clay into valuable, useful pots are the heritage of the beneficial thrust in the Saints' example and the their consequent following... their courage to bear any contempt and any hatred made them pillars and accomplishers of the hierarchy of values, which is molded into shape according to ‘celestial Hierarchy's prototype.’¹³⁵

In Fr. Imbrescu's passionate description of the Iron Guard's youth he identifies it with the sacred people of God, the Russian “fools for Christ,”¹³⁶ similar to the Orthodox saints and earthly embodiment of the celestial hierarchy from the Orthodox theology. Because in the Orthodox theology influenced heavily by Dionysius Areopagite's *Mytical Theology* God's grace towards his creation comes through the mediation of the celestial hierarchy¹³⁷, it means that in the Legion's case through this mediation makes the archangelic theology of the Iron Guard a normative according to the Orthodox canons.

¹³² His first text was published in another place. Ilie I. Imbrescu, “Hristos” [Christ] in *Cuvîntul studentesc* [The student word] Year VIII, no. 2 (12th of March 1933), p.1-2. He also published before this text as a PhD candidate in Theology another text: Ilie I. Imbrescu, “Spre un front al studențimii ortodoxe” [Towards an united front of the Orthodox students] in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 380 (29th of May 1933), p. 3.

¹³³ Francisco Veiga, 1993, pp. 159-161.

¹³⁴ Ilie Imbrescu, „Teologii și ‚Garda de Fier’” [The Theologians and the Iron Guard] in *Axa*, Year I, no 14 (15th of June 1933), p. 3.

¹³⁵ Ilie Imbrescu, 1933, p. 3.

¹³⁶ Nicholas Lossky, *Nebunii lui Hristos* [Christ's fools] (Timișoara: Amarcord, 1995), p. 55 and passim.

¹³⁷ Please see Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 47-83.

This is the starting point of the Christian fused hagiography of the movement in which the myth of sainthood and that of sacrifice would constitute the ideological linchpin for shaping the movement's sacrament of death, pivotal for the legionary theology. A virtuous people of God, the Legion becomes the true Church, the realization of the Orthodox Church's own commandments, an action which should be embraced and cultivated by the Orthodox priests and theologians.

But for Ilie Imbrescu the reality of the Orthodox Church's reaction fell behind his expectations:

What about the servants of the Holy Altar?!... Some anathematize these young people because probably they attempt 'to serve two Masters: God and Mammon.' Others are content with the denunciation of the tempter, forgetting that our Savior said 'who is not against us is with us.' What is the most important thing the theologians are forgetting or not taking into account is the fact that the legionaries do not falsify the teaching of the Holy Church, they obey completely its canons, therefore keeping them away from heresy. To subdue the political to the spiritual in as much as to transform the purpose of the struggle and sacrifice for a Christian Romania of the Romanians in religious faith, this is what is left over by the majority of those who the legionnaires want to defend in this particular moment when the dread caused this power of their struggle betrays the 'occult' through everything that it unleashes with infamy and terror against the Iron Guard.¹³⁸

Ilie Imbrescu criticized the clergy for both its apathy, the reluctance to perceive the Iron Guard's role and for continuing its obedience towards the State or the "occult" organization, a pseudonym for freemasonry. Fr. Imbrescu accused the Romanian Orthodox Church of being incapable of reaching the people and grasp the reality of the transformation of politics into a religious activity. According to this article, as an already sacralized political embodiment due to the Christian message embedded in the legionary political narrative, the Iron Guard stands not just as a simple party or a religious heresy, but rather a political expression of Orthodoxy itself, coming from within the Orthodox

¹³⁸ Fr. Ilie I. Imbrescu, 1933, p. 3.

Church defending it against any threats. The public sought by Fr. Imbrescu was not the Iron Guard's intelligentsia which already came back to the values of millennial Orthodoxy, but rather the high-clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Church, reluctant to even consider collaborating with the Romanian fascists.

Ilie Imbrescu wrote another article in the same journal in order to clarify his positions and make them more explicit for the Orthodox clergy.¹³⁹ After sketching a parallel between the life of Jesus Christ and the fact that he was nailed on the cross because of the alliance between the political factor (in this case Pilate) and the occult factor (the Jewish synagogue), Imbrescu considers that this scenario can be very well applied “in the midst of every nation.”¹⁴⁰ A party to be able to govern, the author thinks, needs “divine grace, especially when it comes to the political leader of a nation.” His critical assessments were addressed both to the political class of interwar Romania, but also to King Carol II himself. According to Imbrescu, the political leader, the political arena had to be regenerated from scratch and the solution was at hand, namely the Iron Guard.

On the 10th of December 1933 the Iron Guard was dissolved by the government of I. G. Duca in order to prohibit the movement running in the upcoming general elections.¹⁴¹ Many of the Iron Guard's leaders, including the Orthodox Dean of Orăștie, Fr. Ioan Moța were imprisoned as precaution.¹⁴² Others like Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa went into hiding¹⁴³ or were expelled from the University as Ilie Imbrescu.¹⁴⁴ Corneliu

¹³⁹ Ilie I. Imbrescu, „Politică și Dogmă” [Politics and Dogma] in *Axa*, Year I, no. 16 (1st of August 1933), p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Armin Heinen, p. 211.

¹⁴² „Preotul Ioan Moța în închisoare!” [The Priest Ioan Moța in prison!] in *Telegraful român* Year LXXXVII, no. 48 (16th of December 1933), p. 3.

¹⁴³ Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, p. 97.

Codreanu gave a final order to his followers and disappeared immediately after the dissolution fearing his life.¹⁴⁵ General Gheorghe Cantacuzino left in charge of the movement's leadership by Codreanu sent threatening letters to all the members of government, including prime-minister I. G. Duca.¹⁴⁶ According to a confidential document, a legionary commando gathered in the house of General Cantacuzino on the 28th of December to receive the benediction of an Orthodox priest for their attempt to assassinate I.G. Duca in Sinaia, where he was received in a private audience by King Carol II.¹⁴⁷ The following day, the commando succeeded in its mission and it seemed that the wave of arrests and public condemnation of this radical gesture thought that set the tombstone and the final epitaph for Codreanu's movement.

III. 6 Final Remarks

The Iron Guard became in a relatively short time a political power to be reckoned with. By using its members or its affiliated intellectuals, Codreanu expanded his organization. He used every opportunity of propaganda in the movement's best advantage. The endorsement received from Nichifor Crainic and his *Calendarul* and the dissemination of the political agenda popularized in the pages of this journal seduced a part of the Romanian low clergy, eager to see that someone was taking time to address its most ardent problems. Together with the events from Maramureş and the ceremony from

¹⁴⁴ Ilie Imbrescu, p. 83.

¹⁴⁵ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *Fascismul în Ungaria și România* [Fascism in Hungary and Romania] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), p. 392.

¹⁴⁶ Duiuliu Sfințescu, p. 84.

¹⁴⁷ Francisco Veiga, p. 146.

the Unknown Soldier's tomb, the articles from *Calendarul* set the tone of the discussion between the low clergy and the Iron Guard.

This is the period when one witnesses the emergence of a young generation of fascist priests such as Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, Fr. Grigore Cristescu or Fr. Georgescu-Edineți who supported the movement and to argue on its behalf. These priests had the necessary theological training and the opportunities to engage ideologically the precarious theological vision of Codreanu and to develop it into something new and original. This generation of clergymen supporting the Iron Guard and writing in favour of Codreanu's movement will be present throughout the its history, influencing according to their Christian view and what they thought best for the Orthodox Church. In the early stages of the movement, the main important ideologues are clerical-fascists such as Nichifor Crainic and Ilie Imbrescu who proposed a version of "syncretic' clerical fascism"¹⁴⁸ in the case of Imbrescu and "colluding clerical fascism"¹⁴⁹ in the case of Crainic to the Church in order to "seduce" the low clergy and the hierarchy.¹⁵⁰ The incident from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier presented exactly the co-existence under the Iron Guard's umbrella of both these varieties of clerical fascism and how the clergymen describing these categories functioned in the legionary context.

The death of Prime Minister I.G. Duca will present the movement in a new light, which was never known before by its followers and sympathizers. By defending the assassins and by refusing to turn himself in to the Police, Codreanu estranged and antagonized people like Nichifor Crainic who saw his dream of unifying the right wing

¹⁴⁸ Roger Griffin, "The 'Holy Storm': 'Clerical Fascism' through the Lens of Modernism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (June 2007), p. 220.

¹⁴⁹ Roger Griffin, 2007, pp. 219-220.

¹⁵⁰ I use the term "syncretic' clerical fascists" literally. See Roger Griffin, 2007, p. 220.

under his intellectual counsel ruined. The members of the Holy Synod received the news with shock. However, Codreanu and his followers were again in just one year on the lips of every bishop in that meeting.

CHAPTER IV

Seducing the “Bride of Christ”. Legionary Propaganda and the Romanian Orthodox Church (1934-1937)

The assassination of Prime Minister I. G. Duca (30th of December 1933) by a legionary commando on Sinaia railway station’s platform after an audience to King Carol II left the Romanian public opinion shocked and bewildered.¹ The situation in the country normalized by the 3rd of January 1934 when the new Liberal Prime Minister, Gheorghe Tătăărăscu pledged his oath of fidelity to the monarch and the Romanian parliament. A thorough men-hunt was directed against the Iron Guard in order to find and bring to justice those culpable for Duca’s death. The assassinate *per se* has represented the end of a defensive, probing period between the Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church, and the transition to a more aggressive stance from the Iron Guard. Several priests were imprisoned together with legionary leadership determining the clergy to adopt a more open and benevolent attitude towards the movement, a chance immediately speculated by the Iron Guard. The ascension of Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, an Orthodox priest as Secretary General of the movement of points that one of Codreanu’s main objectives were to garner the attention and political support of the Romanian Orthodox Church, both central and local.

With increasingly large numbers of Orthodox clerics joining its ranks, the movement finds itself engaged in a vast operation of propaganda using the clerics that already adhered to further the Legion’s numbers. This chapter focuses primarily on the

¹ Armand Călinescu, *Însemnări Politice 1916-1939* [Political Diary] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), p. 144.

relationship between the Romanian fascists and the Romanian Orthodox Church from the assassination of Duca in 1933 until the Moța-Marin burial (13th of January - 13th of February 1937). Seen even by the legionaries as the peak of the movement's propaganda expansion, this period is witness to an intricate association between the two, the present chapter intending to highlight both sides of the relationship. After Duca's assassination the Holy Synod issued a stern reprimand condemning the ways of seducing the nationalist youth into murderous actions in a "Pastoral letter." Thus in engaging in the social activities of the church and inaugurating the church building project in the aftermath of I. G. Duca's assassination I see a way in which the Iron Guard sought to re-gain the lost ground in terms of propaganda among the clergy. Through different activities materialized in benevolent work in the benefit of the Church by building churches and crosses along the roads, renovating old sanctuaries or refurbishing graveyards, the Iron Guard had as primary objective to change the perception of the high-ranking and lower-ranking clergy about the movement's ideological goals. By placing on the working camps agenda several objectives belonging to the Church, the Romanian fascists wanted to change the perception that they were representatives of a nihilistic nationalism or that they shared the secularist contempt towards institutional religion that their German Nazi or Italian Fascist counterparts were known for.

I argue that the working camp was not only a place of propaganda among the common citizens of 1930s Romania, but also a demonstration of constructive nationalism that targeted the reluctant high hierarchy seducing it into adhering to the movement and the still wavering low-clergy of the Orthodox Church. The new churches built in these camps, Archangel Michael as their patron saint, the rituals performed all-over Romania in the camps, the interest paid by the Iron Guard's leaders in the presence in large numbers

of bishops and priest alike in the activities inside these camps and the relation between this building process as a reflection of Codreanu's cult (the tradition of the Captains and church builders from the Romanian history) are marking signs of a fascist theology as represented by a highly modernist architectural project. Also, as in the case of Italian political religion of fascism the emphasis on constructions such as churches emphasized the overarching relationship between the legendary and glorious times of the Romanian princes building churches and the present of the legionaries re-enacting this initiative once more at the Captain's orders. As Emilio Gentile has poignantly shown in the case of Italian fascist political religion,

Monuments and architecture in general therefore had a highly symbolic importance, and through their very presence were intended to contribute, as was in the case of public worship, to the permeation of fascist mythology into the consciousness of the Italian people.²

The emphasis on work originated in *Narodnik* and Tolstoian ideas preaching the necessity of manual work for the young men to achieve an equilibrium of the mind and body and to refrain from irrational acts.³ By building churches or party headquarters and revitalizing both the Romanian youth through work by "taming the body"⁴ and the Romanian village by not only re-sacralizing the place but also offering a sense of community between the young people and the villagers, by building a Church the movement intended, as in the Italian case, to voice its theology and political ideology through stone.⁵ According to Rebecca Anne Haynes quoting George Macrin⁶ the main

² Emilio Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, no. 2-3 (May-June 1990), p. 246.

³ "Romania" in Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism. Doctrines of Revolution in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1964), p. 98.

⁴ Valentin Săndulescu, "'Taming the body': Preliminary Considerations Regarding the Legionary Working Camps System" in *Historical Yearbook* Vol. 5 (2008), pp. 85-94.

⁵ Emilio Gentile, *Il Fascismo di pietra* (Rome: Gius Laterza, 2007), p. 14 and following.

emphasis of the working camps was to build a new “parallel society” and to give the Romanians a taste of what the Romanian legionary would be like.⁷

However, I argue that, since legionary history was marked by the importance of martyrdom through persecution, during the times when the engagement with the political order were scarce and persecution absent, the narrative about *white* martyrdom surfaced. As Codreanu said during the works for building the Bucharest legionary headquarters, the legionaries had to distinguish themselves in time of peace through the peaceful “heroism of work”, which was similar to the “heroism of blood” spelled for the Legion.⁸ The situation of the Iron Guard was similar to that of early Christianity, when after the decree Milan giving liberty to Christians and ending the age of martyrdom, a group of Christians retired into the desert and continued the mortifications of their bodies in order to replace the existence of martyrdom. Monasticism was perceived by Christian theologians not just as a contemplative state of men, but also as “white martyrdom,” that is a perpetual mortification in order to reach the personal redemption and the redemption of the whole human kind.⁹

This idea about the Iron Guard, as a quasi-monastic order, in which its members continued to sacrifice themselves in order to gain the redemption of the nation in the beyond was extremely popular in the movement, even among those intellectuals from a

⁶ George Macrin, „O nouă școală românească. Taberele de muncă” [A New Romanian School. The Working Camps] in *Însemnări sociologice*, Year I, no. 4 (July 1935), pp. 16-23.

⁷ Rebecca Anne Haynes, “Working Camps, Commerce and the Education of the ‘New Man’ in the Romanian Legionary Movement” in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 51, no. 4 (2008), p. 945.

⁸ USHMM, RG 25. 23M. 0004. 000000000117.

⁹ Daniel Boyarin, “Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism” in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* Vol. 6, no. 4 (1998), pp. 577-627. Also see Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert. Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 181-212. For Anthony the Great, see Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Anthony. Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Lund: Trinity Press, 1998), pp. 116-119.

more secular side. In 1933, when the movement started to build a dam in Vișani¹⁰ and the headquarters in Bucharest, Mihail Polihroniade saluted the initiative of the legionaries and wrote an article to popularize their efforts:

There are three years since Corneliu Codreanu founded the Iron Guard. He founded this movement not as a political instrument, but also as a school of heroism. Our Romanian people can [...] be redeemed only by a legion or archangels dressed in the cloth of immaculate purity, handling without mercy the fire whips of purification. [...] *I ask myself sometimes trying to stay away from any hint of sentimentalism and using all my rational objectivity if the Iron Guard is not already living an ascetic experience or the movement follows a monastic discipline* [my Italics]. I realize that in our historical context only this kind of organization, ascetically disciplined, fanatic for an ideal and following its leader to hell can achieve the national revolution and to ground on new and steady foundations the life of Romanian society. Courage, spirit of self sacrifice, discipline, the capacity for collective effort, the legionaries have proven in various occasions. But the noblest traits of the soul fortify only through repetition and that is the reason why the Captain started with his legionaries an even more bold action than before. He started to build the “House of the Wounded Legionaries”.¹¹

Mihail Polihroniade presented the movement as an ascetical one, which continued to work on the virtues and the noble traits of the Romanian soul and internalized the sacrament of suffering and martyrdom, without spelling the blood of its members. The idea that any action of the movement (working in the camps included) should be based on the issue of self-sacrifice was also confirmed by Ion I. Moța. Speaking about the ideological differences between LANC and the Legion, Moța underlined the distinction

¹⁰ For the Vișani working camp see Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For my legionaries] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994), pp. 462-465. Codreanu even stated that the dam will come “out the heroism of your work. (p. 463). “Informații” [Information] in *Garda Râmnicului*, Year II, no. 6 (1st of July), p. 3 mentioned that a religious service performed by four priests preceded the beginning of the works and that the first legionary organizations joining the camp where those from Buzău, Brăila, Putna and Bucharest.

¹¹ Mihail Polihroniade, “Construim!” [We build!] in *Axa*, Year I, no. 17 (6th of September 1933), p. 3. In another article, Vasile Marin spoke also about this ascetic reality: “...in that day, the Iron Guard’s legionaries, the *20 years old ascetics* [my underline], the pioneers of a new religion, the martyrs (mucenicii) of action without repay, having the spade in one hand and the trowel in another can look proudly in the autumn to the harvest of their spring’s sowing.” in Vasile Marin, “Răboj” [The Score], *Axa*, Year I, no. 18 (19th of September 1933), p. 5.

between the movement and other parties the fact the Iron Guard was ready to perform benevolent and voluntary

[...] work that resumes the essence of the new national struggle preached and carried out by the Iron Guard: the sacrifice (*jertfa*) to create a new Romania, the imperious sacrifice, full of faith, mirth and liberated from human egoism.¹²

Both sides of the Iron Guard, the religious one represented by Ion I. Moța¹³ and the secular one represented by Mihail Polihroniade and Vasile Marin emphasized that like in early Christian monasticism, the rule of self-sacrifice for a higher goal, that is personal/national salvation could be only achieved through the means of self-sacrifice. Although written before the first generation of legionary martyrs came into being after the violent electoral campaign in December 1933 and the assassination of Prime Minister I. G. Duca these influential texts were internalized by the movement's followers and put into practice during the large campaign of working camps started in 1934. The idea of "white martyrdom" following a wave of repression causing numerous casualties from the ranks will shape the future development of the Iron Guard. These fierce periods when blood was shed of "red martyrdom" alternated with the "white martyrdom" or even co-existed, but there was not a time when the two were absent in the history of the Legion.

The electoral impact of the Iron Guard's construction project was significant. It made a notable presence in the theological debates inside the Church. The period starting from 1935 bore witness to the enactment of a certain theological perception of the nation

¹² Ion I. Moța, "Garda de Fier și LANC" [The Iron Guard and LANC] in *Axa*, Year I, no. 19 (1st of October 1933), p. 1.

¹³ According to Zeev Barbu, Moța was the legionary archetype of the "martyr", the exponent of "*Theologia Crucis*" and the "mystique of death". I will argue that his fixation with martyrdom was also rooted in his personal context, Transylvanian Orthodoxy influenced by the Catholic theology of Great Friday, the Friday of Crucifixion. Zeev Barbu, "Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Iron Guard, the Fascist Movement of Romania" in Stein Uglevik Larsen, Bernt Gagtvet, Jan Petter Myklebust (eds.), *Who were the Fascists. Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), pp.386-387

in the legionary press. During this period, the legionary ideologues, Corneliu Codreanu, Ioan Moța, Ioan Banea, Alexandru Cantacuzino, Vasile Marin, Nae Ionescu, Traian Cotigă, and several others have published not just their capital ideological works for the movement's doctrine, but also took pains to associate the extremist nationalist agenda with a strong religious input in their writings. The frequent invocation of religious imagery and metaphors coming from the scriptures or the Orthodox dogma were successfully blended with an emphasis on the redemption of the nation to reach its historical destiny, a master narrative designed to attract the sympathies of the Orthodox clergy. The lay-intellectuals of the Iron Guard were not alone in this undertaking, always supported in their endeavor and backed up by the (consecrated) servants of the Archangel. Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Valeriu Beleuță, Fr. Vasile Boldeanu, Fr. Grigore Cristescu, Fr. Liviu Stan, Gheorghe Racoveanu, Vasile Țepordei, Victor Medrea, Valerian Trifa, Nicu Crăcea, Ioan V. Georgescu, Gheorghe Furdui contributed to the shaping of a legionary ideology of the nation by bringing in their theological knowledge and their stern commitment to the movement. Following, expanding and developing the traditional trend established by their predecessors (Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu) they targeted the high hierarchy attempting to attract them to the political values of the movement but at the same time tried to ingratiate themselves into a silent dialogue with the official nationalist narrative of the Romanian Orthodox Church, as expressed in its official journals and newspapers.

Most fruitfully this dialogue between lay intellectuals secular or practicing Christians and the Orthodox priests and un-ordained theologians brought forth what I would call “points of intersection” between the Romanian fascists engaged in their propaganda and the Romanian clergy keen to express itself in a political and radical

manner. I am suggesting that not solely the working camps, but also the students' national congresses from 1935 and 1936, the newspaper editing of both sides in this dialogue, the book publishing all served to engender, what I term the nationalist theology of the Iron Guard.

IV. 1 From Prisons to Resurrection. The Imprisoned Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church

After Duca's assassination in 1933,¹⁴ the Liberal government headed by Constantin Angelescu continued the already launched operation on the 9th of December banned the participation of the Iron Guard in the following elections and imprisoned Iron Guard leaders all over the country.¹⁵ Those from Bucharest were incarcerated at Jilava Military Prison, near Bucharest.¹⁶ Codreanu was nowhere to be found.¹⁷ However, those who spent their next few months in penitentiary counted numerous representatives of the

¹⁴ Several suppositions arose about this assassination. Paul D. Quinlan denies any implication of the King in the assassination Paul D. Quinlan, *Regele Playboy. Carol al II-lea al României* [The Playboy King. Carol II of Romania] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008), p.198. Others like Florea Nedelcu and Nichifor Crainic consider that the king ordered the killing of Duca that Codreanu executed. See Florea Nedelcu, *De la restaurație la dictatura regală* [From Restoration of the Monarchy to Royal Dictatorship] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1981) p. 68; Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe, zile negre. Memorii I* [Good days, bad days] (Bucharest: Gîndirea, 1991) p. 216.

¹⁵ Florea Nedelcu, 1981, p. 70. For Codreanu's perspective about the event please see his "Letter to New Year 1935" in Corneliu Codreanu, 2010, p. 32 where, addressing his New Year's Eve greetings to his adherents, he spoke about the proportions of these arrests 18,000 arrests, 300 people sick in prisons, 16 legionaries killed and "three buried alive", a direct allusion to Duca's killers. On the same lines we have Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *O Istorie a Fascismul în Ungaria și România* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), pp. 387-388. According to Armin Heinen Codreanu number is exaggerated, the real number being 1700 arrests or maybe double, Armin Heinen, *Legiunea „Arhanghelul Mihail“ Mișcare socială și organizație politică. O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional* translated by Cornelia Eșianu and Delia Eșianu [The Legion of "Archangel Michael" Social movement and political organization. A contribution to the topic of international fascism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), p. 241.

¹⁶ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/ Direcția Generală a Poliției, file no.1/1934, f. 15.

¹⁷ According to Armand Călinescu, Codreanu has been sheltered among others by one of Elena Lupescu's cousins. Armand Călinescu, 1993, p. 140.

Romanian Orthodox Church who joined the ranks of the Iron Guard.¹⁸ Numerous Orthodox priests like Ioan Dumitrescu Borșa,¹⁹ Dean Ioan Moța²⁰ or Duminică Ionescu²¹ who at that time were among the leaders of the Iron Guard were arrested and faced the same military trial as the legionary elite Corneliu Codreanu, General Gheorghe Cantacuzino, Gheorghe Clime, Ion I. Moța, Nicolae Totu.²² This speaks of the high offices available to the priests within the movement and their complete integration.

Inside the prison's walls, pseudo-religious rituals began to spread among the members of the movement, rituals which were meant to both keep the spirits up for those imprisoned and to maintain a sense of cohesion between that died in the aftermath of Duca's assassination and those imprisoned. According to Nichifor Crainic, who was arrested together with the legionary elite as the "moral author" of the Sinaia assassination of the Romanian Prime Minister, the religious ritual joined hands with occult undertakings such as spiritualism séances in order to talk to the dead.

At Jilava, during the night, the boys practiced spiritualism séances I don't know who was curious enough to call Duca's soul. Duca responded that he regrets the decision for the dissolution of the Iron Guard. Asked what could be done for him, he replied: 'Pray for me!' An extraordinary emotion occurred. Everybody stood up and a priest said a long and vibrant prayer so I. G. Duca's soul could rest. Nobody said one word and we went to bed in deep silence.²³

The decision to pray for Duca's soul and for the remission of his sins by God is a particularity of the Iron Guard, adding to its exceptional character. Praying for one's

¹⁸ About the legionary atmosphere from Jilava there is the account of Nichifor Crainic, 1991, p. 257.

¹⁹ Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian intra muros. Memorii legionare* [Trojan Horse intra muros. Legionary Memoirs] (Bucharest: Lucman, 2002) p. 118.

²⁰ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file no. 1/1934, f. 26.

²¹ Nichifor Crainic, 1991, p. 255

²² As in the case of the Iron Guard's interdiction to run in the election, the mastermind organizing the public trial of the movement in order to discredit it by proving that Duca's assassination was a plot of all the movement's leaders was the State Secretary in the Ministry of Interior, Victor Iamandi. Please see Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 244.

²³ Nichifor Crainic, 1991, p. 267.

enemy was a Christian ritual present at the Iron Guardists and it was performed by the legionary priests. This situation is unthinkable in the Italian or the German case, where the fascists did not pray for the Communists or other political adversaries they killed.²⁴

Praying was a ritual where the imprisoned Orthodox priest played an important role. After he had turned himself in to the Romanian authorities to be trialed with the others, Fr. Dumitrescu-Borșa, the Secretary-General of the movement performed a ritual at the instigation of Ioan Zelea Codreanu, the Captain's father. Codreanu's father's pietistic drive infuriated those present and led Fr. Dumitrescu-Borșa to take action by appealing to Codreanu in order to contain his father's ritualistic excesses.

After a couple of days, now accommodated to life in prison and cheered up by the multitude of jokes, because we were during the Lent period, professor Codreanu has asked me to perform prayers everyday. He bought two kilograms of candles and he hoped we would pray kneeling every morning, noon, afternoon and evening. It was an exaggerated request too tiresome even for me as a priest. The prayers took almost every seven hours of my time every day while the professor lighting up candles gave one to each. I thought this a bit hypocritical ("fariseic"). It was not favorably received by all and I informed the Captain asking him to curb his father's demands. It resulted that we had to perform the half-hour morning's prayer, the prayer at every meal and the evening's prayer, all without exaggerations and not so many candles.²⁵

The Captain's cult was a cornerstone in the legionary doctrine generated in Jilava detention. By turning himself in the hands of the state authorities when he thought necessary on his own terms, Codreanu's action suggested to both his followers and his opponents that he could not be harmed, but rather he was the one choosing the moment

²⁴ For the Italian fascist violence see Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a comparative perspective, please also see Macgregor Knox, *To the Threshold of Power, 1922-1933. Origins and Dynamics of Fascist and National Socialist Dictatorships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 296-300; 329-361.

²⁵ Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 120.

when he could be trialed for the crimes attributed to him.²⁶ As described by Nichifor Crainic, an eye witness, Codreanu's cult was about to receive its first confirmation among the imprisoned legionaries. They thought that by cherishing their leader they kept the external influences that intended to breach a gap between Codreanu and his followers at bay.²⁷ Following Luisa Passerini²⁸ and Claudio Fogu's²⁹ in considering that the cult of the Duce was not static, but rather it was an evolution from *mussolinismo* to *ducismo*, I argue that during this time spent in prison by the legionary elite, the cult of the Captain began to spread among his prison inmates and to subtly change from the cult of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu as undisputed leader of the movement. As in Mussolini's transition from *mussolinismo* to *ducismo*, Codreanu's cult moved forward from the cult of the Captain to the cult of the leader chosen by God to rule bestowed with an almost divine presence.³⁰

Accordingly, the testimony of a mystified Nichifor Crainic comes only to highlight this particular change in Codreanu's image and his perception among his followers. The transition from Ion I. Moța's early account³¹ from *Pământul strămoșesc* to Nichifor Crainic's memoirs comes with an enormous difference both in terms of subtleness and impact. In his memoirs but also later in a conversation with Octavian Goga, the leader of

²⁶ Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului* [The History of the Iron Guard. The Mystique of Ultra-nationalism] translated by Marian Ștefănescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), pp. 109, 201.

²⁷ Dumitru Banea, p. 49. According to this source, Ionel Moța has led the legionaries into prayer for Codreanu's life.

²⁸ Luisa Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario: Storia di una biografia, 1915-1939* (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 6, 20.

²⁹ Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary. Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 11-12. Also see Claudio Fogu, "'To Make History': Garibaldianism and Formation of a Fascist Historical Imaginary" in Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (eds.), *Making and Remaking Italy. The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento* (Oxford: Berg, 2001) p. 213

³⁰ Nae Ionescu, "Cine face istoria? Puțină filologie" [Who makes history? A little bit of philology] in *Vestitorii*, Year I, no. 2 (1st of April 1936), p. 1.

³¹ Ion I. Moța, "La icoană!" [To the Icon!] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 1 (1st of August, 1927), p. 9.

the National Agrarian Party, Nichifor Crainic confesses how impressed he was with the amplitude of Codreanu's impact upon his followers.

The 'Captain's way of life was present in every boy. The 'Captain' was a dogma, a god, a supernatural existence. At that moment nobody knew where he was and what he was doing. The adoration/ devotion for him extinguished even their thirst for information about him. It was not possible that the Captain was not fine where he was! He is working, he is not sleeping. He will make that one day all will get out of prison victorious. In their ardent feelings, some felt offended that that I was calling him Corneliu instead of "Captain" and that I do not participate in his deification.³²

Nichifor Crainic's text seems utterly hypocritical given the fact that between 1932 and 1933, while he was *Calendarul's* director he propagated the cult of Codreanu just as much as any legionary in the Iron Guard's ranks. Indeed he never named Codreanu in his texts as "the Captain" preferring to personify Codreanu as a mythological figure, descending from the Romanian people's folk stories. These rituals performed by Orthodox priests in the prison, together with all the imaginary surrounding the life-experience inside the prison will be thought by the legionary ideologues a landmark for the future anthropological project of the movement. The detention at Jilava prison and the final acquittal pronounced by the Romanian military court enhanced the belief among Codreanu's followers about his messianic character and his undefeated person.³³ From this belief shared by intellectuals and the priests of the Iron Guard another important idea originated. A certain period in prison was deemed necessary in shaping the 'new man'.³⁴ The 'new man' was already present in the movement in the person of Codreanu and it was described by being honest (*omul corect*)³⁵ and always ready to sacrifice for his

³² Nichifor Crainic, 1991, p. 258.

³³ Ilie Tudor, *Un an lângă Căpitan* [A Year near the Captain] (Bucharest: Sânziana, 2010), p. 52

³⁴ For the new man in the legionary imagination see Valentin Săndulescu, "Fascism and its Quest for the 'New Man': The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement" in *Studia Hebraica* 4 (2004), pp. 349-361.

³⁵ George Macrin, "Taberele de muncă. Aspect politic" [The Working Camps. The Political Aspect] in *Însemnări sociologice*, Year I, no. 5 (August 1935), p. 18.

country.³⁶ According to Victor P. Gârcineanu there are four new “communities” for coagulating the Romanian soul and the legionary spirit in the creation of the new man inside the Legion: the nest, the working camp, the prison and the Legion.³⁷

Preaching the revolutionary, heroic, anti-communist and anti-Masonic agenda, the new generation of the Iron Guard accomplished the ideological transfer of heroism in the frontline to the civil life where different internal dangers existed: such as the presence of strong ethnic minorities and the spread of Communism that threatened, according to the leaders of the Romanian students, the very existence of Great Romania.³⁸ Under the impact of the radicalization of the 1922 generation under the banner of the Iron Guard this blueprint was transformed and incorporated into the idea of working for the country, even when the persecution came from the government of the Romanian State,³⁹ in order to build a fascist New Man in constant process of heroization through persecution.⁴⁰ Constantly under suspicion and infringements imposed upon the movement by Romanian political regimes the Iron Guard has added another important element in shaping the new fascist man through martyrdom: the prison’s cell where under constant persecution, suffering for the country joined hands with Christian doctrine.⁴¹

The Orthodox Church received the news of the assassination of the Prime Minister with surprise and concern. Because of the rigorous censorship already put into effect

³⁶ Valentin Săndulescu, “‘Taming the Spirit’: Notes in the Shaping of the Legionary ‘New Man’” in Traian Sandu (ed.) *Vers un profil convergent des fascismes? <<Nouveau consensus>> et religion politique en Europe centrale* (Paris: Center Interuniversitaire d’Etudes Hongroises, 2010) pp.207-216.

³⁷ Puiu Gârcineanu, “Omul nou” [The New Man] in *Cuvîntul Argeşului* Year I, no. 3(1935), p. 2.

³⁸ Octavian Goga, “Spre alte orizonturi” [To other Horizons] in *Țara noastră* [Our Fatherland] Year IV, No. 15 (15th of April 1923), p. 1. Another article of his is “Cultul tinereții” [The Cult of Youth] in *Țara noastră* Year V, No. 37 (13th of September 1925), p. 1.

³⁹ About this aspect of the persecutions see Dragoș Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail de la mit la realitate* [The Legion of Archangel Michael from myth to reality]. Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1997, p. 197.

⁴⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press) p. 281.

⁴¹ Victor Puiu Gârcineanu, *Din lumea legionară* [From the Legionary World] 5th edition (Bucharest: Sânziana, 2011), p. 13. First edition 1937.

during electoral campaign in late December and kept in place after the replacement of the Prime Minister with the Ministry of Interior, the official ecclesiastical journals abstained from commenting on this tragic event. Both *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* in Bucharest and *Telegraful Român* in Sibiu published only short notices of Duca's death and deplored the tragic destiny of the deceased politician.⁴²

The beginning of the year brought the first reactions of the Church towards the involvement of priests in politics, especially in the light of recent events. Although no mention about Duca's assassination was made or for that matter no news about the imprisonment of the Orthodox priests from Transylvania such as Dean Moța surfaced in church journals and newspapers, *Telegraful român* from Sibiu suggested in various articles that the priests belonging to the Orthodox Metropolitan See in Sibiu should restrain from any party politics:

Entering in the New Year, according to its program, our newspaper reminds its readers that *it does not make any party-politics*, but it makes national politics trying at its best to remove any deeds or ideas causing division, hate and malice between the Romanian brothers and the sons of the same fatherland.⁴³

This issue from *Telegraful român* also has in its pages a theological recommendation for the young generation. The tone was ambiguous. No one could discern if what the author wrote was meant as scolding of or encouragement towards the nationalist, religious youth represented by the Iron Guard. Using a rhetoric borrowed from the vocabulary of "carlism" as envisaged by Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu⁴⁴, Sabin Sibianu urged the Orthodox clerics and especially the young believers from

⁴² Not the same can be said about the Greek-Catholic Church. See Dr. Virgil Bălibanu, "+ I. G. Duca" in *Curierul creștin*, Year XVI, no. 1 (January 1st, 1934), pp. 2-3.

⁴³ "La Început de An" [At the Beginning of the Year] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXII, nr. 1 (January 1st 1934), p. 2.

⁴⁴ For Nae Ionescu see Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu. Așa cum l-am cunoscut* [Nae Ionescu. The way I knew him] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), p. 94.

Transylvania to re-connect with religious nationalism as expressed by the Romanian Orthodox Church:

[...] the young generation, the generation of tomorrow, destined to bring the redemption of our nation, rejects as old and rusty tools the behavior belonging to this world's wisdom, which the Christian morality considers them as sins... Together with all humankind, I believe that our young generation, which is God-loving and confident in Him, has today the role of that child whom God used to straighten as the aforementioned orator said... It is the only way to fulfill this age's commandment asking for new men, new spirit, and new life.⁴⁵

The passive stance of the Orthodox Church advising the priests and its believers to calm and moderation changed radically when the new government led by Gheorghe Tătărescu took office on 3rd of January 1934. After this moment, the ecclesiastical press gave more information about the political assassinate and the religious offices performed for the deceased.⁴⁶ Nevertheless the primary concern of the Church hierarchy and theologians was to attract the attention of the State on the importance of educating the youth and thus not allowing them to end up in the Iron Guard's ranks.⁴⁷

The preoccupation with the youth's preferences to politics and the need to condemn the murderous act of the legionaries soon came to a conclusion. Three months later, on the 2nd of March 1934 the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, issued an official statement addressed to all the Orthodox priests and believers inside the Romanian Patriarchy in which the bishops expressed their normative opinion about Duca's assassination, his criminals and their relationship with the young generation.⁴⁸ A similar

⁴⁵ Sabin Sibianu, "Porunca vremii: oameni noi!" [Our age commandment: new men!] in *Telegraful român* Year LXXXII, nr. 1 (January 1st 1934), p. 2.

⁴⁶ "La moartea lui I. G. Duca" [At I. G. Duca's death] in *Telegraful Român* Year LXXXII, no. 2 (6th of January 1934), p. 2.

⁴⁷ T. S. "Iarăși problema tineretului" [Again the problem of the youth] in *Telegraful Român* Year LXXXII, no. 5 (27th of January 1934), p. 1.

⁴⁸ For a legionary commentary of the Pastoral Letter see Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, „Apostrofa Unui Teolog. Biserica și Mișcarea Legionară” in Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, *V-am scris vouă, tinerilor! Gîndurile și încercările*

concern regarding the political radicalization of the young generation can be noted in the pastoral letter:

The Church asks itself how it was possible that such a crime could happen in our peaceful and welcoming country with its pristine and beautiful traditions. How has it been possible that among us, the Romanians, a noble-spirited, kind, gentle, peaceful, humble, God-fearing people, such young assassins could be found who would fire their weapons against that man who put such an amount of praiseworthy successful work for his country and his people? How could the hand of these stray, driven young men, who have taken away a life so adorned with spiritual gifts, be armed? [...] From thousands of young men indoctrinated with the ideals of the nation, only a few irritable, mentally unfitted enthusiasts can stay aside, those who in their ill fanaticism believe that they are making a gesture of bravery suppressing violently a leader of the country. The bulk of the youth should not approve, nor should they follow them.⁴⁹

The pastoral letter of the Holy Synod was destined to quell the worry of the State regarding the radicalization of the young generation's political agenda and was a straight assessment of the Iron Guard's political means to attract and involve the youth in criminal actions. According to Nichifor Crainic, the Pastoral Letter was not entirely the brainchild of the bishops from the Holy Synod, rather it was composed under the direct guidance of the Minister for Interior, Ion Inculeț, one of the Iron Guard's staunchest enemies and an exponent of King Carol II's powerful *camarilla*.⁵⁰

Though never mentioned explicitly by name, the high clergy has issued this statement not just to temper Codreanu's growing influence among the priests and believers alike, but also to prevent a breakthrough of the movement to reach the religious communities banking on the Christian nature of the movement. They were, by not

unui preot misionar [I wrote to you, young people! The Thoughts and the Hardships of a missionary priest] (Bucharest: Gutenberg 2011), p. 74. Adrian Nicolae Petcu "Slujitorii altarului și Mișcarea legionară. Studiu de caz: Preotul Ilie Imbrescu" [The Altar's Servants and the Legionary Movement. Case study: Fr. Ilie Imbrescu] in *Partidul, Securitatea, Cultele* [The Party, The Securitate, The Denominations] (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005), p. 68.

⁴⁹ "Pentru buna îndrumare a credincioșilor. Pastorală Sfântului Sinod" [For the good guidance of the believers. The Pastoral Letter of the Holy Synod] in *Universul* Year 51, no. 59 (2nd of March 1934), p. 5.

⁵⁰ Nichifor Crainic, 1991, p. 269.

mentioning Codreanu officially, leaving the door open for future political negotiations if the tide would have changed in favor of the Iron Guard. The nationalism of the Romanian young fascists was not entirely displeasing to the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church. They thought the movement as an expression of a political creed dear to most of the members of the Holy Synod.⁵¹ According to Dr. Alexandru Șafran Chief Rabi of Romania, most of the more senior members of the Holy Synod, like Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania, Bishop Visarion Puiu of Hotin, Bishop Tit Simedrea⁵² together with the Patriarch Elie Miron Cristea⁵³ have shared a common anti-Semite agenda, close to that professed openly by the Iron Guard.⁵⁴

This could explain why many clerics remained associated with the Iron Guard even when the largest part of the movement's leadership was imprisoned and the Church voiced publicly its shock and outrage towards the radical act of those who shot Duca.⁵⁵ This was the case of Fr. Grigore Cristescu,⁵⁶ professor at Bucharest's Faculty of Orthodox Theology who protected the Captain during his hiding after the assassination of Duca and together with Colonel Zăvoianu came along with Codreanu when he turned himself in to the authorities.⁵⁷ Fr. Grigore Cristescu filled in for Nichifor Crainic, while he was imprisoned in Jilava Military Prison, teaching his courses of Catechesis and

⁵¹ Lya Benjamin, "Antisemitismul codrenist" [Codreanu's Antisemitism] in Lya Benjamin, *Prigoană și rezistență în istoria evreilor din România, 1940-1944. Studii* [Persecution and resistance in the history of the Jews in Romania. Studies] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001), pp. 13-27.

⁵² Alexandru Șafran, *Un tăciune smuls flăcărilor. Memorii* [A brand rendered from the fire. Memoirs] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), p. 54.

⁵³ For Miron Cristea see Gala Galaction, *Jurnal II* [Diary] (Bucharest: Junimea, 1978), p. 314.

⁵⁴ Paul A. Shapiro "Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church" in Kevin P. Spicer (ed.), *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 136.

⁵⁵ Through the voice of Vasile Marin the movement claimed that Patriarchy is not supporting the Legion. Apud Vasile Marin, "Letter from 6th of March 1934 to Grigore Iunian" in Vasile Marin, *Crez de generație*, (Bucharest: 1995, Mahadahonda), p. 90 in Horia Sima, 2003, p. 130.

⁵⁶ For Grigore Cristescu see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/C/GrigoreCristescu.html> (Internet Accessed on 5th of September 2012).

⁵⁷ Horia Sima, 2003, p. 122.

Homiletics that Crainic offered at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from Bucharest.⁵⁸ Fr. Grigore Cristescu, a convert of the Iron Guard, having published in Nichifor Crainic's *Calendarul* all throughout 1932, began to radicalize his political stance and to advocate openly on behalf of the Iron Guard, even inside the walls of the Bucharest Faculty of Theology:

[...] inside the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from Bucharest where I was professor the majority of students have become legionaries. While I was kept at Jilava prison, a former collaborator from *Calendarul*, Fr. Grigore Cristescu, a disorderly character, without any sense of responsibility, replaced me... During my class hours instead of the ordinary lectures, he delivered inflammatory speeches in which he presented me to the students as a legionary martyr and they, touched by their imprisoned professor's martyrdom, made the Faculty reverberate from the movement's hymns. When I came back, they have received me in tears with the same songs and marches. It seemed as if I was in a nest gathering.⁵⁹

Fr. Grigore Cristescu was not the only exponent of this trend among the products of the Faculty of Theology from Bucharest. It was most probably a token of recognition for this partisan attitude of the Theology's students, that the next president of UNSCR (The National Union of the Romanian Christian Students) from Bucharest was elected on 17th of May 1934 from among them: the PhD student in theology Gheorghe Furdui.⁶⁰ According to Dumitru Banea, Furdui went to Codreanu in prison asking him to allow 100 students from Bucharest to commit collective suicide in front of the royal palace to determine Carol II not to assassinate those already imprisoned, a proposal firmly rejected by the Captain.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Fr. Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885 și 2000. Biserică, Națiune, Cultură* [The Romanian Orthodox Church between 1885 and 2000. Church, Nation, Culture] Vol. 3, I (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 2006), p. 92.

⁵⁹ Nichifor Crainic, p. 283.

⁶⁰ For Gheorghe Furdui, see *Intelectualii și Mișcarea Legionară. Mari Conștiințe Românești* [The Intellectuals and the Legionary Movement. Great Romanian Consciences] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Buna-Vestire, 2000), pp. 122-123.

⁶¹ Dumitru Banea, *Căpitanul* (Sibiu: Totul pentru Țară, 1937), p. 50.

The period spent in prison was not always working in the Iron Guard's benefit. Because of the extent to which the movement was ready to go in politics that included political assassinations and assassination attempts, some of their supporters decided to leave Codreanu, re-organize their political strategy and move to other political parties. This was the case of Nichifor Crainic who had offered *Calendarul* as the Iron Guard's public rostrum.⁶² According to Crainic, the reason he left the movement was the confusion between ideology, political murder and the importance played by martyrdom for the movement.⁶³ Nichifor Crainic was not the only top-intellectual involved with the movement that left, other leaders like Mihail Stelescu and George Beza will soon follow.⁶⁴

IV. 2 The Archangel's Temples. Working Camps as Means to Seduce the Orthodox Church

After the acquittal of all the legionary leaders on the 5th of April 1934, the movement was confronted not just with the Government's interdiction, but with strong internal dissensions.⁶⁵ The movement was banned from taking part in the electoral process. The Orthodox Church voiced its concern regarding the legality of youth enlisting in the Iron Guard's ranks.⁶⁶ On 7th of April 1934 the Romanian government passed another resolution that challenged the Iron Guard's legality. "The Law for Defending the

⁶² Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 222.

⁶³ Nichifor Crainic, 1991, p. 185.

⁶⁴ Corneliu Codreanu, 2010, p. 75.

⁶⁵ For Stelescu see Constatin Petculescu, *Mișcarea Legionară. Mit și realitate* [The Legionary movement. Myth and Reality] (Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1996), p. 135.

⁶⁶ Fr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church] Vol. 3 (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1981), p. 385.

State's Order" prohibited the public use of uniforms, political manifestations and the electoral signs of all the banned political organizations. In spite of constant surveillance from the *Siguranța Statului*, the Police, and the Gendarmerie, the Iron Guard found a medium to express itself by taking control of student's organizations all over the country. They functioned under the banner of the Iron Guard until the beginning of 1935.⁶⁷

With the government circling around, looking for new political formulae to permanently exclude the Romanian fascist movement from politics, the Iron Guard attempted through the medium of the newspapers *Cuvântul studentesc*, *Vestitorii*, *Iconar*, *Revista mea* and *Cuvântul Argeșului* to maintain a sense of legionary unity and to restore the belief in Codreanu's messianic mission.⁶⁸ One of the most important means to keep the legionaries connected and to continue the propaganda around the country without offending the authorities was to re-establish the working camps.⁶⁹ Together with the control over the student movement with the successful election of two legionary leaders the Law graduate Traian Cotigă⁷⁰ (20th of December 1933) and the Orthodox Theology graduate Gheorghe Furdui (17th of April 1934) as heads of the organization the Iron Guard succeeded in securing two important targets for its future. By controlling the leading structure of the UNSCR, Codreanu's movement took a serious option in the control of the young generation's political options and assured the survival of the

⁶⁷ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 258.

⁶⁸ Michele Ralo, *România în perioada revoluțiilor naționale din Europa. Mișcarea Legionară* [Romania in the time of the national revolutions from Europe. The Legionary Movement] (Bucharest: Sempre, 1999), p. 56-57.

⁶⁹ The first working camp was organized in Ungheni, Jassy on 8th of May 1924 by Codreanu and his fellow students from Jassy branch of LANC. Corneliu Codreanu, 1994, pp. 200-202.

⁷⁰ For Traian Cotigă see *Intelectualii și Mișcarea Legionară*, p. 93-94.

movement by implicating the youth in a constructive attitude, thus shifting from a revolutionary one pleasing both the government and the Church.⁷¹

The control over the youth organizations lead to an increase in the number of adherents that needed to be trained in the legionary ideology and initiated on how to become ‘new men’. This process encompassed not only legionary education, but also discipline and obeying the orders and the chain of command in the legionary movement. A sense of cohesion between older and newer elements in order to shape the organization as a unitary body was sought. The transition from the intellectual propaganda and fascization of the youth to concrete team-building in creating the new man was accomplished in the working camp and the final goal of the movement as was perceived as a manner of constructing the identity of the new man.⁷² The scissions in the movement after Stelescu’s 1934 presumptive attempt on Codreanu’s life broke the legionary unity between Codreanu’s “believers” and Stelescu’s followers.⁷³ After Codreanu refused on the 16th of September 1934 the request of 20 Macedonian students to revenge Sterie Ciumetti’s death during a legionary meeting, Ion I. Moța, Nicolae Totu, and Ion Banea and other important leaders decided to distance themselves from the movement’s leader, considering that he stroke a deal with King Carol II to assassinate Prime Minister I. G. Duca. Also they reached this decision because they felt their importance in the movement fading away on behalf of new comers such as Nae Ionescu and their input no longer had the same weight in Codreanu’s eyes.⁷⁴ Accordingly, I argue that by designing the working camps system, Codreanu intended to coagulate again legionary lower ranks

⁷¹ For Cotigă’s election see USHMM, RG 25. 023M. 0006.00000116.

⁷² For the anthropological project see Valentin Săndulescu, 2004, p. 360; Valentin Săndulescu, 2010, pp. 207-216.

⁷³ USHMM, RG 25. 023M. 0006.00000096.

⁷⁴ USHMM, RG 25. 023M. 0006.00000118.

around his person and to re-attract the sympathies of the old guard, preventing them from leaving the Legion and joining Stelescu's organization.⁷⁵ In support of this idea stands the fact that in the same period a rule for the "Brotherhoods of the Cross" youth organization was established, arguing for at least two camping expeditions organized in the course of one year by the chiefs of these youth organizations with all their members.⁷⁶

Another explanation for the work camps surfaces following up on Mihail Polihroniade and Vasile Marin statements when they spoke of the work of the Legion in the working camps in monastic terms. Like the Orthodox monks, the legionaries had to "cage" their violent impulses and manual work suited that purpose:

From the very beginning the legionaries also labored hard on their own collective construction projects, building first their own headquarters, then rural development projects. The legion was very effective in caging its members through such everyday practices that were hard, time-consuming, and socially solidifying. Whatever the legion lacked in numbers, it thus made up in commitment.⁷⁷

I argue that after 1934 the construction process in the working camps that started in Ungheni and continued with the Vișani dam and Casa Verde from Bucharest was invested with new meaning. The working camps during 1934-1936 also had the purpose to define and to lead the participants in the camps toward an apocalyptic experience the new legionary national community, the new *ecclesia* linking together legionary "white" martyrdom with the generation of the front. As David Redles has pointed out

⁷⁵ Despite Emilio Gentile's efforts to present the fascist movement as an unitary party, in tracing the camps in the Iron Guard I follow Paul Corner's argument about a multi-faceted perspective about what Fascism was in Mussolini's Italy. See Paul Corner, "Fascist Italy in 1930s: Popular Opinion in the Provinces" in Paul Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes. Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 127-148.

⁷⁶ *Îndreptarul Frățiilor de Cruce* [The Brotherhoods of the Cross' Manual] (Bucharest: Totul pentru Țară, 1935), p. 32.

⁷⁷ Michael Mann, "The Romanian Family of Authoritarians" in *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 268. Traian Brăileanu spoke of an "ascetical elite" in Traian Brăileanu, "Elita ascetică" in *Însemnări sociologice*, Year I, no. 6 (September 1935), pp. 1-17.

The Nazi emphasis on community and unity as being crucial for salvation appears to have been the key metaphor for eliciting the conversion experience for many of the Old Guards. This was especially true for the war veterans who longed for the lost camaraderie of the field part of what George L. Mosse called ‘the myth of the war experience’. The front itself was in many ways a transcendent experience, one in which the individual self was surrendered to the needs of the collective. Selfishness was replaced by sacrifice. Through Nazism, especially when experienced in a mass-gathering or a Party Day ritual, the lost unity of the front experienced a rebirth.⁷⁸

By joining the working camps and by sacrificing their time, daily comfort, or the privilege of social position, through the sacrament of “white”, bloodless martyrdom, as the soldiers from WWI’s front, the legionaries felt they were experiencing the national community as being racially pure⁷⁹ or deprived of any ideological enemies, with the camp serving as a foretaste of the beyond that was promised by Codreanu, where the Nation had to be resurrected. It was a transition from the closed environments of the nests, organized “as a church”⁸⁰ towards a complete identification between the legionary movement as the new people of God and the Romanian clergy and people. Speaking about the working camp in Arnota, George Beza remembers that

[...] the group of Moldavian students was joined the young comrades from Oltenia and all the priests and the population sent them food. Today’s brotherhood (*înfrățire*) comes to redeem the scissions of the past. The spiritual unity of Romanians was achieved through work.⁸¹

In other words the working camps were the remedy for curing the demon of disunity among the Romanian nation creating a single Romanian ecclesia celebrating the

⁷⁸ David Redles, *Hitler’s Millennial Reich. Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2005), p. 95.

⁷⁹ Thomas Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide. Hitler’s Community, 1918-1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 32-54. The German scholar argues that particularly through these camps where a “male bonding” was forged accustomed the German society with the inexistence of the Jewish minority, suppressing any sensibility or any conscience towards their imminent physical elimination. Also see Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 131-162.

⁸⁰ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib* [The Nest Leader’s Notebook] (Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 2000), p. 13.

⁸¹ George Beza, “Istoricul taberelor de muncă voluntară” [The History of the benevolent working camps] in *Revista mea*, Year I, no. 9-19 (September-October 1935), p. 5.

cult of the Archangel Michael, the holy patron of Arnota Monastery. If in Arnota the celebration of the Archangel through work and sacrifice brought people together, in the case of the great working camp in Carmen Sylva the presence of the Captain, the prayers and the commemorations of the movement's martyrs,⁸² the sacrifice for a new Romania and the presence of the national *ecclesia* in its fullness⁸³ led to spiritual experiences as confessed by participants.

[...] a personal confession: in the working camp I was reborn to a new life. From the skeptical person who believed that something new could come out from the moral crisis in which I was only through violent actions, here I am today won over by a defeat which is the most important triumph of the human soul, here I am won over to the whole generation's Captain, Corneliu Codreanu, here I am won over by a defeat which is of the Christian morals. Here I am walking on the path of the faith in a better life through the legionary revolution. If we would owe the school of legionary education only the salvation of our souls and it would be enough. But the teaching who saved us hopes to transform the soul of the entire nation, to lead the whole nation on the salvation's path.⁸⁴

George Beza's revelation and the following religious conversion in the working camp surfaced from his doubts about his faith in God, but also his mistrust of the leader of the movement.⁸⁵ Inside the working camp, in contact with the legionary self-sacrifice, the rituals of the Orthodox Church and the legionary education something may have changed in his spiritual outlook. Beza's conversion in the working camps system

⁸² George Macrin, "O nouă școală românească. Taberele de muncă" [A New Romanian School. The Working Camps] in *Însemnări sociologice* Year I, no. 4 (July 1935), p. 21.

⁸³ Michael Mann, 2004, pp. 272-273. Please also see Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 370 (for all the participants), p. 371 (for the gendered element).

⁸⁴ George Beza, "Mărturisire de credință" [Confession of faith] in *Revista mea* Year I, no. 9-10 (September-October 1935), p. 7. This was confirmed by the legionary priest Vasile Boldeanu "Ce-am văzut în tabăra Legionară la Carmen Sylva" [What I have seen in the Legionary camp from Carmen Sylva] in *Brațul de Fier* Year I, no. 4 (September 1935), pp. 1-2. See also Ion Fleșeriu, *Amintiri* [Memories] (Madrid: Artes Gráficas Benzal, 1977), pp. 64-77.

⁸⁵ It seems that his mistrust of Codreanu continued even after this article. He was the addressee of Codreanu's circular from 6th of November 1935, after he published an opened letter addressed to General Cantacuzino-Grăniceru, the president of All for Fatherland party. See for the letter Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 68. After Beza published another attack, this time in Mihail Stelescu's *Cruciada Românismului* he was expelled from the movement. See the Circular in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, pp. 75-77.

developed by the legionaries was not the only one who experienced this condition.⁸⁶

Another young man, Gheorghe Arghiropol spoke about the same conversion experience to the legionary “faith” while being in the legionary working camp from Buga:

Every young man from this country should live for a while in a legionary working camp to finally realize how simple is the reality to which he will have to give in all his soul. By working on a wall or mixing lime for the mortar, by doing all these things guided by the thought that through this work effort he serves his fatherland he will finally discover the true meaning of life, because individual is relevant only according to his ability to sacrifice himself for others.⁸⁷

The idea of converting and instilling the values of the Legionary movement to new members and to use the working camps not just as places where ascetical white martyrdom was experienced, but also as places where a legionaries could proselytize was Codreanu’s idea. In circular letter, he clarified what were the conditions to establish a legionary working and the most interesting condition was related with the fact that besides a legionary commander nominated by the legionary headquarters from Bucharest a legionary “missionary undertaking the spiritual education of the legionaries” would also be appointed to every legionary building site.⁸⁸ As David Redles poignantly pointed out

The Nazi convert, as is typical after any conversion experience, it was imperative to proselytize Hitler’s ‘great idea to every German soul’ to ensure collective salvation. Once converted, each person must continue to spread the word. Proselytizing legitimates the conversion by demonstrating that the new life is valid. In other words, by converting others we prove to ourselves that we did not make a mistake. Once again, the spread of conversion usually occurs within established social networks, such as friends, family and the workplace relationships.⁸⁹

The inner goal of these working camps was to attract new followers to the movement’s ideals from the student body and the population considered to be the main

⁸⁶ About conversion to fascist creed in Nazi Germany, see David Redles, 2005, pp. 78-107.

⁸⁷ Gheorghe Arghiropol, “Pe șantierul de la Buga” [In the working camp from Buga] in *România creștină*, Year I, no. 9 (15th of July 1935), p. 1.

⁸⁸ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 47. According to a legionary article, “Oameni noi în vremuri vechi. Taberele de muncă” [New men in old ages. The working camps] in *România creștină*, Year I, no. 9 (15th of July 1935), p. 3 the legionary education was the best part experienced while being in the working camp.

⁸⁹ David Redles, 2005, pp. 102-103.

beneficiary of the legionary work. Nevertheless, as Geoff Eley has pointed out, “the missionaries of the *Volksgemeinschaft*” had as main purpose also crossing the gendered boundaries separating men from women and representing the legionary conversion through the lenses of the working camps as the expression of a total, beyond gender, encompassing all the individuals of the nation experience.⁹⁰ Even after the working camps system was closed down by the State, the idea of proselytizing the fascist religion of the Legion caught the eye of the secular side of the movement as impersonated by Alexandru Cantacuzino.⁹¹

In what concerns the Orthodox Church, in order to respond constructively to the 1934 Pastoral Letter of the Holy Synod and to attempt to attract the sympathies of the bishops one by one, the legionaries began establish the working camps along churches and monasteries. As Nicolas Nagy-Talavera pointed out, before 1934,

The Legion has succeeded in attracting a great number from the low-ranks of the Orthodox clergy. The greatest support enjoyed by the Iron Guard came from regions that were genuinely poor, always haunted by economical crisis and forgotten by God as the villages from the southern Bessarabia and Moldavia or the densely wooded regions of the Carpathians like Neamț and Cîmpulung, often visited by Codreanu and his friends during their long romantic marches.⁹²

The leaders of the movement realized that the quickest way to earn the respect of the citizens and regain their lost momentum was to convince the local leaders and especially the Orthodox clerics that the Iron Guard deserved a second chance. The first major working camp organized after the release from prison of the legionary leadership

⁹⁰ Geoff Eley, *Nazism as Fascism. Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany 1930-1945* (London, Routledge, 2013), pp. 94-100.

⁹¹ Alexandru Cantacuzino, “Cum suntem” [How we are] in Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Opere complete* [Complete Works] (Bucharest: Antet, 1990), p. 35: “The first [legionary] revolutionary commandment is to proselytize”. The text was published in September 1937, near the general elections from December the same year.

⁹² Nicolas Nagy-Talavera, 1996, pp. 390-391.

was set up at Giulești, in Bucharest.⁹³ According to Horia Sima, the land was donated by the lawyer Dimitrie Micescu and the legionnaire in charged with the leadership of the camp was student Ion Caratănase.⁹⁴ The camp begun on the 15th of May 1934 and was closed by the Romanian police on 17th of August, the same year. Inside the camp 352 legionnaires worked producing 800,000 bricks for the construction⁹⁵ of a Church with the Archangel Michael as its patron saint. The Giulești working camp was used by Codreanu for different official ceremonies of the movement, including legionary weddings in which he and his wife stood as witnesses/ Godparents (*nași*) in the religious celebrations,⁹⁶ different propaganda balls, especially during the weekends.⁹⁷ It was in this camp, that Codreanu personally decorated General Cantacuzino-Grăniceru with the highest legionary insignia, the “White Cross” for his bravery during the imprisonment in Jilava, after the Duca affair.⁹⁸

In order to gain the support of all legionnaires and sympathizers of the movement for the construction of this church seen by Codreanu as the movement’s sanctuary, on the 5th of June he addressed a circular letter asking for financial contributions in order to finish the building.⁹⁹ According to an archival document, on the 31st of August 1934 General Cantacuzino, together with Fr. Grigore Cristescu, Gheorghe Clime, and Gheorghe Rahoveanu, mandated by Codreanu, visited Patriarch Miron Cristea while he was resting at the patriarchal monastery from Dragoslavele in Vâlcea County to ask for

⁹³ *Tabăra de muncă* [The Working Camp] (Bucharest, 1936), pp. 13-14.

⁹⁴ Horia Sima, *Istoria Mișcării Legionare* (Sibiu: Imago, 2003), p. 162.

⁹⁵ *Tabăra de muncă*, 1936, p. 13.

⁹⁶ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne, Fond Diverse, File no. 16/1934, f. 23.

⁹⁷ Duiliu Sfîntescu, *Răspuns la întrebări ale tinerilor care doresc tot adevărul despre Mișcarea Legionară* [Answer to young people’s questions, who want to know the truth about the Legionary Movement], (Bucharest: Crater, 1996), p. 126.

⁹⁸ Horia Sima, 2003, p. 162.

⁹⁹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, pp. 50-51.

his patronage and help with the construction of a new church with the Archangel as patron saint in Muscel¹⁰⁰ and to build a “Church of the Nation” in Bucharest.¹⁰¹ According to the press, the Patriarch blessed the initiative and gave the authorization for the building of a legionary sanctuary and for a monastery in Câmpulung.¹⁰² For financial reasons they ended up only repairing the Church of St. Ilie Gorgani in Bucharest, their future sanctuary¹⁰³ and were forced to stop the works for their monastery.¹⁰⁴

The model from Giulești was adopted also in Bessarabia by the legionary youth from Chișinău building a dorm for the Theology students of that student center.¹⁰⁵ The students laid bricks and worked in a vegetable garden providing food for the legionnaires in the working camp. The leader of the camp was Valerian Trifa then a student in Theology later elected the UNSCR president for Chișinău University (1935).¹⁰⁶ Through Valerian Trifa’s personal connections, Codreanu and Fr. Dumitrescu-Borșa were received favorably by Metropolitan Gurie Grosu of Bessarabia and the two legionary leaders laid down, for the Orthodox hierarchy, the mission of the movement for the foreseeable future.¹⁰⁷

Another working camp intended to court the high clergy was established in southern Bessarabia. At Cotiungenii Mari, 86 legionnaires¹⁰⁸ worked from July to October 1934 under the leadership of lawyer Traian Puiu to restore a run-down church

¹⁰⁰ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file no. 15/1933, p. 167.

¹⁰¹ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file no. 15/1933, p. 48.

¹⁰² “Cronica religioasă” [The Religious Chronicle] in *Cuvântul Argeșului*, Year I, no. 9 (19th of October 1935), p. 4.

¹⁰³ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 15/1933, p. 156.

¹⁰⁴ They continued to collect donations for it. ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 15/1933, p. 148.

¹⁰⁵ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, file no. 15/1933, p. 26.

¹⁰⁶ “Valerian Trifa” in *Intelectualii și mișcarea legionară*, p. 274.

¹⁰⁷ Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 271.

¹⁰⁸ According to Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa when he visited the working camp there were only 30 legionnaires working at the church’s renovation. *Ibidem*, p. 171

from the village re-sanctified and placed under the spiritual patronage of Archangel Michael.¹⁰⁹ According to sources this particular camp worked under the personal blessing of Metropolitan Gurie Grosu and the encouragement of the local priests, who perceived the effort of the movement as a missionary enterprise welcomed even by local authorities.¹¹⁰

In addition to building or restoring churches, they also got involved in a series of ecclesiastical projects such as raising the belfries for the church in Cosciusca Veche, Brăila¹¹¹ or Movilești, Vrancea.¹¹² All these churches and religious constructions have one thing in common: they have the same patron-saint, the Archangel Michael. By setting up the cult of the Archangel Michael in stone, the movement continued what started in Jassy¹¹³ in 1928 with a church built by students and placed under the archangel's patronage in the period of the working camps. The newly built Orthodox churches from Aciliu, Marca, Mănăstiriștea, Cotiungeni Mari, Rădăuți, and many other were all under the holy patronage of the Archangel Michael. The explanation behind this overwhelming presence of the Archangel as a patron saint of the legionary churches is related with the apocalyptic importance of the Archangel. The fear of a Communist revolution which would have chastised the Orthodox Church as in the Soviet case elevated the Archangel Michael, the leader of the celestial forces defeating Satan's armies in the Book of Revelations, to a position of protector the period witnessing a surge of devotion among the Orthodox clergy and believers alike.

¹⁰⁹ *Tabăra de muncă*, 1936, p. 15. Horia Sima, 2003, pp. 162-163.

¹¹⁰ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne, Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar no. 21/1934, f. 63.

¹¹¹ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, Dosar no. 17/1934, f. 38.

¹¹² ANIC, Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, Dosar no. 17/1934, f. 40.

¹¹³ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, „Cetatea Sfântului Mihai” [The fortress of St. Michael] in *Pământul strămoșesc* Year II, no. 12 (15th of June 1928), pp. 1-2. Codreanu spoke about the legionary Christian Cultura Centre form Râpa Galbenă, Jassy, built by the students which was also placed under the protection of Archangel Michael.

I argue that *fascism set in stone* meant for the Romanian religious fascist movement a way to enmesh the cult of the archangel in stone acting as both a spiritual protector against the malaises of the day, but also linking the Iron Guard with the Orthodox Church, seduced by the apocalyptic narrative of the Archangel defeating Satan, allowed a merging of the Iron Guard's religious imaginary with its own allowing the construction of these churches. This was both a process of generalizing the cult of the Archangel and expanding the propaganda of the Legion. Setting the churches and the belfries under the protection of the Archangel, the Legion proved to be an atypical fascist movement. Unlike in the cases of Nazi Germany and Italian fascism where benevolent work in the communities' benefit had a strict propagandistic aim, the emphasis of the building process of the legionary working camps was on cultivating the ascetical cult of white martyrdom in terms of education and expanding the cult of the Archangel. The fascist myths of national regeneration and the leader's cult that were present in the Iron Guard's ideology were grounded in Orthodox doctrine, as was the cult of the Archangel Michael.

The year 1935 was pivotal in the history of the Iron Guard. On the 20th of March the Iron Guard enlisted at the Central Electoral Authority the new political organism representing the movement, "All for the Fatherland" party.¹¹⁴ Led by General Cantacuzino as president and Gheorghe Clime for a short time Secretary General,¹¹⁵ the new party continued the working camps project in the benefit of the Orthodox Church all throughout 1935.

¹¹⁴ According to Armin Heinen on the 20th of March the new party was officially formed. Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 492.

¹¹⁵ According to Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa Clime was outraged by the behavior of the General as a Party-chief and left the organizations details to him. Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 139

The first major working camp was established by the legionnaires near the old monastery of Arnota.¹¹⁶ Built in the 16th century on a mountain, having as patron saints Archangels Michael and Gabriel, the monastery needed a new road in order to be better supplied during the winters when the old mountain road became unusable for cars, trucks or animals. It was organized between 8th of July and 11th of September 1936 by the legionary students from UNSCR in Bucharest. Two hundred and forty two legionaries joined the working camp to carve a new road through the stone of the mountain.¹¹⁷

According to Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa who, as secretary general of the movement visited along Corneliu Codreanu and Fr. Grigore Cristescu, the working camp site during 1935, the chief of the working camp was Dimitrie Adonescu, a young PhD student in Orthodox Theology at Atena University.¹¹⁸ Provisions for the students gathered in this working camp came from Bishop Vartolomeu Stănescu of Râmnic¹¹⁹ to whom the monastery of Arnota administratively belonged and he personally came to oversee the legionary work-progress.¹²⁰ As in the case of Metropolitan Gurie Grosu of Bessarabia, the Bishop Vartolomeu received Codreanu and his companions for an audience where he and the “Captain” exchanged political views about the current state of affairs in Romania and the presence of the Iron Guard’s working camps inside his bishopric. Asked by the

¹¹⁶ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 158.

¹¹⁷ *Tabăra de Muncă*, 1936, p. 23.

¹¹⁸ Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 172.

¹¹⁹ See Bishop Vartolomeu Stănescu’s sermon about the legionary work in *Cuvântul Argeșului*, Year I, no. 7-8 (8th of September 1935), p. 4. It was also reprinted in the legionary press together with other two hierarchs that offered opinions on the Legion (Metropolitane Gurie Grosu of Bessarabia and Bishop Visarion Puiu of Hotin): “Ce spun episcopii Bisericii Ortodoxe Române despre legionari” [What the bishops of the Romanian Orthodox Church have to say about the legionaries] in *Brațul de Fier* Year I, no. 4 (September 1935), p. 1.

¹²⁰ Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 174.

legionaries, he visited the working camp, performing the blessing of the works done by the legionaries on behalf of Arnota Monastery.¹²¹

However, the legionary work camps not always arose to the moral standards set by Codreanu in his circular letters. According to Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, while he was inspecting the progress of the legionnaires' work from Arnota working camp, the legionary commander Andonescu came to him and reported the moral derailment of Ilie Stîngă, a legionnaire from Jassy.¹²² On 20th of July 1935, this incident at Arnota Monastery led the Captain resulted in a new circular letter of the Captain asking all the members of the movement to be "rightful people", living according to the moral prescriptions of the Orthodox Church. The circular was addressed to all the legionnaires.¹²³

Arnota Monastery was not the only monastery in Vartolomeu Stănescu's bishopric helped with legionary work. Mamu Monastery in Vâlcea county benefited from the help of 29 legionnaires who worked for almost a month (16th of September to 4th of October 1935) to build six dams to stop the waters of Olt river to flood the monastery's land.¹²⁴

Another objective of the working camps was the production of clay-bricks for the construction of an Orthodox cathedral in Drăgășani. According to the photo-album edited by Mihail Polihroniade, in this working camp 122 legionnaires have worked for a month (13th of June to the 14th of August 1935) producing around 100,000 bricks.¹²⁵ The working camp was led by lawyer Victor Bărbulescu, the legionary chief of Vâlcea county

¹²¹ George Beza, 1935, p. 5.

¹²² Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 174.

¹²³ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 53.

¹²⁴ *Tabăra de muncă*, 1936, p. 34.

¹²⁵ *Tabăra de muncă*, 1936, p. 28.

and by Fr. Necşulescu the priest serving the church in construction.¹²⁶ On the 14th of August the working camp was closed with a religious service presided by the Bishop Vartolomeu who, in his sermon, reminded the participants of the courage and diligence of the legionary youth, preaching the ideals of the Legionary movement to the peasants and people from Drăgășani present at the religious service.¹²⁷

The work camps allow an interesting look into the religious ritual described in the Police's archive. Pictures have been published in the legionary press, describing these rituals. They had much in common with the rituals performed in Rarău working camp, Carmen Sylva, or Susai Mountain. Where the legion set up a working camp for a secular objective, they followed it always with building a chapel where a candle, an icon of the Archangel, and the Gospel were brought, simulating an Orthodox altar.¹²⁸ As mentioned in the archives, in the working camps in Rarău and Susai Mountain a student in Theology led the morning and the evening prayer and prayed continuously during the time the legionaries went to work in the chapel.¹²⁹ Since the presence of the icon of the Archangel was universalized, it is possible that the cult of the Archangel became professed all-over the country, not just as the vengeful, but also the constructive force behind the Legion, as the last barricade in front of the "Communist danger".

A Greek Catholic believer, Ioan Banea, the newly appointed legionary chief of the Transylvanian region mobilized his legionnaires in order to attract the Orthodox clergy in Transylvania towards the Legionary movement. Thus in 1935, among numerous working camps destined to restore bridges, to build schools and houses for poor people, there were

¹²⁶ Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu Borșa, 2002, p. 174.

¹²⁷ With this occasion, Bishop Vartolomeu named the legionaries "shatters of today's darkness and builders of tomorrow's light." George Beza, 1935, p. 6.

¹²⁸ See the letter of Ion Dobre, the commander of the Susai working camp addressed to General Cantacuzino on 6th of September 1936 in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, pp. 82-84.

¹²⁹ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/ Diverse, file 15/1933, p. 149.

many working for the benefit of the Orthodox Church. From the 1st of July until 30th of October 1935, in Aciliu, Sibiu county 48 legionaries built a church under the protection of Archangels Michael and Gabriel, from 8th of July until the 8th of September 70 legionnaires manufactured 100,000 clay-bricks for a church building project that was to begin the following year.¹³⁰ Similarly at Marca, Braşov county, 75 legionnaires worked almost the entire month of August (9th to 26th of August 1935) to pave the courtyard of the Orthodox Church from the village, to restore the church and its graveyard.¹³¹

From 30th of June to 15th of September the same year 52 legionnaires from Transylvania joined hands to make 45,000 bricks in order to build Izbuc Orthodox Monastery, in Bihor county.¹³² From this working camp come pictures of a legionary wedding.¹³³ In the pictures one can see the groom and the bride together with their legionary witnesses/ Godparents (naşi) upon leaving the Church. In terms of Orthodox doctrine one finds surprising that both witnesses are men and not a pair, as required by the Orthodox ritual. It seemed that for propaganda reasons legionary elite from the working camps changed the rituals and the canonic requirements of the Orthodox Church in order to boost peasant's trust in the legionary movement and maximize their propagandistic efforts by socially engaging in the traditional customs of the village.

Bessarabia could not be left out of the legionary building effort. Two legionary working camps were set in order to build a church and a monastery. In the working camp in Valea-Mare, Bălţi county 41 legionnaires worked between 8th of July and 6th of October 1935 manufacturing 100,000 clay-bricks to build a church. In Buga, Lăpuşna

¹³⁰ *Tabăra de Muncă*, 1936, p. 37.

¹³¹ Gheorghe Beza, 1935, p. 5.

¹³² Duiuliu Sfîntescu, 1996, p. 125.

¹³³ *Tabăra de muncă*, 1936, p. 32.

County, from 1st of July until 16th of September 1935, 70 legionnaires laid out the foundations for a future legionary Orthodox monastery boarding legionary student monks by changing their initial idea for constructing only a church.¹³⁴ Under the leadership of Sergiu Florescu, legionary students in Theology headed among others by Viorel Trifa former president of Chişinău Student Centre, Grigore Filip Lupu, and Gheorghe Arghiropol the current president of Chişinău Student Centre continued their work to finish the monastery under the protection of the Archangel Michael.¹³⁵ On the 17th of July 1935 Metropolitite Gurie Grossu of Bessarabia visited his students working at Buga monastery and donated 20 000 lei for materials and 5000 lei for the working camps' provisions. Before leaving the camp, the Metropolitite Gurie Grossu addressed a few words to the legionary youth:

I bless the legionaries' work and I pray to the Almighty God to guide the Romanian nation towards the ideal pursued by the legionaries taking the right path, the path of constructive nationalism.¹³⁶

Horia Sima pointed out, in the summer of 1936 that the phenomenon of the working camps became viral and spread all over the country.¹³⁷ The most important working camps were those at Carmen Sylva, Rarău Mountain and Arnota. In total almost 71 working camps and almost one thousand construction sites were opened.¹³⁸ However, under the strict guidance of the government and an increasingly worried king, Alexandru

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 35. "O mănăstire legionară în Barasabia" [A Legionary Monastery in Bessarabia] in *România creştină*, Year I, no. 7 (15th of June 1935), p. 1. According to the same article, the leadership of the working camp was initially entrusted to Hieromonk Nicodim Ioniţă and Hieromonk Babacă, both adherent of the Iron Guard.

¹³⁵ "Oameni noi la vremuri vechi. Tabere de muncă" [New men in old times. The Working Camps] in *România creştină*, Year I, no. 9 (15th of July 1935), p. 3. For the protector saint of the Monastery, see I. Nicuţă, "Munca pe şantiere" [Working on the working camps] in *Gândul Neamului*, Year I, no. 1 (March 1935), p. 10.

¹³⁶ S. Bucovineanu, "Ofensiva taberelor de muncă" in *România creştină*, Year I, no. 10 (1st of August 1935), p. 3.

¹³⁷ Horia Sima, 2003, p. 164.

¹³⁸ Valentin Săndulescu, 2010, p. 312.

Lapedatu, the Minister for Religious Denominations, intervened to the Holy Synod asking the bishops to discourage and prohibit the working camps of the Iron Guard that worked to support churches and monasteries.¹³⁹ On the 23rd of October 1935 Patriarch Miron Cristea sent an official address to all the Bishops in the Romanian Patriarchate asking then not to allow any legionary working-camps around ecclesiastical objectives.¹⁴⁰ Although the Orthodox clergy continued to participate in religious ceremonies in working camps, Metropolitan Gurie Grosu at Susai Mountain working camp¹⁴¹ being one such example, the Holy Synod refused to accept any more benevolent work coming from the legionaries.¹⁴²

IV. 3 Final Remarks

Although the propagandistic blueprint of the Iron Guard as expressed through the working camps project appeared compromised by the official letter from the Holy Synod, the process of building throughout Romania was in fact a success. Following the implementation of this project numerous Orthodox priests were advanced to legionary county commanders, having the opportunity to not only participate in the leadership of the party, but also to put their stamp on the political stance of the movement's development. Priests like Fr. Vasile Boldeanu of Putna county, Nicolae Nițu from Roman

¹³⁹ Ion Zelea-Codreanu, "Hristos-Dumnezeu, Unii Chiriarhi și Neamul" [Christ-God, Some of the Bishops and the Nation] in *Brațul de Fer*, Year I, no. 7 (December 1935), p. 1-2.

¹⁴⁰ For the text see Patriarch Miron Cristea "Pastoral Letter" in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* no. 4 (1935), p. 1.

¹⁴¹ General Cantacuzino "Circular Letter" in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 81.

¹⁴² For the complete text of the decision see Duiuliu Sfîntescu, 1996, p, 127.

county¹⁴³, Fr. Cucuietu from southern Bassarabia county where among the Orthodox priests with tremendous influence in the Legion's power-structure. Together with Fr. Dumitrescu-Borșa who had been awarded the highest decorations from the legionary's panoply (the Buna-Vestire order and the White Cross), Fr. Grigore Cristescu and Fr. Duminică Ionescu, both members of the Legionary Senate, the Orthodox priests started to enjoy prestige and power inside the Legion that they never had before.

After the student and the lawyer, the Orthodox priest became the most disseminated social category of the movement. Though the Patriarchal decree banned the constructions and the works of the Iron Guard in support of churches, this came too late to prevent the enrolment of a new generation of Orthodox priests in the structures of the Iron Guard. On the contrary, because of increased propaganda from fellow-priests, members of the movement, the number of those willing to participate and engage politically in the Legionary movement grew dramatically. Their importance in the movement increased exponentially with their number. A large majority of those involved in local leading structures were Orthodox priests.

One of the seminal events of this period was Codreanu's direct access to the hierarchy. Patriarch Miron Cristea, Metropolitans Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania and Gurie Grossu of Bessarabia, Bishops Vartolomeu Stănescu of Râmnic, Lucian Triteanu of Roman, the vicar-bishops Tit Simedrea of the Patriarchal See and Nicodim Munteanu of Neamț Monastery among others have received the legionary leaders and gave their personal blessing to the legionary working camps. These intersections between the Orthodox bishops and the Iron Guard's leadership produced an ideological bound that

¹⁴³ Nae Tudorică, *Mărturisiri în duhul adevărului. Mișcarea legionară și Căpitanul așa cum au fost* [Testimonies in the spirit of truth. The Legionary Movement the Captain as they were] (Bacău: Editura Plumb, 1993), p. 54.

will be continued and deepened over the years. What happened during Moța-Marin burial and in the sessions of the March 1937 Holy Synod reunion will mark a change of pace in the intricate relationship between Romanian fascists and the Orthodox clergy.

The project to establish a new Romanian *ecclesia* and to expand the cult of the Archangel in stone was not exclusionary. It allowed the Orthodox clergy to perform its sacramental role, lead working camps, or support the legionaries with supplies and working help. This embodies what Roger Griffin has coined as “‘syncretic’ clerical fascism”.¹⁴⁴ It goes beyond the mere presence of the clergy inside the movement that would go along the lines of clerical fascism’s definition and in the same time was inclusive of the church as an institution thus departing from Gentile’s definition of political religion.¹⁴⁵ Rather, working towards the Orthodox Church represented for the Iron Guard the means to experience the national community (the national *ecclesia*) through the lenses of ascetical, “white martyrdom” with the Orthodox priests as performers of the sacraments. Constructing churches on their own term (devoting them to the Archangel, at times proceeding without the legitimization of the higher clergy – bishops and archbishops, creating a ritual that involved more than just the actual building) yet still entrusting them into the Romanian Orthodox Church, this delicate balance between inclusion and exclusion, between integration and differentiation is where this version of “clerical fascism” can be used to explain the paradoxes. The high and low clergy and the Iron Guard met in the working camps and spoke about them, perceiving

¹⁴⁴ Roger Griffin, Roger Griffin, “The ‘Holy Storm’: ‘Clerical Fascism’ through the Lens of Modernism” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (June 2007), p. 220.

¹⁴⁵ Emilio Gentile, “Fascism as Political Religion”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, no. 2/3, 1990, p. 229–251.

them as places from where the Orthodox Church and the nation had to be defended and expanded.

The movement responded to the requests of poor villages and poor parishes formulated by Orthodox priests to help with building a cultural centre, a belfry or a church. The ritual part of the working camp was performed by the local priest. This is how the politicization of the sacred acted hand in hand with the fascist political religion, beyond the intricate mechanism of church administration at a local level. Building orthodox churches in the villages of the new Romanian provinces was compensating for the State's incapacity to deal with the need for churches in rural areas since its nationalization program involved bringing the Orthodox Church in urban areas by supporting financially the construction of huge cathedrals in the main cities where the Romanian presence might be quickly acknowledge by the minorities. The present undertaking can be also read as a conflict between the centre and the periphery in the State's agenda for nationalization through Orthodoxy, the legionaries speculating the need for churches in rural areas in their own benefit.

CHAPTER V

The Foundation of the Iron Guard's *Theology* (1934-1937)

The process of construction of churches undertaken between 1934 and 1936 as a way to spread the ideology of the movement cannot be understood completely outside a larger conceptual framework established by the Iron Guard's intellectuals to describe the "missionary" character of the movement. This project of the Romanian fascists was meant not just to pursue electorally with pragmatism the Romanian people, but was also the expression of an already crystallized sacralization of politics. The main goal of Codreanu's plan was to use his legionary "missionaries" not only for engaging in anti-Communist propaganda and clashing with Romanian police over anti-Semitic and anti-democratic entangles, but also to spread the seeds of the "new faith" preached ceaselessly by Codreanu's apostles. This is the period, I argue, after the assassination of Prime-Minister Duca that the movement developed an *Iron Guard's theology*. I claim that the intellectuals and theologians in the Romanian Iron Guard produced a theology of the nation, based on Christian theology. The Iron Guard's theology had all the required components: scriptures, a messiah, apostles and missionaries, the new *ecclesia* identified with the movement's ranks and the national community, the sacrament of eternal life, that is self-sacrifice towards the country, the rituals of the movement connected with those of the Orthodox church in a joint liturgy of the nation, the second coming of Christ resulting in the final resurrection of the Nation.

The present chapter focuses on these legionary "dogmas" describing any fascist secular religion, the advent of this hybridization of Christian theology under fascist impact that was uncontested and is still recurrent in the public imagination of post-

communist Romania. I discuss the process of canonization of the movement's scriptures in an intricate procedure of investing the texts of different legionary leaders, especially Codreanu and Moța, with a quasi-religious meaning. By compiling, editing and publishing the canonical texts of the movement, those texts belonging to the leaders, the legionaries have considered the importance of the written text as a public manifesto addressed openly to the masses in order to achieve electoral and public support for the movement's creed. Similar to early Christianity, the importance of the written scriptures and their canonization translated into a new impulse for the development and "missionary" expansion of Codreanu's movement. The legionaries were using these texts both as ideological base and as catechisms of the professed new world. They intended to achieve a nationalist and theological synthesis working in favor of the movement in the clerical and rural environments.

Along with the importance of the scriptures, as in any religion with a theology of salvation, there was also a need for a messiah, a redemptory figure who takes upon himself the sins of the Romanian people. In the case of the Iron Guard this figure – the man whose destiny was the Nation's redemption - was embodied in Corneliu Codreanu, or as his closest followers called him *Căpitanul*. The term was chosen carefully becoming a landmark in the apotheosis of Codreanu's personality cult, synonymous with the earthly messianic mission of the Iron Guard's leader. He was depicted by his followers as a redeemer of the nation from the plague of the foreigners and from the sins of the older generation, a generation impregnated with politicizing (*politicianism*) and who betrayed the country. Through his writings, especially "Cărticica șefului de cuib" [The Nest

Leader's Manual], he set the legionary "Ten Commandments" for his followers to cleanse the moral plague from the midst of the Romanian people.¹

One of the most important parts of any theology is the reality of eternal life, the way in which the member of the movement interacted with the movement's founder and how he achieved salvation. In the case of the Iron Guard it is the interaction with the Nation that ensures salvation. Through the member's sacrifice for the nation he enjoyed an eternal place in the memory of the people and the beyond and ensured not individual salvation but the salvation of the national community. Following Codreanu's commandments, the most important sacrament designed and then performed by the movement was that of the martyrdom for the Nation. According to a commandment from Codreanu, the martyrdom was to be rooted in the minds of his young disciples as part of a more complex project, the creation of the new man. This process entailed constantly educating the young followers on the relevance of the martyr's death for the movement overlapped with the continuous commemoration of those Romanian heroes important for the legion and the Nation. In the words of Codreanu and other leaders of the movement the new legionary man was supposed to die for his country, an ultimate sacrifice through which the legionary martyr would redeem both himself and the national community.

The chapter discusses the effort that the Legion put into generating its own reflection on theological matters, but also the reaction of the Romanian Orthodox clergy towards political and religious topics on the Iron Guard's agenda. The mutual process of

¹ In *Cărticica șefului de cuib* [The Nest Leader's Manual] there were only 6 such commandments: the law of discipline, the law of work, the law of silence, the law of education, the law of mutual help and the law of honor. Their number was never the same. See Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib* point 3 [The Nest Leader's Manual] (Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 2000), pp. 6-7. In practice, the Legion also used Ten Commandments. Please see "Cele zece porunci ale Gărzii de Fier" [The Ten Commandments of the Iron Guard] in *Garda Jiului* Year I, no. 9 (29th of July 1933), p. 3.

learning and borrowing between the Romanian fascists and the legionary clergymen gave birth to a heterogeneous and sophisticated religious narrative in the field of fascist studies.

V. 1 On the Nature of the Legionary Theology

The term “theology” can be confusing and misleading in the context of totalitarian studies. I argue that the Iron Guard’s “theology” was developed as a direct consequence of a process of “syncretism” between the secular religion of fascism and the Christian theology of the Church, leaving the impression that it was according to the Orthodox tradition’s principles and canons.² By so doing, the Legion did not intend to distance itself from the Church or to constitute itself as a sectarian or a heretical movement, but rather assumed and integrated in its own version of secular theology of the nation certain principles emanating from Christian theology. Arguing for a new ritualistic and mystic experience of Christian theology, this fascist, nationalist synthesis was perceived by the legionary and non legionary clergy only as a renewal of the Orthodox Church’s tradition and not as an innovation of the Orthodox dogma. The legionaries did not want to create another Church outside the Orthodox Church, but rather to integrate the already-existing institution with its clergy in the fascist national community of the Romanian people.

People like Nae Ionescu, Gheorghe Racoveanu, Gheorghe Furdui, Nichifor Crainic until 1934, Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Stoicescu, Fr. Vasile Stan or Fr. Grigore Cristescu remained practicing Orthodox Christians and “*syncretic* ‘clerical fascists’” during their adherence to the legionary movement or after it was prohibited by General Antonescu in

² Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, *Biserica și Mișcarea Legionară* [The Church and the Legionary Movement] in Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, *V-am scris vouă, tinerilor! Gândurile și încercările unui preot misionar* [I wrote to you, young people! The thoughts and the trials of a missionary priest] (Bucharest: Gutenberg, 2010), p. 125.

1941.³ In terms of intellectual exchanges, I argue that a symbiotic, syncretic relationship was established between the Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church, with the emphasis falling on assimilating and integrating the clerical-fascists and their ideas in the ideology of the movement.⁴

This nationalist theology was shaped according to the theological precepts of the Orthodox Church and many of those producing this version of nationalist theology were university professors, students in Orthodox theology at the Faculties from Sibiu, Bucharest or Cernăuți.⁵ Also, a large number of priests (Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Emilian Cucuetu, Fr. Alexandru Constantinescu, etc.), monks (Fr. Nicodim Ioniță) and laymen brought their contribution in achieving this synthesis between uncompromising nationalism and the principles of the millennial Orthodox Church. By continuously voicing its sincere adhesion to the Orthodox faith, the “religious speech” of the Iron Guard perceived as the expression of an “ethno-religious community” sought to present itself as a bottom to top alternative for Romanian Orthodox Church’s official discourse in the secular public sphere.⁶ The intention in forging this theological/ nationalistic synthesis was never to depart from the institution of the Church and form splinter groups, neither was it to separate between a legionary Church and a Church who did not support the Iron Guard. The purpose of the legionary leadership and clergymen was to

³ Roger Griffin, “The ‘Holy Storm’: ‘Clerical Fascism’ through the Lens of Modernism” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (June 2007), p. 220.

⁴ This symbiotic relationship can be seen in the principles instilled to those young schoolboys joining the Brotherhoods of the Cross, the movement’s youth organizations. See *Îndreptarul Frățiilor de Cruce* [The Brotherhoods of the Cross’ Manual] (Bucharest: Totul pentru Țară, 1935), p. 36-37 (for the relationship with the Church) and p. 38 for the relationship with the nation: “the nation is our *blood*.”

⁵ This is the case of Fr. Liviu Stan professor of Apologetics at Sibiu Theological School, Fr. Grigore Cristescu, professor of Homiletics at Bucharest Theological School, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, professor of Dogmatics at Sibiu Theological School, Fr. Haralambie Rovența, professor of New Testament at Bucharest Theological School and others.

⁶ The terminology belongs to Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland. Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 242.

romanticize and represent the national community as present in the Iron Guard's brotherhood as the social basis, as source for and the real religious community of the Orthodox Church. As proof that legionary synthesis was well received, the movement was never condemned officially by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church as heretical, neither its theology was listed as prohibit on theological or canonical grounds.

I argue that the “syncretic” character of fascism as a “sacralisation of politics”, the concept proposed by Emilio Gentile caters precisely for this situation that is distinct from how Nazism (condemned officially by Vatican in 1937 through the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*⁷) or Italian fascism who also had a troubled relationship with Vatican dealt with institutional religion. The Romanian fascists did not intend to subordinate the Orthodox Church clergy, but rather, considering that nationalism originated from the Church, they wished to peacefully assimilate the clergy into its ranks.⁸ The sacraments of the Church, the theological dogmas, the ritual of the Church, while at times modified, the canons and the tradition were preserved and cultivated by the Legionary movement. Therefore, at theological level, the “syncretic” character of Romanian fascism meant the synthesis between Orthodox theology (especially, elements from Biblical studies and Dogma) with the ideological core of the Romanian Iron Guard.⁹

Ontologically, the *legionary theology* was a projection upgraded to the level of the nation of the Christian theology focused on individual salvation. Driven by their nationalist convictions, the Iron Guard's intellectuals and clergymen advocated the idea that only the individual will have a place at the Last Judgment. Accordingly, as their

⁷ For the text of the encyclical, please see http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge_en.html. (Internet Accessed on November 5th, 2012).

⁸ Ion Banea, *Ce este și ce vrea Mișcarea legionară. Cărticică pentru săteni* [What is and what does it want the Legionary Movement. Manual for peasants] (Sibiu: Editura Curierul, 1937), pp. 7-8.

⁹ Radu Ioanid, “The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (Winter 2004), p. 435.

Polish counterparts, they drew up a narrative where Christian theology of personal salvation was adapted to the realities of the nation, where the national community was projected in the beyond as a single entity and was invested with immortality and sins, just like a human being.¹⁰

The movement's "theologians" referred to the conceptual translation from the extremist right to the theological reflection, especially after the Great War.¹¹ The personal despair of the combatants confronted with both the loss in sheer numbers of human life and the sheer disbelief in the idea of the technological progress paved the way for a return to religion as a source of existential meaning and communitarian comfort in an almost apocalyptic tone.¹² The carnage of the war had a brutal impact on many clerics and the advent of modernization and mechanized world made the conservative clerical elites more attuned to the intellectual and ideological developments coming from the right.¹³ As Derek Hastings recently pointed out, after the end of WWI and the demise of the Soviet *Räterepublik* under the brunt of Freikorps' violent actions the Bavarian Catholic clergy, but also the Catholic intellectuals (Dietrich Eckart, Franz Schröngamer-Heimdal, etc.) were profoundly attached to the incipient values of Nazi Party.¹⁴ According to the same scholar, "the existence of an increasingly undeniable synthesis of Nazi-oriented racism

¹⁰ Brian Porter-Szücs, 2011, p. 55.

¹¹ John Pollard, "Fascism and Religion" in Antonio Costa Pinto (ed.), *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism. Comparative Perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 141-146. Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. A Sense of Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 78-80.

¹² Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics from the Great War to the War on Terror* (London: Harper and Row, 2007), p. 8-9. Also see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 26.

¹³ Please see chapter II of this thesis. Please also see Ghislain Lafont, *O istorie teologică a Bisericii. Itinerariul, formele și modelele teologiei* [A Theological History of the Church. The Path, Forms and Models of Theology] (Sibiu: Deisis, 2003), p. 341.

¹⁴ Derek Hastings, *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism. Religious Identity and National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 46-76.

and Catholic piety emanating from München”¹⁵ proved that under the impact of the sense of aggressing “decadence” and “degeneration a “mazeway resynthesis” between opposite and incompatible elements such as rabid anti-Semitism, stern nationalism and “religious Catholicism”¹⁶ was possible under the Nazi party’s protective umbrella.¹⁷

There are only a handful of attempts to tackle the topic¹⁸ of the relationship between theology and fascism in the Romanian context. However they focus mostly on the impact produced in the movement by the Romanian secular intellectuals and by the clergy. The novelty of the present approach regarding the relationship between ideology and theology in the case of the Romanian Iron Guard is related to the claim of mutual theological influence of the theological discourses, coming both from a fascist perspective and a perspective of the institutional religion.

I call this a *theology* not because is a discourse about a transcendent God or because its Trinitarian character, but rather because, as in the case of Christianity, the main focus of this intellectual undertaking was devoted to finding means to correlate national and Christian salvation into one efficient way of personal/ collective soteriology that would be acceptable according to the elaborate precepts of the Orthodox Church.¹⁹ It was based on a secular angelology functioning as a reversed Christology, a Christology from below in which in the place of the Christian messiah one finds the movement’s leader cult; on an

¹⁵ Derek Hastings, 2010, p. 77.

¹⁶ Derek Hastings, “How ‘Catholic’ was the Early Nazi Movement? Religion, Race, and Culture in Munich, 1919-1924” in *Central European History*, Vol. 36, no. 3(2003), pp. 383-433.

¹⁷ Roger Griffin, 2007, p. 220-221. See Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 13-50. For the development in a full-fledged Nazi theology mirrored in an institutional cover see Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross. The German Christians Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 21-43.

¹⁸ Mirel Bănică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română, stat și societate în anii '30* [The Romanian Orthodox Church, State and Society in the '30s] (Jassy: Polirom, 2007), p. 39.

¹⁹ See Serghei Boulgakov, *Ortodoxia* [The Orthodoxy] translated from French by Sergiu Grossu (Sibiu: Diecezană, 1936), p. 82.

(angelic) ecclesiology in which every member of the Legion becomes a replica of the celestial hierarchy as the embodiment of the angelic hierarchies and the nation is identified with the ecclesiastical “ethno-religious community”; on a set of texts which, as in Christian theology, perform the function of movement’s scriptures; on a worldly sacrament, the martyrdom for the Nation paralleling and mirroring the martyrdom for God; on a secular liturgy based on a series of rituals performed by the movement’s clergy²⁰ (their own quasi-religious rituals using as inspiration the rituals of the Church), and by an apocalyptic idea of a collective/ individual resurrection in the beyond.²¹ The most important difference between other political religions such as Italian Fascism and Nazism and the political theology of the Iron Guard is related precisely to this expectancy of the resurrection in the beyond, the sheer conviction that individual salvation and the final resurrection have no value in the absence of a collective rebirth of the Nation in the Second Coming where Christ as the true Savior will perform the final judgment of the nations.²²

V. 2 “Love Thy Neighbor”? On Legionary Violence

Another important point of departure from other fascist movements was the stress placed on the relevance of the personal sacrifice of every member of the movement when such human sacrifices were required by the leader. As in the case of Nazi Germany where death was idealized and coupled with the idea of the afterlife in the collective memory,

²⁰ The movement’s clergy can be sometimes people who just graduated from a theological school, priests, bishops, hieromonks, or even laymen.

²¹ Alexandru Cantacuzino, “Cum suntem” [How we are] in Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Între lumea legionară și lumea comunistă* [Between the legionary and the communist world] 2nd edition (Bucharest: Antet, 1994), p. 38. First edition 1940.

²² Corneliu Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For my legionaries] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994) p. 76.

the legionary case extolled upon this opportunity and expanded its meaning by using inspiration from the Romanian Orthodox Church's cult for the dead.²³ By associating the narrative of the Christian martyrdom brought in by some of the priests and theologians associated actively with the movement and the WWI narrative of "fallen soldier" as an imitator of Christ's sacrifice²⁴ the movement acquired a personal redemptive sacrament of immortality based on the *archangelic theology*. I use *archangelic theology* in describing the theology of the movement in relation to the position of Archangel Michael as one of the key-elements of inspiration for developing a religious narrative, but also the idea that the nation was shaped according to a hierarchy based in self-sacrifice and, through this sacrifice, the higher places in the national hierarchy in the beyond will be filled with those who sacrificed more for the country.²⁵

As with the Nazis belief that by sacrificing themselves for Fuhrer and Fatherland and they would achieve immortality in the beyond,²⁶ the legionary was convinced that by giving his life for his country he will inherit the Kingdom of Heavens as a member of the Archangel Michael's personal entourage and he will live forever in the collective memory of the Romanian people.²⁷

By styling its own blend of theology, the Iron Guard did not think only to revolutionize the Romanian nation and state apparatus or to cleanse Romanian nation

²³ For Nazi Germany see George L. Mosse, "Death, Time and History: Volkisch Utopia and its Transcendence" in *Masses and Men* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1980), pp. 69-86.

²⁴ George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) p. 76.

²⁵ Origen, *Aufforderung zum Martyrium* [Exhortation to Martyrdom] (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), p.47, martyrdom is the easiest way to get into the Heavens and to reach a much higher position in the celestial hierarchy. For the celestial hierarchy see David Keck, *Angels & Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 55-58.

²⁶ Jay W. Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.74.

²⁷ Alexandru Cantacuzino, 1990, p. 27. This idea appears in legionary memoirs published in Post-Communist period. See Virgil Maxim, *Imn pentru Crucea purtată* [Hymn for the carried Cross] (Bucharest: Antim, 2002), p. 237.

from internal enemies (be them racial, ethnical, economic, political, or religious). The effort of the Iron Guard went deeper and focused also on revolutionizing the Church from its foundations, starting surprisingly with the ossified Orthodox dogma and the rigid principles regulating the Romanian Orthodox Church in terms of institutional organization. In terms of the Romanian Orthodox Church's doctrine, the differences between what grasp the movement had on Orthodox doctrine and what the official church professed both in theology but also in religious practices were significant. The documents show an almost complete absence of the Trinitarian idea and its reduction to a general notion of God/ Christ and the absence of the *Theotokos* from the legionary imagery. While the cornerstone-dogma of Christianity went almost unnoticed by legionary ideologues and theologians because of the ready-made theological entailing the "apophatic theology" behind the theological reasoning of the Trinity, I can safely assert that Mary's absence from the legionary hagiography was due to the poor status enjoyed by women in all fascist movements, including the Iron Guard.²⁸ Nevertheless, women who reached sainthood and legionary women martyrs were praised by the legionary press, but only as examples of legionary devotion towards Orthodox sainthood associated with transcendence²⁹ or as "heroic women,"³⁰ representatives of legionary martyrdom.³¹

²⁸ Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 1997, p. 168. See also Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1993), pp. 234-271. For "apophatic theology" as a *via negativa* in knowing God through statements defining what God is not see Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology. An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1978), pp. 31-35; Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1960), pp. 13-40. For a contemporary approach on the topic see Aristotle Papanikolau, *Being With God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2006), p. 2.

²⁹ I. B. (Ion Banea?), "Sfânta Paraschiva" [Saint Paraschiva] in *Garda Moldovei*, Year III, no. 5 (15th of October 1933), p. 1.

³⁰ Ioan Stoenescu, "Cuvinte pentru femeia care va veni" [Words for the future woman] in *Gândul Neamului*, Year I, no. 2 (Aprilie 1935), p.11. The same idea was present in Haralambie Popescu, "Femeia legionară" in *Garda Moldovei*, Year III, no. 5 (15th of October 1933), p. 4.

³¹ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, "Olimpia Zeană" in *Porunca Vremii*, Year V, no. 328 (15th of February 1936), p. 2.

Nevertheless, the most striking and interesting example of Orthodox theology's hybridization by the Iron Guard political religion can be noticed when the reader follows the track of violence and in the assassinations committed by movement members against different political figures or rivals.³² The Old Testament's commandment asking any person to "love thy neighbor", a command reinforced and expanded to all mankind by Jesus Christ in his famous parable of the Good Samaritan faded away in the legionary theology. From the 1920s brawls with police and the Jews to Manciu's assassination committed by Codreanu himself the reader can note that in 1930s the violent disposition of the legionaries became almost a generalized phenomenon. Under the impact of post-WWI political mobilization of the masses reconstructing the camaraderie from the trenches and even further translating it into the categories of a national united community militarism and violence were transferred from the front to the reality of every-day politics by the returning soldiers.³³ The myth of violence was used to cleanse society from every adversary of unity and to provide social and cultural means to justify the reason to live and offer existence a superior meaning to cope with the surrounding anomie of Bolshevism, Jewish capital, Liberalism, and social unrest.³⁴ In 1930 Codreanu publicly took side with Gheorghe Beza, a Macedonian student from Bucharest, who on 21st of July

³² For a comparative analysis of the violent character of fascist movements, please see Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 23-47. Also, see Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices. An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 27-54. For Germany see Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic 1918-1933. Fight for the Streets and the Fear of Civil War* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2012), pp. 215-271.

³³ Robert Gewarth and John Horne, "Vectors of Violence: Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War, 1917 – 1923" in *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 83, no. 3 (September 2011), pp. 489-512. For the relation between front violence and national community see Thomas Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide. Hitler's Community, 1918-1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 14-31. For political mobilization in Weimar Germany see Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism. Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 57-64.

³⁴ Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 78-154. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany. Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 7-40.

1930 attempted to assassinate Constatin Angelescu, a National Liberal high-ranking official advocating for a law in the detriment of Macedonian colonists from southern Dobrudjia.³⁵ Because of an anti-Semitic manifesto published by Codreanu's Iron Guard³⁶ presumed as the moral cause behind Beza's attempt on Angelescu's life, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu was also questioned by the prosecutors if he was involved in the assassin's plans.³⁷ After the prosecutors' questioning was completed, Codreanu was arrested together with Beza and his accomplices.³⁸ After a short trial he was acquitted.³⁹

On 31st of December 1930 a legionary high-school student, Constantin Dumitru-Zăpadă shot Emil Socor, at that time director of *Dimineața-Adevărul* left-wing newspapers and publishing house. The reason for the assassination was a rabid political campaign against Iron Guard's the electoral interests conducted by the aforementioned journalist in the pages of his newspapers.⁴⁰ Without condemning the act of the presumptive assassin, Codreanu became his trial lawyer.

This amnesia towards the commandment of "love thy neighbor" and predisposition to violence against political adversaries or ethnic minorities was conveyed to the young

³⁵ "Atentatul dela Ministerul de Interne" [The Assassination Attempt from the Ministry of Internal Affairs] in *Cuvântul*, Year VI, no. 1886 (23rd of July 1930), p. 4. Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 488.

³⁶ "Manifestele 'Gărzii de fier'" [The manifestos of the Iron Guard] in *Cuvântul*, Year VI, no. 1887 (24th of July 1930), p. 4. For the text of the manifestos, please see "Unul din manifestele pentru care a fost arestat, judecat și...achitat Corneliu Zelea Codreanu" [One of the manifestos for which Corneliu Zelea Codreanu has been arrested, trialed...and acquitted] in *Biruința*, Year I, no. 1 (17th of October 1930), p. 1. For both manifestos' texts see Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste (1927-1938)* (Bucharest: Blassco, 2010), pp. 11-16.

³⁷ "Atentatul de la Interne" [The assassination attempt from the Ministry of Internal Affairs] in *Cuvântul*, Year VI, no. 1887 (24th of July 1930), p. 4.

³⁸ "Arestarea d-lui Corneliu Zelea Codreanu" [The arrest of Mr. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu] in *Cuvântul*, Year VI, no. 1890 (27th of July 1930), p. 4. "Iară e plin la 'Văcărești' de studenți români. Dl. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu e cu ei" [Again Vacaresti prison is full of Romanian students. Mr. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu is together with them] in *Libertatea*, Year XXIX, no. 32 (31st of July 1930), pp. 1-2.

³⁹ "Unul din manifestele pentru care a fost arestat, judecat și...achitat Corneliu Zelea Codreanu" [One of the manifestos for which Corneliu Zelea Codreanu has been arrested, trialed...and acquitted] in *Biruința*, Year I, no. 1 (17th of October 1930), p. 1.

⁴⁰ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 488.

generation by Codreanu through a message sent to the Students National Congress from 1930 held in Brăila. Codreanu bluntly stated:

*Obstinately reject all the false theories of the fake humanitarian and pacifist apostles, tending to spiritually disarm you. Bear in mind that Law is a property grounded in force. In battle people fight. From the bottom of the ocean to up in the air you find nothing more than a struggle in which the animals devour one another. ...I wish to say that in nature there is no “peace” as chanted by poets and men of letters, but there is all but one, great, cruel, superb reality: the war. The nations who understand this truth live. The other ones die.*⁴¹

This idea of a militaristic, violent towards the internal “enemies”, warlike, young generation of the Romanian fascists as proposed by Codreanu was internalized and expanded to the masses by the fanatical followers of the Captain. It seemed that as in the Nazi case, according to Codreanu, not all the citizens were equal in front of law, where the act was justice reduced itself to an expression of the national community’s collective will and the exogenous racial conditions of social Darwinism.⁴²

As a direct follow up of this message, at an October 1933 legionary congress held in Zalău, the participants were all “carrying revolvers, some stilettos and daggers” in a rage of violence terrifying even the police.⁴³ As the Police informant reported to the authorities, the armament was a direct reaction of the legionary membership to Codreanu’s advice and order that if confronted with the authorities attempting to ban the meeting force should be applied: “who is fearful and coward has no place in the Legion.”⁴⁴

This constant appeal to courage in extreme situations, violence in targeting adversaries or the representatives of state’s apparatus, the usage of armament in defense

⁴¹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “Congresul studențesc de la Brăila” [The Student Congress from Brăila] in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 17.

⁴² Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 4-45.

⁴³ “Order no. 20 590/1933” in USHMM, RG 25. 23M.0004.00000098.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

of the movement's political meetings as virtues deeply associated with legionary heroism sapped at the very foundation of any hint of Christian morals to be found in the Iron Guard's deontological practices. It is therefore not surprising that in 1932 the political program of the Legion asked for the capital punishment for those embezzling the public finances.⁴⁵

Codreanu was prone to violent behavior and transmitted this trait to his close-followers. This corroborated with the political mobilization of the youth have been the moral causes behind the assassinations of Prime-Minister I. G. Duca⁴⁶ (29th of December 1933) and Mihail Stelescu, Codreanu's former aide, whom the legionaries accused of treason and intent of assassinating Codreanu (16th of June 1936).⁴⁷ If in Duca's case the murderous act ending his life was carried out without any obvious preparations or public instigation to hate against him, Stelescu's murder was carefully prepared in advance. Codreanu himself issued two circular letters, speaking on 1st of March 1935 about "treason"⁴⁸ and alluded to Stelescu as traitor when speaking at the Galați youth organization (FDC):

The "Brotherhood of the Cross" from Galați has forged itself a tradition of heroism in which they would take pride tomorrow, in a victorious Romania, when glory will be distributed. Today only the wounds are shared. Destiny has been cruel to you, brothers of the Cross from Galați. Among you a traitor was born and grew up. How hard this fact burdens you, your soldierly honor, me! I encouraged him and raised him where even he did not believe that he could rise at 25 years old. Today, when we live chained, he enjoys freedom, with enemy money, in the applause of the Jewish power he splashes us with mud and publishes a luxury quality newspaper, a

⁴⁵ "Declarațiile 'Gărzii de Fier' făcute de Șeful ei dl. deputat Corneliu Zelea Codreanu în discuția la Mesaj" [The statements of the Iron Guard made by Mr. MP Corneliu Zelea Codreanu] in *Garda Basarabiei*, Year I, no. 3-4 (15th of September 1934), p. 1.

⁴⁶ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 242

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁴⁸ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "În timpul campaniei de uneltiri și mișelii. Circulară" [In the time of machinations and turpitudes. Circular Letter] in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, pp. 34-35.

quality which us, in our ruthless poverty, in ten years time were never able to achieve.⁴⁹

This campaign of instigation and of publicizing Stelescu's treason among the legionary youth was embraced by other legionary leaders as well who addressed Stelescu different letters in which they threatened his life.⁵⁰ This obvious problem with Mihai Stelescu spread out rapidly among the legionary students, especially among those enrolled in the Faculties of Orthodox Theology. Some of them warned Stelescu that "... do not know if you still have time to repent for your sins."⁵¹

After a stormy legionary student congress held in Târgu Mureș in the spring of 1936, where the participants formed teams of students (death squads) in order to punish with death several Romanian political figures such as Elena Lupescu, King Carol II's ill-reputed mistress, General Gabriel (Gavrilă) Marinescu, the chief of Police and the King's personal henchman, Constantin Argetoianu, and, among others, Mihai Stelescu.⁵² On the 16th of July the same year ten legionaries headed by Ion Caratănase, the vice-president of UNSCR and Iosif Bozântan, the leader of Oradea student center assassinated Mihai Stelescu in a hospital room at Spitalul Brâcovenesc in Bucharest, a place where Stelescu was recovering from a surgery.⁵³ Among the ten assassins who emptied almost 100 bullets in Stelescu and chopped up his body three were Theology students (Ștefan

⁴⁹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Scrisoare către F.D.C. Galați" [Letter of Brotherhood of the Cross from Galati] in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 39.

⁵⁰ "Înfierarea trădătorului Stelescu" [The Castigation of the traitor Stelescu] in *România creștină*, Year I, no. 8 (1st of July 1935), p. 2. To a letter of Stelescu dated 13th of December 1934 addressed to Vasile Iasinschi, the legionary leader of Bukovina, the latter responded on the 18th of December 1934 with the following statement: "You make me sick out of fanaticism and not out of 'order' until you will not redeem your sins or you will be buried underneath them."

⁵¹ Leg. [Legionary], "De ce nu se sinucide trădătorul Stelescu?" [Why traitor Stelescu does not commit suicide?] in *România creștină*, Year I, no 5 (10th of May 1935), p. 3.

⁵² Todie Curățureanul, "Congresul general studentesc de la Târgu-Mureș. Precizări" [The General Student Congress from Târgu-Mureș. Clarifications in *Cuvântul Argeșului*, Year I, no. 19-20 (1st of May 1936), p. 5.

⁵³ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 266.

Georgescu, Ion Atanasiu, and Radu Vlad Bogdan). They were sent to life imprisonment for manslaughter. Fr. Popescu-Mălăiești, the dean of Orthodox Faculty of Theology from Bucharest, following the advice of the professor's council took into consideration the possibility of expelling the assassins from the institution. The Patriarchy represented by Auxiliary Bishop Tit Simedrea and Fr. Gheorge Vintilescu had a peculiar reaction when addressing a confidential letter to Minister of Public Education, criticizing the State's intrusion in the theological system curtailing the Church's authority as responsible for the students' criminal behavior.⁵⁴ In reply to the Church's gesture of expelling the assassin students, Codreanu expressed his opinion towards the movement's relation with the Orthodox Church and the ecclesiastical condemnation of the aforementioned students.

The historical condition is the one we are experiencing, because we live in time. The line of the Church is beyond us. We tend towards it, but we achieve little because we live under damnation and under the burden of our sins, of the world, and our ancestors. We acknowledge that we are sinners: that is our legionary attitude towards the Church.⁵⁵

Codreanu's *captio benevolentiae* of the Church impersonated by the addressee of his letter was offered to calm the worried representatives of the Orthodox Church about the criminal nature of the Legionary movement. By acknowledging the movement as sinful and as a part of the ecclesiastical body striving to achieve the Orthodox Church's religious principles Codreanu wanted to underline that legionaries were in fact a part of

⁵⁴ + Tit Simedrea, Fr. Director Gh. Vintilescu, "Letter 1524/17th of August 1936" in *Arhiva Studențească București, Ministerul Instrucțiunii Publice. Direcția Învățământului Superior*, file 620/1936, p. 41 in Lucian Năstasă (ed.), *Antisemitismul universitar în România, 1919-1939. Mărturii documentare* [The University's Anti-Semitism. Archival Testimonies] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale/Kriterion, 2011), pp. 583-584.

⁵⁵ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Mișcarea legionară și Biserica. Din scrisoarea-răspuns unui preot profesor" [The Legionary Movement and the Church. From the reply-letter addressed to a father professor] in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, pp. 106-107. Codreanu's position was before expressed by Fr. Emilian Cucuetu, "Biserica și Statul" [The Church and the State] in *România creștină*, Year I, no. 10 (1st of August 1935), p. 4. For Fr. Emilian Cucuetu and his close-relationship with the Legionary movement and the Captain see the circular letter from 16th of October 1935 in which Fr. Cucuetu was mentioned first by the legionary commander Șeitan and afterwards by Codreanu himself as an example of courage for the entire movement in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 61.

the Church. The tone of the Captain's opened letter sent to the Church's representative changed abruptly when he reminded them that even the Church blessed military outfits and the guns used in wars. By claiming that because of doing these things the Church has departed from its initial purpose and sainthood, Codreanu contested the decision to expel the legionary students accused of murder from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology:

On the battlefield there are traitors. They are shot by the firing squad.⁵⁶ The Church does not anathematize the squad. On the contrary, she takes part to the scene. The Church says that a person who killed another cannot be a priest. My answer: at Carmen-Sylva there is a priest, a former teacher and captain during the war, who shot and killed many and like him are many more priests. Those who have killed Stelescu it is said that they have to be expelled from Theology. I think not for the aforementioned reason and another one. They can say: We do not become priests. We want to be shoemakers. But we want to study Theology.⁵⁷

This particular justification for violence and the killing of political adversaries was inculcated in the minds of the Theology students associated with the Iron Guard through an extensive emphasis placed upon the national interest superseding the spiritual one. The same attitude towards a human life can be noticed if someone looks at the reaction of the legionary killers, both in the case of Duca and Stelescu. Consider by a reputed historian of fascism as a mark of the "kenotic" character of the movement,⁵⁸ this lack of conscience and their decision to give themselves in without any protest to the authorities could be

⁵⁶ Codreanu has the same argument as Alexandru Cantacuzino's in Alexandru Cantacuzino, "Cum suntem" [How we are] in Alexandru Cantacuzino. *Opere complete* [Complete Works] (Bucharest: Antet, 1990), pp. 24-25.

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 107-108.

⁵⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism. Comparison and Definition* (Madison, WS: Wisconsin University Press, 1980), p. 198. The argument has been re-taken in Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism* (Madison, WS: Wisconsin University Press, 1995), p. 480. According to Stanley G. Payne the Iron Guard was "mystical, kenotic form of semi-religious fascism" for which the term "kenotic" stands out as an explanation for the willingness expressed by the legionary assassins to turn themselves in to the authorities after committing their crimes and to plead guilty in front of the court. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Stanley G. Payne for clarifying this aspect to me during our correspondence. For the relation between fascist pseudo-religious and "kenotic" willingness to commit atrocities and contemporary terrorist imagination associated with religious fanaticism, see Roger Griffin, *Terrorist Creed. Fanatical Violence and the Human Need for Meaning* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), pp.113-115; 198-205.

seen as a sign of the generalized moral anesthesia injected in the legionary student milieu and by different professors with fascist sympathies.⁵⁹

V. 3 An Archangelic Theology of the Iron Guard

The cornerstone of the legionary theology was Archangel Michael, one of the leading angels of the celestial hierarchy.⁶⁰ The emphasis played on Archangel Michael in the early years of the movement seemed to pay rich dividends in this particular period of time. Numerous priests began to embrace the legionary archangelic theology as divine justification of their vengeful mission against Romania's inner or outer enemies and to perceive the relevance of the fascist movement in the image of its divine protector. One of these clergymen was Fr. Vasile Boldeanu, an Orthodox priest from Focșani, who joined the Romanian Iron Guard in the late 1920's.⁶¹ After Tătăărăscu's government eased its stance towards the movement, Fr. Boldeanu edited *Brațul de Fier*, a propaganda

⁵⁹ Claudia Koonz, 2003, pp. 131-162. For the Nazification and the moral/ religious relativism associated with rabid anti-Semitic views propagated by the Nazi elite in the Germany's universities, see Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust. Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 61-93 and Susannah Heschel, "Nazifying Christian Theology: Walter Grundmann and the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life" in *Church History*, Vol. 63, no. 4 (December 1994), pp. 587-605. For the Catholic Church's collaboration in the Nazi attempt to confiscate German religious consciousness, see Kevin P. Spicer, *Hitler's Priests. Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), pp. 154-202 and Michael E. O'Sullivan, "An Eroding Milieu? Catholic Youth, Church Authority, and Popular Behavior in Northwest Germany during the Third Reich, 1933-1938" in *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 90, no. 2 (April 2004), pp. 236-259. For the racial "nonsimultaneity" in the German case see John Connelly, "Catholic Racism and its Opponents" in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 79, no. 4 (December 2007), pp. 825-847

⁶⁰ For the archangel Michael, see Flor Strejnicu, *Creștinismul Mișcării legionare* [The Christianity of the Legionary Movement] (Sibiu: Imago, 2001), pp. 21-34. Also see David Keck, 1998, p.57. For a fresh Orthodox perspective on Christian angelology see Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), pp. 46-49. For the Jewish pre-history of the archangels and angels see Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity. The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 160-189.

⁶¹ For Boldeanu, please see Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 183.

newspaper of the Iron Guard. In one of his first articles regarding the relationship between the archangel and the movement, he wrote:

The Legionary Movement is the only political movement from our country which makes a strong connection between heavens and earth, the only political organization that is acting on the direction/ line of our great dead passed in the world of spirits, the only political organization that has as its guide, counselor, protector, the commander of all the celestial spiritual/angelic forces, the One who stands in the sainthood hierarchy immediately after the Holy Trinity, the Archangel Michael.”⁶²

In other words, the most important source of sainthood and political legitimization was attributed by Fr. Boldeanu to the Archangel Michael, and not to the Virgin Mary or the saints, who were perceived as too pacifist for the legionary military heroism. This was an important innovation from the traditionalist Orthodox dogma, especially when this doctrine was re-engaged conceptually in the same period by the Russian emigration in Paris.⁶³

The cult of the archangel Michael was not new in the development of the movement. According to Constantin Iordachi, his cult was originated in the cult of Michael the Brave Codreanu was familiar with since his years spent in “Dealul Monastery” Military Highschool.⁶⁴ In support of this research hypothesis, while being in Botoșani Military School, Codreanu may have attended on 8th of November 1918 a special commemoration of the Wallachia’s Prince Mihail Viteazu in Jassy. In the presence of King Ferdinand, the Metropolitan of Moldavia, the Prime Minister, members of the Parliament, and the cadets of Botoșani Military School, the skull of the former prince was brought out for a solemn commemorative religious service performed by the

⁶² Fr. Vasile Boldeanu (?), “Arhanghelul Mihail” [The Archangel Michael] in *Brațul de Fier* [The Iron Arm] Year I, No. 6 (November 1935) p. 1.

⁶³ Serghei Boulgakov, *Ortodoxia* [The Orthodoxy] (Sibiu: Diecezană, 1936) was translated into Romanian by professor Nicolae Grossu and was a complete summary of the Orthodox dogma.

⁶⁴ Constantin Iordachi, 2010, p. 325.

Metropolitane Pimen Georgescu of Moldavia on the occasion of Orthodox feast of Archangels Michael and Gabriel.⁶⁵ The event was followed by a series of conferences on Romanian unity and the importance of Mihai Viteazul for Romanian history, conferences delivered by Alexandru Lapedatu, General N. Petala, and Nicolae Bălan, “preacher of Sibiu Metropolitan See and delegate of the National Council.”⁶⁶ Nicolae Iorga was invited to speak as well about the virtues of the prince, being the main attraction of the event.⁶⁷

In line with this argument, the Orthodox Cathedral from Alba Iulia where King Ferdinand I will crown himself as the first monarch of Greater Romania will be built under the same protection, that of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. If spiritually the main protector of the Cathedral was the Holy Trinity, the Trinity as protective power seemed to be too abstract to be related with the historical reality of Alba Iulia being the capital of Mihai Viteazul. Therefore, in order to establish a sense of historical and symbolical continuity between the first prince ruling over the three Romanian traditional provinces and King Ferdinand crowned as Romanian’s monarch a pair of additional patrons were added to the previous one, i.e. the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The reasons why the Archangels became so relevant were manifold. The fact that Germany’s patron was Archangel Michael, that it was Mihai Viteazul’s Christian name, or that, as represented in the Orthodox murals with his sword drawn to punish the sinners, archangel Michael stood as the symbol of military, glorious power against the forces of evil.

⁶⁵ Duiuliu Marcu, “Parastasul de mâine pentru Mihai Viteazul” [Tomorrow’s Religious Commemoration of Mihai Viteazul] in *Neamul românesc*, Year XIII, no. 310 (9th of November 1918), p. 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4. Nicolae Bălan will be elected in 1920 Metropolitane of Transylvania, rewarded for his loyalty and his efforts towards the Romanian unification under the scepter of King Ferdinand I.

⁶⁷ Nicolae Iorga, “Pomenirea lui Mihai Viteazul” [The commemoration of Mihai Viteazul] in *Neamul românesc*, Year XIII, no. 311 (10th of November 1918), p. 1.

According to Codreanu's own account, we can pin point chronologically the start of the cult of the Archangel in November 1923 in Văcărești prison's chapel near Bucharest, while he was imprisoned for a plot to kill several politicians and bankers.⁶⁸ During the time he spent as an inmate in Văcărești, Codreanu wrote a series of letters addressed to different persons, in which he intended to keep the 1922 student spirit of revolt alive and to attract new adhesions and more financial support to the cause. In one of these letters from 12th of February 1924, speaking to a captain of the Romanian army, Codreanu mentioned the vengeful Romanian nation "bearing in its hands the sword of the Archangel."⁶⁹ The book has the same inscription as found near the figure of the Archangel from the first issue from *Pământul strămoșesc*: "Against the unclean hearts coming in God's clean house, without mercy, I draw my sword."⁷⁰

During a period of prayer the icon of the Archangel from the former monastery Văcărești's church made an impression on Codreanu and from that point on remained the portative shrine of the movement.⁷¹ In choosing the Archangel as patron of the movement one other explanation went unexplored, namely the possibility that the importance of the archangel as a divine avenger and the fighter against the evil associated with the myth of the chivalrous quest for moral purity which made such an impact on the violent revenge-based ideology of Codreanu's came also from the Orthodox cult devoted to the Archangels on the 8th of November. Every year the liturgy stated:

Where your power shines, Archangel Michael, therein lies the fear because Lucifer fallen from the sky cannot stand to remain in the brightness of your light. Therefore

⁶⁸ For Văcărești as a monastery and prison, see Octav Gorescu, *'Văcăreștii' Mănăstire, Văcăreștii Penitenciar* (Bucharest: Vremea, 1930).

⁶⁹ In support of this statement see Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Scrisori Studențești din Închisoare* (Orăștie: Tipografia Libertatea, 1925), p 26.

⁷⁰ From the cover of *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 1 (1st of August 1927) these words came from "the icon of St. Archangel Michael from the Coronation Cathedral in Alba-Iulia."

⁷¹ Corneliu Codreanu, *Pentru legionary* [For my legionaries] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994), p. 297-298.

we pray to you: the fiery arrows that the demon shrewdly sent against us put them out, you, worthy of praise, oh Archangel Michael!⁷²

This theology of the Archangel Michael as a divine avenger has crossed from the Orthodox cult into the ideology of the movement and proved seductive for young Codreanu who, coming from a traditional, religious family, has undoubtedly heard about the power of the archangel during his participation in the religious feasts of the Romanian Orthodox Church devoted to the cult of the Archangel.⁷³ The period spent in the military school from Dealu Monastery and the revelation experienced by Codreanu and Ion I. Moța during their imprisonment at Văcărești prison could very well have represented a continuation of this initial experience regarding the Archangel that Codreanu was close to in his infancy and later in his adolescence.

However, the churchly origin of the Archangel's cult cannot be sufficiently verified by documents or testimonies, the origins of cult of the archangel in the Legion is placed by the documents in the period of detention spent by Codreanu and some of his followers in Văcărești prison as part of the hagiographical construction of Codreanu's cult.⁷⁴ As he stated in his memoirs, the strong impression created by the icon of the Archangel belonging to the iconostasis' right door in the Văcărești Monastery church on all those imprisoned was the starting moment of the Iron Guard's fascination with Archangel Michael and the birth of the movement,⁷⁵ a narrative confirmed also by Ion I. Moța.⁷⁶

⁷² *Menaion to November*, 8th of November, p. 79. The same text appears as grounding for the cult of the Archangel in Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, 2010, p. 220.

⁷³ Paul A. Shapiro "Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church" in Kevin P. Spicer (ed.), *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 139.

⁷⁴ Ion Banea, *Căpitanul* (Sibiu: Totul pentru Țară, 1937), p. 65.

⁷⁵ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, p. 126.

⁷⁶ Ion Moța, "La icoană!" [At the icon] in *Cranii de lemn* [Wooden Skulls] 5th edition (Bucharest: Sânziana, 2007), p. 21. Initially published in *Pămîntul strămoșesc* Year I, No. 1 (August 1927), p. 9-10.

Codreanu's powerful narrative has proved to be influential for many. Nichifor Crainic in his "Tineretul și creștinismul"⁷⁷ (1934), signaled his adherence and sympathy to the movement. He made reference to the Romanian youth, to the abyss between the "old world" and the "new world" which is about to come,⁷⁸ the psychology of death,⁷⁹ "the metaphysical meaning of existence,"⁸⁰ anti-Semitism, the new "Romanian Christian Students Association", the introduction of the Christian element in the University as a reply to both Judaic element and academic positivism, all are at that time key-elements already present in the incipient ideology and in the political speech of the Romanian Iron Guard.⁸¹ The text confirms the canonization of the Archangel's cult, recapping the story of the imprisoned generation from Văcărești prison. In order to reconstruct Codreanu's "Scrisori din închisoare" [Letters from prison] recalling those days imprisoned together with those who will later be remembered as the "Văcăreșteni" circle,⁸² Crainic attempted to connect the 1924 and 1934 young generations of the Iron Guard bound together by the Archangel:

Thrown into prison, the heads of the student's movements have time to analyze better their souls. Some chose to hunger, some to write everyday their thoughts and their feelings. They fast and gathering in a single group began to pray to God... *In their religious exaltation, the imprisoned young men have religious visions. It seems to them that Archangel Michael himself, the commander with the blazed sword of the celestial legions reveals himself and takes them under his protecting wings.*

⁷⁷ Nichifor Crainic, „Tineretul și creștinismul” [The youth and Christianity] in *Probleme actuale în Biserică și Stat* (Jassy: Credința străbună, 2009), pp. 75-95. First delivered on the 13th of February 1933 in Bucharest.

⁷⁸ This was a metaphor dear to Benito Mussolini who in an article about "the world to come" written apparently by Giovanni Gentile for the *Enciclopedia italiana* in 1931 spoke about "the new principle in the world, the clear, the final, and categorical antithesis of democracy, plutocracy... The fascist conception of the State is all-embracing, and outside the State no human or spiritual values can exist, let alone be desirable." George Lichtheim, *Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London: Wedenfeld and Nichols, 1972), p. 159.

⁷⁹ Nichifor Crainic, 20009, p. 81.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁸¹ For this please see, Nichifor Crainic, 2009, p. 82.

⁸² According to Constantin Iordachi, this was the charismatic circle of the movement, in Constantin Iordachi, 2004, p. 61.

*From this moment, religious mysticism will descend in the tormented soul of this youth and some of them will put their organizations under the protection of the archangel and his icon will patronize their meeting houses [my italics].*⁸³

While it is clear that Crainic spoke about Codreanu and his group⁸⁴ imprisoned in 1924 at Văcărești penitentiary for plotting against the political regime, he used this example in the text to pinpoint that moment as the start of nationalist mysticism that brought the Iron Guard the support of the young generation, seen as the embodiment of a new national mystique, serving at best both Crainic's and the movement's interests:

religious mysticism becomes from now on [from the moment when Iron Guard came into existence] a constitutive element of nationalism and this new nationalism, which until yesterday crawled on earth, today bathe its upsurges in the unseen world of the angels.⁸⁵

The national mysticism was, according to Nichifor Crainic, a combination of nationalism and religion, a synthesis between traditionalism as cultural nationalism and Orthodoxy as the spiritual substance and transcendental outlook of this nationalism. Invested with such a promising religious background, the nationalist ideology has incorporated not just the ideas of Orthodox theology, but also notions from the philosophy of culture in an attempt to offer a revolutionary, rejuvenating answer to the problems of the young generation of intellectuals from interwar Romania. The cult of the archangel was a part of this complex irrational "mysticism" of the Nation in which the forces of the angelic powers and the souls of those dead had to be beseeched to assure the resurrection of the Nation⁸⁶ and it was put to practice in a close-relationship with

⁸³ Nichifor Crainic, 2009, p. 83.

⁸⁴ It was formed by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ilie Gîrneață, Radu Mironovici, Ion Moța, Tudose Popescu and Corneliu Georgescu. They were all acquitted of all the accusations brought to them in March 1924.

⁸⁵ Nichifor Crainic, "Tineretul și creștinismul", p. 70.

⁸⁶ Corneliu Codreanu, 1994, p. 212.

Codreanu as the archangel's vicar on Earth in the first propaganda campaigns organized by the movement in the beginning of 1930s.⁸⁷

V. 4 Codreanu as National Messiah. The Generalization of His Cult

As discussed above, the exceptionality of Codreanu's personality was canonized through ideological texts in order to enrich the social appeal and the missionary expansion of the movement. The period from 1934 to 1938 marked the zenith of the ideological development of the movement's messianic thought about Codreanu's mission for the Romanian people. His early association with the archangel and the spiritual experience from Văcărești prison was extended and enriched through a vast process of canonization and re-writing/ re-fashioning of reality. Via this narrative, the ideologues of the movement have explored and plunged more and more in the articulation of a hagiographical account of the leader's life intertwined with the eternal destiny of the Archangel.⁸⁸ Looking at the structure and characteristics of the celestial powers of the angels, Codreanu's elite also praised the importance of the hierarchy and the idea of the legionary elite.⁸⁹

The archangel was a spiritual being, an inhabitant of the heavens and to make his vindictive attributes felt more thoroughly among the mortals he needed a representative, a human vicar who in the name of the archangel would profess the vengeful mission against

⁸⁷ Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others. A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970), p. 246-247

⁸⁸ For hagiography see Christian Høgel, "Hagiography under the Macedonians: The Two Recensions of the Metaphrastic Menologion" in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the year 1000* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p.219 and Hippolyte Delehaye S.J., *Les Légendes Hagiographiques* 2nd edition (Bruxelles: Vromant&Co., 1906), p.2.

⁸⁹ For the elite see Traian Brăileanu, *Teoria elitelor* [The Theory of elites] (Cernăuți: Bucovina, 1936), p. 5 and after.

the enemies of God identified in the enemies of the country. The messianic build-up of Codreanu has various sources. The cult of the archangel Michael is hardly the only source of inspiration for the legionary intellectuals building this leader's cult.⁹⁰

To insist only on the importance of the archangel Michael in shaping the messianic nature of Codreanu's mission would reduce the impact and the importance of his earthly quest to redeem the Romanian people in the archangel's name. Therefore, another important source of Codreanu's cult was the constant comparison between him and Christ which appears in the legionary literature almost without variation until the post-communist period.⁹¹ This myth was related closely with the Christian narrative of the exceptional man called by God to suffer hardships and even death for his creed and by doing so, to redeem humankind. In the fascist political religion's imaginary the leader, "place at the apex of fascist hierarchy, and surrounded by an aura of holiness, was respected and love as a kind of demigod."⁹² It is no wonder that legionary youth associated also with the Romanian Orthodox Church considered Codreanu a messianic figure:

⁹⁰ For the leader's cult see Emilio Gentile, "Mussolini's charisma" in Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity. Modernity, Nationalism, Futurism, Fascism* (New York: Praeger, 2003), pp. 128. Gentile defined the leader's cult and the leader's charisma as an embodiment of "the myth of the mission", a description fitting Codreanu. For further development of the idea of the leader, see Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 132-143. For a different perspective than Gentile's see Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle. The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 64-88. For the Romanian case, see Constantini Iordachi, 2004, pp. 72-83 and Stephen Fischer-Galati, "Codreanu, Romanian National Traditions and Charisma" in António Costa Pinto, Roger Eatweel and Stein Ugelvik Larsen (eds.), *Charisma and Fascism in Interwar Europe* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 107-112. For the idea of charismatic leadership see Aristotle Kallis, "Fascism, 'Charisma' and 'Charimatization': Weber's Model of 'Charismatic Domination' and Interwar European Fascism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (2006), pp. 25-41.

⁹¹ According to Zeev Barbu Codreanu was described by a mystical trait, when Moța was the martyr *par excellence*, in Zeev Barbu, "Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Iron Guard, the Fascist Movement of Romania" in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Gagtvet, Jan Petter Myklebust (eds.), *Who were the Fascists. Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), pp.386-387.

⁹² Emilio Gentile, "Fascism as political religion" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, no. 2-3 (May-June 1990), p. 23.

By cultivating virtue and heroism the Captain is the hero setting free souls, he is the one who determined us to strip from the petty cloth of political materialism and to envelop ourselves in the white shroud of our ancestors' faith. The Captain is a supernatural, materialized force who radiates effluents of discipline and love, ruling as a king over our spiritual world. *He is the Messiah of the Romanian people, he is the convict who, as Christ, was tried by all kinds of sufferings, his bones blunted by the prisons' rocks, he climbed the Golgotha more often than a present Minister the Patriarchy's Hill. [...] He was hated, mocked, put together with criminals, he was sentenced, watered with vinegar mixed with gall, even poison was prepared for him because he loves God and the Fatherland more than anything else.*⁹³ [My Italics]

Codreanu's biographical account⁹⁴ and the accounts about him set the canonical understanding of the "Captain" in the perception of those surrounding him. This name was quickly adopted in the movement. It survived and thrived throughout the interwar life of the Iron Guard. The origins of that particular name attributed later on to Codreanu came directly from Ion I. Moța. In a letter sent on 20th of March 1924 to one of his friend while incarcerated in Văcărești Prison, Moța stated

How and in what way is possible the reorganization of the student body? My opinion is that through one man, a student, who will take the lead in his own hands. A student with personality, large-hearted, and ready for self-sacrifice should rise. Let us not lament he will not be found. If he cannot be found then we will not have an organized student body (at least in Cluj, because in Iași I see perfectly who the man of the moment is) until a leading student appears. Ideas and masses need a leader, A CAPTAIN, meaning someone who can embody their feelings and unify their forces.⁹⁵

The cult of the Captain was mainly advocated by two of his closest collaborators: Ion I. Moța⁹⁶ and Nichifor Crainic.⁹⁷ However, the cult of the Captain was expressed by

⁹³ Dimitrie Schlosser, "Căpitanul..." [The Captain] in *România creștină*, Year I, no. 12 (1st of September 1935), p. 1.

⁹⁴ Corneliu Codreanu, "Însemnări de la Jilava" [Writings from Jilava Prison] in *Din luptele tinerețului român, 1919-1939* [From the battles of the Romanian Youth] (Bucharest: Fundația Buna Vestire, 1993), p.83.

⁹⁵ Ion I. Moța, "O scrisoare a lui Ion I. Moța" in *Porunca Vremii*, Year VI, no. 639 (28th of January 1937), p. 3.

⁹⁶ Ion I. Moța, "La icoană" [To the icon!] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 1 (15th of August 1927), p. 10.

⁹⁷ Please see Chapter II.

other representatives of the movement. A young legionary from Oltenia, Iuliu Stănescu wrote an article about Codreanu in *Garda Jiului* praising the Captain:

God destined the Romanian people to a hard and frantic life. Yet, God took care of the Romanian people and in its worse moments sent *a man* proclaiming loudly its truth and justice. ... Almost the same thing happened to the Jewish people when Jehovah, to straighten its ways, sent prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah and John the Baptist. The chosen people stoned to death their prophets, cried for their deaths and straightened up for a while. Those chosen by faith and destiny are men sent to sacrifice themselves. Through their sacrifice the sins of a generation are redeemed. These people were not and they are not commoners. They – the prophets, the teachers, the generals and the leaders – are made of something else than the rest of us, they are the heroes. They guide the life of the nations, they shape their path for the future and they give life to the nations. [...] The righteousness of his people that he [Codreanu] was preaching, his faith in the God of the Romanian nation, the revenge of injustices, misfortunes caused by the foreigners kept him strong and undefeated, awake and determined to die or to triumph.⁹⁸

The text by Iuliu Stănescu stands for an effort made by the Legion to present Codreanu as an inspired leader of the nation, as embodying the qualities of a religious man, to see him as prophet, general, teacher, all coming down as the qualities of the leader. Two things should be taken into account, namely that Codreanu's coming, as Jesus Christ before him, was prepared by a religious prophetic tradition, which underlines the religious messianic character of the Captain. In the same time, the most important attribute of his nationalist messianic nature is his capacity to suffer for the injustices caused by other ethnic minorities, especially the Jewish minority.

The argument of Iuliu Stănescu was picked up by Fr. I. Stoicescu, a former member of the Liberal Party from Mârșani, Oltenia who joined the Iron Guard in 1932.⁹⁹ Along

⁹⁸ Iuliu G. Stănescu, "Căpitanul" [The Captain] in *Garda Jiului* Year I, no. 1 (4th of December 1932), p. 1.

⁹⁹ "Istoricul redeșteptării naționale în Oltenia" [The history of the national re-awakening in Oltenia] in *Garda Jiului* Year I, no. 1 (4th of December 1932), p. 2 Fr. Stoicescu took an active part in all the electoral campaigns of the movement from June 1932 when he joined the Legion.

the same lines as Iuliu Stănescu before him, Fr. Stoicescu wrote a text about the religious grounding of the Captain's cult.

When the world considered itself in the bottoms of the abyss where the world wanted to bury itself forever, the Son of God, born in the manger from Bethlehem in Judea, raised in the modest home of the old carpenter Joseph, noticed by nobody because the Jewish people like us today waited his salvation from emperors, philosophers and those rich, shows Himself in the world saying: "Come to me, all that you are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest." The same way shows as a savior of the Romanian people Corneliu Codreanu, who although young but having a good soul and a large mind, calls for fight for saving what is Christian and good Romanian in this country. [...] When brought in front of the believers St. John the Baptist only said to them "My sons love one another." I tell you only this: Christian brothers, beloved Romanians, follow the voice of Corneliu Codreanu. Everyone join in the Iron Guard, because salvation is closer than you think.¹⁰⁰

According to Fr. Stoicescu the cult of the Captain resembled both the prophetic tradition and Jesus Christ's missionary work. In the first sequence, as Jesus, the Captain comes from modest origins. Nothing seems to announce the great destiny awaiting the future Captain.¹⁰¹ Like Christ, Codreanu became the savior of his nation, calling for the salvation of the national Christian community from the dangers threatening its existence. The second paragraph presents Father Stoicescu, as John the Baptist, crying out in the wilderness¹⁰² and acknowledging the national messiah, Corneliu Codreanu.

The *Axa* group also cultivated the cult of the Captain but from a more secular perspective and in a more focused way on the issue of martyrdom. As emphasized by Emilio Gentile, in the fascist "propaganda literature and iconography, *il duce* [the fascist

¹⁰⁰ Military Priest (Major) I. Stoicescu, "În așteptare" [Awaiting] in *Garda Jiului* Year I, no. 1 (4th of December 1932), p. 2.

¹⁰¹ For the fascist leader as a prophet of modern times, see Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 101, 121-123. See also David Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich. Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2005), p. 50.

¹⁰² This is a metaphor coming from the Gospel of John I, 23, in which St. John the Baptist defined himself as "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord' as the prophet Isaiah said". He was the first to acknowledge the Messiah in the person of Jesus. For the quote from the Gospel of John see <http://www.devotions.net/bible/43john.htm> (Internet Accessed on 11th of March 2013).

leader] was presented as a reincarnation of the myth of the hero, which is ‘the projection of all myths of divinity’.”¹⁰³ Ioan Victor Vojen, a young legionary intellectual, wrote a programmatic text on how the leader of one nation should be.

He, who will assemble in one bundle the new saint place’s bricklayers where all the intuitions will be filled with the grand idea of sacrifice, he will have to be the first to forget about and sacrifice himself. [He will have] to forget about his life, about what is his and to become one with the people, with its needs and wishes. [He will have] to grow deeply from the land and from the most difficult necessities of the people. [He will have] to understand the path and the mission of this people and to be prepared anytime for anything. All people search for the new man, all ask for him. Some found him and from that moment their lives received purpose, a light.¹⁰⁴

Ioan Victor Vojen’s narrative about the providential new man giving a purpose to the lives of the young legionaries was written in an allusive manner similar to that used by Crainic when he wrote about Codreanu in *Calendarul*. As in the case of Jesus who brought spiritual light and purpose to humankind, Codreanu brought the same gifts to the Romanian people. His figure, as a savior, is based not so much on a religious narrative. Codreanu’s messianic nature relies in his ability to endure any suffering for the Romanian people and those who follow him. Vojen’s narrative about Codreanu’s personality comes from a secular perspective if compared with the lines written by Fr. Stoicescu or by Iuliu Stănescu. This constant back and forth between the religious inspired narrative and a more secular narrative about Codreanu, relying especially on his ability to suffer for the Romanian people will be preserved in the movement. In conformity with this narrative the account of Fr. Ilie Imbrescu about Codreanu as “a scholar of the divine grace” represents the cornerstone of any theological representation of the Romanian fascist leader who is

¹⁰³ Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 237.

¹⁰⁴ Ioan Victor Vojen, “Drumul credinței” [The path of faith] in *Axa*, Year I, no. 8 (5th of March 1933), p. 5.

the greatest contemporary Romanian and Christian: Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the Captain of the generation-under-grace legionaries, a generation of martyrs for Christ and nationalist heroes from the 20th century. ... The Captain is the greatest contemporary example of love and struggle on behalf of Jesus Christ and his book is vital water from the Holy Ghost's well...¹⁰⁵

After 1934, with Stelescu leaving the movement and unleashing a press campaign in denouncing the Captain as an impostor and an immoral person, the legionary elite hyperbolized even more Codreanu's profile in order to hide underneath their exaggerated praises the criticisms addressed to their leader.¹⁰⁶ The most important account canonizing Codreanu's personality was that of Ion Banea, one of the initial leaders in the legionary movement, an important figure within the legionary ranks.¹⁰⁷ He was, according to Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, personally designated by Codreanu to succeed him in case of an assassination took place before the legionary victory.¹⁰⁸ A Greek-Catholic by birth he shared the nationalist religious utopia cultivated in the Greek-Catholic Church environments. Ioan Banea was the one who, in Jassy, called Codreanu by his future name,

¹⁰⁵ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, 2010, p. 193, 194.

¹⁰⁶ For Stelescu's criticisms, see Mihai Stelescu, "Sunt silit să vorbesc, sau pe marginea unor calomnii" [I am forced to speak or about some public slanders] in *Cruciada românismului*, Year I, no. 3 (6th of December 1934), p. 7. Mihai Stelescu, "De ce mințiți!" in *Cruciada românismului*, Year I, no. 5 (25th of December 1934), p. 5. Mihai Stelescu, "Fascism, Hitlerism, Românism" [Fascism, Hitlerism, and Romanianness] in *Cruciada românismului*, Year I, no. 16 (21st of March 1935), p. 5. If in these articles Codreanu was mentioned only once by name, but accused of being dishonest and hypocritical, Mihai Stelescu wrote something even more clear about Codreanu's character. See Mihai Stelescu, "Scrisoare deschisă lui Corneliu Codreanu" [Public Letter addressed to Corneliu Codreanu] in *Cruciada românismului*, Year I, no. 18 (4th of April 1935), p. 5. He accused Codreanu of being a liar, of being Prime-Minister Vaida-Voevod's tool, of fornicating with the nuns from Agapia Monastery in Moldova, of being a coward when the legionaries were beaten by the Police at Vișani dam, of being unable to speak in the Romanian Parliament, of consorting with morally-compromised people, of calling Stelescu a "traitor" to the legionary cause out of personal jealousy. There was also a second public letter addressed to Codreanu, after Stelescu found out that he was condemned to death by the Legion: Mihai Stelescu, "A 2-a Scrisoare deschisă lui Corneliu Codreanu" [The Second Public Letter addressed to Corneliu Codreanu] in *Cruciada românismului*, Year II, no. 64 (7th of March 1936), p. 5. He asked Codreanu to come and fight with him by himself, without sending other people in jail or to certain death.

¹⁰⁷ "Ion Banea," in *Intelectualii și mișcarea legionară. Mari conștiințe românești* [The intellectuals and the legionary movement. Great Romanian consciences] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Buna-Vestire, 2000), p. 33-34.

¹⁰⁸ Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian intra muros. Memoriile legionare* [Trojan horse intra muros. Legionary Memoirs], (Bucharest: Lucman, 2002), p.137.

“Captain” in order to distinguish the leader of the movement from other political leaders belonging to other political parties.¹⁰⁹

In 1935 Ion Banea published a manifesto that went far in coining the destiny and personality of Codreanu in the legionary imaginary. The book was titled “Căpitanu” [The Captain].¹¹⁰

*The Captain! He is a milestone, a borderland, a sword laid between the worlds. As an old world which he is confronting with courage to destroy it and the other new world which he is creating, is giving life and he is calling it into the light... His life is tied with the struggle and the nationalist movement so much that it remains nothing to his life because it is the same with a continuous and great action in service of the nation’s interests. Predestined to sacrifices he lived intensely and agitated. His existence was full of deeds and filled with dangers. He climbed to heights that rarely someone can wish for and he descended into abysses from which only the power of God in whom he so sternly believes saved him.*¹¹¹

The text sets the background for Codreanu’s mission as a resume of what he had done by divine election and by the grace of God. Ion Banea intended to offer a parallel account of Codreanu’s exceptionality and of his divine mission by retelling the story of Codreanu’s personal life as it was presented in his biography. Banea’s narrative could be trusted by those too young to fight together with him and Codreanu in the 1920’s because he was one of the first adherents of Codreanu’s movement, a first-hand witness to the actions of the leader, and one of the first to embrace Codreanu as the savior of Romania. However, Banea’s account of Codreanu’s life complemented Codreanu’s own impressions in order to state the messianic dimension and profound connections with the Orthodox Church.¹¹² What is striking about Banea’s undertaking was that he added

¹⁰⁹ Dumitru Banea, *Acuzat, martor, apărător în procesul vieții mele* [Defendant, witness, defender in my life’s trial] (Sibiu: Puncte Cardinale, 1995), p. 81.

¹¹⁰ Ioan Banea, „Căpitanul” [The Captain] in *Axa*, Year II, No. 21 (29th of October 1933), p. 1.

¹¹¹ Ion Banea, *Căpitanul*, 1937, p. 5.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 52

details about Codreanu's life and the early activity of the Iron Guard, details that cannot be found even in Codreanu's "For my legionaries."¹¹³

Banea's narrative about Codreanu's divine election and God's protection is picked up in the writings of other legionary authors. Dimitrie Popa, an adherent to Codreanu's movement from southern Moldavia, wrote that the Captain brought

[...] a new wave of spiritual renewal, trust through morality turn its heels over our heads and against the old world with an unimagined strength due to a creed of an exquisite morality. Nothing can oppose the moral perfection and the hard work on the working camps through which A MAN, A MAN OF AN UNSOILED WILL AND CREED wants to crown through life a perfect morality against the rottenness and the mire we are wallowing in. He who has met Corneliu Codreanu follows him like he is magnetized, without demur, even if he is an honest adversary. How can you not believe in the same things as this man who instead of despair and misery brings spiritual serenity and trust, instead of plunder and theft [he brings] immaculate honesty, instead of atheism [he brings] absolute faith in the power of God and the church in which this nation found sanctuary whenever its life was endangered; instead of luxury and fornication, [he brings] a moral life and work, the ceaselessly work from dusk until dawn.¹¹⁴

As presented by Dimitrie Popa, the portrait of Codreanu seems to be the perfect model for the "new man" with himself as the providential man sent from above to forge it in the Romanian nation.¹¹⁵ As in the case of Christ's religious revolution, Codreanu's personality seems to revolutionize and to regenerate a morally corrupted world and, in order to virtuously accede to higher standards, the followers of Codreanu had to pursue/perform/reenact his life according to the standards set out by the movement's leader.¹¹⁶

Another important feature of Codreanu's cult that came into being during this particular period of time when the project of work camps and building sites was put into

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹⁴ Dimitrie Popa, „Spre o lume nouă” [To a new world] in *Brațul de Fier*, Year I, No. 4 (September 1935), p. 2.

¹¹⁵ For this idea in Fascist Italy, see Christopher Duggan, 2013, pp. 87-112.

¹¹⁶ Please see Corneliu Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib* [The Chief Nest's Manual] (Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 2000), p. 5.

place was related with an attribute he was given - “founder” [ctitor] of churches.¹¹⁷ In developing this particular trait of Codreanu’s cult, the legionaries took upon a fascist idea well represented in Mussolini’s Italy, namely that of relating their historical time with the glorious Romanian past:

Once the myth of the ‘new Italian’ was connected with the myth of Rome, it took on a religious meaning: it was the symbol of the Italian people’s repentance, and the rebirth as the spiritual heirs of the ancient Romans, rejuvenated by a common belief and, just like their forefathers, willing to defy fate and create a ‘new civilization’. In fascist mythology the Roman epoch was the ‘time of origins’, and it was placed at the beginning of the mythical presentation of the Italian history, when Italians first created a sacred tradition. In this presentation, fascism’s own brief history was already legendary, as it was inserted within a centuries-old history which began with Rome itself, and culminated in the Great War and fascism’s rise to power, before being projected into an equally mythical future of grandeur and power.¹¹⁸

Accordingly, Ernst Bernea, a young Romanian intellectual, wrote a whole book placing Codreanu as the last and most important figure in a teleological line of Romanian national heroes.¹¹⁹ Horia,¹²⁰ Avram Iancu, Tudor Vladimirescu among others¹²¹ were seen as the “captains of the Romanian people” who led it during dangerous circumstances and through terrible ordeals.¹²² Although there is no chapter dedicated to Codreanu, the book having an open ending, the succession of historical personages presented into the

¹¹⁷ Vasile Țepordei, “Căpitanul, ctitor de lăcașuri sfinte” [The Captain as founder of sacred shrines] in Vasile Țepordei, *Scrieri alese* (Bucharest: Bucovina, 1996), p. 118. For a parallel with fascist Italy, see Aristotle Kallis, “The ‘Third Rome’ of Fascism: Demolition and the Search for a New Urban Syntax” in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 84, no. 1 (March 2012), pp. 40-79.

¹¹⁸ Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 245. For the virtues of *Romanità* and the importance of the sacred past see Jan Nelis, “Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of ‘Romanità’” in *The Classical World*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (2007), pp. 391-415, Jan Nelis, “Modern Neo-classicism and Antiquity in the Political Religion of Nazism: Adolf Hitler as *Poietes* of the Third Reich” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 9, no. 4 (2008), pp. 475-490. See also Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, 1997, pp. 90-99. For the transposition and institutionalization of the idea into archeological research, see Joshua Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity. The Roman Past in Fascist Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 29-49.

¹¹⁹ Ernst Bernea, *Cartea Căpitanilor* [The Book of Captains] (Bucharest: SOCEC, 1937).

¹²⁰ For Horia’s remembrance in the Legionary movement see Nicolae Mladin, “Sensul revoluției lui Horea” [The meaning of Horea’s revolution] in *Gândul Neamului* Year I, no. 1 (March 1935), pp. 6-7.

¹²¹ It was a tradition proposed from the movement’s beginnings. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ion I. Moța, Ilie Gârneață, Corneliu Georgescu, Radu Mironovici, “Pământul strămoșesc” [The Fatherland] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 1 (1st of August 1927), p. 1.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

book and labeled “captains” was thought of as Codreanu’s prestigious forerunners. The term “captain” is what Bernea applied to these historical figures by comparison to Codreanu who held the title then. The whole text is a re-reading of Romanian history through the lens of Codreanu’s cult. The sole purpose of the book as in the case of Christ and the prophetic tradition is to consider Codreanu as the last chain-link of a prestigious historical tradition and as the fulfillment of this tradition.¹²³

He continued a tradition started by Stephen the Great (1457-1504) thus inserting a royal function into Codreanu’s cult. As in the case of the Moldavian prince, the legionary movement considered that one primordial function of Romanian rulers was to build new churches and to repair the old ones. Two possible outcomes were envisioned by Codreanu’s disciples when making this bold comparison between their leader and the Moldavian prince. On the one hand, as we have seen with Codreanu’s title of “Captain” what counted mostly was the placement of movement’s leader in a historical tradition with as a successor and a coronation of this tradition. By constructing churches and following the example set by Stephen the Great, Codreanu was included in a national pantheon of heroes with the claim for spiritual confirmation from the Church. It was this initiative of building churches that consecrated Stephan as a saint in the folk’s tradition and Codreanu’s biographers hinted towards this, as well.

On the other hand considering Codreanu a builder of churches [ctitor] implied a stealth criticism towards the Romanian monarchy and especially King Carol II for his lack of interest in the expansion and preservation of the Orthodox Church. “When God does not send the country a King, He sends a Captain,” said Nae Ionescu describing

¹²³ Rebecca Haynes, “Corneliu Zelea Codreanu: The Romanian ‘New Man’” in Rebecca Haynes and Martyn Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler. Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p. 172.

Codreanu's revitalizing and revolutionizing drive towards national regeneration.¹²⁴ The process of building churches and monasteries or repairing those affected by earthquakes and the passing of time was described as a positive action of a young generation that was building something and had a religious and political creed contrary to that of the Romanian King and his dynasty which had been brought to power by occult forces.¹²⁵

The idea of Codreanu's as founder [ctitor] was spread especially in the legionary press from southern Moldavia and Bessarabia where the religious cult and the popular piety to Stephan the Great could be better exploited in propagandistic terms. Both Ion I. Moța¹²⁶ and Dimitrie Popa¹²⁷ in *Brațul de Fier*, or Viorel Trifa's *România creștină*¹²⁸ [Christian Romania] praised the hard work of the young generation under Codreanu's leadership: apostles of a "new world" which is created by their work under the very eyes of the old generation. This development of the working camp as the extension of Codreanu's cult/ leader's cult was a common feature of the fascist regimes with the sole difference that although the leaders perceived themselves founders and continuators of ancient historical traditions (ancient Rome, Renaissance, Reformation, etc.) and their project is thought as a regenerative palingenetic process to build the new world and to destroy the old one,¹²⁹ Codreanu unique approach consists of his goal to seduce the Church by constructing on its behalf and in doing so to attract the sympathies and adherences from the Romanian Orthodox Church.

¹²⁴ Keith Hitchins, p. 464.

¹²⁵ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, *Apostrofa unui teolog* [The Reprimand of a Theologian] (Bucharest, 1935), p. 112.

¹²⁶ Ion I. Moța, "Tăcere și muncă" [Work and silence] in *Brațul de Fier* Year I, No. 7, (December 1935), p. 1.

¹²⁷ Please see footnote 72.

¹²⁸ Viorel Trifa, "Tineretul la muncă" [The Youth to Work] in *România creștină* Year I, No. 9 (15th of July 1935), p. 1

¹²⁹ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The sense of a new beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 201.

As in the case of Christ with the Sanhedrim, in order for him to be thought of as the national messiah, Codreanu needed the acknowledgment of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the legitimation of his activity according to the religious prescripts. But as the representatives of the “satanic generation” (Fr. Ilie Imbrescu) described by their allegiance to freemasonry and interests foreign to those pertaining to Christianity the Church failed to grasp Codreanu and the young generation as the “generation of grace” (generația harică) in which all the moral and theological values of the church were embedded harmoniously.¹³⁰

After 1934, Codreanu’s divinization according to a religious view continues. Fr. Liviu Stan, writing about Manglavit miracles and the legionary working camps also wrote a religious eulogy to Codreanu’s personality:

An archangel with a sword of fire had to come to strike the beast preparing our grave, to sound the alarm with the trumpets of hope as through the power of his actions to gather around him all that had a clear conscience and a heroic will from the swamp in which we dwell for almost 20 years. To this ‘sign’ started under the flag of Archangel Michael, the head of the celestial powers, stood against all the organized forces of Satan and all the satanic instruments rose against him. But the ‘sign’ did not fall; the signed lingered and rose crying out loud in the silence of those who feared him, in this criminal rage overwhelming all when the joyful news had to be propagated in all streets.¹³¹

Fr. Liviu Stan’s account transformed Codreanu from a messianic figure, into a terrestrial archangel, able to punish and to redeem in the same time, to revive the Romanian nation and to stop at bay the dangerous influences that could affect the national development of the Romanian nation. Fr. Liviu Stan perceived Codreanu as an

¹³⁰ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, 1935, p. 74.

¹³¹ Fr. Liviu Stan, “Manglavitul și alte semne” [The Manglavit and other signs] in *Iconar*, Year I, no. 4 (1936), p. 7.

apocalyptic sign, as a mark of God's presence among men and a guarantee for the national rebirth.

In the context of the opened conflict with King Carol II in the second part of 1936, the cult of Codreanu shifted again. Nae Ionescu, by now a mentor of the movement, wrote a text to advocate Codreanu's divine election to rule Romania.

It is possible that in a certain moment *history would be sick*. What happens in such a circumstance? It is possible for the unworthy Prince to remain in his place, as a punishment of God; it is possible for him to be replaced with someone more worthy. But there is another thing possible. It is possible that God would go beyond the Prince and make history through the people. In this case the people decides and take action by himself. The people in its totality? No! The people through those chosen. Chosen not by the people, but chosen by themselves. One man is chosen from the nation, one man who decides for the people, not from outside the people but from within its midst because he is the people. Therefore, we do not need a "duce", a "fuhrer" because they do not transcend the people, but rather a chief, a chieftain, a captain.¹³²

Nae Ionescu proposed a divine election for the ruler overcoming human election and the principle of royal succession through which King Carol earned his throne. Nae Ionescu was not recommending Codreanu as a King, but rather as a leader emanated from the people and from God's will. The King could keep his throne as long as he gave Codreanu the leadership of the country. What is also interesting in what Nae Ionescu said is the fact that Nae Ionescu did not make use of the Nazi or the Italian examples in order to shape the Captain's cult, but rather he grounded his opinions on a divine election as the only insurance for the leader's trustworthiness.¹³³

¹³² Nae Ionescu, "Cine face istoria? Puțină filologie" [Who makes history? A little bit of philology] in *Vestitorii*, Year I, no. 2 (1st of April 1936), p. 1.

¹³³ As a critique of King Carol II turbulent regime and his embezzlement from public money, two legionary leaders wrote a book about the rule his grandfather, the first Romanian King, Carol I. See Mihail Polihroniade, Alexandru-Cristian Tell, *Domnia lui Carol I. Vol. I 1866-1977* (Bucharest: Vremea, 1937).

Codreanu's messianic mission in the Archangel's name became the pivotal dogma of the Iron Guard throughout its history. It was through this connection that all the other teachings of the Romanian fascists were related to Codreanu's personal connection with Archangel Michael. But the most striking aspect of the Iron Guard's theology was the transmission of the messianic cult of Codreanu and his perfection as the new man to his followers.

V. 5 The Movement's *Sacrament*. The Importance of Martyrdom

The importance of martyrdom shaped the whole history of the movement from the early days. The generation of 1922 was relevant for the history of the Legion because it was a generation of sacrifice. They thought of themselves as the inheriting the generation who created Great Romania. This model of self-sacrifice will be put forward by the Legion in order to redeem the Romanian nation.¹³⁴ The first understandings of martyrdom were interrelated with Christ's self-sacrifice for the world's sins and redeeming the individual in the beyond, with Codreanu as Christ's vicar.¹³⁵ The idea of self-sacrifice and martyrdom was advocated by Codreanu even before the movement's genesis¹³⁶ and it was picked up immediately after the split from A. C. Cuza's political organization. In an article published in the movement's newspaper this idea of Christ's passion and

¹³⁴ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1925, p. 29. For the myth of WWI and its importance for fascism's development, see Emilio Gentile, 1996, p. 11. Omer Bartov, "Martyrs' Vengeance: Memory, Trauma, and Fear of War in France, 1918-1940" in *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historique*, Vol. 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 47-76. For Germany, see Sabine Behrenbeck, *Kult um die toten Helden. Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten und Symbole* (Vierow: SHVerlag, 1996), pp. 32-47.

¹³⁵ Rebecca Haynes, 2010, p. 177. For the relationship between martyrdom, Christ, and fascism see Gerald Parsons, "Fascism and Catholicism: A Case Study of the 'Sacratio dei Caduti Fascisti' in the Crypt of San Domenico, Siena" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 42, no. 3 (July 2007), p. 469-484.

¹³⁶ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1925, p. 29.

resurrection was embraced by the legionaries through the voice of Codreanu as a legionary dogma:

Christ is risen! Thus would also rise the justice of the Romanian nation. But for that it is required that his sons follow Jesus' path, to be crowned with a crown of thorns, to climb Golgotha on their knees carrying their cross on their backs and to allow themselves to be crucified. Legionaries, be those children!¹³⁷

This idea passed in the legionary imagination and was linked with the idea of martyrdom for the movement's creed. One of the legionary leaders from Iași, the lawyer Alenxandru Ventonic stated that,

As Golgotha was won by sacrifice, with the same sacrifices the new Romania will also be conquered. We will fall, we will end up with our flesh torn and our blood spilling, but the horizon of a new life which will rise from the steam of our blood will make us die happy and with our conscience clear that in hard times for our country we did not stay unconscious but we had the courage to sacrifice ourselves and to triumph. No matter how persecuted we will be, no matter how many times our organization will be abolished, no matter how long we will be imprisoned, beaten, killed, our blood will cry out, Romanian will rise by thrusting its young roots in our bodies of heroes.¹³⁸

The article of Alexandru Ventonic makes a transition from the sacrifice of Christ to the legionary sacrifice by pointing out one major distinction between the two. If in the case of Christ he redeemed the whole world, the legionary martyrdom is directed only towards saving Romania. The metaphor of Romania as a tree, with its roots fixed in the bodies of the legionary martyrs meant that the resurrection of the Romanian nation and its historical and ontological rebirth was owed to the redeeming sacrifice of the legionary martyrs. Until 1933, after the movement moved to Bucharest and engaged in a campaign of building its headquarters, the idea of martyrdom seemed unclear even for Corneliu Codreanu. An effort of defining what legionary sacrifice meant and what were the forms

¹³⁷ *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 8 (15th of April 1928), p. 9.

¹³⁸ Alexandru Ventonic, "Vrei să fii legionary?" [Do you want to be a legionary?] in *Garda Moldovei*, Year II, no. 2 (15th of August 1932), p. 3.

through which it will be embraced by the movement had to be undertaken. Therefore, while works for the legionary Bucharest headquarters were under way, Codreanu stated:

Our generation must distinguish itself from the former generation through heroism: through the heroism on the battlefield and, during peace time, through the heroism of work. For the future legionary state for the new Romanian life which the Legion will establish the works from Vișani and Iași are indestructible pillars. The Green House (Casa Verde) will remain a historical document.¹³⁹

The importance played by benevolent work in legionary working camps started in 1933 was coupled with the first legionary martyrs fallen from the ranks during the electoral campaign from the end of this year.¹⁴⁰ The death of Sterie Ciumetti in the aftermath of the Duca assassination started a radicalization and an appropriation of the legionary martyrdom myth in the legionary ranks. From this moment onwards the cult of martyrdom will become one of the central rituals of the Iron Guard, providing not just a sense of cohesion, but also an important missionary tool for the young supporters in disseminating the legionary faith among their fellow-students.

Furthermore, as in the case of the leader's cult where there was a transition from the idea of the leader to the idea of the providential, God-sent nationalist messiah, Codreanu's implication in this particular aspect of the movement faded away, the task being assumed by the second tier intellectuals of the movement. This will imply a much more secularist, fascist-influenced approach of the reality of martyrdom in the Iron

¹³⁹ USHMM, RG 25. 23M.0004.00000113. For a theological lecture about the nature of the two legionary martyrdoms see Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, 2010, p. 135: martyrdom has a dual understanding. It can be "a. without spelling blood and b. through the spelling of blood." According to Ion Fleșeriu, *Amintiri* [Memories] (Madrid: Artes Gráficas Benzal, 1977), p. 70 the legionary ranks and decorations were received in Carmen Sylva working camp from Codreanu by different legionaries according to the period of imprisonment suffered after Duca's assassination.

¹⁴⁰ The martyrs were student Virgil Teodoreanu from Constanța killed on 24th of November 1933, Niță Cornel was killed on the 28th of November in Iași and N. Bălăianu on 9th of December. See Ion I. Moța, "Cranii de lemn" [Wooden Skulls] in *Axa*, Year II, no. 23 (7th of December 1933), p. 1, 5. See also "Mor legionarii!" [The legionaries are dying!] in *Axa*, Year II, no. 23 (7th of December 1933), p. 9.

Guard's political religion, a tendency coexisting with the clerical discourse about legionary self-sacrifice.¹⁴¹

Therefore, the clerical understanding of sacrifice for the country was entailed with the Church's emphasis on the Christian martyrs fallen in the first centuries after the foundation of Christianity.¹⁴² As Fr. Vasile Boldeanu puts it,

What makes the men to come closer to perfection is their capacity for suffering for a faith and the force that can overturn and change positions fixed in centuries is the sufferance as well... A nation without its martyrs is collapsing immediately and on the contrary it rises highly, brashly and powerful when from its midst rise firm foreheads of fearless martyrs.¹⁴³

Fr. Vasile Boldeanu is tacking up a common theme of the legionary speech as proposed by Codreanu and this recurrence of martyrdom gradually receives more importance in the narrative of the Romanian clergy. The aesthetics of death and the cult of martyrdom spread extensively in the ecclesiastical environments. Some of the legionary theologians proposed a theological perspective on the movement's martyrdom for the country. In his book describing the fascist theology of the Iron Guard, Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, one of the leading exponents of the fascist theologians, reaffirmed the official position of the Orthodox Church regarding the doctrine of martyrdom, a doctrine amalgamated with the legionary dogma:

... the Captain changes entirely the strategy of the struggle by replacing the human weapons of national justice with the divine weapons of the Holy Gospel of our Lord

¹⁴¹ For the fascist approach towards martyrdom see Peter Lamber, "Heroisation and Demonisation in the Third Reich: The Consensus-building Value of Nazi Pantheon of Heroes" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, no. 3-4 (September-December 2007), pp. 523-646. In the article the author says that in the Nazi case the real martyrdom was that of not dying (p. 527), a reality that is not found in the Romanian case. Also see Jesús Casquete, "Martyr Construction and the Politics of Death in National Socialism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 10, no. 3-4 (September-December 2009), pp. 265-283.

¹⁴² Fr. Vasile Boldeanu, "Ideia nu moare" [The Idea does not die] in *Brațul de Fier*, Year I, no. 2 (July 1st 1935), p. 1.

¹⁴³ Fr. Vasile Boldeanu, "Prin suferință la biruință" [Through sufferance to victory] in *Brațul de Fier*, Year I, no. 6 (November 1935), p. 1.

Jesus Christ. Then he guided the Legionary movement from the line of heroism to the line of martyrdom.¹⁴⁴

Fr. Imbrescu's assessment seems to stipulate a clear-cut distinction between the nationalist goals and the reality of the Church. He stated that there was no radical and rigorous difference between the two notions, heroism and martyrdom, the two meeting perfectly in the legionary imagination. The theology of martyrdom professed by Fr. Imbrescu had still a strong Christian connotation and was related with the author's personal intellectual/ religious background, as a former PhD student in Theology and a missionary priest.¹⁴⁵ Fr. Imbrescu was not ready to abandon the metaphysical aspect of Christian spirituality on what the legionary theology was based, thus he enhanced and updated the legionary discourse about martyrdom in an attempt to reconcile the two opposing martyrdoms: the martyrdom for the country and martyrdom for God.¹⁴⁶

Accordingly, Fr. Imbrescu offered a definition of what was the legionary martyrdom from a Christian perspective:

[...] the silent and submissive acceptance, without any violent response of every moral and bodily persecution, riposting to the satanic filled with hate weapons of the usurpers with the weapons of grace's love of our Savior Jesus Christ [...]¹⁴⁷

This narrative about martyrdom was heavily challenged and improved by the Iron Guard's main ideologues. The myth is so widespread that martyrdom is to be found even in the legionary book of hymns.¹⁴⁸ The legionary death became something of an obsession among the legionary youth and was carefully brought forth during the legionary

¹⁴⁴ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, *V-am scris vouă, tinerilor!*, p. 135

¹⁴⁵ For details about Fr. Imbrescu's life and training see *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁴⁶ For a detailed study about the two see Paschalis Kitromilides, "The legacy of the French Revolution: Orthodoxy and nationalism" in Michael Angold (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume V. Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 230.

¹⁴⁷ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, 2011, p. 137.

¹⁴⁸ Ion Mânzatu, *Cum am compus cântecele legionare* [How I composed the legionary hymns] (Munich: Ion Mării, 1996), p. 3 and after.

student's national congresses.¹⁴⁹ The secular side of the Iron Guard produced a version of the sacrament of martyrdom by extolling the virtues of self-sacrifice and the death cult as means to indoctrinate the legionary youth. In 1935, although previously inspired by constant religious fervor, Ion I. Moța embraced a more secular understanding of martyrdom in a message sent to the national student congresses held in Craiova.¹⁵⁰ The text was a eulogy in favor of martyrdom a proselytizing exercise for an astounded audience:

When you [Romanian student] will tell your redoubtable enemies: I do not care if you will break me or not, I do not care if I will see the day of [legionary] victory or not, but I am sure that my sacrifice will bring your downfall and when you start and you stay into the fight until the end with this serene decision, there is no doubt that you are carrying inside a force that no repressive technique can defeat. *The spirit of [self] sacrifice is the essence!* We all have at our disposal the most formidable dynamite, the most overpowering war machine, more powerful than tanks and machine guns: *that is our own ashes!* No power in the world will be able to avoid its downfall when it is sustained on the ash of brave fighters, fallen for justice and God.¹⁵¹

Ion I. Moța, the former leader of the 1922 student generation, used this occasion to present his own understanding of martyrdom which will become normative in the legionary movement, especially after his death on the Spanish front in 1937. By forging together the martyrdom for God and that for his country, Moța like Fr. Imbrescu before him, tried to maintain a sense of balance between the two notions. There are several explanations why Moța still associated intimately the two notions, but a thing was certain: from this point onwards the word describing best the legionary theology was no longer

¹⁴⁹ Alexandru Cantacuzino, "Românul de mâine" [The future Romanian] in Alexandru Cantacuzino, 1992, pp. 62-75.

¹⁵⁰ Ion Moța, „Esențialul” [The Essence] in *Cuvîntul studențesc* Year XII, no. 6 (April 1935), p. 1

¹⁵¹ *Congresul general studențesc ținut la Craiova în zilele de 17, 18 și 19 aprilie 1935* [The General Student Congress held in Craiova on the 17th, 18th and 19th of April 1935] (Bucharest, 1935), pp. 10-11.

the word “faith”, as in the Italian case.¹⁵² The word characteristic for legionary ideology became that of self-sacrifice (*jerfă*). Moța’s mystical personality and the role his Christian creed played in his life were among the reasons for it.¹⁵³

The same attitude towards martyrdom was expressed by Alexandru Cantacuzino during the same legionary meeting. In a text called “Românul de mâine” [The Romanian from tomorrow] he brings the same vivid perspective about martyrdom from the angle of the exceptionality of the movement in comparison with other fascist movements, such as the German national-socialists or the Italian fascists.¹⁵⁴

We believe in the redeeming virtue of the tombs. We believe positively that someone can rise above this world only by expiating sins and through a heroic way of life. [...] We, the Romanian people, exult mostly our national and Christian faith, the virtues of justice, humanness (*omenie*) and nobility of the Romanian soul, our wounds, constraints and renunciations, the asceticism, the blaze of our sacrifices to our nation, the anonymous greatness of the daily bitterness which this nation had to take for hundreds of years, the relieving testimony of so many lives devoted to the coming dawn, the prayer of our tombs, which give us truly the hope for a better life.¹⁵⁵

In Cantacuzino’s secular vision the martyrdom for the country in both its forms represents the most common feature of the new man. Martyrdom for its country in diverse forms had to insure a change of pace in the life of the Romanian people and had to be, as in the case of Ion I. Moța, the new raw material for building a new world and a new Romanian in terms of sheer heroism.¹⁵⁶ But despite Moța’s positive account, for Alexandru Cantacuzino martyrdom for the country becomes not just a means to achieve the nation’s resurrection, but also the final goal of the new man: “The future Romanian

¹⁵² Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 234, 238.

¹⁵³ Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Pentru Cristos* [For Christ] (Bucharest: 1935), p. 12.

¹⁵⁴ For Nazi Germany’s construction of martyrology and its balance between religious and secular dimensions of the martyrs’ figure, see Daniel Siemens, *The Making of a Nazi Hero. The Murder and Myth of Horst Wessel* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), pp. 107-134.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁶ For heroism in Nazi Germany see George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture. Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 2003), p. 99 and 128.

will have to be aware that he was born to die for his country.”¹⁵⁷ Cantacuzino’s attack on the virtues of sainthood as understood by the Christian Church in general¹⁵⁸ was coupled with a pronounced exaltation of the legionary self-sacrifice as means of expiation of the nation’s sins in front of God.

But what differentiate us even from the Italian, German and the other countries youth is our morality of expiation, our terrible certainty that on this world what is not rightly and honestly built on truth, probity, and honor is meant to destruction.¹⁵⁹

The powerful narrative of Alexandru Cantacuzino came as part of a debate regarding martyrdom between a religious, theological account, inspired by the Orthodox theology which placed a great emphasis on the issue of the resurrection and a more secular one, praising the martyrs from the perspective of their sacrifice for the Legion as a political movement. As Emilio Gentile has emphasized,

Even in celebrating the rites of dead, Fascism seemed to emphasize life and faith in the future. Melancholy and regret did not dominate in the cult of the fallen. The austere and martial form of the ceremony made it possible for pain felt for the dead to be submerged in an act of devotion to the fatherland; sorrow was mitigated by faith in the immortality of the fallen who were in communion with the living. The blood of the martyr regenerated; it gave life to the nation and fed its rebirth. By transforming the rites for the dead into a rite of life, Fascism sought to give prominence to the mystical sense of communion that was at the heart of the Fascist concept of a political movement or a party.¹⁶⁰

There was a silent debate between the secular legionaries represented by the position of Alexandru Cantacuzino, preaching a secular nature of the legionary martyrs

¹⁵⁷ Alexandru Cantacuzino, 1935, p. 56. For a theoretical perspective see Rebecca Anna Haynes, “*The Romanian Legionary Movement. Popular Orthodoxy and the Cult of Death*” in Mioara Anton, Florin Anghel, Cosmin Popa (eds.), *Hegemoniile trecutului. Evoluții românești și europene. Profesorul Ioan Chiper la 70 de ani* [The Hegemonies of the Past. Romanian and European Evolutions. Professor Ioan Chiper at his 70th anniversary] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2006), p. 113-126.

¹⁵⁸ Alexandru Cantacuzino, “Cum suntem” [How we are] in Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Opere complete* (Bucharest: Antet, 1990), p. 29: “We are faithful to the Christian teachings when we educate the legionaries to become heroes and not saints.”

¹⁵⁹ Alexandru Cantacuzino, “Românul de mâine” in Alexandru Cantacuzino, 1990, p. 66-67.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 27-28.

not as saints, but as heroes¹⁶¹ and a more religious side of the movement represented by different clergymen or theologians. This debate took place in the pages of a legionary newspaper and reflected best the coexisting positions within the movement, regarding martyrdom. In the context of a discussion on the resurrection of Jesus and the importance played by Christian martyrs, one of these theologians, Gheorghe Furdul, stated clearly that the legionary cult of martyrdom was deeply related with the Christian theology:

The ultimate meaning of sacrifice was given to the world by Jesus Christ through his incarnation and death on the cross in human flesh. [...] Our Legionary movement knew this height of spiritual experience. The movement has today a few dozen martyr's graves who wrote, in the history of the Romanian nation, dimensions of spiritual life the Romanian people only reached in decisive moments of great historical trials. In these graves is concentrated all the living power of the Romanian nation.¹⁶²

According to Gheorghe Furdul supported by Vasile Marin¹⁶³ the Legion through the martyrdom of its members foretasted the spiritual experience of suffering and resurrection. The martyrs were an anticipation of what would happen with the nation in the final resurrection, in the second coming. The martyrs functioned in the movement as a promise of the beyond, as a proof that resurrection was possible and the fight for the nation was not useless. Fr. Ilie Imbrescu went further with the idea of Christian legionary martyrdom associated with the idea of resurrecting the Romanian nation in theological notions implying that just as people are resurrected for God's Kingdom first through baptism and, finally, in His Second Coming, the nations follow the same path.¹⁶⁴

The final act of the martyrdom as a sacrament was performed during Moța-Marin burial. If the funeral highlighted the importance of the Orthodox rituals for the dead and

¹⁶¹ Alexandru Cantacuzino, "Românul de mâine" in Alexandru Cantacuzino, 1990, p. 68.

¹⁶² Gheorghe Furdul, "Jertfa legionară" [The Legionary sacrifice] in *Cuvântul Argeșului* Year I, no. 17 (20th of March 1936), p. 1.

¹⁶³ Vasile Marin, "Morții noștri" [Our dead] in *Cuvântul Argeșului* Year I, no. 17 (20th of March 1936), p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, 2010, p. 195-196.

the priests as the main performers of the sacrament, the most important part for the theological development of a legionary theology was Ion I. Moța's Testament. Moța sacrifice canonized the importance of martyrdom for the movement, and highlighted the importance of the Captain's cult.¹⁶⁵

I am joyful and I die happy because I had the power to feel you calling, to understand and serve you, because you are the Captain. [...] Corneliu, make from our country a beautiful one, strong and God fearing.¹⁶⁶

The cult of the Captain was reinforced through Moța's death, a confirmation coming from one of the most respected legionary voices. The significance of Moța's text comes in the last statement, which presented the conditions Codreanu and his movement had to fulfill in order to achieve a new Covenant with God and politically a new social contract. Moța's statement about the movement's goal was immediately picked up by Mircea Eliade, a representative of the secular intellectual side of the movement.

The honest, strong and creative Romania Moța wanted to sacrifice himself for even from the first day of the war was first and foremost *a Christian Romania*. Like his Captain and friend, Ion Moța thought the mission of his generation was to reconcile Romania with God, to transform the dead letter into Christian life, to fight against the powers of darkness. ...Ion Moța fell for a supra-human ideal, for Christ's triumph.¹⁶⁷

Mircea Eliade emphasized that legionary martyrdom was already a Christian martyrdom and the advent for the resurrection of the nation. The reconciliation of the nation with God and the signing of a new covenant, this time between God and Romania instead of God and the individual, was only possible through the Abrahamic rite of passage, sacrificing the most valuable thing someone had: his life. The idea of martyrdom

¹⁶⁵ Ion Banea, *Ce este și ce vrea Mișcarea legionară. Cărțica pentru săteni* [What is and what wants the Legionary movement. The Manual for peasants], (Sibiu: Curierul, 1937), pp. 46-47.

¹⁶⁶ Ion I. Moța, „Scrisoare către Căpitan” [Letter to the Captain] in *Taina jertfei. Dosar istoric Moța-Marin* (Sibiu: Puncte Cardinale, 2002), p. 97.

¹⁶⁷ Mircea Eliade, “Ion Moța și Vasile Marin” in *Vremea*, Year X, no. 472 (24th of January 1937), p. 2.

as envisaged by legionary intellectuals and clergymen was also a call for the propagation of the sacrament and the salvation of Romania.¹⁶⁸

The language used by the legionary elite after this tragic event merged for the first time the legionary fascist secular discourse about martyrdom with the religious, theological understanding of this category.¹⁶⁹ Even Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa produced a text praising the martyrs in which he produced a similar narrative,¹⁷⁰ quickly adopted by Fr. Ilie Imbrescu.¹⁷¹

V. 6 Final Remarks

The Christianization of the Legion's secular side was also true regarding other dogmas of the legionary theology, including the cult of the Captain as a national messiah. The intersection of priests and lay intellectuals and theologians on a common Christian ground led to a legionary doctrine that can be grasped not just through the lenses of political ideology, but also through those of Christian theology. This mutual approximation of theological and ideological concepts in the legionary ideology and theology proposed a new approach for both fascism and Orthodoxy. In case of fascism, this theological component Christianized the *eight sacrament* from a death cult to a

¹⁶⁸ For this idea in the Croatian case, see Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Anihilation. The Ustacha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism 1941-1945* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), pp. 295-344.

¹⁶⁹ Șerban Milcoveanu, "Mormânt de sfânt. Neam mesianic" [A saint's tomb. Messianic Nation] in *Cuvântul studențesc*, Year XII, no. 1-4 (January-February 1937), p. 1: "Ion Moța is the saint of the Romanian Nation." N. Crudu, "Doi sfinți noi în calendar" [Two new saints in the calendar] in *Porunca Vremii*, Year VI, no. 639 (28th of January 1937), p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă legionară* [The greatest legionary sacrifice], (Sibiu: Editura "Totul pentru Țară", 1937), p. 274.

¹⁷¹ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, 2010, p. 224.

guarantee of the body's and nation's resurrection and the presence of the nations in Heaven with their creator. As Emilio Gentile has poignantly observed,

The resurrection image was a commonplace in the cult of the Great War and its accompanying patriotic rhetoric, but it now acquired a special significance by giving a specific Fascist tinge to the myth of war. It became the founding myth of the Fascist symbolic universe, both in the ritual aspects of the cult of the lictor and its epic aspects, developed during the creation of a 'sacred history' for the Fascist religion.¹⁷²

It was Codreanu who said that

[...] the final goal of the nations is not life, but *Resurrection*, the resurrection of the nations in the name of Jesus Christ. Creation and culture are nothing more than means, not a purpose to achieve this resurrection. It is the fructification of the talent that God planted in our nation and for which we are responsible. There will be a time when all the nations of the earth will resurrect, together with their kings and their dead. Every nation has its place before the throne of God. This *final moment*, the resurrection from the dead is the highest and the most sublime goal to which a nation can reach.¹⁷³

Although theologians such as Fr. Ilie Imbrescu spoke of already of a resurrection of the nation as a spiritual reality overtaking the legionary death cult associated with legionary martyrdom as expressed by Alexandru Cantacuzino¹⁷⁴, after Moța-Marin burial legionary martyrdom radically changed its function and meaning. It sought to surpass the legionary exaltation of heroic death and to point out to the eternal life in God's Kingdom provided by it. The change can be noticed especially in the writings of Alexandru Cantacuzino, the most fervent apostle of the legionary death cult. In one of his writings, he bluntly stated that "I preach you the love of death in order to grow in you the taste of perpetuity."¹⁷⁵ According to Emilio Gentile,

¹⁷² Emilio Gentile, 1996, p. 39. For the logics of national and religious "resurrection" going beyond that of secular "rebirth" and the fascist death, please see Mark Nucleous, "Long live death! Fascism, resurrection, immortality" in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (February 2005), pp. 31-49.

¹⁷³ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 1994, p. 425.

¹⁷⁴ Alexandru Cantacuzino, "Românul de mâine" in Alexandru Cantacuzino, 1990, p. 72: the legionary "loves death."

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 73.

...fascism tried to give an answer to the problem of death through the exaltation of a sense of community, which integrated the individual into the collectivity. Whoever died believing in fascism became part of its mythical world and thus acquired immortality in view of the movement's collective memory, which was periodically updated in commemorations.¹⁷⁶

Accordingly, in the legionary theology everything was subordinated to the resurrection from the dead of the nation. Borrowed from the Christian theology the final resurrection from the dead was extended to the level of national communities. This national resurrection was considered to be more than a religious metaphor and the Legion and the movement attempted to change the political system and to reform the Church from below in order to implement and put into practice their legionary theology.

¹⁷⁶ Emilio Gentile, 1990, p. 244.

CHAPTER VI

The Moța-Marin Burial (13th of February 1937) and the *Fascization* of the Romanian Orthodox Church

VI. 1 Preliminaries

The present chapter investigates the turning point in the intricate relationship between the Romanian Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church. If in the beginning of the movement the priests and monks who supported the movement splintered from other right wing groups and political parties, once the Iron Guard grasped the propagandistic importance of the labor camps in restoring different ecclesiastical buildings, one could witness a gradual and steady increase in the affiliation of the Orthodox low-clergy and even some members of the Holy Synod to the movement. I argue that there is a precise moment in the history of the Iron Guard that galvanized the sympathies not just of the lower clergy, but also of the most important members in the hierarchy of the church, the Holy Synod: the Moța-Marin funeral. By developing the sacrament of martyrdom through Orthodox ritual, the Iron Guard unified its narrative about martyrdom with the narrative of the Church through ritual. The Legion intended to improve its narrative about “white martyrdom” period during the work camps and create its own ritual for those fallen for the movement. Nevertheless, as a political religion, Romanian Iron Guard putted a strong accent on rituals and especially on the rituals commemorating those fallen from its ranks. As Emilio Gentile has pointed out

The majority of fascist rituals were spontaneously developed during fascism’s early period of violence, and were later institutionalized by the regime, as occurred with

the swearing-in ceremonies, the consecration and veneration of banners, and above all with the cult of fascism's fallen martyrs.¹

The chapter concentrates on several issues. The first part will focus on the national and ideological origins of this funeral ceremony and what the religious and nationalist agendas behind the funeral service were. Initially, the commemoration of the war victims entwined religious and secular nationalism to glorify the nation through those who died for it. In this wave of public commemorations, adopted by LANC and after by the Iron Guard the funeral of fascist martyrs became the place where the religious and the nationalist narratives of the martyr met.

The chapter will offer an account of the funeral of Ion I. Moța and Vasile Marin. It will present the travel of the funerary train carrying the two bodies to their interment place and the funeral procession from the train station in Bucharest. Along with a narrative of the funeral procession in itself I will discuss the radicalization of the movement in the immediate aftermath of this event. This will allow a look into the *mise-en-scène* of the movement's sacrament that this event, I argue, is the catalyst of. The presence in large numbers of high and low clergy during the train voyage through the country and during the ceremony itself showcased the support the movement enjoyed in the ranks of the Romanian clergy.

This chapter will follow the effort of Nae Ionescu at that time an important intellectual voice of the Iron Guard to bring the Church into a dialogue with the movement and take a public stance in support of the Iron Guard. The last part will focus on the March 1937 public decision of the Holy Synod to condemn openly freemasonry

¹ Emilio Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, no. 2-3 (May-June 1990), p. 242.

and the secular spirit of the age, a position of the church that was immediately grasped both by Corneliu Codreanu and by some of the priest still undecided in joining the movement as a triumph and the beginning of a mutually useful collaboration between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Iron Guard.

VI. 2 From Fallen Soldiers to Martyrs for the Movement

The idea of martyrdom in the Romanian fascist imagination stands as a continuation of the cult of the “fallen soldier”² and the funeral commemoration of those dead on the battle fields fighting for their country³ and will become a central ritual in the fascist movements.⁴ With the war over, the national hero⁵ was constructed along the lines of

² I am using the concept *fallen soldiers* as applied by George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

³ See Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press:1994); Jay Winter & Antoine Prost (ed.), *The Great War in History. Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For the Romanian case see Gail Kligman, *The Wedding of the Dead. Ritual, Poetics and Popular Culture in Transylvania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Katherine Verdery, *The Political Life of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Nancy M. Wingfield & Maria Bucur (eds.), *Gender and War in the Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims. Remembering War in Twentieth Century Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁴ According to Mabel Berezin there is no Fascist movement without a ritual and one of the most important is the commemoration of those deceased either for the movement or for their country. Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self. The Political Culture of Interwar Italy*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 34. For the funeral rituals of the Iron Guard, see Rebecca Anna Haynes, “The Romanian Legionary Movement. Popular Orthodoxy and the Cult of Death” in Mioara Anton, Florin Anghel, Cosmin Popa (eds.), *Hegemoniile trecutului. Evoluții românești și europene. Profesorul Ioan Chiper la 70 de ani* [The Hegemonies of the Past. Romanian and European Evolutions. Professor Ioan Chiper at his 70th anniversary] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2006), p. 113-126.

⁵ As Ivan T. Berend emphasized, the idea of the national hero is a romantic myth associated all over the Eastern Europe with the building of a national history and culture. Myth joins hands with historical reality to create a master narrative of the past, both homogenizing and setting a challenge for the ambiguous cultures from the region. Ivan T. Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2003), p. 68.

(spiritual) warfare, namely of hero engaged in a bitter struggle against all the enemies of his fatherland.⁶

The idea of commemorating the dead of the Great War was present throughout the interwar period and in the fascist imagination the idea of the martyrs for the political ideals of the movement was depicted as nothing more than a continuation of the frontline heroism in the daily life held under siege by the Nation's enemies.⁷ In the case of Protestant post-WWI Germany and future Nazi Reich this strong connection between the rituals of commemoration for those fallen for their country and the religious imagery fueling the mindset of national collectivity has become a *locus communis*. As George Mosse pointed out,

It was not the belief in this goal of the war which justified death for the fatherland, but death itself was transcended; the fallen were truly made sacred in the imitation of Christ. The cult of the fallen provided the nation with martyrs, and, in their last resting place, with a shrine of national worship.⁸

Mosse states that death was overcome during the ceremonies of commemoration and those dead became the promise of regeneration for the whole nation. Just as Christ suffered for the redemption of humankind, the fallen in the war suffered for their country's resurrection through victory against other nations. Through their sacrifice, the country was sacralized and the politics promoting self-sacrifice and commemorating those fallen for the country received a protective divine aura.

⁶ Corneliu Codreanu was quoted as saying that the fourth commandment of any member of the Iron Guard was the "commandment of education": "you have to become someone else. *A hero.*" (my italics) in Corneliu Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib* [The Nest Leader's Manual] (Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 2000) p. 7.

⁷ George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture. Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 2003), pp. 99, 128.

⁸ George Mosse, 1990, p. 76.

Accordingly, the people organizing the Moța-Marin funeral rites used the references from Fascist imaginary to construct a Christian-secular synthesis of the martyr for God and for country merging the Christian Orthodox liturgy for the dead with the secular liturgy for the fallen soldier. Their emphasis on the need for martyrdom and the body as source of charisma responds to another important topic on the fascist agenda: the need for ritual, especially rituals for the dead.⁹ Using young men as regenerative force of the Nation during the rituals for the dead, the fascist project emphasized the invincibility of the movement's ideal, even when confronted with death.¹⁰

The change from the past that came across during the Moța-Marin burial was the emphasis placed not so much on a discourse about death, but rather on ritual, a combination of a fascist and Orthodox one. It also marked the transition from the “*ritual of regret*”¹¹ where “sorrow dominated”¹² to a completely different liturgy of the dead, where those fallen were perceived as the seeds of the old world's rebirth. In the case of the fascist movements, the ceremony related to martyrs and those dead for the movement had a central role in uniting the nation in a “liturgy of collective harmony.”¹³ Modris Eckstein points out that this held true for Nazi Germany as well:

The grandest of Nazi ceremonies seemed to focus on the laying of the wreaths, on the celebration of heroes and martyrs, whether they were Frederick the Great, the fallen of the war, the party dead of the 1923 Munich putsch, or Horst Wessel. “Propaganda of the corpse” was how Harry Kessler called this aspect of Nazism.¹⁴

⁹ Mabel Berezin, 1997, p. 33.

¹⁰ See for instance Horst Wessel's process of heroization by the Nazi propaganda in Jay W. Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.74.

¹¹ Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralisation of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 11.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ Emilio Gentile, 1996, p. 17.

¹⁴ Modris Ekstein. *Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), p. 316.

Already by 1920s the Nazi movement harbored the devotion towards those dead for the fatherland, dedication already present in numerous other fascist movements, including the Iron Guard. The Legion's fascination with national heroes and the remembrance of the Great War was cultivated in the elementary school or for some of its leaders in military school.¹⁵ Remembering war heroes was part of the school's curricula. An education in respecting the war heroes came also through direct participation in different commemorative rituals, especially on the national "Day of the Heroes" celebrated on the day of the Ascension, forty days after Easter.¹⁶

From as early as primary school, learned on the school's benches, the idea of the national heroes will be integrated in the national building project of the Romanian State. The radical nationalist movements born out of the trenches of WWI perceived this innovatory effort of the State as a regenerative anthropological project which intended to pour new wine into new bottles. The intellectual milieu from the universities depicted as bastions of the Left became the main vortex where radical nationalism and its moderate counterpart were mixed in order to offer a political alternative to the increasing Communist propaganda proliferated in the workers' factories and neighborhoods.¹⁷

The memory of the frontline heroism from the Great War, as in the case of other "paradigmatic" fascism movements such as Nazism or Italian fascism¹⁸ will be tied also

¹⁵ Constantin Iordachi, "God's chosen warriors: Romantic palingenesis, militarism and fascism in modern Romania" in Constantin Iordachi (ed.), *Comparative Fascist Studies. New Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 322.

¹⁶ Maria Bucur, "Of Crosses, Winged Victories and Eagles: Commemorative Contests between Official and Vernacular Voices in Interwar Romania" in *East Central Europe*, no. 37 (2010), p. 34.

¹⁷ Irina Livezeanu, "Fascists and conservatives in Romania: two generations of nationalists" in Martin Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives. The Radical Right and the Establishment in the twentieth-century Europe* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 224.

¹⁸ For Italian fascism see Roberta Suzzi Valli, "The Myth of Squadristo in the Fascist regime" in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 35, No. 2 (2000), p. 131-150.

with the necessity of creating a New Man, an ideological key-concept for Iron Guard as well. As Peter Fritzsche and Jochen Hellbeck have pointed out,

what [the] Nazi endeavored to realize [through marches, work camps, hiking, rallies, etc.] was the myth of the trenches, in which soldiers from a variety of social backgrounds allegedly discovered their common German being, or the experience of Weimar era *Werkstudent*, the impoverished middle-class students who spent summers working in factories and living among the workers.¹⁹

The whole idea of frontline heroism was transferred to the young generation in a regenerative “palingenetic” project focused on the revival of the nation through anthropological engineering by shaping the New Man. In all major fascist movements the youth became the driving force in both assumptions related with the creation of the New Man and the sense of a new historical beginning under the fascist banner: the moral, intellectual, nationalistic creation of the racial elite and the exclusion of the racially-alien and un-wanted from the *Volksgemeinschaft*.²⁰ This process of re-establishing the social prestige based on frontline heroism criteria that appeared in the early stages of the Fascist movements was transferred into a complex process of “heroization”²¹ of those fallen for the movement, a process that has been also linked with an exclusionary highly – anti-

¹⁹ Peter Fritzsche and Jochen Hellbeck, “The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany” in Sheila Fitzpatrick & Michael Geyer (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 312.

²⁰ For the relevance of the youth in the Italian case see Michael A. Leeden, “Fascism and Youth” in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 4, No. 3 (1969), p. 137-154. For Germany see Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity* translated by Richard Devenson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), p. 89. For a comparison between Italian fascism and Nazi Germany perception of the youth see Patrizia Dogliani, “Propaganda and Youth” in RBJ Bosworth (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 195-201. See Daniel Siemens, *The Making of a Nazi Hero. The Murder and Myth of Horst Wessel* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), pp. 135-144.

²¹ Peter Lambert, “Heroisation and Demonisation in the Third Reich: The Consensus-building Value of a Nazi Pantheon of Heroes” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, No.3-4 (2007), p. 526.

Semitic speech, a black and white account in which the heroes of the Nation victoriously confronted the Jewish corruption inside the Nation's body.²²

By preaching the revolutionary, anti-Semitic character of the new generation²³ the Iron Guard accomplished the transfer of heroism from the frontline to civil life where different inner dangers such as the presence of strong ethnic minorities and the spread of Communism threatened, according to the leaders of the Romanian students, the very existence of Great Romania.²⁴ Under the impact of the radicalization of the 1922 generation under the banner of the Iron Guard this blueprint was transformed and incorporated in the idea of martyrdom for the country, even when the persecution came from the government of the Romanian State, in order to enlarge the national heroes' Pantheon in constant process of heroization through persecution.²⁵

Constantly under the suspicion and infringements of the Romanian political regimes the Iron Guard has presented the sacrament of martyrdom as means to realize the new man. This martyrdom took different forms. It was to be achieved in the prison cell, imprisonment due to following the movement's cause, the work camp, through offering not solely physical labor but sacrificing their time, and, the ultimate sacrifice, death. They were meant to experience suffering and at times die to expiate the sins of the nation.²⁶

²² David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 82.

²³ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, National Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 256 and forward.

²⁴ Octavian Goga, "Spre alte orizonturi" [To other Horizons] in *Țara noastră*, Year IV, No. 15 (15th of April 1923), p. 1; "Cultul tinereții" [The Cult of Youth] in *Țara noastră*, Year V, No. 37 (13th of September 1925), p. 1.

²⁵ Jesús Casquete, "Martyr Construction and the Politics of Death in National Socialism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 10, no. 3-4 (September-December 2009), pp. 265-283.

²⁶ Victor Puiu Gârcineanu, *Din lumea legionară* [From the Legionary World] 5th edition (Bucharest: Sânziana, 2011), p. 13. First published in 1937.

The 1937 rituals surrounding Moța-Marin burial presented a transition from the original outlook of the movement on the sacrament of collective immortality: self-sacrifice for the country. In the previous years in between periods when the movement was persecuted and some of its members died or were imprisoned, the Legion cultivated its sacrament through “white martyrdom” in the working camps, a different type of sacrifice. In these camps, the legionary elite cultivated self discipline and inoculated the young generation of recruits with the necessity of suffering by giving examples from the legionary pantheon of martyrs. Rituals of commemoration were performed for remembering those fallen in the war and but also for those dead from among the legionary ranks were performed before in the Legionary movement. However the strong impression made on the Orthodox clergy and its understanding of Moța - Marin funerary ceremony will act as a turning point changing substantially the ritual of the martyrdom sacrament in form and manifestation.

VI. 3 The *Proto-Martyrs*. Antecedents to the Moța-Marin Burial

The rhetoric on martyrdom for country that equated it with martyrdom for God had its origins before the foundation of the movement. According to Corneliu Codreanu, the first extremist right-wing movement, the National Christian Defense League was inaugurated with a commemoration for those fallen during WWI and in previous other conflicts fought for the Romanian nation.²⁷ In 1931, in Fălticeni, Romanian Bukovina, Gheorghe Popescu, a young student member of LANC, died during the electoral campaign in a clash with the police force and the Gendarmerie. At the end of the religious

²⁷ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For my legionaries] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994), p. 119.

funeral service,²⁸ A. C. Cuza, the agnostic leader of LANC,²⁹ preached an inflammatory sermon inside the church where student Popescu was considered “the tenth martyr for the Nation’s unity and the faith of this [Orthodox] Church.”³⁰ He was buried in front of his fellow students with a swastika on his grave.

A couple of days later, A.C. Cuza took up the subject again using the same bitter rhetoric describing the ultimate sacrifice for Nation as an act of Christian faith, a discourse which will be later on employed by the Iron Guard’s writers:

The martyrs, who defeated the pagans for Christ, were not avenged with the sword. Their innocent blood fell in blazing drops on a rotten world and under the ruby dew the colossus of the old world crumbled. On its ruins the powerful faith of our Redeemer rose. Our dead are the martyrs of the Nation. In the bitter struggle filled with the sacrifices of our political liberation, those fallen from our ranks today are the promise of our victory tomorrow.³¹

This idea of martyrdom for country that A. C. Cuza advocated for was identical with the one that Corneliu Codreanu professed while a member of LANC.

In this period, the idea the country’s regeneration through the sacrifice of those fallen during the war has incorporated a secular perspective. Emilio Gentile termed it “sacralization of politics”³² where the nation constructed its own pantheon of martyrs and its own rituals. In order to give the nation a sense of cohesion, the liturgy of the nation incorporated the funerary rituals and these martyrs. The fascist movements took

²⁸ The Orthodox priest refused to let Cuza speak, but the students and LANC members forced him to do this. ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 12/1930, p. 267.

²⁹ Some Orthodox priests (I. Popescu and R. Cordeanu) already members of the Iron Guard even preached in Bucovina against A. C. Cuza because he was an atheist. Please see ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 12/1930, p. 32.

³⁰ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file. 12/1930, p. 268.

³¹ A. C. Cuza, “Moartea studentului martir Popescu” [The death of the student martyr Popescu] in *Apărarea Națională*, Year IX, no. 10 (29th of March) 1930, p. 1.

³² Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralisation of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 15.

inspiration for their ideology from the rituals of the Church for commemorating those fallen for the country.

The change from this secular perspective, infusing a Christian emphasis to the process of remembrance and martyrdom for the nation came with the legionary movement. The first legionary commemoration of the war dead took place in the procession held on 24th of December 1932 with the attempt of the Bucharest legionary delegation to place a cross at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The language of this legionary commemoration is different from that used by LANC or for that matter other fascist movements. The focus was transferred from the tomb and the Unknown Soldier to the Christianization of the fallen soldier and in the incidents that followed the stress fell on the profanation of the cross and the sufferings of the young generation of the Iron Guard, martyred by the Masonic government for their Christian belief.

The legionary image of the martyr for country and God was first put forward after the assassination of Prime Minister I. G. Duca by the legionary commando on the platform of Sinaia Railway station. In the wave of violence that followed, directed by the Romanian Police, Sterie Ciumetti, the Iron Guard's treasurer, was tortured and assassinated in retaliation for Duca's life and for refusing to lead the police to Codreanu. On the 27th-28th of January 1934³³ the Inter-Academic Committee of Bucharest University issued a manifest in 28 points that states at point six:

revenge will be carried out in the name of our martyr, Sterie Ciumetti, who for his faith in the Christian Church and Nation was killed in a cowardly manner by the tools of the Jewish Freemason Hydra, suffering tortures no less painful than those of the martyrs of the Christian cause.³⁴

³³ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 13/1934, p. 189.

³⁴ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file. 15/ 1933, p. 50. According to Constantin Papanace in 1934 a manifestation of the Macedonian students went to Ciumetti's grave and swore not to forget him and his

The changes brought forth by the narrative used between LANC and the Legion surfaced. The Christian character of Ciumetti's martyrdom was equally important with his martyrdom for his country. There was no subordination of the religious to the national significance. It was an attempt of the legionary elite to shape a religious nationalist synthesis regarding martyrdom as the final sacrament of the nation. Ciumetti is up to this day in the legionary imagination the movement's "proto-martyr". However his influence would fade when the group of the legionary martyrs grew with two more powerful figures.³⁵ Together with those killed during the 1933 electoral campaign (Niță Constatin, Virgil Teodorescu and N. Bălăianu)³⁶ or Gheorghe Grigor for whom the first legionary funeral was organized,³⁷ along with the names of those members of the Legion fighting in

"executioners". Constantin Papanace, *Fără Căpitan. Conducerea în a doua prigoană* [Without Captain. The leadership in the second persecution] (Bucharest: Elisaváros, 1997), p. 23.

³⁵ He was also mentioned in Codreanu's, "Însemnări de la Jilava" [Writings from Jilava Prison] in *Din luptele tinereții române, 1919-1939* [From the battles of the Romanian Youth] (Bucharest: Fundația Buna Vestire, 1993), pp. 147-148.

³⁶ For those killed during this campaign, please see "Mor legionarii!" [The legionnaires are dying!] in *Axa* Year I, no. 23 (7th of September 1933), p. 8. For Virgil Teodorescu, please see Ion I. Moța, "Cranii de lemn" [Wooden skulls] in *Axa*, Year I, no. 23 (7th of September 1933), p. 1.

³⁷ Gheorghe Grigor was killed on the 5th of August 1936 in Cernăuți by Isidor Koschman, a Jewish Communist at the instigation of Eduard Wagner, a member of the Jewish organization "Morgenroth". The place where he was killed became a shrine of pilgrimage for nationalist students and in the day of his burial on the 9th of August he was accompanied by 8 priests before the coffin headed by Fr. Professor Vasile Gheorghiu, the dean of the Faculty of Theology and his fellow legionnaires in green shirts, followed by the members of German and Ukrainian nationalist groups. The political language, the anti-communist narrative and the aggressive anti-Semitic tones used to condemn the crime, the religious procession and the merging of the two rituals will precede by several months what will happen in Bucharest on 13th of February 1937. Traian Brăileanu, "La înmormântarea camaradului Gheorghe Grigor" [At the burial of our comrade Gheorghe Grigor] in *Iconar*, Year I, no. 12 (August 1936), p. 1-2. Mircea Streinu, "Iarăși o jertfă: Gheorghe Grigor" [One more sacrifice: Gheorghe Grigor] in *Iconar*, Year I, no. 12 (August 1936), p. 3; Vasile Postecă, "Un nou mormânt" [A new grave] in *Iconar*, Year I, no. 12 (August 1936), pp. 5-6. George Macrin, "Asasinatul de la Cernăuți" [The Murder from Cernăuți] in *Însemnări sociologice*, Year II, no 5 (August 1936) pp.14-19. According to George Macrin, Grigor was a student in Theology and he just returned from the working camp in Mănăstiriște, where together with other comrades he worked in the construction of an Orthodox church when he was killed. See Adrian Gabriel Lepădatu, *Mișcarea legionară: între mit și realitate* [The legionary movement: between myth and reality] (Chișinău: Cartier, 2005), pp. 155-156.

Spain, he will be remembered again by Codreanu himself in his circular letter to legionaries on the 23rd of December 1936 in anticipation of what will develop later.³⁸

VI. 4 The Moța-Marin Funeral – Constructing the Ritual

After the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1938),³⁹ a delegation of the Iron Guard headed by General Cantacuzino, the leader of All for Fatherland (TPT) party, left Romania for Spain, in December 1936. They intended to present General Moscardo the sword General Cantacuzino used during WWI, as homage and marker of the Legion's support for the Nationalist side led by Generalissimo Franco.⁴⁰ Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, one of the participants in the Spanish expedition, talked with Nicolae Tonu during the sail from Hamburg to Lisbon about who would have the right to lead the "death squad."⁴¹ Ion I. Moța, who was appointed the chief of the squad by the Captain himself proclaimed his leadership over the squad:

The real death squad is going to Spain and I have the honor to lead it. This squad is meant to die and triumph. This death squad must present the greatest sacrifice and

³⁸ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 113.

³⁹ The legionaries were made aware of the events in Spain in a series of articles published in the main legionary newspapers. The main argument of those articles was to warn that Romania can face the same fate of Spain where the Church was persecuted, the clergy and property were under a siege of fire and the traditional values fell in disgrace. Among the articles Ion Țurcan, "Pericol comunist și legitimă apărare" [Communist danger and self-defense] in *Însemnări sociologice*, Year II, no. 6 (September 1936), pp. 3-21. Mihail Polihroniade, "Tragedia spaniolă" [The Spanish tragedy] in *Vestitorii*, Year I, no. 4 (28th of April 1936), p. 2.

⁴⁰ Vasile Marin, "Note din drumul spre frontul spaniol" [Notes from the road to the Spanish front] in *Porunca Vremii* [The Commandment of the Age] from 12th of December 1936 republished in Vasile Marin, *Crez de generație* [Creed of a generation] 5th edition (Bucharest: Majadahonda, 1997), p. 19. For another testimony regarding this expedition see Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, "Pe 'Monte Olivia'" [On Monte Olivia] in *Rânduiala*, Vol. II, no. 6-7 (1937), pp. 261-270. "Monte Olivia" was the name of the ships carrying them from Hamburg to Lisbon.

⁴¹ The death squads were initially propaganda team having as slogan the phrase „Either we triumph, or we die!” In 1933 Fr. Dumitrescu was in charge of such a squad sent for propaganda purposes.

maybe only a few, one or two, will return to Romania carrying the coffins of those dead for Christ.⁴²

Moța left behind a series of premonitory letters regarding his imminent death on the Spanish front. This speaks to the seriousness with which the leader of the death squad regarded his mission that of dying and being victorious. In these circumstances, without informing Codreanu, although they were reservist officers of the Romanian, army all the 7 members of the delegation⁴³ with the exception General Cantacuzino⁴⁴ enlisted in the irregular infantry of Franco's troops as mere soldiers.⁴⁵

During an attack of the Republican forces against the Nationalists Ion I. Moța and Vasile Marin⁴⁶ found their death in front of Madrid in the village of Majadajonda on 13th of January 1937.⁴⁷ The Captain was immediately alerted and together with Nae Ionescu,

⁴² Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, 1937, p. 268.

⁴³ They were Ion Moța, Vasile Marin, Bănică Dobre, Nicolae Totu, Prince Alexandru Cantacuzino, Gheorghe Clime, Fr. Ilie Imbrescu. According Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa that was the minimal number to create a legionary nest. Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian intra muros. Memorii Legionare* [Trojan Horse intra muros. Legionary Memoirs] (Bucharest: Lucman, 2002), p. 187. Also see Șerban Milcoveanu, "O ofensă celor plecați în Spania pentru Hristos" [An Insult to those left in Spain for Christ] in *Cuvântul Argeșului* Year I, no. 25-27 (20th of December 1936), p. 1.

⁴⁴ According to Armin Heinen the General was not accepted to enlist by the Spanish nationalists due to his poor health and his age. Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 293.

⁴⁵ According to Bănică Dobre's testimony, General Cantacuzino was the one who asked the Spanish Nationalist authorities to allow the Romanian legionnaires to enlist in Franco's colonial army (*Tercio*) as mere soldiers. Bănică Dobre, *Crucificații. Zile trăite pe frontul spaniol* [The Crucified. Days on the Spanish front] IId Edition (Bucharest: Criterion Publishing, 2010), p. 15.

⁴⁶ Ion I. Moța (1902-1937) was a doctor in Law and one of the members of the charismatic circle of the *Văcăreștenii*. Together with Codreanu, his brother-in-law, he was one of the founding members of the Iron Guard and, for several years, Codreanu's right hand. He led the nest where Codreanu was a member and he was one of the few who was legionary commander "Buna Vestire". Because of the 1933 adherence of Bucharest's intellectuals to the movement and the increasing influence of Nae Ionescu on Codreanu, Moța felt betrayed and adopted a low profile in the movement. In 1936, together with a team of legionnaires, went to fight in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Franco's army and he was killed in action on the 13th of January 1937. Vasile Marin (1904-1937), doctor in Law and diplomat, kept a close correspondence with Charles Maurras. Disaffected with the politics of the National Peasant Party in which he was a member, he joined the Iron Guard in 1933 becoming a legionary commander and chief of the Bucharest garrison. He was killed in Spanish front in the same day and together with Ion I. Moța.

⁴⁷ For the participation of the Legionary expedition in Spain see Judith Keene, *Fighting for Franco. International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 225-239.

Virgil Ionescu and General Cantacuzino made all the diplomatic arrangements for the return of the two bodies and the surviving members of the legionary expedition.⁴⁸

The train with the two coffins reached the first train station in Romania (Ghica Vodă in Bucovina) on 7th of February and was met by Corneliu Codreanu, legionary staff, and 70 legionaries in full uniform. A short religious service in memory of the deceased was held by Fr. Noteanu from Cernăuți and “the assistance kneeled throughout the entire religious service.”⁴⁹

After Ghica Vodă the train headed towards Lujeni where 70 school children and 40 members of LANC offered the fascist salute to the coffins and sang “Our Father.”⁵⁰ Cernăuți followed. In this city the Police banned the Church from any involvement in the legionary ceremonies. However twelve priests and 300 legionaries attended a pithy religious service. After a short dispute between Metropolitan Visarion Puiu of Bucovina⁵¹ and the Prefect of the city, the coffins were placed for public veneration in the Orthodox Cathedral.⁵² At 3 pm another religious service took place and soon after eight legionaries took the two coffins to Cernăuți Orthodox Cathedral. The convoy was accompanied by eight priests in priestly vestments. They were met by Metropolitan Visarion’s envoy, Fr. Soroceanu who spoke about the importance of “Moța and Marin’s martyrdom for God.”⁵³ The next day, the coffins were taken back to the train where a new religious service was performed. At the end of the religious service, Vasile Iașinschi, the leader of the Legion

⁴⁸ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 119.

⁴⁹ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Metropolitane Visarion Puiu (1879-1964) was Bishop of Argeș (1921-1923), Bishop of Hotin (1923-1935), Metropolitane of Bucovina (1935-1940), Metropolitane of Transnistria (1942-1944), Metropolitane of the Romanian Church in Exile (until 1958), see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/P/VisarionPuiu.html>, Internet Accessed on 22nd of February 2012.

⁵² Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 294.

⁵³ Ibid.

in Bucovina, took the Moța-Marin oath and told the 250 legionaries and the assistance: “Romanians from everywhere, men and women, baptize yourselves in the legionary faith!”⁵⁴

After Cernăuți the train stopped in Cuciurul Mare (two priests and 1000 legionaries took the oath), Adâncata (four priests performed the religious service and 75 legionaries took the oath), Dornești (five priests performed the religious service and 1000 legionaries participated),⁵⁵ Burdujeni (5 priests in white vestments performed the religious service and 150 legionnaires were present), Verești (two priests performed the religious service and the legionnaires in assistance took the oath).⁵⁶ When the train reached Roman, Lucian Triteanu,⁵⁷ the Orthodox Bishop of the city, together with 15 Orthodox priests performed the religious service followed by another one performed by his Vicar, Ilarion Mircean together with 3 priests and the Orthodox Seminary’s choir.⁵⁸ In all the other cities and villages where the train stopped, the presence of the Orthodox priests was massive. A significant observation is available to the careful follower of the event. The Orthodox lower clergy from Moldavia starting from Burdujeni and until the train left Moldavia for Transylvania wore white priestly vestments.⁵⁹ The fact that even the police agent noticed this change in priestly vestments implies that this particular detail was plain to see for all the observers present for the commemoration of the two deceased legionaries. In a common funeral service or a commemoration of the dead the color of the vestments is

⁵⁴ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Bishop Lucian Triteanu (1872-1953) was a Romanian Orthodox Bishop of Roman from 10th of June 1923 until his retirement in 1947. He was an opened supporter of the Legionary movement. For further details, please see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/T/LucianTriteanu.html>, Internet Accessed on February 22nd, 2012.

⁵⁸ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

black or dark. White priestly vestments are worn during Easter and immediately after, during feasts consecrated to the Angels or during a procession of canonization of a saint. In all of these cases the white vestments symbolized the light of Christ. During February, none of these holy days are celebrated in the Orthodox Church. Thus one can easily conclude that the Orthodox clergy performing the rituals of commemorations for Ion I. Moța and Vasile Marin were anticipating an official canonization of the two proclaimed solemnly by the Holy Synod. The presence of white vestments worn by priests in Moldavia suggests that Orthodox clergy already saw Moța and Marin as holy martyrs of the Church and were eager to see them canonized and acknowledged officially by the Church and the Orthodox people as saints.

The same is true in Transylvania where the Orthodox and the Greek-Catholic priests joined together when the mortuary train stopped throughout the region. As Valentin Săndulescu noticed,⁶⁰ the most important ceremonies took place in Cluj-Napoca and in Sibiu. In Cluj the train was met by Orthodox bishop Nicolae Colan and 16 Orthodox priests who greeted Codreanu and the legionary commanders following him. The coffins were taken by the legionaries from the train to the square in front of the railway station. They were met by 200 legionaries, 40 students in Greek-Catholic theology and 30 legionary female students with the fascist salute. After the religious service, Bishop Colan praised “their supreme sacrifice” with their “spirits [that] went straight to Heaven.”⁶¹ His sermon was followed by the words of Greek Catholic priest Agârbiceanu, who eulogized their sacrifice and emphasized the ecumenical dimension of

⁶⁰ Valentin Săndulescu, “Sacralised Politics in Action: the February 1937 Burial of the Romanian Legionary Leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (June 2007), p. 264.

⁶¹ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, p. 177.

their death.⁶² At the end of the speeches, not the legionaries, but Bishop Nicolae Colan himself and the priests carried the coffins back to the mortuary wagon, a fact that hints at the fact that the clergy considered the two dead as saints.

In Sibiu the train was greeted by the Vicar of the Orthodox Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, Bishop Vasile Stan⁶³ and 32 priests took the coffins out of the train for the religious service and later carrying them on their shoulders back to the mortuary wagon.⁶⁴ As in Cluj-Napoca, by carrying the coffins on their shoulders, Orthodox clergy showed publicly they were not attending a political event, a national funeral or an ordinary funeral procession where the clergy always walked in front of the coffin, but never touched the coffin or the person inside. Due to Old Testament's prescriptions that see dead people as impure, Orthodox clergy refrain from touching the bodies of the dead. The only times the Orthodox clergy carry on their shoulders the coffin is either when that person was a member of the clergy or that person was a saint or a presumed saint. In the Moța - Marin case, I argue that the Orthodox clergy present, saw itself as part of a ritual of canonization of the legionary deceased in the civil war from Spain and not a part of a political event.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 23.

⁶³ Valentin Săndulescu mistakenly identifies Liviu Stan as present at the funeral proceedings in Orăștie when saying "Vicar Liviu Stan gave a speech highlighting the deeds of the two fallen Legionaries." Valentin Săndulescu, 2007, p. 264. According to his own bio, at that time Liviu Stan was in Germany, where he was studying Law and Philosophy at München University. See Liviu Stan in <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/S/LiviuStan.html>, Internet Accessed 12th of February, 2013. At that time, Vicar of the Sibiu Archbishopric was Bishop Vasile Stan. The information is confirmed by Flor Strejnicu in *Creștinismul Mișcării Legionare* [The Christianity of the Legionary Movement] (Sibiu: Imago, 2001), p. 213. Bishop Vasile Stan (1875-1945) was a doctor in Philosophy from Budapest University (1908), archpriest (1921) and after his wife death he became vicar of Sibiu Orthodox Archbishopric (1927) and auxiliary bishop of this archbishopric from 1928, with the title "Rășinăreanul". He was elected on 1st of November 1938 as Bishop of Maramureș and kept this position until his death. For Bishop Vasile Stan, please see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/S/VasileStan.html>, Internet Accessed on February 12th, 2013.

⁶⁴ "Eroii români, căzuți pentru Hristos, proslăviți la Sibiu" [The Romanian heroes fallen for Christ glorified in Sibiu] in *Telegraful român* Year LXXXV, no. 7 (14th of February 1937), p. 2. The source confirms the presence of Bishop Vasile Stan. It is the first time when an official paper of the Romanian Orthodox Church called Corneliu Codreanu "Captain".

Bishop Vasile Stan began his sermon by naming the two dead “blessed soldiers of Christ”⁶⁵ and asked the audience headed by Corneliu Codreanu and Fr. Ioan Moța, the father of Ion I. Moța, to take them as an example for their future Christian life:

God guided your decision and your steps for your martyrdom to glow as a lightning in the depths of the Romanian soul, showing him the abyss in which atheism wants to cast him forever. Otherwise, your dramatic sacrifice would have no echo in the hearts of the Romanian nation. We would be reckless and foolish if we did not follow them [Moța and Marin].⁶⁶

The words of Bishop Vasile Stan had an immense impact on the audience present in Sibiu solely for this religious ritual because it showed clearly that the Orthodox Church understood the sacrifice of the two legionaries as a Christian sacrifice of their lives and a model to be followed. The people present were even more touched by the clergy’s initiative to carry the coffins of the martyrs, an action that everybody understood as an acknowledgment of the two legionary martyrs’ sainthood.

Bishop Vasile Stan was not alone in proclaiming Moța and Marin as martyrs of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Fr. Stanciu, the Orthodox priest from Câmpia Turzii, the next stop of the funeral procession after Cluj-Napoca, after a religious service that was performed together with the Greek-Catholic priest Balinț, eulogized “the two martyrs and their self-sacrifice for Christ and Cross.”⁶⁷ In all the sermons along the voyage of the train throughout Romania there was not a word about party politics or the Iron Guard. The emphasis fell on the sacrifice for Christ and the Christian faith of the two legionary leaders.

⁶⁵ This reference appears often in the language of the Romanian Orthodox Church when is the feast of a saint martyr celebrated.

⁶⁶ Flor Strejnicu, 2001, p. 214.

⁶⁷ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, p. 24.

The reaction of the press to the deaths of Ion I. Moța and Vasile Marin was unanimous.⁶⁸ For the first time ecclesiastical newspapers from Transylvania, the Orthodox *Telegraful român* from Sibiu⁶⁹ and the Greek-Catholic *Clujul creștin* from Cluj⁷⁰ set aside their differences a truce being reached in the articles dedicated to the dead on the Spanish front. Especially the Orthodox clergy expressed its awe towards the actions of Moța and Marin in its most prestigious journals including the theological ones.⁷¹ One of the leading theologians of the period, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae from Sibiu, praised the sacrifice of the two legionary leaders, calling them martyrs for Christ:

The young Moța and Marin are from now on names of lightning and burning fire in the history of the Romanian pride and of the Romanian Orthodox Church whose martyrs they are. ...Aggrieved but still proud, hardly crushed but precisely because of that with even more hopes for the future, we praise the name of martyrs Ion Moța and Vasile Marin.⁷²

Fr. Stăniloae's statement about the sanctity of those dead was picked up by the legionary press, praising the sacrifice of Moța and Marin. A whole issue of *Cuvântul studentesc* was dedicated to the life of the two martyrs and numerous intellectuals affiliated with the Iron Guard expressed in the pages of this newspaper their grief over the

⁶⁸ Even LANC praised those dead in Spain. Please see "S-au dus eroii" [The heroes are gone] in *Santinela*, Year 38, no. 2 (14th of February 1937), p. 1.

⁶⁹ „Căzuți în luptă pentru o mare credință” [Fallen in battle for a great religious faith] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXV, no. 3 (17th of January 1937) p. 3

⁷⁰ I. C. "Triumful credinței" [The triumph of faith] in *Clujul creștin* Year III, no. 3-4 (16th - 31st of January 1937), pp. 6-7.

⁷¹ Grigore T. Marcu, "Suprema jertfă: să mori pentru Cruce" [The ultimate sacrifice: to die for the Cross] in *Revista Teologică*, Year XXVII, no. 2 (February 1937), p. 77. Also see Fr. Coriolan Drăgan, "Lacrimi în amintirea eroului Ionel Moța" [Tears in remembrance of hero Ionel Moța] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXV, no. 5 (31st of January 1937), p. 1. Zinaida Vințan, "La moartea unui erou" [When a hero dies] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXV, no. 5 (31st of January 1937), p. 3. Also see "Știri" [News] in *Foaia diecezană*, Year LII, nr. 7 (14th of February 1937), p. 6.

⁷² Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, "Martiri pentru Hristos" [Martyrs for Christ] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXV, no. 4 (January 1937), p. 2.

loss of Moța and Marin.⁷³ Gheorghe Racoveanu wrote an article where he elevated their status to that of archangels:

Moța and Marin are not heroes [my highlight]. They were Christians without fear and now they are archangels. They left for Spain not *to fight* but *to die*. ... Moța and Marin were angels in flesh. They renounced their flesh for Christ and for the Legion. They left the nest and became inhabitants of heavens. They escaped from the worldly winter and they halted on the banks of silence. How can we, the poor, meet with tears those who glorify God together with the archangels and rejoice with the angels? We will meet them in prayer, in fasting and with songs of triumph.⁷⁴

Gheorghe Racoveanu, a PhD student in Orthodox Theology, perceived the death of the two legionary leaders in the same way as Fr. Stăniloae did. Due to the brutality of their martyrdom and their public confession of faith before embarking for Spain, both Racoveanu and Stăniloae thought that Moța and Marin were already saint martyrs of the Church⁷⁵ simply by their ultimate sacrifice for Cross and Christ. The official decision of canonization was to be a matter of time and this is precisely the reason why neither Racoveanu nor Stăniloae made public pronouncements in its favor.

Gheorghe Racoveanu and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae were supported in the Legion's newspapers by other priests such as Vasile Boldeanu from Focșani who, together with other 25 Orthodox priests performed a religious ritual for the dead in the Adjud railway station.⁷⁶ In an article written before the burial, Fr. Boldeanu asked the Romanian high

⁷³ *Cuvântul studențesc*, Year XII, no. 1-4 (January-February 1937).

⁷⁴ Gheorghe Racoveanu, "Să tacă tot trupul..." [Let all the mortal flesh be silent...] in *Cuvântul studențesc*, Year XII, no. 1-4 (January-February 1937), p. 44.

⁷⁵ The words to qualify the two legionnaires they use in Romanian are "mucenic", "martir", which both have the same equivalence in English - the word "martyr".

⁷⁶ ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, p. 155.

clergy to join the Legion who had a priest such as Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, fighting personally and not through pastoral letters in the war waged against Communism.⁷⁷

On the 11th of February at 11.50 am the train reached Bucharest railway station after a short stop in Pitești.⁷⁸ The coffins were greeted by the families of the deceased and a large number of legionaries who came to pay their respects for their lost leaders. Both coffins were taken from the train and carried in a procession from the railway station to the legionary church St. Ilie – Gorgani in Bucharest, where they were laid for two days. Several public figures paid their respect for the legionary *martyrs* and religious rituals commemorating the dead were performed in the sanctuary. On 13th of February an impressive funeral procession was organized by the Iron Guard under the command of Victor Vojen⁷⁹ to accompany its two most prominent members to their grave.

The language used by the 400 priests⁸⁰ headed by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan,⁸¹ Bishop Vartolomeu Stănescu of Craiova and Patriarchal Vicar Veniamin Pocitan⁸² sent by Patriarch Miron Cristea in his stead⁸³ in praying for “the two martyrs”⁸⁴ proved the

⁷⁷ Fr. Vasile Boldeanu, “Pentru cinstea și demnitatea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române” [For the honor and dignity of the Romanian Orthodox Church] in *Brațul de Fier*, Year III, no. 18 (15th of January-15th of February 1937), p. 4

⁷⁸ Valentin Săndulescu, 2007, p. 264.

⁷⁹ Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 205.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 206.

⁸¹ Metropolit Nicolae Bălan headed the religious ceremony and not Patriarch Miron Cristea as mentioned by Rebecca Ann Haynes, 2006, p. 121. The information is confirmed by several sources like Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, 2002, p. 206 or Flor Strejnicu, 2001, p. 214.

⁸² Bishop Veniamin Pocitan (1970-1955) was first elected Vicar Bishop of Huși Bishopric under the title “Bârlădeanul” (1929-1932). From 1932 until 1935 he was *in locum tenens* for the bishop of Huși. From 1935 until 1948 he was Vicar-Bishop of Bucharest Archbishopric under the title “Ploieșteanul”. In 1948 he retired to Cernica Monastery near Bucharest where he died in 1955. Please see <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/dictionarul-teologilor-romani/veniamin-pocitan-84769.html>, Internet Accessed on 12th of February, 2013.

⁸³ According to a document at the funeral there were four Orthodox bishops, including the Patriarchal Vicar. ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, p. 14

⁸⁴ Dumitru Banea, *Acuzat, martor, apărător în procesul vieții mele*, [Defendant, witness, defender in my life’s trial] (Sibiu: Puncte Cardinale, 1995), p. 54.

fascistization of the Orthodox Church.⁸⁵ During the funerary ritual, the litanies⁸⁶ for the deceased performed by the lower clergy (almost 20 of them) were altered to maximize the effect on the public. Instead of saying “Furthermore we pray for the repose of the souls of the servants of God *Ioan* and *Vasile*, departed from this life and Thou will pardon all their sins, both voluntary and involuntary”⁸⁷ the litany said: “We pray for the souls of the heroes *Moța* and *Marin*, who fell in battle against bolshevism for the Cross.”⁸⁸

The alteration of the litanies for the two and the change of the names (using their family names instead of their given, Christian names) was unusual for the Orthodox ritual. All those living or dead were mentioned by their first names in the litanies and prayers of the Church, since the first name of a person was his/ her baptism name. By making these changes in the ritual, one assumes the clergy compromised with the requests of the Legion to maximize the impact of the funeral among the Romanian people. Changing the names of the dead and not taking into consideration the part of the litany where God’s forgiveness was asked for the sins of the dead suggested that the priest thought the dead had no sin. This idea is associated in Orthodox Christian theological milieus with the idea that the person that has no sin does not need the intercession of the Church to be redeemed.

One other peculiarity of the funeral service came from the leading clerical member of the clergy attending the service, Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan. In that capacity he held the sermon at the end of the church service addressed to the families and the

⁸⁵ Valentin Săndulescu, 2007, p. 266.

⁸⁶ For what a litany is please see the “Liturgy” in Michael Prokurat, Alexander Golitzin and Michael D. Peterson, *Historical Dictionary of the Orthodox Church* (Lanham & London: Scarecrow Press, 1996), pp. 200-2004.

⁸⁷ “Litany for the Deceased” in *Divine Liturgy* in: <http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/liturgy/liturgy.html>, Internet Accessed on 12th of February 2013.

⁸⁸ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 294.

legionaries taking part to the funeral. More a prayer than a sermon, Metropolitan Bălan's speech corrected the derailments introduced by the lower clergy and praised the defunct legionaries using their Christian names.⁸⁹ After initially naming them with both names (Ioan Moța and Vasile Marin), Metropolitan Bălan continued in the eulogy for the two legionnairy "martyrs" by calling them on their baptism names, Ion and Vasile. Moreover, Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan refrained from any innuendo regarding their sainthood and from any comment regarding their imminent canonization. While Metropolitan Bălan tried to correct the innovations introduced by the lower clergy into the composition of the litanies, he however altered the funeral ritual of the Orthodox Church by substituting one of the forgiveness prayers from the end of the ritual with his own prayer.

The reason the Transylvanian Metropolitan decided to change the course of the ritual by introducing his own prayer and in the end to allow the clergy to use those particular litanies could be explained if one is to contextualize the funeral proceedings and acknowledge the deep impact already produced by the sacrifice of the two legionaries on the Romanian public opinion.

One important observation comes from analyzing the clergy present at the funeral. If the low clergy embraced the Legion's *martyrs* Moța and Marin and was ready to consider them saint martyrs of the Church, the high clergy, represented by the bishops attending the funeral, was rather tempered in their views. This distinction was also technical. It was an opposition between the legionary popular devotion towards the newly martyrs of Christ and the hierarchy of the church aware that to canonize the two some

⁸⁹ I use the text of the sermon from "Rugăciune" [Prayer] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXV, no. 8 (21st of February 1937), p. 1.

criteria had yet to be met.⁹⁰ The high clergy present at the funeral knew that any decision regarding the canonization of Moța and Marin as saints needed the approval of the other bishops including the Patriarch who kept a reserved distance vis-à-vis the events in question.

The impact of the funeral was maximized by a tour of the two coffins across Bucharest with people kneeling in front of the wagon carrying the two bodies.⁹¹ As Francisco Veiga pointed out, the funeral was perceived as a “lesson” addressed to the modern and “frivolous” Bucharest by an austere and chivalrous monastic order, rather than a fascist movement with the purpose of revolutionizing the country from the Right.⁹²

According to eye-witnesses, Bănică Dobre or Dumitru Banea, the ritual displayed by the Iron Guard during this funeral ceremony was magnificent representing the future pattern for all other legionary burials.⁹³ The funeral procession began with a living cross, made of 72 specially selected legionaries, dressed in green shirts and holding the paraphernalia of the movement. They were followed by 400 (in other accounts 200) Orthodox priests⁹⁴ headed by three hierarchs of the Orthodox Church with Metropolitan Bălan presiding in full ecclesiastical dressing together with Bishop Vartolomeu and Vicar

⁹⁰ For “canonization” see the definition provided by Gerard O’ Collins and Edward G. Farrugia: “Church’s solemn and final declaration that one of its dead and previously beatified members belongs among the saints in heaven and such is to be publicly invoked and venerated.” In the Orthodox tradition the process of declaring someone a saint is the same, with the exception that the beatification is not necessary and that the popular devotion towards that person before the decision of canonization is the most important criteria for making someone a saint.” Gerard O’ Collins, Edward G. Farrugia *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2000), p. 32. In the Orthodox case, the public devotion of the believers has to be confirmed by a decision of the Holy Synod which sanctions through canonization process the subject of public devotion as saint of the Church.

⁹¹ The same happened in the case of bringing in 1921 the body of the Italian Unknown Soldier to Rome’s *Altare della Patria*. Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary. Politics of History in Fascist Italy*, p. 85.

⁹² Francisco Veiga, 1996, p. 186.

⁹³ Dumitru Banea, 1995, p. 112.

⁹⁴ Dumitrescu-Borșa gives the account of 400 priests, Francisco Veiga quoting other participants gives the account of just 200.

Bishop Veniamin, although the Holy Synod initially opposed any involvement of the Church in the Iron Guard's public processions.⁹⁵

The funeral carriage came after the priests with the two coffins blanketed by the Romanian national flag under a shower of flowers thrown from the public. The carriage was pulled by all the legionary commanders and the legionary elite and it was followed by Codreanu and diplomats from the embassies of nationalist Spain, Germany, Italy and Portugal, the families of those deceased, General Cantacuzino-Grăniceru and the survivors of the Spanish expedition. They in turn were followed by the Legionary Senate, sympathizers and a large number of people that included even officers members of the Royal Guard.⁹⁶

The speech delivered by Vasile Iașinschi, the leader of the Bucovina region draws attention. When the procession reached its final destination at Casa Verde, the legionary headquarters, after Archbishop Bălan's sermon, and just before the coffins were prepared to be laid to rest in the hastily prepared wooden mausoleum, Iașinschi climbed on the carriage and addressed the crowd and the priests present with an invitation to baptize themselves in the baptismal waters of the "legionary faith."⁹⁷ In other words, although the movement placed an emphasis on the relevance of the religious ritual as means of propaganda among illiterate and highly superstitious peasant class, the most relevant issue

⁹⁵ Bănică Dobre, 2010, p. 98.

⁹⁶ Heinen, 1999, p. 274.

⁹⁷ A document states that during the Moța-Marin burial, Vasile Iașinschi, the commander of legionary Cernăuți garrison, preached after the end of every religious service to the dead the following words: „Romanians from everywhere, men and women, baptize your selves now in the legionary faith.” ANIC, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse, file 4/1937, pp. 4, 93

at stake was the belief in the heroic “legionary death”, which was praised in the legionary anthem.⁹⁸

The presence of the Orthodox clergy (both priest and hierarch) during the Moța-Marin funerary procession represented not only an expression of political sympathy towards the movement, but also the unification of the two conceptions of martyrdom into one. From the Moța-Marin burial onwards the legionary imagination will consider martyrdom for country as equal to martyrdom for God. The ritual of commemorating those dead for the movement will be always coupled with the Orthodox ritual for commemorating the dead. This combination although scarcely seen in the past, will, from now onwards, be generalized by the Legion. From this moment on any Legionary public ceremony will start with the religious commemoration of the movement’s martyrs and the public call of their names by all the participants. The role of the clergy in this religious fascist ceremony was unparalleled in other fascist movements. If in the case of Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany the Duce or the Führer were the main actors in the commemorations of the dead and those fallen for the movement, in the Romanian case the sacerdotal function during these ceremonies was fulfilled only by the Orthodox clergy. The ritual of the Orthodox Church, although altered, continued to be the main ritual for commemorating the dead and the movement’s martyrs until today. Unlike in the case of Nazism and Italian Fascism, where the ritual was performed by the *Fuhrer* and *il Duce*, the preservation of the clergy for performing the ritual in Romanian fascism regardless of the innovations brought to that particular religious ritual leads one to argue

⁹⁸ Nelli Manzatti, *Cărticica de cântece* [The Handbook of Songs] 2nd Edition (Bucharest: Mahadajonda, 1992), p. 3.

that one cannot distinguish between fascism and religion, that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two.

Moța-Marin burial marks the beginning of a process of radicalization among the first generation of Iron Guardists. Forced by the unfriendly political context with their rival party LANC in power and facing the opposition of the King and some of his supporters (Nicolae Iorga, Armand Călinescu, Constantin Argetoianu, Nicolae Malaxa, etc.) that were eager to determine the king to proclaim his own personal dictatorship and to get rid of the Iron Guard, Codreanu started to think in a trope moderated by his stern belief that only martyrdom will save the movement and the country. Confronted with multiple life threats and wanting to warn away his enemies, on 13th of February 1937, immediately after he found out about the deaths of Moța and Marin, Codreanu established another legionary unit: “Corpul Moța-Marin” [Moța-Marin Core] formed by a “special paramilitary elite” of 10.033 members with military training that were armed and grouped in 13 garrisons all around the country.⁹⁹ Codreanu entrusted the leadership of the newly created legionary core to Prince Alexandru Cantacuzino, one of the survivors of the Spanish expedition, with the requirement that the unit “be ready at any moment for any sacrifice.” This group was thought out to form the “spiritual aristocracy”¹⁰⁰ of Codreanu’s movement.¹⁰¹ Codreanu wrote a special oath for this unit. In its five points it states that

⁹⁹ The number differs slightly from author to author. Constantin Petculescu speaks of 10 000 members in *Mișcarea legionară. Mit și realitate* [Legionary Movement. Myth and Reality] (Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1997), p. 112. Constantin Iordachi speaks about 10 033 members in Constantin Iordachi 2004, p. 103.

¹⁰⁰ Mircea Eliade, “Comentarii la un jurământ” [Comments about an Oath] in *Vremea*, Year X, No. 476/21st of February 1937, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Ioan Banea, “Rînduri către generația noastră” [Lines to our generation] in *Corneliu Codreanu. 100 de ani de la naștere* [Corneliu Codreanu. 100 years from his birth] (Bucharest: Fundația “Profesor Gheorghe Manu”, 1999), p. 95. For an understanding of the concept of legionary aristocracy see Corneliu Ciucanu, “Conceptul de elită în viziunea legionară” [The concept of elite in the legionary view] in Gheorghe Buzatu, Corneliu Ciucanu, Cristian Sandache, *Radiografia Dreptei Românești* [The Radiography of the Romanian Right] (Bucharest: FF Press, 1996), pp. 276-285.

the future legionary elite was to live in poverty, to have “a harsh and severe life without luxury,” “to eliminate any attempt of exploitation of men by his fellow-man,” “to sacrifice constantly for fatherland” and “defend the Legionary movement against anything that could drag the movement on ways of concession and compromise or against anything that could alter its course from its highly moral line.”¹⁰² On top of the requirement to provide a model of exemplary living, this paramilitary group was intended both as a shock-detachment of the movement in the case of a legionary *coup d’etat* and as offering a further impulse towards even higher sacrifices to the movement in the context of a gradually more hostile political climate.

These oaths were the first and most straightforward landmarks in developing a hagiographical idiom of the Iron Guard. They had a deep impact among the legionary intellectuals who considered them as the basis for a new approach of the legionary phenomenon through martyrdom. Accordingly, Moța and Marin’s road to martyrdom benefited from a powerful narrative, to be internalized by the young generation and, in times when their fatherland was in need, to be reproduced/ acted out mimetically. In the period immediately preceding and in the aftermath of the funeral ceremony the language employed by the legionary elite imposed an understanding on the identification operated by Codreanu¹⁰³ and the legionary intellectuals¹⁰⁴ between the martyrdom for Nation and martyrdom for God that has preserved its appeal over the years.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “Jurământul Gradelor Legionare” [The Oath of the Legionary Ranks] (12th of February 1937) in *Circulări și manifeste* (1927-1938) [Circulars and manifestos] (Bucharest: Blassco, 2010) first edition 1940. p. 122. The text is present in another of Codreanu’s circulars, namely the electoral circular from 11th of November 1937. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 202.

¹⁰³ In Codreanu’s Circular no. 58/ 26th of February 1937 he openly names both Moța and Marin as “martyrs” for faith (*mucenici*) Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, 2010, p. 123. Afterwards in his 60th Circular from March 2nd, 1937 called them “martyrs” (*martiri*). Codreanu followed the same path of preaching their martyrdom in a religious key in both introductions by naming Ion I. Moța “a martyr” (*mucenic*) in his 31st of January 1937 “Introduction” to Ion I. Moța, *Cranii de lemn* [Wooden Skulls] 2nd edition (Sibiu:

Another narrative line in the hagiographic excursus following this funeral in terms of the movement's radicalization was the emphasis placed on Moța and Marin not just as martyrs for God, "but as martyrs who have sacrificed themselves to defend the religion and the West against satanic bolshevism."¹⁰⁶ For the first time the anti-Communist and anti-Semite backbone of the Legionary ideology¹⁰⁷ was explicitly expressed as linked together and associated with the martyrdom for God/ country.¹⁰⁸ Legionary intellectuals perceived the two legionary martyrs as envoys of the Iron Guard "to confess" Christianity against Satanic Bolshevism.¹⁰⁹ Paradoxically, the Legion needed the sacrifice its most prominent representatives in a foreign country to advertise even more strongly the symbiotic relationship between Communism as embodied exclusively by Jews and its "Satanic" character, to understand communism through a religious lens. The stress placed on this dimension of the legionary sacrifice in Spain was intended to awaken the old green shirts, the original members of the movement, and part of the 1922

Vesteman, 1937), p.11. The same term "mucenic" was given by Codreanu to Vasile Marin in his 20th of February 1937 "Introduction" to Vasile Marin, 1997, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ For a complete overview of the legionary literature about Moța-Marin burial see Răzvan Codrescu (ed.), *Taina Jertfei. Dosar istoric Moța-Marin* [The Mystery of Sacrifice. Historical brief about Moța-Marin] (Sibiu: Puncte Cardinale, 2002), pp. 157-208. It contains articles signed during that time by Nicolae Iorga, Mircea Eliade, Alexandru Cantacuzino, Mihai Polihroniade, Nae Ionescu, Horia Stamatu.

¹⁰⁵ Fr. Liviu Brânzaș, *Raza din Catacombă. Jurnal din Închisoare* [The Light from the Catacomb. Prison Diary] (Bucharest: Scara, 2001), p. 98.

¹⁰⁶ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 293.

¹⁰⁷ For a thorough intellectual investigation over the 19th century origins of the Iron Guard anti-semitism see Victor Neumann, "Repere culturale ale antisemitismului din România în secolul XIX" [Cultural Landmarks of Anti-Semitism in 19th Century Romania] in *Ideea care ucide. Dimensiunile ideologiei legionare* [The Killing Idea. The Dimensions of the Legionary Ideology] (Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1994), pp. 35-54. For the connection between 19th century and the antisemitism of the 1930s intellectuals and the Iron Guard see Leon Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă și problema evreiască în România anilor '30* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995), pp. 112-163. See also Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel. Fascist Ideology in Romania*, translated by Peter Heinegg (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1990), p. 118.

¹⁰⁸ Although Codreanu already preached this aspect in Corneliu Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For my legionaries] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994) p. 161.

¹⁰⁹ Mircea Eliade, "Ion Moța și Vasile Marin" in *Vremea* Year X, No. 472/ 24th of January 1937, p. 3; Nae Ionescu, "Prefață" [Preface] in Vasile Marin, 1997, pp. 13, 14. This aspect of the martyr for movement as "confessing" the religious truth in front of a politically hostile environment will appear later on in the constructing other hagiographies of the Captain (1940) and those killed during the purge launched by King Carol II and his government against the movement in 1939.

generation and to restore a sense of unity between now clashing factions of the movement.

VI. 5 After Moța-Marin. Nae Ionescu on National Orthodoxy

After the Moța-Marin burial some of the intellectual supporters of the Legion founded their own theological journal. This new publication was to confront and criticize the Orthodox Church and its representatives (bishops, theology professors and laymen with authority in the Church) according to the Orthodox tradition of the holy fathers of the Church.¹¹⁰ Called programmatically *Predania*, the bi-monthly journal reached twelve issues before it was banned by the authorities. In the first issue the contributors praised “the martyrs of Christ” (*mucenici ai lui Hristos*) Moța and Marin for their sacrifice and their profoundly religious life.¹¹¹ The journal published important theological contributions from authors like Fr. I. D. Petrescu¹¹² who was apolitical, but also from Fr. Grigore Cristescu an old member of the Legion.¹¹³

Nae Ionescu was throughout the twelve issues, the true voice and force behind the journal. In November 1933 opening the newspaper *Cuvântul* to the Iron Guard,¹¹⁴ Nae Ionescu’s began his carrier as the Mentor of the movement. One of the most prominent

¹¹⁰ “Cuvânt de lămurire” [Explanatory Introduction] in *Predania*, Year I, no. 1 (15th of February 1937), pp. 1-2.

¹¹¹ “+Ion Moța și Vasile Marin” in *Predania*, Year I, no. 1 (15th of February 1937), p. 6.

¹¹² Fr. I. D. Petrescu (1884-1970) was a Romanian specialist in ecclesiastical music and professor of Gregorian chanting at the Romanian Conservatoire in Bucharest (1934-1947). After the Communist take-over of political power he was purged for a time and could not teach.

¹¹³ Fr. Grigore Cristescu (1895-1961) professor of Theology in Sibiu (1924-1929) and Bucharest (1929-1940). After 1938 he stopped being member of the Iron Guard fearing for his life and from 1940 he resigned his teaching position from Bucharest’s Faculty of Theology. For further information see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/C/GrigoreCristescu.html>, Internet Accessed on 12th of February 2013.

¹¹⁴ Armin Heinen, 1999, p.171

ideologues in Romania switched sides in an attempt of retaliation against King Carol II whose selection of councilors he disapproved of. He allied himself with the Iron Guard. Mircea Eliade has pointed out that Ionescu

was always in a continuous and open contradiction with the Palace. For a long time Carol did not listen to his advices and in his articles from *Cuvîntul* Nae Ionescu was criticizing elegantly but constantly the royal politics, alluding clearly to the camarilla.¹¹⁵

The reasons behind Nae Ionescu's break up with King Carol were diverse. In 1933, when the legionaries began their work at the Green House in Bucharest, the King sent Ionescu to spy on Codreanu and his followers, an insult the philosopher could not forgive. According to Mircea Vulcănescu, the split between the King and Nae Ionescu came after Carol II used and tempted Nae Ionescu with political gains, but never really came through on his promises.¹¹⁶

Dissatisfied with the King and other political parties, like Nichifor Crainic before him, Nae Ionescu explored the relation with Codreanu's movement. He started to publish in the legionary press and he was arrested together with the legionary elite after the assassination of Prime Minister I. G. Duca in 1933.

His ideas about the connection between Orthodoxy and Romanianess made an impact on the ideology of the Iron Guard movement.¹¹⁷ Two articles from *Predania* illuminate on Nae Ionescu's line of argumentation established before 1930: "Biserică, stat, națiune" [Church, State, Nation]¹¹⁸ and "Naționalism și Ortodoxie" [Nationalism and

¹¹⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Memorii* [Memoires] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991), p. 286.

¹¹⁶ Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu. Așa cum l-am cunoscut* [Nae Ionescu. The Way I knew him] (București: Humanitas, 1992) pp.87-88.

¹¹⁷ See also Claudio Mutti, *Penele Arhanghelului. Intelectualii Gărzii de Fier (Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constatin Noica, Vasile Lovinescu)* [The Plumes of the Archangel. The Romanian Intellectuals and the Iron Guard] (Bucharest: Anastasia, 1997), p. 45.

¹¹⁸ Nae Ionescu, "Biserică, stat, națiune" [Church, state, nation] in *Predania*, Year I, no. 4 (1937) p. 1-3.

Orthodoxy].¹¹⁹ In the first, Nae Ionescu reacted against the State's decision to ask the Romanian Orthodox Church not to involve itself in politics.¹²⁰ On 2nd of March 1937 Victor Iamandi, the Liberal Minister for Religious Denominations sent a private letter to Patriarch Miron Cristea asking him to reprimand the Orthodox priests who blessed the flags and the meetings or joined the ranks of extremist organizations.¹²¹ The insinuation was obvious. This measure of the government was taken to quell the political appeal of the movement among the Orthodox low clergy. The Patriarch called for a session of the Holy Synod to debate the measures requested by the State representative and on the 10th of March 1937 a statement was issued. Titled "Nihil sine deo", the official statement of the Holy Synod called for an immediate re-Christianization of the Romanian political life and public sphere. It asked for a more determined attitude of the State regarding its role in enforcing Christian morality in society and national solidarity in condemning materialism and atheism, individualism and class struggle.¹²²

Nae Ionescu picked up on this exchange and the ensuing result and challenged the intrusion of the State in the affairs of the Church. Although the Holy Synod already answered the State representative's letter by saying that presence of the Orthodox Church in politics was its national duty, instilling Christian morals in society, Nae Ionescu made some striking statements, confirming that he was not a defender of the Church, but rather

¹¹⁹ Nae Ionescu, "Naționalism și Ortodoxie" [Nationalism and Orthodoxy], *Predania*, Year I, no. 8–9 (1937), p. 1–3.

¹²⁰ Florin Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail de la mit la realitate* [The Legion of Archangel Michael from myth to reality] (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1997), p. 233.

¹²¹ Fr. Grigore T. Marcu, "Lucrările unei sesiuni memorabile a Sf. Sinod" [The proceedings of a memorable session of the Holy Synod] in *Revista Teologică* Year XXVI, no. 4 (April 1937), p. 160.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

of the Legionary movement.¹²³ Delivered in the church of St. Anthony from Bucharest, the church of the (legionary) students, as a conference during the Lent at 17th of February 1937 and republished afterwards, the text is a contemptuous critical outburst addressed to Patriarch Miron Cristea.

An old enemy of the Patriarch's strategy of appeasement, Nae Ionescu took the Church's point of view regarding the involvement in (party-) politics and radicalized it in the way the Legion expected from the Church. He stated that:

1. The Church has *the right* to support those actions – even political actions – which militate for the 'conception of existence' and the 'ethic program' of Orthodoxy; 2. The Church has *the right* to ask the Romanian state to impress upon the Romanian state a national character which emanates from the Orthodoxy of this Church.¹²⁴

By drawing upon his previous radical right-wing allegiances and confessional understanding of the Romanian nation as expressed best by its direct link with Orthodoxy, Ionescu saw the Church, together with the Iron Guard, defending the pristine character of Romanian ethnicity against any internal or external threats, the warrants and defenders of Romanian national character. There is a shift in the development of Nae Ionescu's view on the relation between Orthodoxy and the nation towards an institutionalized form embodied in the Romanian Orthodox Church as the rightful censor of the Romanian nationality. Ionescu transformed his ethnical, confessional ontology on the link between ethnicity and confession into a clerical ideology regarding the relationship between the Church and the State. He asserted the Church the "right" of a political opinion which the Church never had in the Romanian state. Nae Ionescu struggled for this particular right of

¹²³ The Legion was not the only one to speculated the events from Spain. LANC also did this when asking the support of the Orthodox Church. Tiță G. Pavelescu, "Pentru Înalții Prinți ai Bisericii Creștine" [For the High Princes of the Christian Church] in *Santinela*, Year 35, no. 4 (Sunday, 4th of April 1937), p. 3.

¹²⁴ Nae Ionescu, "Biserică, stat, națiune", p. 1.

the Church to support the political camp which, according to Nae Ionescu, best fitted the creed of the Church, the Iron Guard.¹²⁵ By affording the Romanian Orthodox Church this privilege, Ionescu had more political acumen than the Patriarch who, supported by Carol II's new Constitution (10th of February 1937), prohibited any political stance of the Romanian Orthodox clerics.

In his second article,¹²⁶ published in the beginning of March 1937, Nae Ionescu opened a polemic about the relation between Orthodoxy and nationalism with one of Nichifor Crainic's students, Radu Dragnea. Following up on his call to the Church to support the Iron Guard's very existence, he tried to show once again that

nationalism is the attitude which draws all the consequences from the understanding of the natural and necessary fact that every man belongs without the possibility of abstraction to a nation... nationalism is not just a political attitude as Mr. Dragnea wants us to believe, but a polyvalent attitude which covers in the same way the spiritual and economical, the political or the cultural–aesthetic sectors of our activity.”¹²⁷

Therefore, for Nae Ionescu, nationalism became the main political attitude possible for the nation where Orthodoxy was a fundamental category; nationalism intertwined with Orthodoxy was in Nae Ionescu's view the only alternative for a Romanian cultural and political attitude. Orthodoxy for Nae Ionescu was synonymous with Christian spirituality which came to back a nationalist political ideology in a secular public sphere. Unlike Nichifor Crainic, who wanted to infuse a cultural essence into his ethno-theological discourse in order to approach the laic sphere, Nae Ionescu came across

¹²⁵ The most recent investigation on this topic was made by Mirel Bănică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Romană. Stat și societate în anii '30* [The Romanian Orthodox Church. State and Society in the '30s] (Jassy: Polirom, 2007), p. 124.

¹²⁶ Nae Ionescu, “Naționalism și Ortodoxie”, p p. 1–3.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

Orthodoxy from an academic, secular space reframing the nature of the nationalist discourse to achieve a new approach in defining the Romanianness.

One of the last statements of Nae Ionescu in his article stated that “the community of love of the Church identifies itself structurally and spatially with the community of destiny belonging to the nation. This is Orthodoxy.”¹²⁸ Nae Ionescu identified Orthodoxy with the Orthodox Church, the only institution which could reunite both the nation and its spirituality under the same roof. Nae Ionescu’s interest in the Orthodox Church is not a vote of confidence for the Romanian Orthodox hierarchy or the Holy Synod, but rather for the almost 3,000 Orthodox priests who adhered by that hour to the Iron Guard. It was this destiny of the Romanian people that Nae Ionescu had in mind all along. This clerical presence in the Iron Guard assured the movement a great prestige and it is my assumption that at this particular time Ionescu identified the Church and Orthodoxy with the clerics who supported the Iron Guard.

The contribution of Nae Ionescu to *Predania*, the Romanian theological journal embracing a fascist agenda built upon an already paved road that started in the aftermath of the Moța - Marin funeral. *Predania* was imagined as a theological rostrum for a dialogue with the professors of Theology about the relevance of legionary nationalism in the context of Romanian Orthodoxy. Nae Ionescu writing in the journal thought that he could impose some of his ideas on the Holy Synod’s agenda. However the short-lived *Predania* did little in the way of influencing the agenda of the church.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, p. 3.

VI. 6 The Positive Reaction of the Orthodox Hierarchy towards the Iron Guard

The breakthrough moment for the Legion in its relationship with the Church came in 1937. At the Moța-Marin funeral procession three hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church led a procession of 200 priests, manifesting openly their support for the Iron Guard. The impact of the event upon the clergy was manifest soon after the burial was over (in some accounts 3000 priests were accounted in joining the movement).¹²⁹ The Holy Synod's condemnation of freemasonry soon after the funeral (11th March 1937) can be looked upon as a natural progression in the relationship between the Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church since both Synod and the fascists saw freemasonry and Jewish World Finances¹³⁰ as the evil force behind the Romanian political parties associated with the spread of "communism and atheism."¹³¹ Moreover, although the Patriarch used his influence to persuade the bishops to ban the presence of the priests in politics, decorate churches with political symbols or take part in political propaganda. In the same session the Holy Synod refused the request of the State to dissolve the newly created legionary working camps built around its churches and monasteries. Even more, influenced by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, the Synod upheld 'a Christian point of view' against "the spirit of secularism" in politics arguing that the Church could chose itself what party was worthy of support according to its moral precepts.¹³²

¹²⁹ Mirel Bănică, 2007, p. 134.

¹³⁰ "Hotărâri sinodale", 1937, p. 27.

¹³¹ Fr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church] Vol. 3 (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1981), p. 404 and Fr. Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885 și 2000. Biserică, Națiune, Cultură* [The Romanian Orthodox Church between 1885 and 2000. Church, Nation, Culture] Vol. 3, I (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 2006), p. 103.

¹³² "Biserica și Francmasoneria" in *Mitropolia Moldovei*, Year XIII, no. 4 (April 1937), pp. 150-152.

The decision of the Holy Synod created confusion in that part of society that was not attached to the legionary cause and values and was perceived as a direct attack against King Carol II's intimate circle, namely his Jewish mistress Elena Lupescu and his circle of influential and financially interested cronies. The Iron Guard also saw them as the expression of Jewish capital penetration through freemasonry and the sources of the nation's moral corruption, and thus the decision of the Holy Synod was perceived as a victory of the Iron Guard. Codreanu saluted the decision of the Holy Synod as "the beginning of greatness" for the Romanian people in its struggle against the corroding influences from interior. In his 64th circular, he mandated the readings of the acts of the March Synod for all the legionaries in their nests.¹³³

VI. 7 Final Remarks

Moța-Marin burial represented a major point of intersection between the clergy and a fascist movement fashioned by Codreanu to lead Romania. The movement's ritual for the dead as witnessed at the funeral was completed with that of the Orthodox Church in an impressive nationalist ceremony. The most important consequence of the funeral was the overlapping between the two rituals for the dead and the two narratives concerning martyrdom. If until that moment martyrdom for country was directly related with the idea of frontline heroism and its final purpose was to prove the young generation as a sacrificed generation on the altar of the nation, from that particular point onwards the situation changed significantly. The narrative of Christian martyrdom and the presence in large number of the Orthodox clergy who thought they were witnessing a public

¹³³ Corneliu Codreanu, 2010, p. 99.

canonization of two saints ensured the legionary imagination with fresh material for constructing a new type of hagiography for their movement. That was the point of departure in making the martyrs of the movement also martyrs of God. All suffering and self-sacrifice on the altar of nationalism was filtered through the lenses of Orthodox hagiography.

The institutional consequences of this change in the legionary ideology, a direct association between the Romanian nation as represented by the Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church befuddled temporarily the politically savvy high clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Church. No sooner than the incense from Moța and Marin's grave faded and the candles blown away, the bishops of the Church knew that in order to manipulate the movement for their own purposes, they needed to maintain the same atmosphere of compromise as during the funeral. The actions of the Holy Synod in March 1937 disobeying a direct request from the State administration to reprimand the priests engaged in legionary activity and the condemnation of Freemasonry were immediately interpreted by the movement as a step forward in the direction sought by the Iron Guard. Nevertheless, although the low clergy joined massively the ranks of the Romanian fascist movement, the high clergy chose to remain in waiting to see who will finally triumph in the electoral race for complete power. The promotion of Patriarch Miron Cristea as Prime Minister (9th of February 1938), the arrest of Codreanu (16th of April 1938) followed by the imprisonment of the legionary elite, including 32 Orthodox priests will prove the high clergy's estimation and the expectations regarding the movement were correct.

CHAPTER VII

“The National Funerary State.”¹ The Iron Guard in Power (September 1940- January 1941)

VII. 1 Preliminaries

In the early days of the royal dictatorship (10th of February 1938) a new period of persecution started for the Iron Guard. Corneliu Codreanu was arrested (16th of April 1938) and condemned to ten years, imprisonment for high treason. On the 29th of November 1938 together with the assassins of Stelescu and Duca he was murdered by the Police, during his transfer from Râmnicu Sărat to Jilava Prison, near Bucharest. In the absence of the Captain, some legionary leaders escaped arrest and fled the country to Germany. They created a joint commandment in Berlin, headed by Constantin Papanace and Horia Sima, who maintained the connections with the country and assured the communications between Berlin legionaries and the underground organization in the country. On the 21st of September 1939 a legionary commando assassinated Prime Minister Armand Călinescu thus *avenging* the killing of the Captain. The assassination was followed by a wave of extreme violence against the legionaries from Romanian prisons killing 256 legionaries from Codreanu's movement. The Legion seemed

¹ Nicholas Nagy-Talavera noted that contemporaries were speaking about the existence of a “National Funerary-State” instead of the „National Legionary State” because of the large numbers of martyrs' commemorations all over the country. After this event, 252 legionaries were assassinated by Romanian police and army after they have received this order from Carol II and his Prime Minister General Gheorghe Argeșanu (1883-1940). By choosing three legionaries in every county and assassinating the Legion's elite imprisoned in concentration camps already from 1938, a fatal blow was delivered to the movement from which it will never fully recover. He states that Patriarch Nicodim has repealed the terrorist attack against Prime Minister Călinescu and condemned the legionaries for their un-Christian actions. Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *O Istorie a Fascismul în Ungaria și România* [A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), p. 412, 430

incapable to recover from this massacre. The consequences of the Vienna Diktat (30th of August 1940) turned the tide politically for the legionaries and the King made an appeal to them for reconciliation and collaboration. The reconciliation with King Carol II brought not just a relaxation of the already-strenuous relations between the Guard and the Royal House of Romania, but also a sense of possibility, of victory that was within grasp.

According to Horia Sima the stroke that broke the camel's back in the relations between Romanian fascists and the king was the German and Italian supervised Vienna's agreement (30th of August 1940) between Romania and Hungary regarding the surrender of a portion of Romanian Transylvania to Hungary.² The news was received by the Romanian people with sadness and paved the way for a legionary conspiracy against the king's dictatorship. A rebellion was outlined by the legionary commandment and was timed to profit the most from the national disaffection towards the King's government and to bring the Guard to power.³ Reaching a political agreement of collaboration with General Ion Antonescu,⁴ a former member of the Miron Cristea's cabinet and a long-time sympathizer of Codreanu's movement, Horia Sima and his men put into practice a long-awaited rebellion plan against the King, asking for his dethronement and tipping the political scale towards the Iron Guard. They launched a series of clashes and violent

² Although a Communist inspired narrative using extensively the myth of the Iron Guard as the fifth column of Nazism, A. Simion provides one of the best documented accounts of the rebellion and the joint government between Antonescu and the Iron Guard. A. Simion, *Regimul politic din Romania în perioada sept. 1940-ian. 1941* [The Political Regime from Romanian during September 1940 – January 1941] (Cluj – Napoca: Dacia, 1976), p. 272. See Armin Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelului Mihail". Mișcare socială și organizație politică. O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional*, [The Legion of Archangel Michael Social movement and political organization. A contribution to the topic of international fascism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), pp. 420-424.

³ Mihail Sturza, *România și sfârșitul Europei. Amintiri din țara pierdută* [Romania and the End of Europe. Memories from a lost country] (Alba Iulia: Fronde, 1994), p. 168.

⁴ Ilarion Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară după Corneliu Codreanu. Dictatura regală (februarie 1938 - septembrie 1940). Mecanismele schimbului de generație* [The Legionary Movement after Corneliu Codreanu. The Royal Dictatorship (February 1938-september 1940). The Exchange of Generation's Mechanisms] (Bucharest: Vremea, 2007), p. 211.

attacks towards radio stations, the gendarmeries barracks, county administration houses, police headquarters and communication centers in Constanța, Bod, Brașov, Bucharest and other cities. Their purpose was to create a state of confusion and attract the support of the masses in the movement's bid for power.

Asked by the King Carol II to assume the position of Prime Minister and restore public order, General Antonescu with the complicity of some of the army generals and German ambassador Fabricius forced the King into handing his power to the Prime Minister and abdicate in favor of his son, Michael (5th - 6th of September 1940).⁵

The present chapter discusses the cohabitation between the legionary movement and General Antonescu during the short-lived National Legionary State and maps the consequences of the Guard's rise to power on the relationship with the Romanian Orthodox Church. How the transfer of power was received in the ecclesiastical milieu and how the legionary revolution was perceived by Church's official newspapers? What was the reaction of the clergy towards the creation of a fascist Romanian State? The main emphasis of the chapter will be placed on the crystallization of the movement's theology according to the newly-acquired institutional framework, with the Romanian Orthodox Church, the faculties of theology and the state administration under legionary control.

The importance played by the funeral processions (especially Codreanu's) and funeral commemorations of those Iron Guardists perceived as the movement's martyrs reflected a solidification of the martyrdom's relevance as a *sacrament* in the legionary theology. The sacrament of immortality achieved through the ultimate sacrifice

⁵ For General Antonescu, see Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally. Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania 1940-1944* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), especially chapter 2, "Antonescu's path to power", pp. 37-51.

transcended the boundaries of the fascist “death cult”⁶ as glorification of death itself. In this instance death was overcome through the hope of national resurrection and was perceived as an initiation process which the young student could follow. These funeral ceremonies were the anteroom of terrible acts of vengeance against the movement’s enemies or against those considered alien to the nation’s body. That was the case with the Jilava incident on 27th of November 1940. The ceremonial digging up of the bodies of Codreanu and those murdered with him in 1938 was followed by the killing of those imprisoned and accused of the Iron Guard’s bloody repression by a legionary commando.

In this new political framework with the Iron Guard coming to power a discussion regarding a reform of the Church is taking place. The legionary project of reforming the Orthodox Church and the participation of several clergymen (Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Liviu Stan, Ștefan Palaghiță) and lay theologians (Nichifor Crainic) in this undertaking represented a break up point between the Orthodox hierarchy (especially, the bishops and the metropolitans) and the low clergy that continued to support and to make up a significant contingent of the Iron Guard’s membership.

VII. 2 Taking the Political Power Seriously. The Reaction of the Orthodox Clergy

On the 6th of September the legionary mob surrounded the Palace of King Carol II, now in exile to celebrate the coming to power of the young King Michael I and General Antonescu.⁷ After two years of harsh repression, the ordinary spectator was overwhelmed

⁶ Please see chapter IV.

⁷ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 412.

by the sheer size of the legionary presence and by their confidence in the victory of the Iron Guard. The success of the revolution to overthrow Carol II was placed under the sign of the Archangel Michael by Horia Sima himself.⁸ Immediately after the successful *coup d'état*, on the 6th of September 1940, following a vote of confidence from Codreanu's father towards Sima and the fact that several legionaries from Banat and Transylvania already acknowledged him as the "leader", the remaining members of the "Văcăreșteni" together with Mile Lefter, Commander of the Annunciation (Comandant al Bunei-Vestiri) and several other legionary leaders recognized Horia Sima as Commander of the movement legitimized by his revelation from the Archangel.⁹ If in the case of the Captain the election was absent, Codreanu standing out as the uncontested leader from the beginning, Horia Sima needed to be elected by a Legionary Forum of leaders thus legitimizing his commandership.¹⁰

The election day of 6th of September was not randomly chosen by Sima. On 6th of September, the Orthodox calendar celebrated the miracles of St. Michael from Colosse. An article in *Pământul strămoșesc* wrote by Ion I. Moța in the beginning of the movement placed the religious celebration of St. Michael from Colosse also on the calendar of the legion.¹¹ Sima placing the election of Codreanu's successor in that particular day speaks about his awareness of the irreplaceability of the Captain and the need of any and all legitimizing factors for his access to power. He proceeded to replace the Captain's cult among the legionaries by presenting himself as both the Archangel's and Codreanu's vicar and advertised the King's overthrow as an act of divine inspiration

⁸ Horia Sima, *Sfârșitul unei domnii sângeroase* [The end of a bloody reign] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1995), p. 435.

⁹ Horia Sima, 1995, p. 488.

¹⁰ Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 416.

¹¹ Ion I. Moța, "Sfântul Arhanghel Mihail: Voevodul Puterilor Cerești" [St. Archangel Michael: The Prince of the Celestial Powers] in *Pământul strămoșesc*, Year I, no. 5 (1st of October 1927), pp. 10-12.

coming directly from the Archangel. It is in this key that one needs to see Horia Sima's disinterest in cultivating the veneration Codreanu among the legionaries and also his reluctance in openly challenging Codreanu's central role in the legionary ideology. Nevertheless, he made sure that Codreanu's influence was fading away through an intricate process of estrangement from those close to him and their slow removal from leading positions (as in the case of Fr. Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa) or simply by canonizing Codreanu as the divine figure of the movement with him as interpreter of Codreanu's vision.

The Orthodox Church's hierarchy distanced itself from the events that happened in those first days of September. The new Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu, while an old acquaintance of the Iron Guard from the days when he was a superior at Neamț Monastery in Moldavia and collaborated with Codreanu on various occasions, changed his political views when he was elected (30th of June 1939) and supported openly the King's authoritarian regime. He condemned publicly the legionaries as "assassins," having "an un-Christian lust for blood" and urged for "punishment for this crime [...] to be drastic" in his sermon delivered at the funeral of Prime-Minister Armand Călinescu, assassinated by a legionary commando on 21st of September 1939.¹² In spite of his overt attitude against the Legion, he was still the hierarch who took the oath of the newly crowned king Michael I and received the oath of the new formed government.¹³ Appointed and invested Patriarch by King Carol II, he was worried of the consequences of his allegiance seeing the revengeful nature of the legionaries, and he offered his

¹² Flor Strejnicu, *Creștinismul Mișcării legionare* [The Christianity of the Legionary Movement] (Sibiu: Imago, 2001), p. 219.

¹³ Horia Sima, *Era Libertății. Statul Național-Legionar* Volume I [The Age of Freedom. The National-Legionary State] (Timișoara: Gordian, 1995), p. 21.

resignation leaving the patriarchal see vacant for a more suitable candidate for the job.¹⁴ Rumors that Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, a strong supporter of the movement and the main ecclesiastical figure of Moța - Marin burial was supposed to take his place circulated in Bucharest.¹⁵ It was the events surrounding the cession of a large portion of Transylvania and the reduction of his canonical jurisdiction that convinced Nicolae Bălan taking over the patriarchal must wait for less troubled times.

On the 14th of September the list of the new government was published. It included numerous legionary members. Horia Sima was Vice Prime-Minister and General Antonescu Prime Minister and Minister of War.¹⁶ The Ministry for Religious Denominations, Arts, Education and Culture was given to a staunch legionary as well, university professor Traian Brăileanu, member of the Legionary Senate, from Cernăuți.¹⁷

He succeeded in this position, Radu Budișteanu, another legionnaire that was appointed by the King during the short period of collaboration between Carol II and Sima's followers.¹⁸ Budișteanu's handling of Church matters was perceived, by the men of the Church, as intrusive and authoritarian and they were openly critical about it. Thus, while the change of government was received with mixed feelings by Orthodox clergymen, when it came to Budișteanu's release from his position everybody agreed that was the best thing for normalizing the relations between the state and the Romanian

¹⁴ The resignation attempt is confirmed by R. G. Waldeck, *Athénée Palace* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006), p. 262.

¹⁵ Adrian Gabriel Lepădatu, *Mișcarea legionară: între mit și realitate* [The Legionary Movement: Between Myth and Reality] (Chișinău: Cartier, 2005), p. 262.

¹⁶ About the negotiations regarding the formation of the new government see Horia Sima, 1995, pp. 16-17. About the government's list see Horia Sima, 1995, pp. 19-20. See also Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe, zile negre* [Good days, bad days] (Bucharest: Gândirea, 1991), p. 327 and Dragoș Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail de la mit la realitate* [The Legion of Archangel Michael from Myth to Reality] (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1997), p. 301-304.

¹⁷ "Monitorul Oficial" Part I, no. 214 bis (14th of September 1940) in Ioan Scurtu (ed.), 2007, pp. 99-101. Also, Armin Heinen, 1999, p. 414.

¹⁸ Ilarion Țiu, 2007, p. 184.

Orthodox Church. Fr. Grigore T. Marcu from Sibiu praised the emphasis the legionary Minister of Religious Denominations Radu Budișteanu laid on strengthening the missionary character of the Orthodox clergy, on the importance of priests being in the church, on not baptizing Jews and not collecting taxes for their religious services from their congregations in the journal *Revista Teologică*.¹⁹ However, he was less content with the minister's interference in the pastoral activity and canonical authority of the Holy Synod and demanded a change of perspective in the relations between the state and the Church. He warned the legionary minister on the involvement of the state in the church's internal affairs:

Are there abuses? In our case at least, the ecclesiastical authority lingers in sanctioning them. But *only this authority* has the right to do it and this being said, we point to a mistake constantly made by Mr. Minister...He is *giving orders in the Church*. In other words, he superposes himself and, by so doing, he is taking the place of the Holy Synod. It's not right! It's not canonical! It's not Christian! The role of the Minister is to represent and to defend the Church's interests in front of the State leadership and not to make order in the Church disregarding the bishops. How can something ephemeral order perpetuity?²⁰

After this attack on the interference of the state in the Church's affairs, the tone of the article changes towards laudatory and the author announces that the state prohibited by law any religious sect in the new legionary state.²¹ The Church was striving to obtain as much as they could from the new government and especially from General Antonescu.

In order to reassure the religious denominations of the regime's benevolence towards the religious cults, especially the Orthodox Church, General Antonescu issued on the 8th of September 1940 a public statement drafted to attract the sympathy of Orthodox

¹⁹ Fr. Grigore T. Marcu, "Note și informații" [Notes and informations] in *Revista Teologică*, XXX, No. 9-10 (September-October 1940), p. 533-534.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 534.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 535. "Desființarea sectelor" [The Abolishment of the Sects] in *Telegraful român*, LXXXVIII, No. 37-38 (8th of September 1940), p. 3.

high clergy. Using religious rhetoric and appealing to the nationalist feelings of the clergy, Antonescu's oath in front of God and in front of the Nation's martyrs was to be popularized among the clergy, read in the churches, since it was delivered on the Orthodox Church celebration of the Virgin's Nativity.²²

It was Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania who responded to Antonescu's appeal to calm and quietness with a sermon, printed out as a pastoral letter, praising the decisiveness of General Antonescu's position and promising his diocese's full cooperation with the new political administration.²³ His words were printed in every religious newspaper and popularized through pastoral letters and sermons by the Orthodox bishops in every Romanian bishopric.

Winning over the Orthodox clergy was helped by the decree 42353 from 9th of September 1940 issued by Traian Brăileanu, the new minister for Religious Denominations prohibiting the religious sects on Romanian territory. With the Greek-Catholic Church dispensed with since it resided almost entirely in the Transylvanian territory surrendered to Hungary, the Romanian Orthodox Church remained the main benefactor of this particular decree issued by the legionary regime.²⁴ The political measure was meant to encourage not so much the Orthodox Church from the former Romanian kingdom, but to ensure that in the provinces where the spreading of religious sects was rampant (Romanian Banat, western Transylvania) the allegiance towards the Romanian Orthodoxy remained undisputed by other religious claims.

²² General Ion Antonescu, "Chemare" [Calling] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 37-38 (8th of September 1940), p. 2.

²³ IPS Nicolae Bălan, "Cuvântare" [Speech] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 37-38 (8th of September 1940), p. 4.

²⁴ Fr. Grigore T. Marcu, "Note și informații" in *Revista Teologică*, XXX, No. 9-10 (September-October 1940), p. 535.

The reaction in the Orthodox Church after the establishment of the National Legionary State (14th of September 1940) with the Iron Guard as the political driving force behind Antonescu's regime seemed enthusiastic. Reputed theologians that held moderate views up until that time, personalities that distanced themselves previously or even adversaries of the movement like Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae²⁵ or Nichifor Crainic²⁶ saluted the change of regime considering the new government as an expression of a positive revolutionary radicalization of Romanian nationalism in a legionary key (*Românism*) undertaken with the enthusiasm of the youth.²⁷ Nichifor Crainic, especially, made peace with the legionary body and as a result was offered a position as director of the Radio Broadcasting Company, after he was replaced as Minister of National Propaganda by the legionary Alexandru Constant.²⁸ According to Crainic, General Antonescu put forth his nomination as head of the Radio Broadcasting Company and Crainic became one of Antonescu's most important supporters.

The position of the legionary clergy was expressed by Fr. V. Popa-Nicoară and Fr. Ilie Imbrescu. The first praised the movement and found that

...in its essence [the Iron Guard] is and remains a religious movement, a religious-Orthodox movement. Its founder was and remains a visionary and a God-bearing fool for Christ. [...] the legionary triumph is also the Church's triumph.²⁹

²⁵ Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, "Restaurarea românilor în destinul său istoric" [The Restoration of Romanians in its Historical Destiny] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 39 (22nd of September 1940), p. 1.

²⁶ Nichifor Crainic, "Revoluția legionară" [The Legionary Revolution] in *Gîndirea*, XX, No. 8 (1940), p. 1.

²⁷ Victor Ioan Pavelescu, "Creștinism și legionarism" [Christianity and Legionary doctrine] in *Cuvântul*, Year XVII, no. 52 (4th of December 1940), p. 2.

²⁸ Nichifor Crainic, 1991, pp. 328-329.

²⁹ Fr. V. Popa-Nicoară, "Legiunea și Biserica Ortodoxă" [The Legion and The Orthodox Church] in *Mitropolia Moldovei*, Year XX, no. 11 (1940), p. 601. The quote can be found in Mirela Bănică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română: stat și societate în anii '30* [The Romanian Orthodox Church: state and society in the 1930s], (Jassy: Polirom, 2007), pp. 230-231.

The Legion was regarded as an Orthodox expression, “the most martyred nationalist movement in Europe, but also the most deep-rooted in Christian spirit.”³⁰

This idea of a martyr movement with an ideology inspired by Christian values makes the legionary case exceptional among other fascist cases, including those with a significant clerical element in their ranks. The two aforementioned priests were not alone in believing Codreanu’s movement a Christian political expression. Other theologians and clergymen stated that the Iron Guard was a Christian revolution organic to Romanian history. Fr. Ilie Imbrescu radicalized their statements and declared that

Any true priest will be also a legionary just as much as any legionary will be in the same time the best son of the Church. ... if the legionaries have been favored with becoming Christ’s martyrs because of the persecution unleashed against them by the Jewish-freemasonry and the satanic generation of our age, the priest must burn permanently on the pyre of martyrdom, prayer, tears and self-sacrifice for Christ. Among the legionaries that remained in the triumph day, the priest stands as the living uninterrupted remembrance of martyrdom.³¹

In Imbrescu’s opinion the Church had to become legionary itself in order to fulfill its evangelical duties. The Legion served as foundation for the creation of new exemplary Christian people, providing the Church with martyrs and urged the clergy to change its ways in a Christian manner. The Legion became the inner censor for Christian life, a model of living the Gospel in a world inhabited by the “satanic generation”³².

The peaceful interactions between the Orthodox Church and the Legionary movement were troubled only by a few theologians who could not take the penetration of

³⁰ Deacon Nicolae Mladin, “La icoană!” [To the icon] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 48 (24th of November 1940), pp. 2-3. The title comes from an article of Ion I. Moța published in 1927.

³¹ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, “Preotul și Mișcarea legionară” [The Priest and the Legionary Movement] in Ilie Imbrescu, *Biserica și Mișcarea legionară* [The Church and the Legionary movement] (Bucharest: Gutenberg, 2011), pp. 221, 223. The words of Fr. Imbrescu were taken seriously by the low clergy. See a review by Fr. M. Constantinescu, “Biserica nouă legionară. Cartea părintelui Imbrescu” [The New Legionary Church. The Books of Fr. Imbrescu] in *Înălțarea*, Year I, no. 1 (1st of January 1941), p. 2.

³² Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, 2010, p. 133.

the legionary ideas in the theology schools and churches quietly. Inside the theological schools, Fr. Gala Galaction, a professor of New Testament studies and Hebrew, voiced his worries about the legionary coup that he saw as a form of “madness” and predicted the bloody/ violent nature of the new legionary state.³³ Fr. Gala Galaction, a longtime adversary of the legionary movement, thought to be “a tool of the Jewish freemasonry” because of his long-standing friendship with some of the most important figures of the Romanian Jewish community, did not succeed in convincing his students from Jassy and Bucharest to abstain from legionary manifestations.

Perceived by the legionary elite as an opponent to the fascist style of teaching theology in the Bucharest’s Faculty of Theology, Fr. Gala Galaction was forced to retire from his position and his transfer for a full professorship in Old Testament studies in Jassy was postponed indefinitely by the legionary administration coming from Traian Brăileanu’s Ministry of Religious Denominations, Arts and Education. This was a just one of the cases of ideological purification of the academic body.³⁴ Traian Brăileanu’s administration went even further and appointed a committee led by Professor P. P. Panaitescu, the rector of Bucharest University, which functioned as an investigation office against those professors and academics who were deemed ideologically unfit to teach, based on their adversary position towards the Iron Guard.³⁵

³³ Fr. Gala Galaction, *Jurnal* [Diary] Volume II (Bucharest: Minerva, 1977), p. 184. Fr. Gala Galaction, the penname of Grigore Pișculescu (1871-1961) was a Romanian professor of Theology and writer. Translator of the Bible from Hebrew to Romanian (1938) and Professor of New Testament, he will teach in the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from Chișinău (1926-1941). After the legionary rebellion from January 1941, he will teach at Bucharest Faculty of Theology until his retirement in 1947. In the same year he was elected member of Romanian Academy.

³⁴ Gala Galaction, 1977, p. 279.

³⁵ Dragoș Zamfirescu, 1997, p. 309. P.P. Panaitescu saw his role as Rector of Bucharest University as a continuator of the Romanian university and legionary traditions and found eliminating professors on political grounds necessary. See P.P. Panaitescu, “Universitatea noastră” [Our University] in *Cuvântul studentesc*, Year XX, no.1 (8th of November 1940), p. 8.

By taking control of the student organizations, investing the students with authority in censoring their professors and appointing Valerian Trifa, a PhD student in Theology, to lead the student body towards complete indoctrination into the Iron Guard's precepts,³⁶ the movement discouraged any form of academic opposition against the Legion.³⁷ In every department of every university in Romania a professor/ assistant professor with legionary sympathies, or member of the movement was appointed by the decision of the Minister Traian Brăileanu to supervise the attitude of the academic body and, together with the student organization's leader to proselytize the legionary doctrine among the students. This included a process of "Christianization of Bucharest University."³⁸ In the Faculty of Theology from Bucharest this task was fulfilled by Ion V. Georgescu³⁹ one of Fr. Gala Galaction's staunchest enemies, the substitute professor for the chair of Old Testament studies during the suspension of Fr. Gala Galaction⁴⁰.

The Church continued to be present during the public events on 13th of September (commemoration of the Captain's birthday), 6th of October and 8th of November 1940 when General Antonescu and the Iron Guard expressed openly their commitment to continue their political alliance and to fulfill the Romanian people historical destiny.⁴¹ During these manifestations of cohesion between the army and the legionary movement with the participation of different foreign diplomats including those of Germany and

³⁶ Traian Herseni, "Studentime legionară" [Legionary studentship] in *Cuvântul studențesc*, Year XX, no. 1 (8th of November 1940), p. 7. According to Herseni, three virtues were needed for the legionary studentship: "youth, spirit (duh) and Legion" all leading to the same thing: "spirit of sacrifice and love for the nation."

³⁷ "Noul Președinte al Uniunii Studenților Creștini din România" [The New President of the Christian Student's Union from Romania] in *Buna Vestire*, Year IV, no. 45 (5th of November 1940), p. 2. Horia Sima, 1995, pp. 58-59. The chief of the Bucharest centre became Șerban Milcoveanu, the former chief of the legionary student body from Medicine.

³⁸ Adrian Gabriel Lepădatu, 2005, p. 264. Fănică Anastasescu, "Creștinarea Universității" [Christianization of the University] in *Cuvântul studențesc*, Year XX, no. 1 (8th of November 1940), pp. 10-12.

³⁹ For Ion V. Georgescu, see <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/G/IonGeorgescu.html> (Internet Accessed on 24th of February 2013).

⁴⁰ Fr. Gala Galaction, 1977, p. 251.

⁴¹ For the events see Denis Deletant, p. 123 and Larry Watts, p. 182.

Italy, the role of the clergy was secondary, much less important than it used to be during the King Carol II reign or Codreanu's leadership of the movement. Although numerous priests attended these events and even marched in front of General Antonescu and Horia Sima, their presence in these events was somehow limited in importance and was confined to the role of celebrants of the movement's sacrament.

Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan performed a Te-Deum in honor of General Antonescu's visit in Sibiu and praised the regime and the radical nationalist agenda of the members of the government in a sermon. Patriarch Nicodim attended the celebrations held for the return of Queen-Mother Elena from her Italian exile and the ceremonies from 6th of October, inaugurated with a religious ceremony having among the participants all the members of the government and the leading members of the Iron Guard.⁴² Metropolitan Irineu Mihălcescu,⁴³ a reputed theologian and professor at the Faculties of Theology in Chişinău, Bucharest and Jassy, was the highest ecclesiastical figure meeting General Antonescu, Horia Sima and King Michael I on the 8th of November in Jassy on the Legion's day celebrating its holy patron, the archangel Michael, now celebrated as a national holiday.⁴⁴

Placed in the legionary calendar of secular feasts and benefiting from the name coincidence between the Archangel and the new king it insured the generalization of the archangel's cult. In the same time, while it preserved a central role in speeches, (those of Corneliu Georgescu, one of the "Văcăreşteni" circle and commander of Buna-Vestire, and Ioan Zelea Codreanu, the Captain's father for instance), the cult of the Archangel

⁴² Horia Sima, 1995, p. 32.

⁴³ For Irineu Mihălcescu's biography see http://biserica.org/WhosWho /DTR/M/Irineu_Mihalcescu .html, Internet Accessed on 24th of February 2013.

⁴⁴ Horia Sima, 1995, p. 186.

seems to fade away, to be replaced with a new secular approach towards politics. Both Antonescu and Sima's discourses on this occasion, although imbued with religious and mystical rhetoric, show a turn towards power and a radicalization of the nationalist agenda.⁴⁵

One of the highlights of the days of the Legion and the celebration of its holy patron was the speech of Ion Zelea Codreanu and his attempt to link the Legion with the Orthodox Church:

Today we celebrate our eternal master, the Archangel Michael. As in the Church because the Legion is like the Church, we have two holy patrons: first, the Archangel Michael and second St. Martyr George who has protected the fatherland inscribed on the flags of Stephen the Great. There is a distinction between these two Saints: in 1923 the Archangel Michael called us when we were imprisoned in Văcărești; Saint George was taken as a patron by us. ...the praise of saint archangel Michael can be done only in one way: by fulfilling those oaths we have sworn before everything. The oaths sworn to the Captain say that in Predeal we must build a great monastery with St. Michael as the first and St. George as the second patron.⁴⁶ In that Monastery, the holy relics of fallen legionaries must be sheltered.⁴⁷

The speech of Ion Zelea Codreanu in Jassy was the only one remembering the time when the Legion was led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Highlighting the role of the Archangel in the development of the movement, Codreanu's father wanted to preserve the ideological legacy of his son intact. I argue that already in conflict with Horia Sima, perceived by the Codreanu family as a traitor and usurper, Ion Zelea Codreanu wanted to maintain the cult of the Archangel as his son envisaged it. The Archangel had to be not just a metaphor, but the divine driving force behind the Legion continuing to play a role as envisaged by his son.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 185-191.

⁴⁶ The highlight of St. George in the speech could be related with the fact that in the Orthodox hagiography St. George is a symbol of triumph over the malign powers.

⁴⁷ "Cuvântarea d-lui profesor Ion Zelea Codreanu" [The Speech of Professor Ion Zelea Codreanu] in *Buna Vestire*, Year , no. 49 (10th of November 1940), p. 5.

The idea of building an Orthodox monastery with the Archangel as holy patron, a shelter for the relics of the fallen legionaries as objects of devotion was not new. The project of building churches with the Archangel as holy patron was put into practice by the legionaries as a form of materializing their cult of the Archangel into stone. What Ion Zelea Codreanu brings forth though is related with the presence inside the monastery of the legionary relics, considered martyr relics and therefore objects of Christian worship.

Even now the Legionary movement made efforts to integrate Orthodox priests in its structures, even in the leading positions. However Sima replaced Fr. Dumitrescu-Borșa as the Secretary-General of the movement with Nicolae Petrașcu, one of his friends and the legionary who deceived Romanian censorship and got Codreanu's "Pentru legionary" edited in 1936. His deputy was Fr. Vasile Boldeanu from Focșani, the editor of *Brațul de Fier*, one of the most popular legionary newspapers.⁴⁸ This is the case with two other priests that were integrated in Sima's leadership apparatus: Fr. Teodor Bodogae⁴⁹ and Fr. Zosim Oancea,⁵⁰ both from Sibiu. The first, a doctor in Theology from the University of Cernăuți, was the commander of "Ajutorul legionary" [The Legionary Social Assistance], an organization founded by the Legionary movement for philanthropic purposes, to help the poor, those uprooted from the Romanian provinces lost in 1940 and the legionary members who had no monthly income.⁵¹ Fr. Zosim Oancea acted as Fr. Bodogae's deputy

⁴⁸ Zaharia Boilă, *Amintiri și considerații asupra mișcării legionare* [Memories and opinions on the Legionary movement] (Cluj-Napoca: Biblioteca Apostrof, 2000), p. 91.

⁴⁹ Fr. Teodor Bodogae (1911-1994) was a Romanian historian of the Orthodox Church or Byzantium and a Patristics scholar. He taught mostly in Sibiu Faculty of Theology.

⁵⁰ Fr. Zosim Oancea (1911-2005), priest of the Sibiu Orthodox Cathedral and school inspector for religion. He was also the preacher of the Sibiu Cathedral until 1948.

⁵¹ "Acțiunea 'Ajutorului Legionar' la Sibiu" [The Activity of the Legionary Social Assistance in Sibiu] in *Înălțarea*, Year I, no. 1 (1st of January 1941), p. 13. For the Legionary Social Assistance Dragoș Zamfirescu, 1997, p. 310. Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941. Mistica Ultranaționalismului* [The History of the Iron Guard 1919-1941. The Mistique of Ultrationalism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), pp. 283-284. The appeal of this organization among the priests can be explained by the fact that

and assisted him in collecting the sums of money needed for helping especially the refugees from Northern Transylvania, a province surrendered to Hungary in 1940.⁵²

In order to engage locally with the Orthodox priests, new positions of legionary leadership were created. According to a legionary internal regulation, every county and local organization from every city or village had to have among its cadres an Orthodox priest for ecclesiastical matters.⁵³ The movement's efforts were directed mainly towards integrating the low clergy, already staunch supporters of the movement. The high clergy, with some significant exceptions like Metropolitan Bălan, kept a strategic distance from the Legion, waiting to see which side will be cast aside from the bi-cephalous government.

VII. 3 The Sacrament of the Next World. Commemorating the Dead, Indoctrinating the Youth in Martyrdom

Following its access to power, the Legion started the commemoration of those members fallen for the legionary victory before and after 1938. In the absence of the Captain and the legionary elite educated by him, the sacrament of the supreme sacrifice for the country became the only hard currency of legionary doctrine and was instrumental in to attract new converts and insure the cohesion of the movement, project an specific image to the outside and also attract the clergy. On the 9th of September 1940, shortly

every meal started with a Christian prayer or ended with one and the Church was asked to contribute to this embryo of social assistance, a request accepted by the hierarchy.

⁵² Flor Strejnicu, 2001, p. 218.

⁵³ Nicolae Petrașcu, "Ordin emis de Secretariatul General al Mișcării Legionare către organizațiile regionale, județene, Corpurile și Serviciile Legionare pentru organizarea activității" [Order issued by the General Secretariat of the Legionary Movement to all the regional, county organization and to all the Legionary Corps and Services for the organization of their activity] ASRI Constanța, D, file 202/21st of November 1940, Vol I, pp. 211-212 in Ioan Scurtu (ed.), 2007, p. 201.

after taking the power, Horia Sima and his staff attended the reburial of those legionaries killed by the regime of Carol II in the September 1939 repression following the assassination of Prime-Minister Armand Călinescu.

Numerous manifestations, reburials and commemorations took place during that September in which the dead for the movement were invoked and their martyrdom was preached as the only sacrament of the movement assuring the resurrection of the Romanian nation. In Predeal (11th of September 1940), Miercurea Ciuc (14th of September 1940) and Vaslui (24th of October 1940) where the main leaders of the movement were shot after Armand Călinescu's assassination large processions headed by Orthodox priests commemorated the movement's martyrs.⁵⁴

The Iron Guard's agenda of commemorations was completed with a grandiose ceremony on the Captain's birthday on 13th of September 1940. According to the Police, the legionaries gathered for a short religious commemorative service, praised the Captain sacrifice and offered him up as a model for all the legionaries to come. The event was received by the entire legionary organization with religious fervor and in St. Anton student church from Bucharest a religious service was celebrated (parastas) commemorating Codreanu.⁵⁵ The head of this celebration was Metropolitan Bălan who praised in a sermon the religious significance of Codreanu's Christian martyrdom.⁵⁶ The religious wave of commemorations for the legionary martyrs and the multitude of

⁵⁴ Dragoș Zamfirescu, 1997, p. 305.

⁵⁵ ASRI, D, file 728/1940, p. 78 in Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România* [Right-wing Ideology and parties in Romania] Volume VI (1940-1941) (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2007), p. 71.

⁵⁶ Fr. Grigore T. Marcu, "Cronică" [Chronicle] in *Revista Teologică*, Year XXX, No. 9-10 (September-October 1940), p. 530. According to Fr. Nicolae Grebenea, Metropolit Bălan was the person who intervened personally to Prime-Minister Armand Călinescu to release from prison the legionary priests from his diocese, Fr. Nicolae Grebenea, *Amintiri din întuneric* [Memories from the Dark] (Bucharest: Scara, 1997), p. 42.

legionaries fallen for the movement's determined Horia Sima to create a special day for commemorating those fallen for the Legion. On every 22nd of September in every church and every legionary garrison the Legion the martyr legionaries were commemorated nationwide, a tribute to their sufferings.⁵⁷ During that day, at noon, the bells of the churches began to toll and the people kneeled where they stood and kept a moment of silence or offered a prayer to those deceased from within the legionary ranks.⁵⁸

The stratification of the legionary hagiography of the movement's martyr placing those who sacrificed their lives for the movement in a key role in the ideological development and constructing a sense of national cohesion and also group unity among the Iron Guard's members pick up some of the themes and models that were already popular in the period of expansion from 1934-1938. Many legionary newspapers continued to advertise the sacrifices of Moța and Marin in Spain or other legionary martyrs from the 1938-1939 or choose to make reference to the sufferings of the movement the imprisonments of the early 1934.⁵⁹ Others cultivated the need for martyrs and say martyrdom as the sole objective of the youth.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *O Istorie a Fascismului in Ungaria și România* [A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1999), p.420.

⁵⁸ Francisco Veiga, 1993, pp. 286-287. The first time the collective moment of silence and prayer was put into practice on the 9th of September when the loudspeakers all over the country asked for a moment of prayer and remembrance of those who died during the legionary revolution.

⁵⁹ Alexandru Constant, "Moța-Marin, precursorii" [Moța-Marin, forerunners] in *Buna Vestire*, Year V, no. 98 (14th of January 1940), p. 1. The whole issue of *Buna Vestire* was dedicated to Moța-Marin commemoration and the remembrance of their martyrdom. Also see Nicolae Petrașcu, "Înțelesul eroic al jertfei lui Moța" [The heroic meaning of Moța's sacrifice] in *Înălțarea*, Year I, no. 9 (15th of January 1941), p. 1. Also I. P. "Un erou legionar și un martir creștin: Victor Dragomirescu" [A legionary hero and a Christian martyr: Victor Dragomirescu] in *Cuvântul*, Year XVII, No. 53 (5th of December 1940), p. 3.

⁶⁰ Andrei Vasile, "Dreptul și datoria noastră" [Our Right and Duty] in *Cuvântul studențesc*, Year XX, no. 1 (8th of November 1940), p. 9. The author considers that the only right of the Romanian youth was "to die for the Captain." See also "Din slova lui bădița Istrate. Legea jertfei" [From the writings of our older brother Istrate. The rule of sacrifice] in *Frăția de Cruce*, Year I, no. 1 (December 1940), p. 13. The text is taken from Gheorghe Istrate, *Frăția de Cruce* [Cross Brotherhood] (Sibiu: Vesteman, 1935). The book was not available for consultation.

A change in terms of the construction of the martyrdom in the legionary perception seems to occur. After the Moța-Marin burial, confronted with the reality of martyrdom and the fact that it was not just a propagandistic means and an ideological tool to express the movement's readiness to die for its country. Confronted with an elite generation led by the founder of the movement who died in prisons or were assassinated, the movement's leadership had to cope with the reality of martyrdom and the presence of a hagiographical pantheon of legionary martyrs already sacrificed on the nation's altar now that they were in power.⁶¹

The sacrament of martyrdom for the Nation as an instrument to transcend death was finalized and put into practice in a complicated ritual meant to draw the attention and the adherence of the masses to the movement. The change affected the perception on martyrdom dramatically. More the Legion moved away from the Romanian Orthodox Church, more the legionary perception of martyrdom changed. If with Moța-Marin burial the identification between the Christian and legionary martyr was finally achieved, another transition was made when the Legion was in power. Moța and Marin were no longer just simple martyrs, but rather "archangels" of Romanian history as Vasile Băncilă called them,⁶² meaning not an identification of Ion I. Moța and Vasile Marin with the Archangel, but rather, as in the case the legionary archangelic theology, the souls of Vasile Marin and Ion I. Moța through the intercessions of the movement and the Church became members of the Archangels group of angels, headed by Archangels Michael and Gabriel.

⁶¹ The second pages from *Cuvântul* or *Buna Vestire* were filled with the portraits of the martyrs and the news regarding their commemorations.

⁶² Vasile Băncilă, "Arhanghelii în istoria românească" [The archangels in the Romanian history] in *Frăția de Cruce*, Year II, no. 1 (January 1941), pp. 18-22.

The change in the approach on martyrdom was reflected also in the rituals for the dead performed by the movement, but also in the construction of the Captain's cult. On the 20th of November 1940, Dean Moța, Ion I. Moța's father, passed away and the state organized a national funeral.⁶³ He was buried in a legionary funeral in Orăștie with the national flag wrapped around his coffin that was placed on a gun carriage. The funeral procession was opened by Horia Sima accompanied by most of the members of the government.⁶⁴ The choreography reproduced in minute details the scenario already put into practice during Moța-Marin burial, with the only exception that the funeral convoy was also followed by a platoon of Romanian soldiers, offering three volleys of fire when the coffin was laid into the ground. Another legionary practice that was introduced during this legionary funeral was the roll call of names belonging to those already dead in the Legion's service beginning with the Captain, Moța and Marin and ending with the name of dean Moța.⁶⁵ The priests participated in this ritual as well and Metropolitan Bălan joined in this practice, linking the dead with those alive as famous legionary song said: "Those dead marches in the same line with those left alive". During this ceremonial, dean Moța was associated with the martyrdom of his son and the praise for this long time fighter for the Romanian cause in Transylvania and his nationalism later in Greater Romania fell short compared to his son's sacrifice for Christ and Cross. Dean Moța was

⁶³ Gh. Ganea, "A murit venerabilul luptător naționalist, Părintele Ion Moța" [Fr. Ion Moța, the venerable nationalist fighter died] in *Buna Vestire* Year IV, no. 59 (22nd of November 1940), p. 1. A. Alexianu, "Magul dela Orăștie" [The Wise Man from Orăștie] in *Buna Vestire*, Year IV, no. 59 (22nd of November 1940), p. 3.

⁶⁴ "Mii de legionari și cetățeni au defilat în jurul sicriului părintelui Moța" [Thousands of legionaries and citizens have paraded in front of Fr. Moța's coffin] in *Buna Vestire* Year IV, no. 60 (23rd of November 1940), p. 3. "În drum spre locul veșnic de odihnă" [On the way to the resting place] in *Buna Vestire*, Year I, no. 61 (24th of November 1940), p. 3. Fr. Imbrescu was also present at this funeral.

⁶⁵ Ion Costea, "Cu gândul la Părintele Moța" [Thinking of Fr. Moța] in *Înălțarea*, Year I, no. 1 (1st of January 1941), p. 2.

reduced to the position of martyr's father and received the acknowledgment of his contribution to the movement through the lens of this reality.

The same scenario was repeated with Codreanu's reburial on the 30th of November 1940. Codreanu's body and the bodies of his 12 comrades killed together with him and buried under a concrete plaque near Jilava prison were dug up after several nights of constant prayer by the Orthodox priests and a concerted effort of several legionaries in the afternoon of the 26th of November.⁶⁶

The bodies of Codreanu and other 13 legionary martyrs (Decemvirii⁶⁷ and Nicadorii⁶⁸) were carried out in procession to Ilie-Gorgani church, the legionary sanctuary from Bucharest, where the coffins were draped in the national flag and placed for public devotion. On the 30th of November in the presence of General Antonescu and Horia Sima, a group of Orthodox clergymen headed by Metropolitan Gurie Grosu, Patriarchal Vicar Veniamin Pocitan and Metropolitan Vicar from Jassy, Bishop Valeriu Moglan officiated the religious funeral together with a group of priests, Fr. Liviu Stan, Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Ștefan Palaghiță, Fr. Georgescu-Edineți, Fr. Hierodeacon Cristofor Dancu from Cernica Monastery.

The Greek-Catholic Church was also represented by Archpriest Titus Mălai of Bucharest and Fr. Moisiu.⁶⁹ The Captain's and the legionary martyrs' funeral respected

⁶⁶ "Osemintele Căpitanului au fost scoase la lumină" [The Captain's relics have been unveiled] in *Cuvântul*, Year XVII, no. 48 (30th of November 1940), p. 10.

⁶⁷ These were the 10 assassins of Mihail Stelescu, former associate of Codreanu, who left the movement in 1935 and started his own rival party, Cruciada Româniismului [The Crusade of Romanianness]. He was shot on the 16th of July 1936 charged with being a traitor by a legionary commando while he was recovering after a surgical intervention in the hospital.

⁶⁸ The Nicadori were the three assassins of Prime Minister I. G. Duca. Together with the Decemviri and Codreanu, they were killed on the night of 29th - 30th of November from Carol II's order while being transferred from Râmnicu-Sărat prison to Jilava prison.

⁶⁹ "Drumul spre veșnicie al Căpitanului" [The Captain's path to eternity] in *Cuvântul*, Year XVII, no. 51 (3rd of December 1940), p. 1.

the same rules already exercised during Moța-Marin burial. The funerary litanies were changed by the priests by saying “Let us pray for Corneliu Codreanu, the Captain of Romanian history and cornerstone of the Legionary movement” while the other martyrs were mentioned by both their names, an unusual custom for an Orthodox commemoration.⁷⁰ At the end of the ceremony, while the coffins of the martyrs were carried by legionary commanders, Codreanu’s coffin was carried by the clergy.⁷¹ As I noted in a previous chapter, the Orthodox clergy carries a dead men’s body only when that body was sanctified either by consecration, or by divine election as in the case of the saints. In Codreanu’s case as in the case of Moța and Marin, it appears the clergy already considered him a saint martyr. Codreanu’s apotheosis respected the already accustomed ceremonial. From the church of Ilie-Gorgani, in the centre of Bucharest where a new oath of fidelity towards Codreanu’s precepts was taken by all those present he was taken to Moța-Marin mausoleum, where he was buried together with the two legionary martyrs.⁷² The ceremonies were extended all over the country with religious commemorations and legionary marches and ceremonies accompanied the religious ritual.⁷³

The legionary press eulogized Codreanu as an image of Christ who, although dead, rose from the grave again through the miracle of resurrection.⁷⁴ Accordingly, Axente

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Drumul spre veșnicie al Căpitanului” [The Captain’s path to eternity] in *Cuvântul*, Year XVII, no. 51 (3rd of December 1940), p. 3.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁴ Vasile Posteuță, “Nevoia ispășirii” [The necessity of expiation] in *Cuvântul*, Year XVII, no. 50 (2nd of December 1940), p. 1; Just the Christ, “The Captain encarnalized to change the men itself, to spiritualize him and the set him free from the chains of materiality. From Jesus Christ to the Captain no one has desired for such a transformation of the humankind. The Captain was a direct continuator of the crucified on Golgotha.” Ion Diaconescu, “Începutul fără sfârșit” [The beginning without the end] in *Buna Vestire*, Year IV, no. 48 (8th of November 1940), pp.1-2.

Sever Popovici dismantled the accusation that Codreanu was the exponent of a death cult, but rather

The Captain did not attempted to run from and made no compromise in front of death. He welcomed death with an unworldly calmness, but not because he despised life, or he considered death a purpose in itself, but because he knew that, only through his death, he placed himself in the service of his nation. The Captain gave his life away for the redemption of our sins and for our reconciliation with God. Meaning, [the Captain gave his life away] for life as well.⁷⁵

This narrative of Codreanu's apotheosis and the identification between him and Christ became the canonical view regarding the cult of the Captain in the Legionary movement.⁷⁶ Wanting the Captain divine, but not alive, thus ensuring his remoteness Horia Sima encouraged this legionary narrative which left him in charge of the Legion's current affairs as Codreanu's heir apparent and custodian of the Archangel's revelation. Sima tried to keep up the appearances and not interfere directly with the Captain's cult, but since most of the Legion's leaders were former associates or trusted friends of Sima, this enforced even more the importance of the living Commander in the movement in the detriment of the defunct Captain.

Horia Sima's leadership of the movement and the feeble competition from someone already dead led to a decrease in importance of the Captain's cult and opened the door for a new theological approach, namely that of martyrdom for the country, more associated with the narrative of obedience towards the leaders than to those of the past.

The last act in the relationship between the Church and the Iron Guard was represented by the movement's request for Codreanu's sanctification, and consequently

⁷⁵ Axente Sever Popovici, "Legionarii și tema morții" [The legionaries and the issue of death] in *Înălțarea*, Year I, no. 3 (4th of January 1941), p. 1.

⁷⁶ The canonical view was encapsulated later in a book signed by Vasile Posteuca, *Dezgroparea Căpitanului* [Digging out the body of the Captain] (Madrid: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 1971). A version can be found online at <http://www.miscarea.net/carti2.htm>, Internet Accessed on 24th of February 2013.

the receipt of the much-needed legitimacy for the Iron Guard's theological claims. A delegation went to Patriarch Nicodim asking for Codreanu's immediate canonization as a martyr saint. The prelate refused the Iron Guard's claims basing his position on the fact that it is the people's devotion and the survival test of time for this devotion that would make him a saint. He presented his resignation from the Patriarchal See and maintained his decision of not sanctifying Codreanu. However backed by General Antonescu he remained Patriarch.⁷⁷ The ceremony from the 30th of November 1940 was the last in which high clergy and the General Antonescu were seen attending legionary ceremonies. Both the high clergy and the general were preparing to depart from the movement and the moment for that was closer than they expected.

VII. 4 Epilogue. The Break between the Legion and the High Clergy

In late November and beginning of December 1940 a group of legionary theologians and priests hired by Traian Brăileanu in the Ministry for Religious Denominations started working on a project of reforming the Romanian Orthodox Church. This was the work of the three directors appointed by General Antonescu and Minister Traian Brăileanu to attend the religious affairs and to maintain the State's control over the Orthodox Church. Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Liviu Stan, Fr. Ștefan Palaghiță⁷⁸ together with Nichifor Crainic started their work on the religious legislation, a brainchild of the low clergy and the Legionary movement designed to control the activity of the

⁷⁷ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, 1996, p. 434. The attempt is also confirmed by R. G. Waldeck, *Athénée Palace* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006), p. 262.

⁷⁸ For an overview of the law project see Adrian Nicolae Petcu "Slujitorii altarului și Mișcarea legionară. Studiu de caz: Preotul Ilie Imbrescu" [The Altar's Servants and the Legionary Movement. Case study: Fr. Ilie Imbrescu] in *Partidul, Securitatea, Cultele* [The Party, The Securitate, The Denominations] (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005), pp. 65-71.

Church and to limit the influence of the Orthodox bishops in the public sphere and inside the Orthodox Church while elevating the position of the low clergy and the laymen.

The Legion attempted to put pressure on the hierarchy through a series of articles signed mainly by Gheorghe Racoveanu in order to force the Holy Synod to adopt the law project as designed by the legionary clergy.⁷⁹ On the 5th of December 1940, in the context of a distancing in the relations between the Iron Guard and the General, a project of religious legislation was handed out to the Holy Synod for attention and approval. Written by the four aforementioned directors in the Ministry at the express wishes of the Legion and the low clergy represented by it, the project stated that there was a need of more educated clergymen, the need for closing small monasteries and merging them with bigger ones, restrictions for those intending to join monastic orders and the imperative that the church should refrain from any involvement into politics. The project was produced by the backbone of the Legion's theologians and reflected not just the will to control the Church, but rather the dissatisfaction of the low clergy towards the pretensions and the unjustified revenues of the top-hierarchs. It was a sign of discontent, present for a long time among the Orthodox clergy, coming from theologians and priests associated with the Iron Guard, who, at one time or another, had their own specific problems with the Orthodox hierarchy.⁸⁰

The Orthodox high clergy via Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu had already initiated a discussion with General Antonescu about a future reorganization of the Romanian Orthodox Church. In a letter exchange between the General and the Patriarch, the

⁷⁹ Gheorghe Racoveanu, "Sfântul Sinod la lucru" [Holy Synod in working session] in *Cuvântul*, Year XVII, no. 54 (6th of December 1940), p. 1.

⁸⁰ Mirel Bănică, 2007, pp. 236-237.

collaboration and the unchanged status of the Romanian Orthodox Church was insured.⁸¹ Encouraged by this correspondence with the Patriarch, General Antonescu appealed the Romanian clergy asking them not to involve themselves in politics and to continue to preach the doctrine of the Gospel in the newly created legionary state.⁸²

After the project was discussed in the Holy Synod and reports were drawn up by different hierarchs in order to present the risks of adopting such a law unfavorable to the future of Romanian Orthodoxy, the final vote was held. Metropolitans Nicoale Bălan of Transylvania and Tit Simedrea of Bucovina protested against this intrusion in the churchly affairs and voted against its implementation, thus determining the Holy Synod to unanimously reject the project of law.⁸³

As in the case of other fascist movements, the Iron Guard was not content just to revolutionize the state or to create a different perception of reality for its citizens, but intended to involve itself into the life of the Church, to listen to the clergymen's grievances against the hierarchy and to revolutionize the Church by controlling the involvement of the hierarchy in the public life and by curbing its demands towards the lower clergy. From this point on, the Orthodox bishops started to see the Iron Guard as

⁸¹ The reply of General Antonescu's to Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu reassuring the high clergy that nothing will change can be found in "Răspunsul Dl. General Antonescu la scrisoarea I.P.S.S. Patriarch Nicodim" [The reply of General Antonescu to the letter of His Excellency the Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 41 (6th of October 1940), p. 2. The opinion of Nicodim Munteanu was criticized here "Biserica Ortodoxă în noul regim" [The Orthodox Church under the new political regime] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 41 (6th of October 1940), pp. 1-2. Again the same problem appears in Fr. Grigore T. Marcu, "Biserica și preoțimea ortodoxă în statul român legionar" [The Church and the Orthodox priesthood in the Romanian legionary state] in *Revista Teologică*, Year XX, no. 11-12 (November-December 1940), pp. 590-594 where the author comments on an appeal of General Antonescu to the Romanian clergy.

⁸² "Apelul Generalului Antonescu către toți slujitorii altarelor românești" [The appeal of general Antonescu to all the servants of the Romanian altars] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 42 (13th of October 1940), p. 2.

⁸³ "Importante hotărâri luate ieri în ședința Sf. Sinod" [Important decision taken yesterday in the working sessions of the Holy Synod] in *Cuvântul* Year XVII, no. 54 (6th of December 1940), p. 5. For a complete text of the official statement, please see "Comunicatul Sfântului Sinod" [The Official Statement of the Holy Synod] in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXVIII, no. 50 (8th of December 1940), p. 1.

fully responsible for this reformist law-project and began to distance themselves from the movement. Confronted with a clergy revolution from below wanting to reform the Church and disappointed with the movement's encouragement of this revolutionary drive, the high clergy headed by Patriarch Nicodim turned to General Antonescu and disowned the movement.

It is no surprise that Fr. Imbrescu criticized the high clergy for not defending the legionary clergymen by stating that

...the doctrinal and canonical leading forum [the Holy Synod] of the Romanian Orthodox Church is not heading in the same doctrinal and canonical direction of the Saint Ecumenical Orthodox Church.⁸⁴

This particular act coming from the legionary movement represented the last attempted for a dialogue with the Orthodox Church. However the law-project on the reformation of the church ended the relationship between the two negotiating entities. The Church of the hierarchy turned to a more flexible and less fanatical leader in General Antonescu, with his dream of internal order and a state-controlled Church rather than the zealous, chaotic and revolutionary approach of the Guard. By losing the sympathy of the hierarchy yet still maintaining the support of the lower clergy the movement was preparing itself for its last moments on the scene of the Romanian history, bringing down with them a whole generation of nationalist priests that will populate the communist prisons due to their allegiance to the movement.

⁸⁴ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, "Descifrarea unui sens" [Deciphering a Meaning] in *Mitropolia Moldovei*, Year XX, no. 12 (1940), pp. 697-699.

VII. 5 Final remarks

The legionary revolution which brought the Legion to power in a joint government with General Antonescu was initially received with hope and joy by the high and the low clergy alike. The high clergy wanted to become independent from the State's intrusions that reduced the Church to a merely state department. The low clergy who died and suffered together with the legionaries in prisons and camps hoped that their grievances regarding their subordinate position to the high clergy and the remuneration issues will be solved by a legionary government. The nomination of Traian Brăileanu, an old green-shirt, for Ministry of Religious Denominations and the appointment in this department of three fanatical legionary priests Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Liviu Stan and Fr. Ștefan Palaghiță who wanted to nationalize even more the Church and construct it in a legionary key by changing all the legislation regarding religious denominations troubled the Orthodox hierarchs. Always focused on the collaboration that could bring them most benefits, the bishops found themselves not so fascist in the end, but rather, like General Antonescu, stern conservatives who had to quell the low clergy's rebellious revolution from below threatening their privileges and their position in the Church. The October letters exchanged between General Antonescu and Patriarch Nicodim were nothing more than an anticipation for what was to come in early December, when the Holy Synod rejected the reforming law project envisaged by the legionary priests from the Department of Religious Denominations and backed by the Iron Guard. The rapprochement between General Antonescu and the Church and the decision of the Holy Synod to reject the law project provoked a breach between the high clergy and the Legion. In that sense, the relationship between the Orthodox clergy and the Iron Guard failed and remained that

way, although some of the young monks and students in Theology attending Codreanu's funeral such as Hieromonk Firmilian Marin and Valeriu Anania will later become bishops in the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The "'syncretic' clerical fascism" animating the Romanian Orthodox low clergy survived the end of the movement in Antonescu's and Communist Romania. The narrative linking together the ideological core of fascism filtered and expressed through a theological language survived in the language of the Romanian Orthodox Church up until today.

The low clergy embraced even more the fascist revolution preached by Horia Sima and considered the movement's martyrs as their own. They remained fanatical followers of the movement in the Antonescu's and the Communist prisons, in exile during the Communist period, after their liberation from Communist prisons and even in post-communist Romania. The fact that a political movement that claimed to be Christian and to defend Christianity in general against any threat and their interests in particular against the pretensions of the secular state assured the movement a long career in the minds and souls of the Romanian Orthodox priesthood.

Final Remarks

The events of January 1941 marked the end for the Legionary movement as an organized political organism in General Antonescu's Romania. Few of their ideas continued to make hay in the circles of legionary sympathizers and some of the church reforms that the legionary theologians championed in the 1930s and 1940s made their way into the communist legislation on church and state a lingering consequence of the intricate relationship between the legion and the Orthodox Church. The present thesis shows the extent and the characteristics of the symbiotic relation between the Legionary movement and representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church. From the first interactions in the late 1920s to the full-scale implication of the clergy in the legionary rituals the present undertaking presented the entanglements via different point of intersection (the manifestation from the tomb of the Unknown Soldier from 1933, the system of legionary work camps and the project of the construction of churches, the Moța-Marin burial, the national commemoration of the legionary martyrs in the National Legionary State). Disputing one of the fallacies of interpretation (Pedro Ramet) in the research on church state relations, that is that the church behaves as one, a coherent institution with a super centralized singular voice, I found that in these points of intersection there were different levels of authority both in the Church and the Legion interacting with each other and that the hierarchy and the low clergy acted at times differently to the point of opposing each other's positions when faced with different layers within the Iron Guard. Furthermore, the thesis emphasized that until Moța-Marin burial there were at least two important groups in the Iron Guard's intelligentsia putting together the relationship with the Orthodox clergy. The secular side of the Iron Guard

exposing the hardcore version of fascism as political religion placing the Church on an subordinate role, seen as auxiliary to the movement, the role and position of the clergymen in building the future legionary Romania as secondary in the organizational worldview of the movement. Its main representatives, Mihail Polihroniade, Vasile Marin, or Alexandru Cantacuzino, were from a second generation of fascist converts to Codreanu's ideal, who secularized their leader's religious creed and fervently embraced the realities of Italian fascist superior attitude towards religion in general and Catholicism in particular, applying it to the Orthodox clergy. The religious, "mystical", "syncretic" side of the Legion gathered around Codreanu, Ioan I. Moța, Ion Banea, and Gheorghe Furdui embraced the Orthodox politicization of the sacred and integrated it into the legionary ideological framework. Their inner belief in the social and cultural importance of national community as an "ethno-religious community" (Brian Porter Szücs) for the creation of a legionary united Romanian nation and their quasi-religious public discourse defending the relevance of Orthodoxy for the Romanian spirituality profoundly resonated with the public speech of the official Church. During the ceremonies following Ioan I. Moța's and Vasile Marin's deaths, the narratives of representatives of the two factions in the Legion merged, the Iron Guard's discourse towards the Romanian Orthodox Church unified in a more religious, apocalyptic symbiosis between fascist religion and the Orthodox doctrine. The following persecution beginning in 1938 that culminated in Codreanu's assassination (30th of November 1938) and the Orthodox clergy's abjuration of the legionary faith had as consequence the dissociation between the two fascist discourses again. While the clergy maintained the syncretic symbiosis between the *fascist religion* and the Orthodox doctrine, the legionary leadership headed Horia Sima pushed for a fascist radicalization of the legionary political religion and a virtual purge of any

evident religious idea from the legionary doctrine. Following to the letter the legionary ritualistic habit and focusing on the rituals for the movement's martyrs, taking control over the Department of Religious Denominations and subsequently attempting to bring the Church under the National Legionary State's control, the Iron Guard began to act as a fascist political religion in power. By excluding those representatives of the Orthodox Church that opposed the Legion from the academic theological schools (Fr. Gala Galaction, one of the legionaries' most fervent opponents a case in point) and by asking for a more hands on and increased control over the institution of the Church, are other examples of the Legion behaving as a fascist political religion.

The return to religion in search for meaning against the dangers of secularization, social atomization, the decline of the traditional rural world under the impact of industrialization that brought up front the big city, the advent of capitalism, liberalism and democracy, the increasingly rabid anti-Semitism described the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century Romania. After the end of the Great War the return to religion and the emphasis placed on the importance of the Orthodox Church as an ethnic identity marker of the national community rapidly found their ways into the discourse of radical political parties and clergy alike. The Church used this in its attempt to return to the public arena a place that was contested in the secularization movement of the end of 19th century. As the present thesis showed, the nationalism that seduced the Orthodox clergymen was actually grounded on a theological paradox. While the Orthodox Russian exile in Paris sought an innovative, neo-patristic refreshing approach to the traditional, obsolete, scholastic school-theology by advocating for the virtues of theological concepts such as out-of-this-world 'sobornost' including all humanity in Christ's grace, Christian ecumenism, and return to the spirit of the Greek Church Fathers of the early church as a basis for dialogue

with other Christian Churches, the East European Orthodoxy discovered the benefits of anti-Semitism, inner-worldly radical politics, and distrust towards any Christian denomination. Their association with the far-right movements was just a step forward into putting these ideas into practice.

In its relationship with the Iron Guard, the present thesis identified four groups of Orthodox clergymen. If a certain group of clergymen remained neutral faced with the legionary seduction process and others opposed its influence in the Church publically, the hierarchy represented by bishops, archbishops and the Patriarch chose an ambiguous, “colluding” attitude of fellow-travelers to the movement. In search for a political expression for the Church able to embrace and to express the autonomous politicization of the sacred of the Orthodox Church after the end of the war, at first some bishops (Auxiliary Bishop Nicodim Munteanu, Metropolitane Nicolae Bălan) cautiously sided with the movement and supported even financially the first forays of Codreanu’s followers into politics. After 1934, when the working camps system advertized by the Legion proved to be extremely useful for the Church, more bishops such as Metropolitane Gurie Grossu, Bishop Vartolomeu Stănescu, Bishop Lucian Triteanu jumped in the legionary wagon and praised the work performed by legionaries on behalf of the Church. The Moța-Marin burial, the decision to officially condemn freemasonry, and the open support during the elections of 1937 also determined Codreanu to believe that finally the Orthodox hierarchy chose his side. However, the bishops ended the fruitful collaboration with the movement when Patriarch Miron Cristea became Prime-Minister during King Carol II personal dictatorship. In 1940, during the National Legionary State, frightened by the aggressive attitude of the fascist political religion manifested in its desire to subject the Church to the movement, the Holy Synod fully backed General Antonescu in the Legion’s detriment.

If the attitude toward the Legion of the high clergy is ambiguous the lay clergy embraced the movement from the beginning and after certain events such as the manifestation from the tomb of the Unknown Soldier (24th of January 1933), the working camps system from which they benefited the most, the Moța-Marin burial, the 1938 persecution, and foundation of the National Legionary State their confidence and support for the movement progressively increased. It was the legionary low clergy who manifested best the “syncretic” aspect of clerical fascism and due to the points of intersection with the legionary membership internalized the features of Romanian fascist political religion, combining them with the doctrine of the Orthodox Church. The cases of Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Emilian Cucuetu, Fr. Liviu Stan or Fr. Grigore Cristescu are but a few examples of this internalization of the aforementioned synthesis.

The institutional interaction went hand in hand with a theological and conceptual exchange where both the fascist political religion and the politicization of the sacred as expressed by the Orthodox clergymen profited. It was a process of mutual theological approximation and the influence of the Orthodox clergymen’s theology assured a religious twist to the Romanian fascist political religion. The categories of the political religion theory such as the leader’s cult, the cult of the martyrs, the ritualistic function of the movement, the need for an afterlife of the nation, the national moral community as present in the movement’s ranks, all were reinterpreted through the lenses of Orthodox/Christian religion. As an example, the present undertaking showed that Codreanu’s cult had among its initiators different theologians like Nichifor Crainic and one of the most important channels in spreading Codreanu’s cult was represented by the clergy (sermons, pastoral letters, speeches and so on). In the process of constructing Codreanu as a providential leader different priests or Theology students reshaped the figure of the fascist

leader by associating it and presenting it with the help of powerful and evocative theological metaphors such as “Messiah”, “redemption”, “expiation through suffering”, “resurrection”, etc. Even the word describing the movement’s ideology was not, as in the Italian case, “faith” in the nation and in the leader, but rather “sacrifice” as in the will to sacrifice oneself for the nation’s redemption, a notion close to the ideals of Christian monasticism and doctrine. Although these concepts can be identified as being present in the construction of other fascist leaders’ cults in no other case the theological component played such an important role as in the Romanian case. The singular presence of a political movement having as protecting figure the Archangel Michael (with the role of patron saint) and the cult this celestial figure enjoyed in the legionary ranks also led me to believe in the church and Orthodox liturgical origins of his cult among the legionary ranks and files.

This particular process of re-interpreting and re-calibrating the categories of the fascist secular political religion can be noticed best in the cult of the legionary fallen, the fascist sacrament of immortality. While there is a legionary secular understanding of the sacrament of self-sacrifice as a form of rebirth of the fascist fallen in the memory of the nation insuring the nation’s regeneration, after the Moța-Marin burial the fascist sacrament of immortality was profoundly Christianized by a several theologians and priests and this new narrative was quickly adopted by the legionary elite. This synergy between legionary martyrdom and Christian self-sacrifice for faith represented the only characteristic of the legionary fascist religion surviving both General Antonescu’s regime and the Communist repression into post-Communist Romania. The thesis clearly shows that despite numerous voices from the secular side of the movement voicing their conviction about an association between legionary martyrdom and the fascist/ Nazi cult of

death (particularly this is the position of Alexandru Cantacuzino and Vasile Marin as described in Chapter IV) the legionary stress on resurrection, a resurrection applied even to the movement's martyrs and perceived through the lenses of the Orthodox theology's doctrine transcended this particular secular perspective. Although acknowledging the redemptive virtue of the legionary tombs, martyrdom perceived through the lenses of resurrection as a theological category transformed the legionary martyrdom in a means to achieve eternal life not just for the nation, but also for the individual, and not just in the collective memory of the nation, but also in God's eternal Kingdom.

In the case of the ritualistic nature of the Iron Guard's political religion I found that unlike the Italian fascist and the Nazi German cases the ritualistic function was performed by the Orthodox clergy and students in Theology members of the Legion. Furthermore, during important events, the ritualistic function of the movement was exclusively carried out by the Orthodox clergy and the fascist rituals coexisted with the religious liturgy of the Church. In the Romanian case the fascist hierophant was embodied in the person of the priest or the bishop and this particular privileged and exclusive position enjoyed by the Orthodox clergymen in the ranks of the movement and the fascist liturgies assured the large conversions of the Romanian clergymen to the Legion. During the National Legionary State this ritualistic monopoly of the clergymen took a totalitarian turn and became even more exclusive, eliminating from its ranks any other denomination and, sometimes, even the high-clergy, considered to be too attached to General Antonescu.

The relevance of the concept of "political religion" and that of "sacralization of politics" were constantly questioned by comparing the conceptual framework with the empirical research's data. The present thesis argued and showed that in order to

understand the Iron Guard as a political religion one has to re-read and re-interpreted to the lenses of Christian attachment towards the values and doctrine of the Orthodox Church as expressed by the legionary leaders.

The concept of political religion in the case of the Romanian Iron Guard has to be studied taking into account the profound Christian theology enmeshed in the legionary ideological core. By shedding light on the Christian-fascist “mazeway re-synthesis” (Roger Griffin) occurred in the framework of fascist political religion the present effort intended to underline not just the “sacralization of politics”, but also the sacralization of the sacred taking place in the cadres of this fascist apprehension of the sacred.

The emphasis of the present thesis fell also on this politicization of the clergy, a phenomenon started as a direct consequence of the Romanian state’s drive to exclude the Church from its civil religion both in the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century. Even the category of clerical fascism in both of its versions (colluding and syncretic) has to be carefully applied to the Romanian case due to the particularities of the legionary clergymen’s biographies and their destiny following the movement’s demise. The majority of Orthodox clergymen associated with the Romanian Iron Guard are exponents of the “syncretic” clerical fascism, the internalization of the fascist religion and its synthesis with their own Christian belief assured a permanence of legionary/ fascist ideas in the Orthodox Church’s structure even from late 1920s. The infusion of legionary ideas in the student body of different Faculties of Theology was traced and one could easily note that the most clerical fascist institutions of theological learning were those from the newly acquired territories after 1918, i.e. the Faculties from Cernăuți, Chișinău, and Sibiu. In the case of the first two the presence of large Jewish minorities especially in the urban areas, the neglect displayed by central authorities towards these regions and the

economic backwardness of the regions assured that Iron Guard's message caught the eyes of the Theology students almost instantly. Some of these students, such as Viorel Trifa from Chişinău, were among the most fervent and dedicated legionary missionaries among their fellow students, proselytizing the legionary "faith" inside and outside the boundaries of the Church. In the case of Sibiu, most of the faculty from here was trained in the nationalist, legionary-influenced academic environment of Cernăuţi and they were actually the first generation of university professors having a complete legionary curriculum from the years spent as students to the years of teaching. Accordingly, in these areas the anti-Semitic, nationalistic message of the Legion galvanized the minds of the students and the majority of them joined different radical political organizations such as the Iron Guard or LANC.

The Iron Guard's political religion was profoundly marked and influenced by the close relationship with the Orthodox clergy. Both on instructional and ideological/conceptual aspects the legionary idea was forged in constant synthesis with the Orthodox Church's theology and liturgical rites. The clergymen served as the movement's missionaries, as its hierophants during the large ceremonies of the Iron Guard, as the persons instilling in the legionary creed the emphasis on morality and close-connection with transcendence, as part of legionary leadership both in the second tier ranks of those surrounding and counseling Corneliu Codreanu (this is the case of Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borşa, Secretary General of the movement for several years, Fr. Duminică Ionescu, the head of the legionary body investigating the internal affairs of the movement, and Fr. Georgescu-Edineţi, the confessor of the student organization from Bucharest) or in the legionary organizations from the countryside (Fr. Emilian Cucuetu, Fr. Niţu, Fr. Imbrescu, Fr. Chivu, etc.). Most of the legionary dogmas (the sacrament of martyrdom,

the cult of the Captain, the moral community of the nation, the resurrection of the nation in the beyond, the cult of the dead) were shaped in a close-collaboration between lay and consecrated theologians and the legionary leadership through a process of constant negotiation and theological approximation. Accordingly, as a fascist movement seeking to sacralize politics Iron Guard presents itself to the scholars in the field of fascist studies as a political religion with a religious/ Orthodox/ theological twist, a twist describing other countries in Eastern Europe at that particular time (Poland, Serbia, Greece).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Archival material:

Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale (The National Historical Archives)
Bucharest, Romania, Ministerul de Interne/Diverse files 12/1930; 15/1933; 19/1933;
13/1934; 4/1935; 5/1935; 18/1935; 15/1936; 21/1936; 4/1937; 6/1937; 8/ 1937 Vol. I;
8/1937 Vol. II; 13/1937; 14/1937; 28/1940; 45/1940; 8/1941; 9/1941 Vol. I; 9/1941 Vol.
II.

Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale (The National Historical Archives)
Bucharest, Romania, Ministerul de Interne/ Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei files
7/1934; 15/1935; 24/1936; 11/1937; 25/1939; 47/1939.

Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale (The National Historical Archives)
Bucharest, Romania, Ministerul Cultelor files 116, 117, 118, 119, 122, 129, 146, 150,
157, 169.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), RG 25. 23M. 0001, 0004, 0006.

Journals/ Newspapers:

Apărarea Națională 1931

Axa 1933

Biruința 1930

Biserica Ortodoxă Română 1930-1941

Brațul de Fier 1935-1937

Buna Vestire 1937-1938, 1940-1941

Calendarul 1932 – 1933

Cruciada Românilor 1934-1936

Cuvântul 1933, 1940-1941

Cuvântul Argeșului 1935-1937

Cuvântul studențesc 1927-1933, 1935-1937, 1940

Frăția de Cruce 1940

Garda Bucovinei 1932-1933

Garda Jiului 1932-1933

Garda Moldovei 1932-1933

Garda Râmnicului 1932-1933

Gîndirea 1927–1940

Gândul Neamului 1935

Iconar 1936-1937

Însemnări sociologice 1935-1937

Înălțarea 1941
Legiunea 1932
Legionarii 1931-1932
Libertatea 1937-1938
Mitropolia Moldovei 1923, 1930-1941
Pământul strămoșesc 1927-1930, 1933, 1940
Porunca Vremii 1936-1937
Predania 1937
Raze de lumină. Revista studenților în Teologie din București 1929-1931
Revista mea 1935
România creștină 1935-1937
Santinela 1937
Rânduiala 1935-1937.
Revista teologică 1930-1941
Telegraful român 1930-1941
Vestitorii 1936

Literature

Banea, Ion. *Ce este și ce vrea Mișcarea legionară. Cărticică pentru săteni* [What is and what the Legionary movement wants. Small book for villagers]. Sibiu: Curierul, 1937.

_____. *Căpitanul* [The Captain]. Sibiu: Totul pentru Țară, 1937.

Banea, Dumitru. *Acuzat, Martor, Apărător în procesul vieții mele* [Accused, Witness, Defender in my Fife's Trial]. Sibiu: Puncte Cardinale, 1995.

Bălan, Nicolae Metropolit. *Ortodoxia în mijlocul frământărilor de azi. Orientări programatice pentru 'Frăția Ortodoxă Română'* [The Orthodoxy in today's turmoil. Programatic guidelines for Romanian Orthodox Fellowship]. Sibiu: Diecezană, 1933.

_____. *Biserica Neamului și drepturile ei* [The Church of the Nation and its Rights]. Sibiu: Diecezană, 1928.

_____. *Monahismul ortodox. Sensul și misiunea lui în viitor* [Romanian Monasticism. Its future meaning and mission]. Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1936.

Bernea, Ernst. *Cartea Căpitanilor. Căpitanii în destinul românesc* [The Book of the Captains. The Captains in the Romanian destiny]. Bucharest: Serviciul de Propagandă, 1940.

_____. *Stil legionar* [Legionary style]. Bucharest: I. E. Torouțiu, 1937.

- Boilă, Zaharia. *Amintiri și considerații asupra mișcării legionare* [Memories and thoughts on the legionary movement]. Cluj-Napoca: Apostrof, 2002.
- Cantacuzino, Alexandru. *Între lumea legionară și lumea comunistă. Opere complete* [Between the legionary and the communist world. Complete works]. Bucharest: Antet Press, 1990.
- Cernăianu, C. *Biserica din Regat 1908-1918*. Bucharest: Tipografia Apollo, 1920.
- Ciorogaru, Roman Bishop. *Zile trăite* [Lived Days]. Oradea: ?, 1926.
- Codreanu, Corneliu. *Pentru legionari* [For my legionaries]. Timișoara: Gordian, 1994. First printed in 1936.
- _____. *Cărticica șefului de cuib* [The small book the nest's chief] Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 2000. 13th Edition.
- _____. *Circulare și manifeste* [Circular letters and manifestos]. Bucharest: Blassco, 2010.
- _____. *Scrisori studențești din închisoare* [Student letters from prison]. Orăștie: Tipografia Libertatea, 1925.
- Crainic, Nichifor. *Zile albe. Zile negre* [Good days. Bad days]. Bucharest: Gîndirea, 1991.
- _____. *Puncte Cardinale în Haos*. Jassy: Timpul, 1996.
- _____. *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație*. Bucharest: Albatros, 1997.
- Cristea, Elie Miron. *Note ascunse. Însemnări personale(1895-1937)* [Hidden Notes. Personal Lines]. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1999.
- _____. *Pastorale și cuvântări ținute de Înalt Prea Sfinția Sa Domn Domn Dr. Miron Cristea, Patriarh al României* Vol. IV [Patoral Letters and Speeches Delivered by His Holiness Dr. Miron Cristes, the Patriarch of Romania]. Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1938.
- _____. *Pastorale, predici și cuvântări ținute de Adormitul întru Fericire Dr. Miron Cristea, Patriarh al României* Vol. VII [Patoral Letters, Sermons, and Speeches Delivered by Deceased Dr. Miron Cristes, the Patriarch of Romania]. Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1939.
- Cuza, A.C. *Naționalitatea în artă. Principii, fapte, concluzii. Introducere la doctrina național-creștină*. Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1927. 3rd Edition.

- _____. *Învățătura lui Isus. Judaismul și teologia creștină* [Jesus' Teaching. Judaism and Christian Theology]. Iași: Editura "Ligii Apărării Naționale Creștine", 1925.
- Dobre, Bănică. *Crucificații. Zile trăite pe frontul spaniol* [Those Crucified. Days spent on the Spanish Front]. Bucharest: Criterion Publishing, 2010. First edition in 1951.
- Dumitrescu-Borșa, Ion Fr. *Cal troian intra muros. Memorii legionare* [Trojan horse intra muros. Legionary memoirs]. Bucharest: Lucman, 2002.
- _____. *Cea mai mare jertfă legionara* [The greatest legionary sacrifice]. Sibiu: Totul pentru Țară, 1937.
- Goldiș, Vasile. *Subvenționarea Cultelor în Statul Român* [The Financial Subsidize for Religious Denominations in the Romanian State]. Arad: Diecezană, 1927.
- Gărcineanu, Victor P. *Din lumea legionară* [From the legionary world]. Bucharest: Sânziana, 2011. First published in 1937.
- Marin, Vasile. *Crez de generație* [Creed of a generation]. Bucharest: Majadahonda, 1997. 4th edition. First published in 1937.
- Moța, Ion I. *Cranii de lemn. Articole 1922-1936* [Wooden skulls]. Bucharest: Sânziana, 2007. First published in 1936.
- Fleșeriu, Ion. *Amintiri* [Memories]. Madrid: Artes Graficas Benzal, 1977.
- Guiraud, Paul. *Codreanu et la Garde de Fer* [Codreanu and the Iron Guard]. Paris: Editions du Francisme, 1940.
- Imbrescu, Ilie Fr. *Apostrofa unui Teolog* [The Reprimand of a Theologian]. Bucharest: Copuzeanu, 1935.
- _____. *Biserica și Mișcarea Legionară* [The Reprimand of a Theologian. The Church and the Legionary Movement] in *V-am scris vouă, tinerilor! Gândurile și încercările unui preot mărtirisitor*. București: Gutenberg, 2011.
- Ionescu, Nae. *Roza vânturilor 1926–1933* [The Winds Cross]. Bucharest: Roza vânturilor, 1990.
- _____. *Teologia. Integrala publicisticii religioase* [The Theology. The Complete Works of his Religious Articles]. Sibiu: Deisis, 2003.
- Lapedatu, Alexandru. *Statul și Biserica. Cuvântare rostită în Senat la 29 Decembrie 1923* [The State and the Church. Speech in the Senate delivered on the 29th of December 1923]. Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1924.

- Meteș, Ștefan. *Păstori ardeleni în Principatele Române* [Transylvanian Pastors in the Romanian Principalities]. Arad: Editura Librăriei Diecezane, 1925.
- Polihroniade, Mihail and Alexandru-Christian Tell. *Domnia lui Carol I, 1866-1877* [The Rule of Carol I] Volume I. Bucharest: Vremea, 1937.
- Prevost, Marcel. *Tineretul de azi* [The Contemporary Youth]. Bucharest: Editura Tipografiile Române Unite, 1934.
- Racoveanu, Gheorghe. *Mișcarea legionară și Biserica. Omenea și frumusețea cea dintâi* [The Legionary movement and the Church. Humanness and original beauty]. Bucharest: Antet Press, 2002.
- _____. *Viața și nevoițele fericitului Paisie, Starețul Sfintelor Monastiri Neamțul și Secul* [The Life and Works of Blessed Paisie, the Abbot of Neamțul and Secul Monasteries].
- _____. *Gravurile în lemn la Mănăstirea Neamțul* [The Engravings in Wood from Neamțul Monastery]. Bucharest: Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, 1940.
- Roșu, Nicolae. *Dialectica Naționalismului*. [The dialectics of Nationalism]. Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1938. 2d edition.
- Scurtu, Ion. (ed.). *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România*. Vol. II 1927-1931 [Ideology and Right Wing Organizations in Romania]. Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2000.
- _____. *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România*. Vol. IV 1934-1938. Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2003.
- _____. *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România*. Vol. V, 1940-1941. Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2007.
- Sfințescu, Duiuliu. *Răspuns la întrebări ale tinerilor care doresc tot adevărul despre Mișcarea Legionară* [Answer to young people's questions, who want to know the truth about the Legionary Movement]. Bucharest: Crater, 1996.
- _____. *Din luptele tineretului român 1919-1939* [From the struggle of the Romanian youth]. Bucharest: Editura Fundației Buna Vestire, 1993.
- Sima, Horia. *Istoria mișcării legionare* [The History of the Legionary movement]. Sibiu: Imago, 2000.
- Simedrea, Titu Abbot. *Patriarhia Română. Acte și documente* [The Romanian Patriarchy. Official Papers and Documents]. Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1926.

- Smântânescu, Dan. *Mișcarea Sămănătoristă. Studiu istoric-literar*. Bucharest: Bucovina, 1933.
- Strejnicu, Flor. *Creștinismul Mișcării Legionare* [The Christianity of the Legionary Movement] 2d Edition. Sibiu: Imago, 2008.
- _____. *Mișcarea legionară și evreii* [The legionary movement and the Jews]. Sibiu: Imago, 1996.
- Sturza, Mihail. *România și sfârșitul Europei. Amintiri din Țara pierdută* [Romania and the end of Europe. Memories from the lost Country]. Alba-Iulia: Fronde, 1994.
- Tudorică, Nae. *Mărturii în duhul adevărului. Mișcarea legionară și Căpitanul așa cum au fost* [Testimonies in the spirit of truth. The Legionary movement and the Captain as they were]. Bacău: Plumb, 1993.
- Vulcănescu, Mircea. *Nae Ionescu. Așa cum l-am cunoscut* [Nae Ionescu. The way I knew him]. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992.
- Zeletin, Ștefan. *Burghezia română: Originea și rolul ei istoric* [The Romanian Bourgeoisie: Its origins and historical role]. Bucharest: Nemira, 2005.
- ***. *Congresul General Studențesc ținut în zilele de 17, 18, 19 Aprilie la Craiova* [The General Student Congress held in 17th, 18th, 19th of April in Craiova]. Bucharest: 1935.
- ***. *Biserica și probleme sociale* [The Church and the Society's Problems]. Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1933.
- ***. *Intelectualii și Mișcarea Legionară. Mari conștiințe românești* [The Intellectuals and the Legionary movement. Great Romanian Consciences]. (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Buna-Vestire, 2000).

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Alexandrescu, Sorin. "Junimea: discours politique et discours culturel" in I. P. Coulianu, Ed. *Libra: Études roumaines offerts à Willem Noomen*, Groningen, 1983
- _____. *Paradoxul român* [The Romanian Paradox] Bucharest: Univers, 1998.
- Angold, Michael (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 5. Eastern Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

AntoŃi, Sorin. *Imaginaire culturel et r ealit e politique dans la Roumanie moderne. Le Stigmate et l'utopie*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999.

_____. "Romania and the Balkans From geo - cultural bovarism to ethnic ontology", *Tr@nsit online*, Nr. 21/2002, Internet accessed June 1st, 2007.

Baird, Jay W. *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Bab k, Milan. "Nazism as Secular Religion" in *History and Theory* 45 (October 2006), pp. 375-396.

Bandier, Norbert. "Avant-gardes in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: New Perspectives", *Contemporary European History* 14/3 (2005): 391-402.

Baranowski, Shelley. *The Sanctity of Rural Life. Nobility, Protestantism & Nazism in Weimar Germany*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Barbu, Zeev. "Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Iron Guard, the Fascist Movement of Romania" in Stein Uglevik Larsen, Bernt Gagtvet, Jan Petter Myklebust (eds.), *Who were the Fascists. Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), pp. 379-394.

B anic , Mirel. *Biserica Ortodox  Roman . Stat  i societate  n anii '30* [The Romanian Orthodox Church. State and Society in the '30s] Jassy: Polirom, 2007.

Berend, Ivan T. *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the long Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: California University Press, 2003.

Berezin, Mabel *Making the Fascist Self. The Political Culture of Interwar Italy*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Bergen, Doris. *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1996.

Berger, Stefan and Chris Lorenz. (Eds.), *Nationalizing the Past. Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Bessel, Richard. *Germany after the First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Betts, Paul. "The New Fascination with Fascism: Nazi Modernism" in *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 4 (2002).

- Blinkhorn, Martin. "Afterthoughts, Route Maps and Landscapes: Historians, "Fascist Studies" and the Study of Fascism." In *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 5, No. 3, (2004): pp. 507 - 526
- Boia, Lucian. *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* [History and Myth in Romanian Conscience]. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997.
- _____. *Capcanele istoriei. Elita intelectuală românească între 1930 și 1950* [The history's traps. Romanian Intellectual Elite between 1930 and 1950]. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011.
- Boulgakov, Sergei *Ortodoxia* [The Orthodoxy] transl. from French Nicolae Grosu (Bucharest: Paideea, 1997).
- Bozdoghină, Horia. *Antisemitismul lui A.C. Cuza in politica românească*. [The anti-Semitism of A.C. Cuza in Romanian politics] București: Curtea Veche, 2012.
- Braunștein, Iancu. *Evreii în prima universitate românească* [The Jews in the first Romanian University]. Iassy: Dan, 2001.
- Brustein, William I. *Roots of Hate. Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Bremer, Thomas. *Cross and Kremlin. A Brief History of the Orthodox Church in Russia*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013.
- Bucur, Maria. "Of Crosses, Winged Victories and Eagles: Commemorative Contests between Official and Vernacular Voices in Interwar Romania" in *East Central Europe* 37, (2010).
- _____. *Heroes and Victims. Remembering War in Twentieth Century Romania*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Burleigh, Michael. *Earthly Powers. Religion and Politics in Europe from the Enlightenment to the Great War*. New York: Harper & Collins, 2006.
- Casquete, Jesús. "Martyr Construction and the Politics of Death in National Socialism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 10, no. 3-4 (September-December 2009), pp. 265-283.
- Castelli, Elizabeth A. *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Chirot, Chirot. *Social Change in a Peripheral society: The Formation of a Balkan Colony*. New York: Academic Press, 1976.

- Clark, Roland. "Nationalism and orthodoxy: Nichifor Crainic and the political culture of the extreme right in 1930s Romania" in *Nationalities Papers* Vol. 40, No. 1 (2012), pp. 107-126.
- Clogg, Richard (ed.), *The Struggle for Greek Independence. Essays to mark the 150th anniversary of the Greek War of Independence*. London: Archon Books, 1973.
- Connelly, John. *From Enemy to Brother. The Revolution in Catholic Teachings on the Jews 1933-1965*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Cunningham, Mary B. and Elizabeth Theokritoff (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Drace–Francis, Alex. *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture. Literacy and the Development of a National Identity*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006.
- Deletant, Dennis. *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his regime, 1940-1944*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Dogliani, Patrizia. "Propaganda and Youth" in RBJ Bosworth (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Duggan, Christopher. *Fascist Voices. An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Eaton, Henry. *The Origins and Onset of the Romanian Holocaust*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013.
- Eatwell, Roger. *Fascism. A History*. London: Pimlico, 2003.
- _____. "Reflections on Fascism and Religion" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol.4, No. 3, (2003): pp. 145-166.
- Ebner, Michael R. *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013
- Ekstein, Modris. *Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989.
- Eley, Geoff. *Nazism as Fascism. Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany 1930-1945*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Ericksen, Robert P. *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- _____. *Complicity in the Holocaust. Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

- Ericksen, Robert P. and Susannah Heschel. *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.
- Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta. *Fascist Spectacle. The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkeley: California University Press, 2000.
- Falina, Maria. "Between 'Clerical Fascism' and Political Orthodoxy: Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Interwar Serbia." In *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 8, 2 (2007): pp. 248-253.
- Fattorini, Emma. *Hitler, Mussolini and the Vatican. Pope Pius XI and the Speech that was Never Made*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.
- Felak, James Ramon. "At the Price of the Republic." *Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1919-1938*. Pittsburgh, PN: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994.
- Frazer, Charles A. *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece 1821-1852*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- Fritzsche, Peter. *Rehearsals for Fascism. Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- _____. *Life and Death in the Third Reich*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Greble, Emily. *Sarajevo, 1941-1945. Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Hitler's Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.
- Stephen Fischer-Galați, "Codreanu, Romanian National Traditions and Charisma." In *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 7, No. 2, (2006): pp. 245 – 250.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. Michael Geyer. (Eds.) *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Fogu, Claudio. *The Historic Imaginary. Politics of History in Fascist Italy*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003.
- Gentile, Emilio. *The Sacralisation of Politics in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- _____. *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918-1925*. New York: Enigma, 2005.
- _____. *Politics as Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

_____. *Contro Cesare. Cristianesimo e totalitarismo nell'epoca dei fascismi*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010.

_____. "New Idols: Catholicism in the face of Fascist totalitarianism" in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* Vol. 11, no. 2 (2006), pp. 143-170.

_____. "The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 1, no. 1 (2000): pp.18-55.

_____. "Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 5, no. 3 (2004): pp. 326-375.

_____. "Fascism as Political Religion." *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 25, no. 2-3 (1990): pp. 229–251.

Gilley, Sheridan and Brian Stanley. *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 8. World Christianities c. 1815-c. 1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Gillis, John R. (Ed.) *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1994.

Gilman, Sander L. and Milton Shain (eds.). *Jewries at the Frontier. Accommodation, Identity, Conflict*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Giurescu, Dinu, C. and Stephen Fischer-Galați (eds.), *Romania. A Historical Perspective*. Boulder:East European Monographs, 1998.

Glenny, Micha. *Balkans. Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers*. London: Granta Books, 1999.

Gregor, James A. *Mussolini's Intellectuals. Fascist Social and Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Griffin, Roger. *Fascism* in Roger Griffin (ed.), *International Fascism. Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*. London: Arnold Publishing House, 1998.

_____. *The Nature of Fascism*. London: Routledge, 1993.

_____. *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

_____. *A Fascist Century*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

- _____. “The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (Or Manufacture) of Consensus with Fascist Studies” in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 37, no. 1 (January 2002), pp. 21-43.
- _____. “God’s Counterfeiters? Investigating the Triad of Fascism, Totalitarianism and (Political) Religion” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 5, no. 3 (2004), pp. 291-325.
- _____. “Cloister or Cluster? The Implications of Emilio Gentile’s Ecumenical Theory of Political Religion for the Study of Extremism” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 6, no. 1 (June 2005), pp. 33-52.
- Hamburg, G.M. and Randall A. Poole. (eds.) *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830-1930. Faith, Reason, and the Defence of Human Dignity*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013
- Hamilton, Alastair. *The Appeal of Fascism. A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism, 1919–1945*. New York: MacMillan, 1971.
- Hanebrink, Paul A. *In Defence of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism, 1890-1944*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Hastings, Derek. *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism. Religious Identity and National Socialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Haynes, Rebecca Anne. “The Romanian Legionary Movement. Popular Orthodoxy and the Cult of Death” in Mioara Anton, Florin Anghel, Cosmin Popa (eds.). *Hegemoniile trecutului. Evoluții românești și europene. Profesorul Ioan Chiper la 70 de ani* [The Hegemonies of the Past. Romanian and European Evolutions. Professor Ioan Chiper at his 70s anniversary]. Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2006.
- _____. “German Historians and the Romanian National Legionary State 1940-1941” in *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 71, no. 4 (1993).
- _____. “Work Camps, Commerce, and the Education of the ‘New Man’ in the Romanian Legionary Movement” in *The Historical Journal* 51, 4(2008), pp. 943-967.
- _____. “Corneliu Codreanu: The Romanian ‘New Man’” in Rebecca Haynes and Martyn Rady (eds.). *In the Shadow of Hitler. Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011. pp. 169-187.
- Heinen, Armin, *Die Legionen “Erzengel Michael” in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, München: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1986, (Romanian edition Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999.

- Herf, Jeffrey. *Reactionary modernism. Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Heschel, Susannah. *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames. Photography Narrative and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- _____. *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Hitchins, Keith. *Rumania 1866–1947*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- _____. *Orthodoxy and Nationality: Andreiu Saguna and the Rumanians of Transylvania 1846-1873*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) 1977.
- _____. “Gîndirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise” in Kenneth Jowitt, Ed. *Social Change in Romania 1860–1940. A Debate on Development in a European Nation*. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978.
- _____. “Orthodoxism: Polemics over Ethnicity and Religion in interwar Romania” in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*. New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995.
- Iancu, Carol. *Evreii din România. De la emancipare la marginalizare 1919-1938*. [The Jews from Romania. From Emancipation to Marginalization]. Bucharest: Hasefer, 2000.
- Ioanid, Radu. *The Sword of the Archangel. Fascist Ideology in Romania*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990.
- _____. “Nicolae Iorga and Fascism” in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (July 1992), pp. 467-492.
- _____. “The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 5, no. 3 (2004), pp. 419-453.
- Iordachi, Constantin. *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the ‘Archangel Michael’ in interwar Romania*. Trondheim: Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004.
- _____. (Ed.) *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2009.

- Janos, Andrew C. "Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: The Case of Romania" in Kenneth Jowitt Ed. *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978.
- Jonsson, Stefan. *Crowds and Democracy. The Idea and Image of the Masses from Revolution to Fascism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Judson, Pieter M. and Marsha L. Rozenblit (eds.). *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*. New York, NY: Berhahn Books, 2005.
- Kallis, Aristotle. *Genocide and Fascism. The Eliminationist Drive in Fascist Europe*. London: Routledge, 2009.
- _____. "To expand or not to expand? Territory, Generic Fascism and the Quest for an ideal 'Fatherland'" in *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 2 (2003).
- _____. "Fascism and Religion: The Metaxas Regime in Greece and the 'Third Hellenic Civilisation'. Some Theoretical Observations on 'Fascism', 'Political Religion' and 'Clerical Fascism'" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 8, no. 2 (June 2007), pp. 229-246.
- Keck, David. *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Kiel, Thomas J. *Romania's Tortured Road towards Modernity*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006.
- Kilgman, Gail. *The Wedding of the Dead. Ritual, Poetics and Popular Culture in Transylvania*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Kitromilides, Paschalis M. *Enlightenment and Revolution. The Making of Modern Greece*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Knox, MacGregor. *The Threshold to Power, 1922-1933. Origins and Dynamics of Fascist and National Socialist Dictatorships*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Kocka, Jürgen. "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The case of the German *Sonderweg*." In *History and Theory*. 38(1999): pp. 40–51.
- Koonz, Claudia. *The Nazi Conscience*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Korkut, Umut. "Nationalism versus Internationalism: The Roles of Political and Cultural Elites in interwar and Communist Romania" in *Nationalities Papers* 34, No. 2, 2006.

- Kühne, Thomas. *Belonging and Genocide. Hitler's Community, 1918-1945*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Lambert, Peter. "Heroisation and Demonisation in the Third Reich: The Consensus-building Value of a Nazi Pantheon of Heroes" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, No.3-4 (2007).
- Lampe, John R. *Balkans into Southeastern Europe. A Century of War and Transition* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Lansing, Charles B. *From Nazism to Communism. German Schoolteachers under two Dictatorships*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Leeden, Michael A. "Fascism and Youth" in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 4, No. 3 (1969).
- Lepădatu, Adrian Gabriel. *Mișcarea legionară: între mit și realitate* [The Legionary movement: between myth and reality]. Chișinău: Cartier, 2005.
- Lilla, Mark. *The Reckless Mind. Intellectuals in Politics*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003.
- Livezeanu, Irina. "Fascists and conservatives in Romania: two generations of nationalists." In Martin Blinkhorn (Ed.). *Fascists and Conservatives. The radical right and the establishment of twentieth-century politics*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- _____. *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, National Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- _____. "Interwar Poland and Romania: The Nationalization of Elites, the Vanishing Middle, and the Problem of Intellectuals" in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* No. 22 (1998), pp. 407-430.
- _____. "From Dada to Gaga": The Peripatetic Romanian Avant-Garde Confronts Communism" in Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu (ed.). *Littératures et Pouvoir Symbolique*. Bucharest: Paralela 45, 2003.
- _____. "Romania: 'Windows towards the West': New Forms and the 'Poetry of True Life'" in Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker and Christian Weikop (eds.). *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines. Volume III, Europe 1880-1940 Part II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Louth, Andrew. *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013.

Luzzatto, Sergio. "The Political Culture of Fascist Italy" in *Contemporary European History* Vol. 8, no. 2 (July 1999), pp. 317-334.

_____. *The Body of Il Duce: Mussolini's Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy*. New York: Metropolitan Books/ Henry Holt, 2005.

Maier, Hans (ed.). *Totalitarianism and Political Religions. Volume I: concepts for the comparison of dictatorships*. London: Routledge, 2004.

_____. *Totalitarianism and Political Religions, Volume II. Concepts for the comparison of dictatorships*. London: Routledge, 2007.

_____. *Totalitarianism and Political Religions, Volume III. Concepts for the comparison of dictatorships: theory and history of interpretation*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Mallet, Robert, Roger Griffin and John Tortorice. *The Sacred in the Twentieth-Century Politics. Essays in Honor of Professor Stanley G. Payne*. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.

Maner, Hans-Christian. "Die 'rumänische Nation' in den Konzeptionen griechisch-katholischer und orthodoxer Geistlicher und Intellektueller Siebenbürgens im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert" [The Romanian Nation in the views of Transylvanian Greek-Catholic and Orthodox of Thinkers and Intellectuals in 18th and 19th Century] in Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa* [Nationalizing Religion and Sacralizing the Nation in Eastern Europe]. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006.

Mann, Michael. *Fascists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

McLeod, Hugh (ed.). *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930*. London: Routledge, 1995.

_____. (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 9. World Christianities c. 1914-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Mihai, Constantin. *Biserica și elitele intelectuale interbelice* [The Church and the interwar intellectual elites]. Iași: Institutul European, 2009.

Micu, Dumitru. *Gîndirea și gîndirismul* [The Thought and the thoughtism]. Bucharest: Minerva, 1975.

Mezdrea, Dora. "Nae Ionescu-Teologul" [Nae Ionescu- The Theologian] in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia. Integrala publicisticii religioase* [Theology. The Complete Edition of the Religious Articles]. Sibiu: Deisis, 2003.

Moro, Renato. "Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularization: The Sacralization of Politics and the Politicization of Religion" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (2005): pp. 71–86

Mosse, L., George. *The Fascist Revolution. Towards a General Theory of Fascism*. New York: Howard Fertig, 1999.

_____. *Fallen Soldier. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

_____. *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980.

_____. *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Moraru, Alexandru. Fr. *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885 și 2000. Biserică, Națiune, Cultură* [The Romanian Orthodox Church between 1885 and 2000. Church, Nation, Culture] Vol. 3, I. Bucharest: IBMBOR, 2006.

Nagy-Talavera, Nicholas M. *O Istorie a Fascismului în Ungaria și România* [A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania]. Bucharest: Hasefer, 2000.

_____. *Nicolae Iorga. A biography*. Jassy: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1996.

Nastasă, Lucian. (Ed.) *Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919-1939. Mărturii documentare*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale/Kriterion, 2011.

Nemoianu, Virgil. "Variable Socio-political Functions of Aesthetic Doctrine: Lovinescu vs. Western Aestheticism" in Kenneth Jowitt, Ed. *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978.

Neumann, Victor. "Repere culturale ale antisemitismului din România în secolul XIX" [Cultural landmarks of anti-Semitism in Romania in the 19th century] in *Ideea care ucide. Dimensiunile ideologiei legionare* [The Killing Idea. The Dimensions of the legionary ideology]. Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1994.

Neocleous, Mark. "Long live death! Fascism, resurrection, immortality" in *Journal of Political Ideologies* Vol. 10, no. 1 (2005), pp. 31-49.

Nica, Emilian. Arhim. *Aduceți-vă aminte de înaintașii voștri. Arhiepiscopia Iașilor între anii 1900-1948* [Remember your predecessors. The Archbishopric of Iași between the years 1900-1948] Jassy: Doxologia, 2009.

- Nichols, Aidan. *Theology in the Russian Diaspora. Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanas'ev (1893-1966)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Ornea, Zigu. *Junimea și junimismul* [Junimea and the Junimism]. Bucharest: Eminescu, 1978.
- _____. *The Romanian Extreme Right. The Nineteen Thirties*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999.
- Oldson, William, O. *The Historical and Nationalistic Thought of Nicolae Iorga*. Boulder: East-European Quarterly, 1973.
- _____. “Alibi for Prejudice: Eastern Orthodoxy, The Holocaust and Romanian Nationalism” in *East European Quarterly* Vol. XXXVI, no. 3 (2002), pp. 301-311.
- Payne, Stanley. *A History of Fascism 1914–1940*. Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1995.
- _____. “Emilio Gentile’s Historical Analysis and the Taxonomy of Political Religions.” In *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 3, No. 1, 2002: pp. 122-131.
- _____. “On the Heuristic Value of the Concept of Political Religion and its Application.” In *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*. vol. 6, no. 2 (2011): 163-174.
- Păcurariu, Mircea. Fr. *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church] Vol. 3. Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1981.
- Pârâianu, Răzvan. “Culturalist Nationalism and Anti–Semitism in Fin–de–Siècle Romania” in Paul Weindling & Marius Turda, *'Blood and Homeland': Eugenics and Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900 – 1940*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Tradiția creștină. O istorie a dezvoltării doctrinei. Vol. V. Doctrina creștină și cultura modernă de la 1700*. Iassy: Polirom, 2008.
- Petculescu, Constantin. *Mișcarea legionară. Mit și realitate* [The Legionary Movement. Myth and Reality]. Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1997.
- Petreu, Marta. *An Infamous Past. Emil Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania*, Chicago: Ivan. Dee, 1999.
- Peukert, Detlev. *Inside Nazi Germany. Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Pinto, António Costa, Roger Eatwell and Stein Ugelvik Larsen. *Charisma and Fascism in Interwar Europe*. London: Routledge, 2007.

- Pollard, John. *The Vatican and Italian Fascism, 1929-1932. A study in conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- _____. "Fascism and religion" in António Costa Pinto (ed.), *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism. Comparative Perspectives*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 141-165.
- Porter, Brian. *When Nationalism Begin to Hate. Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- _____. *Faith and Fatherland. Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Peukert, Detlev J. K. *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity* translated by Richard Devenson. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992.
- Rallo, Michelle. *România în perioada revoluțiilor naționale din Europa. Mișcarea Legionară* [Romania during the national revolutions from Europe. The Legionary Movement]. Bucharest: Sempre, 1999.
- Ramet, Pedro (ed.). *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the twentieth century*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1988.
- Rienzo, Stephen R. Di. "The Non-Optional Basis of Religion." In *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 3, No. 3, (2002): pp. 75-98.
- Redles, David. *Hitler's Millenial Reich. Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2005.
- Riley, Dylan. *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe. Italy, Spain and Romania, 1870-1945*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- Roberts, Henry L. *Rumania. Political Problems of an Agrarian State*. Yale: Anchor Books, 1969.
- Rorem, Paul. *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary of the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Sandache, Cristian. *Doctrina național-creștină în România* [The national-christian ideology in Romania]. Bucharest: Paideea, 1997.
- Sălcudeanu, Nicoleta. "Present Day Reverberations of the Traditionalist-Nationalism-Orthodoxism Sythesis professed by *Gîndirea* Magazine" in Maria Crăciun & Ovidiu Ghita, *Ethnicity and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe*. Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press, 1995.

Săndulescu, Valentin. "Sacralised Politics in Action: the February 1937 Burial of the Romanian Legionary Leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin" in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 8, No. 2 (2007).

_____. "'Taming the Body': Preliminary Considerations Regarding the Legionary Working Camps System (1933-1937) in *Historical Yearbook* Vol. 5 (2008), pp. 85-94.

_____. "'Taming the Spirit': Notes on the Shaping of the Legionary 'New Man'" in Traian Sandu (ed.) *Vers un profil convergent des fascismes? <<Nouveau consensus>> et religion politique en Europe centrale*. Paris: Center Interuniversitaire d'Etudes Hongroises, 2010, pp.207-216.

_____. "Fascism and its Quest for the 'New Man': The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement" in *Studia Hebraica* 4 (2004), pp. 349-361.

Schapiro, Paul, A. "Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church" in Kevin P. Spicer (ed.), *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence and the Holocaust*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, pp. 136-172.

Schmemmann, Alexander. *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.

Schmitter, Philippe C. "Reflections on Mihail Manoilescu and the political consequences of the Delayed-Dependent Development on the Periphery of Western Europe" in Kenneth Jowith. Ed., *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978.

Schneider, Johann. *Der Hermannstädter Metropolit Andrei von Şaguna. Reform und Erneuerung der orthodoxen Kirche in Siebenbürgen und Ungarn nach 1848*. Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2005.

Schumann, Dirk. *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic 1918-1933. Fight for the Streets and the Fear of the Civil War*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012.

Scurtu, Ioan & Gheorghe Buzatu. *Istoria românilor în secolul XX (1918 – 1948)* [The History of Romanians in the 20th century]. Bucharest: Paideea, 1999.

Smith, Anthony D. *Chosen People. Sacred Sources of National Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Solonari, Vladimir. *Purifying the Nation. Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2008.

_____. “In the Shadow of Ethnic Nationalism: Racial Science in Romania” in Anton Weiss-Wendt and Rory Yoemans (eds.), *Racial Science in Hitler’s New Europe 1938-1945*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013.

Spicer, Kevin P. *Hitler’s Priests. Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008.

Steigmann–Gall, Richard. *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919 – 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

_____. “Nazism and the Revival of Political Religion Theory” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 5, no. 3 (2004), pp. 376-396.

Stern, Fritz. *Politics of Cultural Despair. A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*. New York: Anchor Books, 1965.

Sternhell, Zeev, Mario Sznajder & Maia Asheri. *The Birth of the Fascist Ideology. From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State. Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. New Haven, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Stowers, Stanley. “The Concepts of ‘Religion’, ‘Political Religion’ and the Study of Nazism” in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 42, no. 1 (2007), pp. 9-24.

Sugar, Peter F. „Nationalism and Religion in the Balkans since the 19th Century” in Peter F. Sugar, *East European Nationalism, Politics and Religion*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

_____(ed.). *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. Washington DC: American University Press, 1995

_____(ed.). *Native Fascism in the Successor States 1918-1945*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1971.

Trencsényi, Balázs. “The ‘Münchansenian Moment’: Modernity, Liberalism, and Nationalism in the Thought of Ștefan Zeletin” in Balázs Trencsényi, Dragoș Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi, Zoltán Kántor (eds.), *Nation–Building and Contested Identities. Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies* Iassy: Polirom, 2001.

_____. “‘Imposed Authenticity’: Approaching Eastern European Characteriologies in the Inter-war Period” in *Central Europe*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (May 2010), pp. 20-47.

- _____. *The Politics of 'National Character': A Study in Interwar East-European Thought*. Milton Park, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Turczysky, Emanuel. *Konfession und Nation. Zur Frühgeschichte der serbischen rumänischen Nationsbildung*. Dusseldorf: Schwamm, 1976.
- Turda, Marius. *Idea of National Superiority in Central Europe, 1880-1918*. Lewinston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004.
- _____. "Fantasies of Degeneration: Some Remarks on Racial Anti-Semitism in Interwar Romania" in *Studia Hebraica*, Issue 3 (2003), pp. 336-348.
- _____. *Modernism and Eugenics*. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.
- Țiu, Ilarion. *Mișcarea Legionară după Corneliu Codreanu. Dictatura regală (1938-1940). Mecanisme de schimb al generației*. [The Legionary Movement after Corneliu Codreanu. The Royal Dictatorship. The Mechanisms of generation's exchange]. Bucharest: Vremea, 2007.
- Țurcanu, Florin. *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier de l'Histoire*. Paris: Editions la Decouverte, 2003.
- Valli, Roberta Suzzi. "The Myth of Squadristo in the Fascist regime" in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 35, No. 2 (2000)
- Vanhaelemeersch, Philip. *A generation "without Beliefs" and the Idea of Experience in Romania (1927 - 1934)*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Veiga, Francisco. *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului* [The History of the Iron Guard. The Mystique of Ultra-nationalism]. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993.
- Verdery, Katherine. *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1990.
- _____. *The Political Life of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- _____. "Beyond the Nation in Eastern Europe" in *Social Text*, No. 38 (1994), pp. 1-19.
- _____. "National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania" in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery. Eds. *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*. New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995.

- Volovici, Leon. *National Ideology & Antisemitism. The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991.
- Walicki, Andrej. "Russian Social Thought: An Introduction to the Intellectual History of 19th Century Russia." In *Russian Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, (1977): p. 1-20.
- Ward, James Mace. *Priest, Politician, Collaborator. Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.
- Weber, Eugen. *Varieties of Fascism. Doctrines of Revolution in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1964.
- Welch, David. *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* Second Edition. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Wingfield, Nancy M. Maria Bucur. (Eds.), *Gender and War in the Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Winter, Jay. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Winter, Jay. Antoine Prost (eds.), *The Great War in History. Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Wilken, Robert Lewis. *The First Thousand Years. A Global History of Christianity*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Woods, Roger. *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic*. London: Macmillan, 1996.
- Yeomans, Rory. *Visions of Annihilation. The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013.
- Young, Julian. *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Zahra, Tara. *Kidnapped Souls. National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- Zamfirescu, Dragoș. *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail de la mit la realitate* [The Legion of Archangel Michael from myth to reality]. Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1997.