

**EUROPEAN FASCISTS AND LOCAL ACTIVISTS:
ROMANIA'S LEGION OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL (1922-1938)**

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In interwar Europe, “fascism” referred to a diffuse collection of independent movements and regimes that used similar symbols, gestures, and activities to pioneer a distinctive style of politics. The Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Iron Guard, was one of the largest fascist social movements in interwar Europe. This dissertation examines how rank and file Legionaries experienced and articulated their political affiliations as members of the Legion, and more broadly as part of a global fascist network. Official repression, fascist aesthetics, and the demands of Legionary activism meant that becoming a Legionary involved far more than giving intellectual assent to a clearly articulated set of ideas. It changed activists’ everyday activities and life trajectories in profound ways.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, Romanian ultra-nationalists organized to eliminate Jews, Freemasons, Communists, and political corruption from their society. Anti-Semitic violence increased in the universities in 1922, and extremist students engaged in mob violence, vandalism, and assassination. Ultra-nationalist activists built connections with racists abroad, but they based their movement on ways of thinking about Jews and Romanians that derived from nineteenth century nationalism. In 1927 Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and a small group followers split with other ultra-nationalists to form the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Legionaries gradually took over the anti-Semitic student movement by using a combination of

violence, terrorism, and pious rhetoric. Elections were usually violent affairs for Legionaries, who flouted the law but also ran work camps, restaurants, and businesses.

Legionaries described the Legion as a school for creating “new men” who would bring about national rebirth. Creating “new men” meant belonging to a hierarchical organization that expected total obedience from its members. Legionaries committed time, money and energy to expanding their movement and risked imprisonment and even death in return. They spoke about continuing the national struggle of their ancestors, but used uniforms, gestures, and symbols that identified them as part of a Europe-wide fascist current.

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For Laura.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On Saturday, 15 January 1938, a group of forty schoolgirls gathered outside a family home in Craiova, a regional city in southern Romania, for the funeral of their colleague, Maria Cristescu (1922-1938). The girls were accompanied by seventy Legionaries, mostly shopkeepers, tradesmen, and office workers led by the tailor Dumitru Baiculescu. Sixteen year old Maria was in sixth class at the “Elena Cuza” girls’ boarding school in town and had become a Legionary four months earlier.¹ Maria and the seventy Legionaries who assembled in a military formation outside her parents’ house were members of *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* (the Legion of the Archangel Michael), a fascist organization that had just won 15.58 percent of the votes in the national elections (26.92 percent in Craiova’s county) and could boast a membership of at least 272,000, organized into 34,000 small groups known as *cuiburi* (nests).² Most Legionaries were men, but it was not uncommon to find women joining groups called *cetățuile* (fortresses) or working for the movement in supportive roles as girlfriends, wives, or mothers. Girls like Maria joined the female wing of the youth section – *Frăția de Cruce* (the Blood Brotherhood). Maria died from a sudden illness, but in her last months she had kept a diary in which she wrote about her love for her country and for the Legion’s leader, her “*Căpitan*” (Captain) – Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899-1938). The diary contained her prayers to die a “Christian death,” and reflected on how heroically other Legionaries had died in the past.³

The crowd stood to attention and gave a fascist-style salute when Maria’s body was carried out of the house, following the coffin down to the nearby Postelnicu Fir Church. Maria’s

¹ According to the 1924 Education Law, girls were obliged to attend four years of primary education and could then opt to study another three or four years before attending a more academically rigorous *gimnaziu* which would prepare them for tertiary study. Ottmar Trașcă, “Aspecte ale educației femeii în România în perioada 1926-1948. Studiu de caz: Liceul de fete “Principesa Ileana” din Cluj-Napoca,” in Ghizela Cosma and Virgiliu Țărău eds., *Condiția femeii în România în secolul XX : studii de caz*, (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002) 103-104.

² Armin Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”: Mișcare socială și organizație politică*, trans. Cornelia and Delia Esianu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006) 357; “Alte rezultate de ieri,” *Bună vestire*, 1/248 (22 Dec 1937): 3.

³ Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, “Maria Cristescu,” *Bună vestire*, 2/270 (23 Jan 1938): 1.

father Ștefan Cristescu was a manager in the county administration and her uncle Father Grigore Cristescu (1895-1961) was a theologian at the University of Bucharest. Fr. Cristescu was an important figure in the Legion, which explains in part why so many Legionaries attended her funeral. Four priests from different Craiovan churches presided over the funeral service. The Craiovan poet and journalist Eugen Constant (1890-1975) spoke alongside one of Maria's school friends, her uncle, and a Miss Săndulescu, who was presumably the leader of Maria's Brotherhood. After leaving the church the funeral procession stopped in front of the offices of *Partidul Totul pentru Țară* (the Everything for the Fatherland Party) – the Legion's official political party – where they gave speeches and held another religious service before continuing on to the cemetery.⁴ The crowd sang “*Imnul Legionarilor căzuți*” (the “Hymn of the Fallen Legionaries”) at the graveside before dispersing quietly.⁵

The theatricality, religiosity, and community spirit displayed at Maria Cristescu's funeral show how fascism transformed the lives of rank and file Legionaries in Romania. Maria was not a particularly important figure in the movement; nor did she die in politicized circumstances. She had only just joined the Legion in fact, and yet her political affiliation dominated and choreographed her funeral. Legionaries gathered around the mourning family and friends like neighbors to help celebrate Maria's life. Their salutes, marching, and office buildings paid tribute to her, and Legionary connections brought in local celebrities and extra priests who would otherwise would not have bothered with the funeral of a school girl. Legionary propaganda overwhelmed this private family celebration, showing how completely membership of the

⁴ Legionaries contested elections as *Grupul Corneliu Zelea Codreanu* (the Corneliu Zelea Codreanu Group, 1927-1931), *Garda de Fier* (the Iron Guard, 1933), and *Partidul Totul pentru Țară* (the Everything for the Fatherland Party, 1934-1938). *Totul pentru Țara* literally means “Everything for the Country,” but I follow the translation of Ion Moța, who rendered it in French as “*Tout pour la patrie.*” Ion Moța, *Corespondența cu Welt-Dienst (1934-1936)* (Munich: Colecția Europa, 2000) 45.

⁵ This account of Cristescu's funeral is based on National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (Henceforth: CNSAS), Fond Cristescu Grigore, I.258626, f. 103-105.

Legion could take over an individual's life, and how family ties were impacted when people chose to join an extremist political party such as the Legion.

Led by the charismatic Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Legionaries combined political assassination, street violence, and anti-Semitic hate speech with romantic nationalism, religious symbolism, and charity projects. They claimed that they followed a “religion,” not a political party, and they described the Legion as a “spiritual” movement whose aim was to create a “new man” through suffering and sacrifice.⁶ They “molded Legionary character” by attending weekly meetings and occasional religious services, following strict disciplinary procedures, going on long marches, performing voluntary labor at summer work camps, paying weekly dues, and internalizing Legionary doctrine through singing, speeches and small group discussions.

What does it mean to say that Maria Cristescu was a fascist? Was she horrified at the decadence of modernity and eager to stimulate a “cultural rebirth” by worshipping the nation, a position that Roger Griffin suggests lay at the heart of fascist ideology?⁷ Did she feel frustrated because she thought that Jews⁸ were limiting her employment opportunities, or was she threatened by the thought of Communist workers overthrowing capitalism?⁹ Was she addicted to

⁶ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* (Bucharest: Editura Scara, 1999) 240.

⁷ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Cf. Modris Eksteins *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989); Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006).

⁸ In a long tradition occasioned by scholarly usage of emic terms when categorizing people in twentieth-century Europe, I use the words “Jew” and “Romanian” in the same way as they are used in my consistently racist sources. I in no way wish to endorse these usages but know of no alternative that retains the embodying meaning that these terms had to contemporaries.

⁹ Historians who see anti-Semitism as a core element of fascism in East-Central Europe include Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). For a more balanced view, see William Brustein, *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Few historians consider anti-Communism to have been foundational to fascism, but most consider that it played an important role. See John-Paul Himka, “The Importance of the Situational Element in East Central European Fascism,” *East Central Europe* 37/2-3 (2010): 353-358; and Gilbert D. Allardyce, “The Political Transition of Jacques Doriot,” in George L. Mosse ed., *International Fascism: New Thoughts and New Approaches* (London: SAGE Publications, 1979) 273-294.

paramilitary violence?¹⁰ Or bedazzled by the spectacle of uniforms, marches, rallies, salutes, and singing?¹¹ Historians have suggested all of these options as essential elements of interwar European fascism. As they look for an answer to the question “what was fascism?” observers have made fascism into a category of analysis to describe a wide variety of individuals, movements, and regimes, each arising in fundamentally different circumstances. They lump Mussolini’s transformation of Italy through corporatist labor relations, festivals, building projects, women’s organizations, educational reforms, and mass media, together with the terroristic violence, pogroms, church services, and emperor-worship of the Black Hundreds in Russia.

Claud Sutton, a member of the British Union of Fascists, remarked in 1937 that fascism was “an inconvenient and awkward term to describe the world movement that has emerged in our time,” but he acknowledged that its widespread popular usage made the word impossible to avoid. Aware of his movement’s affinities with similar groups abroad, Sutton suggested that fascism was “an underlying similarity of outlook that can be detected in various modern national movements, and that may be seen to emerge with a kind of necessity from the situation in which our European culture finds itself at present.”¹² Unlike the followers of other “-isms,” – such as communism or liberalism – fascists had no clearly articulated ideology or intellectual system.¹³

¹⁰ Key works on the importance of paramilitary violence to fascism include Adrian Lyttelton, “Fascism and Violence in Post-War Italy: Political Strategy and Social Conflict,” in Wolfgang Mommsen Gerhard Hirschfeld eds., *Social Protest, Violence, and Terror in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982) 257-274; Richard Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany, 1925-1934* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristum und in der deutschen SA* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002).

¹¹ Key works on the importance of spectacle to fascism include Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, trans. Keith Botsford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

¹² Claud Sutton, “An Interpretation of ‘Fascism’,” in Roger Griffin ed., *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (London: Arnold, 1998) 257-258.

¹³ Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Knopf, 2004) 16.

Instead, they built movements and regimes by using tactics, words, and symbols that came to be recognized all over Europe as fascist. Sutton went on to explain that “European culture” meant different things in each European country, and that fascism manifested differently according to distinct local circumstances. In Romania, Legionary ideologues more frequently used terms like “nationalist” to describe their movement, but they presented the Legion, Italian Fascism, and German Nazism as part of a global network of like-minded parties.¹⁴

Dissatisfied with seeing fascism as simply a loose network of similarly inclined movements and regimes, scholars have tried to isolate common elements of the Italian, German, and sometimes other cases in a search for a “fascist minimum.”¹⁵ Contemporaries used fascism as a category of practice, but when scholars use it to classify movements and regimes the problem then becomes “was *x* fascist” or simply “ultra-nationalist”? These were fluid terms in interwar period; contemporaries often used them interchangeably and certainly not as clearly defined political typologies.¹⁶ To make matters more complicated, scholars describe similar movements as “para-fascist,” “authoritarian,” or “neo-fascist.” In this dissertation I ask what “being a fascist” meant in practice. More precisely, I examine how rank and file Legionaries experienced and articulated their political affiliations as members of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, and more broadly as part of a global fascist network. In doing so, I hope to recover fascism as a social category that had practical consequences for those who embraced it. Fascism was social because its meanings were forged through relationships amongst Legionaries; and in

¹⁴ Mihail Polihronade, “‘Garda de Fier’ și statul democrat,” *Axa*, 1/13 (31 May 1933): 1; Vasile Marin, “Extremismul de dreapta,” *Axa*, 2/21 (29 Oct 1933): 1-2; CNSAS, Fond Gârneata Ilie, I.211932, vol. 1, f. 90-92.

¹⁵ On this methodology, see David Baker, “Of Fascism and Idealising Abstractions: Are All Cats Grey?” and Roger Eatwell, “The Nature of Fascism: Or Essentialism by Another Name?” in Roger Griffin ed., *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2006) 69-77, 104-109.

¹⁶ For example, when José Antonio Primo de Rivera declared in 1934 that the Falange was not fascist, he meant that it was not allied politically with Mussolini’s Italy and with other self-identified fascist groups. The fact that the Falangists incorporated most of those elements which scholars would now consider “fascist” was irrelevant as far as he was concerned. Stanley Payne, *Falange* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961) 78.

Legionaries' interactions with the state, other political parties, families and friends, and fascist groups abroad. Furthermore, official repression, uniforms, and the frequency of Legionary activities meant that becoming a Legionary meant far more than giving intellectual assent to a given ideology. It changed a person's everyday activities and relationships in profound ways.

With several important exceptions, most students of comparative fascism focus on the Italian and German regimes as ideal cases, describing movements that did not come to power as “failed” or “unsuccessful” fascisms, and sometimes as “minor” movements.¹⁷ But prior to 1939, fascists in every European country except for Italy and Germany were members of social movements – not regimes.¹⁸ I use the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as *Garda de Fier* (the Iron Guard), as a case study because it was one of the largest and most enduring fascist movements in interwar Europe.¹⁹ At the time of Maria Cristescu's funeral, roughly 1.79 percent of ethnic Romanians were card-carrying members of the Legion – significant numbers given that, as Michael Mann notes, “these are higher percentages than the 1.3 percent attained by German Nazism and the 1.0 percent by the Italian PNF before their seizures of power.”²⁰ As does Alberto Melucci, I understand a social movement to involve “the mobilization of a collective actor (i) defined by solidarity, (ii) engaged in a conflict with an adversary for the appropriation and control of resources valued by both of them, (iii) and whose action entails a breach of the

¹⁷ For example, *ibid.*, 68-75; Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995) 290-327; Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (New York: Allen Lane, 1996) 195-244.

¹⁸ Assuming that one does not classify Miklós Horthy's Regency in Hungary (1920-1944), Austria's *Väterlandische Front* (1934-1938), Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal (1933-1974), or Francisco Franco's dictatorship in Spain (1936-1975) as fascist.

¹⁹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu formed the Legion of the Archangel Michael as an ultra-nationalist social movement in 1927. He established the Iron Guard as a paramilitary subsidiary of the Legion in 1930. The Iron Guard was banned in 1933 and has not officially existed since, but it continues to be a popular way of referring to the Legion.

²⁰ Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 237. According to the *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1937-1938* (Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1939), the population of Romania in 1937 was 19,535,398 people. Census data from 1930 estimated that 73 percent of the population was ethnically Romanian. Extrapolating the 1930 percentage into 1937, this gives a total of 15,237,610 ethnic Romanians in 1937.

limits of compatibility of the system within which the action itself takes place.”²¹ Legionaries expressed solidarity with each other and with fascist movements abroad, their movement was created and sustained through conflict, and their opinions and methods situated them outside of the legal and cultural mores governing Romanian political life.

Chronologically, the dissertation focuses on the period 1922-1938. A violent anti-Semitic student movement emerged in Romania’s universities at the end of 1922, which identified itself with anti-Semitic and fascist movements elsewhere in Europe and was supported by a loose but self-conscious network of ultra-nationalists scattered throughout the country. Ultra-nationalists simply called themselves “nationalists” or “anti-Semites,” but those labels risk confusing them with those mainstream politicians who articulated both nationalism and anti-Semitism as an ordinary part of Romanian politics. Ultra-nationalists shared the nationalism and anti-Semitism of Romanian society but they articulated these ideas in terms of an extremist ideology that most of their compatriots were not prepared to accept. Examining the five years before Codreanu founded the Legion sheds light on how contemporaries understood the symbols, vocabulary, and arguments that Legionaries used; and the fact that the Legion existed five years before “fascism” became a popular term to describe certain social movements in Europe helps clarify how fascism changed what it meant to be a Legionary.

In 1927 former student activists and ultra-nationalists formed the Legion of the Archangel Michael under the leadership of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Their movement grew steadily during the 1930s, until government repression in 1938 left Codreanu and many of the Legion’s other leaders dead, and the rest in prison or in exile. The Legion became an underground organization for the next two years, after which it suddenly took power in a coup

²¹ Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 30.

together with General Ion Antonescu (1882-1946), ruling for five months before the general destroyed the Legion in response to a failed Legionary rebellion against the regime. I end the dissertation in 1938 because the implications of fascism changed significantly after Codreanu's death. Changes in Romanian politics and the balance of power in Europe transformed the Legion first into an underground terrorist organization and then into a ruling party, radically altering what it meant to be a Legionary from this point on. Legionaries were now hunted fugitives even while the country's leaders were drawing steadily closer to political alliances with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

After the Romanian Communist Party came to power in 1946, high school and university students who had been children at the time of Codreanu's death formed Legionary groups of their own. They adapted the vocabulary, ideology, and organizational structure of the old movement to the conditions of anti-communist guerrilla warfare.²² These groups reinterpreted the events of the interwar period to suit Cold War realities. Denying the anti-Semitism and hooliganism of the interwar period, they reframed the Legion as a spiritual movement aimed at fighting communism. For many of them, the first contact they had with veteran Legionaries was in communist prisons. Other former Legionaries entered the Romanian Orthodox Church as priests, monks, or nuns, using monasteries as a place where they could develop a *post facto* Legionary spirituality.²³ Arrested as members of what they understood as a spiritual movement, young Legionaries cultivated their prayer lives while in prison. Many had remarkable religious experiences behind bars, and their testimonies inspired a large body of hagiographical writings in

²² Lăcrămioara Stoenescu, *De pe băncile școlii în închisorile comuniste* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2010); Mariana Conovici, Silvia Iliescu, and Octavian Silvestru eds. *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul: Mișcarea Legionară în documente de istorie orală* (București: Humanitas, 2008) 344-381; Tiberiu Tănase, *Fețele monedei: Mișcarea Legionară între 1941-1948* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2010) 206-235; Șerban Milcoveanu, *Partidul Comunist și Mișcarea Legionară în epoca fierbinte, iulie 1945-iulie 1948* (Bucharest: Editura Crater, 1996).

²³ Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2005); George Enache, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005) 297-400.

post-Socialist Romania and abroad.²⁴ Stories about the suffering and holiness of these political prisoners added legitimacy to the idea that the Legion was a movement based around anti-communism and Orthodox spirituality.

Serious discussions of fascism became taboo in Socialist Romania, and the relevant archives were closed to most researchers until the mid-1990s with the result that the ghosts of the Legion of the Archangel Michael still haunt Romanian post-Socialism today. As Romanians searched for a non-Socialist heritage during the 1990s, many intellectuals looked back to the interwar period as a golden age. Editura Humanitas, the largest and most prominent publishing house in Romania, has led the way in recent years in resurrecting a number of interwar intellectuals who were well known for their Legionary sympathies, including Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran, and Petre Țuțea. Historians such as George Enache write of the “tragedy” that such a promising movement as the Legion could have ended so badly just because Legionaries “misunderstood” Orthodox Christianity.²⁵ Given that the Holocaust as a Romanian phenomenon was only officially recognized in 2004, and is still considered a dubious myth by many people, it is perhaps unsurprising that a great deal of ambiguity surrounds the Legion’s history.²⁶

The right-wing *Mișcarea Pentru România* (Movement for Romania, 1990-1995) that arose around Marian Munteanu (1962-) during and after the *Minerada* riots of 1990 was

²⁴ For example, Gheorghe Andreica, *Reeducările comuniste* (Constanța: Ex Ponto, nd); Dumitru Bordeianu, *Mărturisiri din mlaștină disperării: cele văzute, traite și suferite, la Pitești și Gherla* (Paris: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 1992); Nistor Chioreanu, *Lacrima prigoanei: din lupta legionarelor române* (Timișoara: Editura Gorian, 1994); Ioana Iancovescu, *Părintele Voicescu: un duhovnic al cetății* (Bucharest: Editura Bizantină, nd); Monahul Moise, *Sfântul închisorilor* (Alba Iulia: Asociația Synaxis, 2007); Alexander Rațiu, *Memoria închisorii Sighet* (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 1999); Nicolae Trifoiu, *Studentul Valeriu Gafencu: sfântul închisorilor din România* (Cluj-Napocă: Editura Napocă Star, 2003); Octavian Voinea, *Masacrarea studențimii române în închisorile de la Pitești, Gherla și Aiud* (Bucharest: Majadahonda, 1996).

²⁵ Enache, *Ortodoxie și putere politică*, 490f.

²⁶ Roland Clark, “New Models, New Questions: Historiographical Approaches to the Romanian Holocaust,” *European Review of History – Revue européenne d’histoire*, 19/2 (2012): 257-274.

modeled on the interwar Legion, and acknowledged sharing certain affinities with it.²⁷ Similarly, George Becali's (1958-) *Partidul Noua Generație* (Party of the New Generation, 2000-Present) uses Legionary slogans and images in its political propaganda.²⁸ Numerically more powerful than Becali's movement, is Vadim Tudor's (1949-) *Partidul România Mare* (Greater Romania Party, 1991-Present), which draws on the same mix of religious fundamentalism and anti-Semitism that the Legion popularized in the interwar period. Even though Tudor does not explicitly reference Legionary history in his propaganda, his political agenda draws on many of the same themes.²⁹ Neo-fascist movements such as *Noua Dreaptă* (the New Right, 2000-Present) eulogize the Legion, and claim to be a continuation of the movement. Although numerically small, the New Right is very vocal and conspicuous, especially in contesting the legality of homosexuality.³⁰ Contemporary misunderstandings about what it meant to be a fascist make this a particularly urgent question for Romania's public sphere as well as for scholars of European fascism.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

In his *Cărticică șefului de cuib* (*Little Handbook for Nest Leaders*, 1933), Corneliu Zelea Codreanu explained that whenever Legionaries gathered for weekly meetings in their nests, they should pray for the victory of the Legion, sing Legionary songs, speak about the dead, think of the Captain – Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, swear never to betray the Legion, share news, and hold discussions on set topics.³¹ But is that what really happened? Legionaries were obliged to carry

²⁷ Vladimir Tismăneanu and Dan Pavel, "Romania's Mystical Revolutionaries: The Generation of Angst and Adventure Revisited," *East European Politics and Societies*, 8/3 (1994): 402-439.

²⁸ Mihail Neamțu, "Viciul mesianismului politic," *Dilema veche*, 3/126 (2006).

²⁹ Grigore Pop-Eleches, "Romania's Politics of Dejection," *Journal of Democracy*, 12/3 (2001): 156-169.

³⁰ Shannon Woodcock, "Gay Pride as Violent Containment in Romania: A Brave New Europe," *Sextures*, 1/1 (2009): 1-17.

³¹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticică șefului de cuib* (Bucharest: Editura Bucovina, 1940) 12-21.

this booklet with them whenever they went on propaganda trips, and yet the police did not confiscate a copy of it every time they arrested Legionary propagandists.³² To understand the practical implications of fascism in interwar Romania, historians need to know what Legionaries did, not just what they said. Questions about the daily practice of Legionarism are best resolved through microhistorical research into the everyday lives of rank and file Legionaries.

The history of everyday life, or *Alltagsgeschichte* as it is known in Germany, emerged as a distinct historical methodology in the mid-1970s, pioneered by historians such as Alf Lüdtke and Hans Medick. Disillusioned with the structuralism of German social history, the practitioners of *Alltagsgeschichte* hoped that “by exploring social history in its experiential or subjective dimensions, conventional distinctions between the “public” and the “private” might be transcended, and a way of making the elusive connection between the political and cultural realms finally be found.”³³ Alf Lüdtke presented *Alltagsgeschichte* as a form of history from below that pays a great deal of attention to where and amongst whom something happened, was thought, or believed.³⁴ *Alltagsgeschichte* focuses on repetitive activities rather than epoch-making events. Methodologically akin to anthropology, it is most successful only when sufficient information exists to allow for “thick description,” which involves unpacking enough of the cultural context to explain why and how an event was meaningful to its participants.³⁵

The brief popularity of *Alltagsgeschichte* was quickly swept aside in the 1990s by the “cultural turn” in history writing. Like *Alltagsgeschichte*, the new cultural history was also

³² National Historical Archives of Romania (Henceforth: ANIC), Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 87.

³³ Geoff Eley, “Labor History, Social History, “Alltagsgeschichte”: Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday – a New Direction for German Social History?” *The Journal of Modern History* 61/2 (1989): 315.

³⁴ Alf Lüdtke, “Introduction: What is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?” in Alf Lüdtke ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 3-40.

³⁵ Hans Medick, ““Missionaries in a Rowboat”? Ethnological Ways of Knowing as a Challenge to Social History,” in *ibid.*, 50-53. Cf. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

concerned with reading history from below through Clifford Geertz's notion of "thick description."³⁶ But whereas cultural historians look for commonly-accepted meanings that they can use to characterize a society or a historical period, historians of *Alltag* emphasize the variety and discontinuities in life. *Alltagsgeschichte* has undergone something of a revival in recent years among historians of Central Europe working in the United States.³⁷ According to a recent manifesto by several of its practitioners, the new histories of everyday life "locate stories in particular lived realities; they emphasize the agency of human actors in their daily lives; and they dwell in the stories of these individuals as a way to narrate that history."³⁸ Even though many of the most well-known histories of everyday life are interested in how individuals relate to state policies, historians have also fruitfully used similar approaches to investigate the involvement of local actors in protest movements.³⁹

Studying everyday life helps break down reified analytical categories and reveals that they are actually contingent upon the choices of individuals. Using the frame of everyday life, Jeremy King and Emily Greble Balić have demonstrated that ethnicity can be chosen or

³⁶ Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and the essays by Ronald Grigor Suny, Patrick Brantlinger and Richard Handler in *American Historical Review* 107/5 (2002): 1475-1520.

³⁷ Paul Steege, Andrew Stuart Bergerson, Maureen Healy, and Pamela E. Swett, "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *The Journal of Modern History* 80/2 (2008): 358-378; Maria Bucur, Ragna Gavrilova, Wendy Goldman, Maureen Healy, Kate Lebow, and Mark Pittaway, "Six Historians in Search of *Alltagsgeschichte*," *Aspasia* 1/3 (2009): 189-212.

³⁸ Steege, Bergerson, Healy and Swett, "The History of Everyday Life," 361. Some examples of the new history of everyday life include Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Bucur and Wingfield eds., *Staging the Past*; Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³⁹ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*; William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Suzanne Desan, "The Role of Women in Religious Riots during the French Revolution," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22/3 (1989): 451-468; Alf Lütke, "What happened to the "fiery red glow"? Workers' experiences and German fascism," in Lütke ed., *The History of Everyday Life*, 198-251; Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Beth Roy, *Some Trouble with Cows: Making Sense of Social Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

conferred during tumultuous times; Maureen Healy has shown that in wartime Vienna, the “effectiveness and viability [of the state] were determined by those who lived within it;” and Lara Putnam has suggested that “myriad intimate encounters, patterned in common ways, create collective change.”⁴⁰ In the case of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, the study of everyday life shows how some of the defining moments of Legionary history came about in unexpected ways. Chapter five, for example shows how Codreanu’s battle with the police prefect of Iași, Constantin Manciu, in 1924 was brought to court by the parents of Codreanu’s adolescent followers who charged that Manciu had been abusing their children in custody.⁴¹ Chapter nine reveals that Legionaries received the support of a major ultra-nationalist daily in 1933 because of a pricing dispute between the newspaper and the street vendors.⁴² And in chapter twelve I argue that the frequent Legionary rhetoric about elitism, discipline and punctuality was a reaction to complaints by nest leaders that their members were always late to meetings and failed to pay their dues on time.⁴³

Rather than continuing to speak of “the Legion” as a monolithic historical actor, the history of everyday life allows us to treat it as a diverse collection of people who were united in a common cause, but for personal reasons and bringing different skills and life experiences to the movement. The examples I use are drawn from hundreds of biographical accounts of Legionary activism collected by the Romanian police or recorded by former Legionaries later in life, and thousands of reports about fascist gatherings and conflicts over a sixteen year period. Each

⁴⁰ Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Emily Greble Balić, “When Croatia needed Serbs: Nationalism and Genocide in Sarajevo, 1941-1942,” *Slavic Review* 68/1 (2009): 116-138; Lara Putnam, *The Company they Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) 10; Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 24.

⁴¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 1-21.

⁴² CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 2, f. 343.

⁴³ ANIC – Central, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Vol. 2, Dosar 109/1934, f. 4-32.

illuminates different aspects of Legionary life. Local incidents clarify how macrohistorical forces shaped individual experiences of fascism, and how rank and file militants helped build the movement as a whole.

1.2 A NOTE ON SOURCES

My research relies on a varied collection of sources, each of which has its own benefits and drawbacks. Police reports held at the National Historical Archives of Romania (ANIC) and reproduced at the United States Holocaust Museum (USHMM) are my most important sources. These sources have only recently become available, and were not available to earlier historians. They were collected by *Siguranța* (secret police) agents attending fascist gatherings, from anonymous informers who had access even to Codreanu's most intimate circles, and by local policemen making enquiries around their villages about anyone suspected of being a Legionary sympathizer.⁴⁴ Police reports can be valuable first-hand accounts of Legionary activities, but they can also contain unsubstantiated rumors about things that never happened. Sometimes the report indicates whether the information was verified or not, but usually one has to make an educated guess about how reliable the informant was.⁴⁵ The sheer quantity of the material – hundreds of thousands of pages – means that there is a lot of repetition, and often two policemen will report on the same event so it is usually possible to cross-reference information when in doubt.

Other factors also meant that some things were simply not recorded. Policemen were sent to look for specific information and often came back empty handed. In response to warnings from his Regional Inspector about student violence during a proposed congress in 1933, the chief

⁴⁴ The Romanian secret police was established in 1907 and was known as the *Siguranța* until 1948 when it was reorganized as the *Securitate*. For the history and structure of the *Siguranța* during the interwar period, see Alin Spânu, *Istoria serviciilor de informații/contrainformații românești în perioadă 1919-1945* (Iași: Demiurg, 2010).

⁴⁵ This aspect of the historian's craft is eloquently discussed in Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 96-125.

of police in Cernăuți replied, “Members of the Iron Guard from this region have not received any instructions about a congress in Suceava, nor have they carried out any propaganda to this end.”⁴⁶ These sorts of affirmations are common in the correspondence between Bucharest and regional police stations. It is impossible to know whether the hierarchy was poorly informed about Legionary plans, if local policemen were simply too lazy or overworked to investigate properly, or if a policeman’s sympathies for the Legion caused him to lie to his superiors. Anti-Semitism was also a problem. Policemen were frequently anti-Semitic and had a propensity to assume that Jews were troublemakers or communists, which made the authorities less likely to properly investigate anti-Semitic violence.⁴⁷

Police reports are also found at the National Council for the *Securitate* Archives (CNSAS), but here they are most frequently part of personal files compiled by *Securitate* (communist-era secret police) officers using *Siguranța* investigations. These files were used in court cases or else to provide background checks on suspect individuals being kept under surveillance. They contain informers’ reports, surveillance transcripts, and *Securitate* interrogations, as well as documents from before 1948.⁴⁸ The organization of these files makes it easier to compile detailed biographical information on Legionary activists, but once again the information is not always reliable. Andrei Ionescu, for example, who was one of the Legion’s most valuable organizers between 1927 and 1933, told his communist interrogators in 1947 that he had joined the Legion because of the socialist elements to its program and had spent long

⁴⁶ USHMM, Fond Ministry of the Interior – Diverse, Reel #1 (RG25.023M), f. 203.

⁴⁷ Katherine Sorrels, “Ethnicity as Evidence of Subversion: National Stereotypes and the Secret Police Investigations of Jews in Interwar Bessarabia,” *Transversal* 3/2 (2002); ANIC – Central, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 43/1924, f. 1-2.

⁴⁸ On the functioning of the *Securitate* during this period, see Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii: o istorie a Securității (1948-1964)* (Iași: Polirom, 2008); Mihai Șerban, *De la Serviciul Special de Informații la Securitatea Poporului, 1944-1948* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2009).

hours convincing Codreanu that Marxism was compatible with Legionary ideology.⁴⁹ Ionescu's claim that the Legion was a pseudo-communist organization appears frequently on the lips of former Legionaries during *Securitate* interrogations. As in German National-Socialism, there were certainly socialist elements in Legionary ideology, but Ionescu's presentation of the Legion is difficult to believe given that anti-communism was one of the movement's core public stances. Patterns of convenient untruths in such confessional documents are regular enough that researchers can easily recognize them.

Similar problems emerge when one consults memoir accounts or oral histories from former Legionaries, usually designed to appeal to the prejudices of Cold War-era or post-Socialist audiences. They omit instances of anti-Semitism while emphasizing themes such as religiosity or the persecution of Legionaries at the hands of the police. Like the life-stories that appear in *Securitate* files, these memoirs are nonetheless useful for the incidental details that they contain. Sofia Cristescu, for example, writes that a male colleague who was listening to the radio while she was cleaning up after a meal told her that Codreanu had been killed by the police. Taken together with many similar accounts, her story tells us that when Legionaries gathered together it was the women who cooked and cleaned while the men relaxed and socialized – not an unusual division of labor in interwar Romania.⁵⁰ The structure of the texts can also be revealing. For example, Father Ștefan Pălăghiță's 1951 book described joining the Legion as “conversion,” which involved “a process in which a new life is grafted into the old one.”⁵¹ Conversion narratives are common in religious autobiographies, and if the Legion was indeed a religious movement then we would expect to find frequent examples of conversion

⁴⁹ CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 11, f. 46-49.

⁵⁰ Sofia Cristescu Dinescu, “Cetățui sfârâmate,” in Nistor Chioreanu ed., *Lacrima prigoanei: din lupta Legionarelor române*, (Timișoara: Editura Gorian, 1994) 10.

⁵¹ Ștefan Pălăghiță, *Istoria mișcării Legionare scrisă de un Legionar: Garda de Fier spre reînvierea României* (Bucharest: Roza Vânturilor, 1993) 83.

narratives in the life-stories that former Legionaries told their interrogators or wrote down in their memoirs.⁵² In fact, *almost none* of the hundreds of autobiographical documents now available contain conversion stories – not even Fr. Pălăghiță writes about how he “converted” to the Legion!

Earlier studies of the Legion relied upon printed materials such as newspapers, pamphlets, posters, calendars and booklets. I discuss the production and distribution of these materials in detail in chapter nine. Such sources are extremely useful for analyzing Legionary ideology and for the information that they contain about fascist gatherings and activities. Other sources I have drawn upon for information about the Legion include non-Legionary newspapers, trial records, membership lists, shopping lists, intercepted letters, administrative documents from local councils, records from the military, regional school inspectors and the sub-inspectorate of pre-military training, and the records of factories, schools, theatres, charities and cultural organizations. So long as they are read together, these sources allow for a reliable account of Legionaries’ everyday activities.

1.3 HISTORIANS AND THE FASCISTS

Books stand better on the shelf when they are supported by other books, and my story relies on the laborious work of earlier historians on other aspects of the Legionary movement. The first histories of Romanian fascism were written during the 1930s by Legionaries or by sympathetic foreign observers. These are unashamedly propaganda texts, and are mostly interesting as

⁵² Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Heather Coleman, “Becoming a Russian Baptist: Conversion Narratives and Social Experience,” *Russian Review*, 61/1 (2002): 94-112; D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

examples of how fascists presented themselves.⁵³ They were followed by much better documented but also polemical texts written first by men working for General Ion Antonescu to justify his suppression of the Legion and then by Jewish survivors of the Holocaust cataloguing anti-Semitic atrocities in Romania.⁵⁴ Early histories written by Romanian communists also had their biases. Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's 1944 study argued that Codreanu's exploitation of religious ideas and rituals deceived peasants and adolescents into believing that God wanted them to save their country through violence.⁵⁵ Early communist histories written under the auspices of *Partidul Comunist Român* (the Romanian Communist Party) emphasized the Legion's lack of a program and its opportunism in the face of a disorganized opposition, suggesting that individuals enlisted in the hope that the movement would bring them social and political influence.⁵⁶ Finally, Mihai Fătu and Ion Spălățelu's 1971 study labeled the Legion a "terrorist movement" and said that the Legion had no popular basis in Romania but was an "instrument of German Nazism," a position that became the standard line of the PCR until 1989, when the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu fell from power.⁵⁷

During the 1960s, historians of the Legion writing in the West emphasized what they saw as "pre-modern" elements and decided that it was substantially different from other fascist

⁵³ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*; Mihail Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă* (Bucharest: Tipografia Ziarului Universul, 1936); Bănică Dobre, *Crucificații: zile trăite pe frontul spaniol* (Bucharest: I. N. Copuzeanu, 1937); Victor P. Gârnicianu, *Din lumea Legionară* (Bucharest: Rânduiala, 1937); Corneliua Zelea Codreanu, *Însemnari de la Jilava* (Bucharest: Editura Majadahonda, 1995); Julius Evola, *Naționalism și asceză [La tragedia della Guardia di ferro*, 1996], trans. Florin Dumitrescu (Alba Iulia: Fronde, 1998); Lorenzo Baracchi Tua, *Garda de Fier*, trans. Cesar Balaban (Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 1940); Paul Guiraud, *Codreanu et la Garde de Fer* (Paris: Francisme, 1940).

⁵⁴ *Pe marginea prăpastiei: 21-23 ianuarie 1941*, 2 vols. (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului Imprimeria Centrală, 1941); Matatias Carp ed., *Cartea neagră: Fapte și documente: suferințele evreilor din România în timpul dictaturii fasciste, 1940-1944*, 3 vols. (Bucharest: Socec, 1946-1948).

⁵⁵ Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi* [1945] (Bucharest: Editura 100+1 Grammar, 1996) 33-40.

⁵⁶ A comprehensive treatment of communist historiography on the Legion can be found in Mihai Chioveanu, *Fețele fascismului: Politică, ideologie și scrisul istoric în secolul XX* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2005) 310-317.

⁵⁷ Mihai Fătu and Ion Spălățelu, *Garda de fier: Organizație teroristă de tip fascist* [1971] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1980) 10.

movements because it came from the “periphery” of Europe. These historians focused on the involvement of Orthodox priests and the apocalyptic religious rhetoric of Legionaries, which they juxtaposed with stories about barbaric violence and corruption. In his influential 1965 essay, Eugen Weber wrote that “whereas Western fascist movements were generally a-religious or antireligious, [Codreanu’s] was a religious revival, or, perhaps more correctly, a revivalist movement with strong religious overtones.”⁵⁸ Weber compared the Legion to “novel revivalist churches” in Africa, which used religious innovations to establish a new social and political order.⁵⁹ Another historian even justified separating the Legion from the study of other fascist movements on the dubious grounds that in Romania the Legion developed “within the framework of a completely Orientalized way of life,” and “as a result of Oriental despotism.”⁶⁰ The account by Nicholas Nagy-Talavera was likewise centered in isolated villages and recounted the author’s childhood awe in the face of towering Legionaries dressed as *haiduci* (bandits) with turkey feathers in their hats, riding white horses and prophesying a new spiritual age.⁶¹

Traian Sandu has recently noted that while the Legion was undeniably part of mainstream European fascism, it is important to keep in mind that Romania was not as industrialized or as economically and militarily powerful as Italy, Germany and France, which are often studied as exemplary of the fascist phenomenon as a whole. Legionaries adapted their tactics and ideology to appeal to a barely literate rural audience, even if the most committed activists were students

⁵⁸ Eugen Weber, “Romania,” in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber eds., *The European Right: A Historical Profile*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) 534. Zeev Barbu and Stephen Fischer-Galati both also followed this line of interpretation. Zeev Barbu, “Rumania,” in S. J. Woolf ed., *European Fascism*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968) 146-166; Stephen Fischer-Galati, “Fascism in Romania,” in Peter F. Sugar ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States 1918-1945*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1971) 113.

⁵⁹ Weber, “Romania,” 523f.

⁶⁰ Emanuel Turczynski, “The Background of Romanian Fascism,” in Peter F. Sugar ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States 1918-1945*, Santa Barbara, (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1971) 102, 104.

⁶¹ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970).

and middle-class professionals.⁶² The uniqueness of East-Central European fascisms becomes immediately obvious when one compares the Legion to right-wing peasant movements in France, such as Henry Dorgère's *Comités de défense paysanne* (1927-1934) or Joseph Bilger's *Bauernbund* (1924-1935), which never faced the same levels of difficulty that the Legionaries encountered when doing propaganda or organizing members scattered throughout isolated villages.⁶³ According to Sandu, the unique elements of East-Central European fascisms makes these movements particularly useful test cases for scholars interested in defining "generic fascism" or in describing a "fascist minimum."⁶⁴

Refusing to orientalize Romanian fascism does not mean we should ignore the fact that it took place in East-Central Europe but it does force us to think seriously about what the core elements of Legionarism were and to hesitate before locating them in exotic or irrational customs.⁶⁵ The most useful of the histories written within the "fascist peripheries" paradigm was Bela Vago's *The Shadow of the Swastika* (1975), which used the records from the British Foreign Office to analyze fascist movements in Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Vago was less interested in the seemingly exotic elements of Romanian fascism than in the reactions of senior Romanian politicians to extremist violence and anti-Semitism. His history portrayed the Legion as a destabilizing force within an increasingly dysfunctional democracy, arguing that the

⁶² Traian Sandu, "A Model of Fascism in European Agrarian Peripheries: The Romanian Case," in Dietmar Müller and Angela Harre eds., *Transforming Rural Societies: Agrarian Property and Agrarianism in East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2011) 204-222.

⁶³ Robert Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgère's Greenshirts and the Crises of French Agriculture, 1929-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁶⁴ Traian Sandu, "Introduction: Le new consensus sur le fascisme est-il adapté à l'Europe centre-orientale ?" in Traian Sandu ed., *Vers un profil convergent des fascismes? "Nouveau consensus" et religion politique en Europe central* (Paris: Cahiers de la Nouvelle Europe, 2010) 9-26.

⁶⁵ On the usefulness of the notion of a specifically "East-Central European fascism" and on the comparative method in general, see the reflections by Constantin Iordachi, Philip Morgan, Roger Griffin, Andreas Umland, John-Paul Himka, Mark Biondich, Stein Ugelvik Larsen and Armin Heinen in *East Central Europe* 37 (2010): 331-371.

inability of Romanian officials to control Legionary violence weakened their authority and eventually cost them their hold on power.⁶⁶

Rejecting the assertion that there was anything unusual or peripheral about the Legion, in *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien: Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation* (*The Legion of the Archangel Michael in Romania: Social Movement and Political Organization*, 1986) Armin Heinen argued persuasively that it was a fascist social movement comparable to German Nazism or Italian Fascism, with a mass following and clear political goals. Drawing primarily on large Legionary libraries and collections assembled by Legionary émigrés in Germany, Heinen documented the growth and social composition of the Legion as carefully as possible, using German diplomatic documents, Legionary memoirs, newspapers and pamphlets. Like Vago, he situated the Legion's history within the context of Romanian interwar politics but insisted that the influence of the Legion on the political system was limited in comparison with that of other authoritarian elements such as King Carol II, who undermined successive governments before establishing himself as a dictator in 1938.⁶⁷ Also focusing on political rivalries, Francisco Veiga used information he gleaned from oral history interviews to portray Codreanu as a political actor with little formal power. He showed how Codreanu's message and tactics mutated to take full advantage of the weaknesses of his opponents and the changing grievances of his followers.⁶⁸

Next to the political story sits one about ideology, and in 1995 the Romanian literary historian Zigu Ornea explained how Romanian intellectuals promoted nationalism in order to gain prestige within an intellectual scene that celebrated the nation and derided Western

⁶⁶ Bela Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936-1939* (Farnborough: Saxon House for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1975).

⁶⁷ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*.

⁶⁸ Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1919-1941: mistica ultranaționalismului*, trans. Marian Ștefănescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993).

modernity.⁶⁹ A significant group of historians from Ernst Nolte to Roger Griffin have argued that at the heart of interwar fascism lay an “anti-modern revolt” catalyzed by the First World War, which made people believe that a new world was necessary and that its apocalypse required the violent purification of Western civilization.⁷⁰ In Romania, ultra-nationalist intellectuals reacted against what they saw as foreign influences entering their society, particularly from France – secularization, liberalism, internationalism, industrialization, and ideas about tolerance, democracy and human rights.⁷¹ A handful of these intellectuals, particularly Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972) and Nae Ionescu (1890-1940), had an enormous influence upon a whole generation of students whom they encouraged to join the Legion. Some of these students became the Legion’s most important ideologues. Through their speeches, pamphlets and journalism they popularized the notion of an anti-modern revolt within educated Legionary circles. There has developed a veritable research-industry into a small group of Nae Ionescu’s disciples known as the “young generation” – including Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran and Constantin Noica – who had

⁶⁹ Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci: extrema dreaptă românească* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995); cf. Zigu Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1980).

⁷⁰ Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian fascism, National Socialism* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1966); George Mosse, “Introduction: The Genesis of Fascism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 1/1 (1966): 1-14; Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Sorin Alexandrescu, “Modernism și antimodernism: din nou, cazul românesc,” in Sorin Antohi ed., *Modernism și antimodernism: noi perspective interdisciplinare*, (Bucharest: Addenda Cuvântul, 2008) 103-160; Stein Larsen, “De-Linking as an Explanation of International Fascism,” *East Central Europe* 37/2-3 (2010): 362-366.

⁷¹ Other useful treatments of this topic include Dumitru Micu, “*Gândirea*” și *Gândirismul* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1975); Gheorghe Epure, “Ortodoxismul Gândirist,” in Dumitru Ghișe and Nicolae Gogonea eds., *Istoria filosofiei românești*, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1980) 676-741; Keith Hitchins, “*Gândirea*: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise,” in Keith Hitchins ed., *Studies on Romanian National Consciousness*, (Pelham, NY: Nagard, 1983) 231-258; Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Irina Livezeanu, “After the Great Union: Generational Tensions, Intellectuals, Modernism, and Ethnicity in Interwar Romania,” in Irina Vianovsky-Mihai ed., *Nation and National Ideology: Past, Present and Prospects*, (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2001) 110-127; Viorel Marineasa, *Tradiție supralicitată, modernitate diortosită: Publicistica lui Nichifor Crainic și a lui Nae Ionescu, la o nouă citire* (Timișoara: Universitate de Vest, 2004).

strong affiliations with the Legion.⁷² Whereas most historians who write about the “young generation” are interested in why these intellectuals joined the Legion, I am more interested in how they influenced what fascism meant to other Legionaries.

Anti-Semitism played a key role in a number of fascist movements in Europe. A number of detailed studies have shown how Jews were marginalized legally and politically in nineteenth century Romania even though a minority of wealthy Jews still wielded considerable influence in finance, business, and in the law and medical professions.⁷³ Radu Ioanid has argued that anti-Semitism was the core ideology of Romanian fascism. Anti-Semitism, he says, was deeply rooted within Romanian culture but suddenly became a substantial political movement in the 1920s.⁷⁴ Irina Livezeanu and others have made the argument about anti-Semitism more sophisticated by suggesting that although it had been a long-standing problem in Romania, the “Jewish Question” became urgent during the 1920s because anti-Semitism was an integral part of the nation-building project that intensified after the First World War.⁷⁵ Rather than portraying

⁷² Matei Calinescu, “The 1927 Generation in Romania: Friendships and Ideological Choices (Mihail Sebastian, Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, Eugène Ionesco, E. M. Cioran),” *East European Politics and Societies*, 15/3 (2001): 649-677; Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Filozofie și naționalism: Paradoxul Noica* (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1998); Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco – L’oubli du fascisme* (Paris: PUF, 2002); Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade: Prizonierul Istoriei* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2003); Alexandru Popescu, *Petre Țuțea: Between Sacrifice and Suicide* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Marta Petreu, *An Infamous Past: E. M. Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005); Philip Vanhaelemeersch, *A Generation “Without Beliefs” and the Idea of Experience in Romania (1927-1934)* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006); Marta Petreu, *Diavolul și ucenicul său: Nae Ionescu - Mihail Sebastian* (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2009); Cristina Adriana Bejan, “The Criterion Association: Friendship, Culture and Fascism in Interwar Bucharest” (PhD Dissertation, University of Oxford, Oxford, 2009).

⁷³ William D. Oldson, *A Providential Antisemitism: Nationalism and Policy in Nineteenth Century Romania* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991); Léon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Anti-Semitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991); Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie (1866-1919): De l’Exclusion à l’Emancipation* (Provence: Éditions de l’Université de Provence, 1978); Andrei Oișteanu, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română: Studiu de imagologie în context Est-Central European* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004).

⁷⁴ Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania*, trans. Peter Heinegg (Irvington, NY: Colombia University Press, 1990); Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000) 5-61.

⁷⁵ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Irina Livezeanu, “Interwar Poland and Romania: The Nationalization of Elites, the Vanishing Middle, and the Problem of Intellectuals,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 22/1-

fascism as the eruption of a centuries-old hatred, Livezeanu joined a large body of scholars who understand fascism as a distinctly modern phenomenon, and as the product of specific changes that rocked European societies after the war.⁷⁶ The dramatic territorial expansion of the Romanian state after 1918 and the nationalization of the bureaucracy and education systems that accompanied it caused the Romanian middle classes to believe that Jews were blocking their opportunities for advancement. In short, Legionaries mobilized because they wanted to appropriate the social and economic power they thought Jews had.

Other historians have investigated how Legionaries transformed their ideology into a movement. Constantin Iordachi argues that messianic ideas about national regeneration found in nineteenth century Romanian nationalism gathered Legionaries around Codreanu as a leader endowed with unique charismatic qualities.⁷⁷ Legionaries called Codreanu “*Căpitanul*” (the Captain), and in 1933 the Legionary activist Ion Banea (1905-1939) wrote: “The Captain! He is a boundary stone; a frontier; a sword reaching between two worlds. He overcomes and destroys the old world through his courage; creating the new world, he gives it life and calls it into the light. ... We love him. We listen to him. We await his orders. We are strong through him. We are grounded in him. Through him we shall have the victory.”⁷⁸ The notion of charisma and the leader-cult has been extensively explored by historians of Nazism such as Martin Kitchen and Ian Kershaw, but Iordachi’s careful reading of Max Weber’s theory of charismatic leadership

4 (1998): 407-430. For similar arguments, cf. William Brustein and Ryan King, “Anti-Semitism as a Response to Perceived Jewish Power: The Cases of Bulgaria and Romania before the Holocaust,” *Social Forces* 83/2 (2004): 691-709; Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-allied Romania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

⁷⁶ For examples of this argument, see Axel Kuhn, *Das faschistische Herrschaftssystem und die moderne Gesellschaft* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1973); Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989); Geoffrey Cocks, “Sick Heil: Self and Illness in Nazi Germany,” *Osiris* 22 (2007): 93-115.

⁷⁷ Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the “Archangel Michael” in Inter-war Romania* (Trondheim: Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004); 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) 316-357.

⁷⁸ Ion Banea, “Capitanul” AXA 2/21 (29 Oct 1933): 1.

allows him to show how charismatic leadership functioned outside of a fascist regime and without the use of radios and mass rallies that promoted the *Führer* image in Nazi Germany.⁷⁹ Whereas other historians associate Legionary mysticism with Romanian Orthodox rituals, Iordachi suggests that Legionaries sacralized nationalist symbols, making them doubly potent by blending God and nation into one social movement.⁸⁰ In his account, Codreanu's charismatic legitimacy drew the Legion together and this same legitimacy was then appropriated by Horia Sima after Codreanu's death.

Valentin Săndulescu argues that however important Codreanu was as a charismatic leader, what really defined the Legion was a coherent ideology of national regeneration focused around the creation of a "new man" and a "new order." He suggests that the Legion was a youth movement, and says that Legionary rhetoric about "old" and "new" was intimately tied into a generational conflict between the country's leaders and a "new generation" that came of age during the First World War.⁸¹ Drawing mostly on the writings of the Legion's major ideologues, Săndulescu shows convincingly that the leadership imposed this regenerative program upon ordinary members through participation in election campaigns and work camps, and that it was

⁷⁹ Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Martin Kitchen, *The Third Reich: Charisma and Community* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008).

⁸⁰ For accounts of Legionary "Orthodox Christianity," see William O. Oldson, "Alibi for Prejudice: Eastern Orthodoxy, the Holocaust, and Romanian Nationalism", *East European Quarterly* 36/3 (2002): 301-313; Paul Shapiro, "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) 136-170; Rebecca Haynes, "Orthodox Rituals of Revolution and Rebirth in Interwar Romania," in L. Peter and M. Rady eds., *Resistance, Rebellion and Revolution in Hungary and Central Europe: Commemorating 1956*, (London: UCL, SSEES, 2008) 129-142.

⁸¹ Valentin Săndulescu, "Fascism and its Quest for the 'New Man': The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement," *Studia Hebraica* 4 (2004): 349-361; Valentin Săndulescu, "Revolutionizing Romania from the Right: The Regenerative Project of the Romanian Legionary Movement and its Failure (1927-1937)," (PhD Dissertation, Central European University, Budapest 2011) 1-3.

at the heart of the public image that the Legion projected through events such as the joint funeral of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin in 1937.⁸²

Asking what Codreanu hoped to achieve through the Legion, Rebecca Haynes argues that his goal was “to construct a ‘parallel society’ that challenged the hegemony of the state and the dominant class of Romanian politicians and Jewish capitalists, while endeavoring to found an alternative and competing raft of economic and social institutions.”⁸³ Haynes focuses on Legionary work camps, businesses, and religious rituals, maintaining that Codreanu desired to establish a new basis for social life free from corruption, profiteering and foreigners.⁸⁴ She suggests that Codreanu hoped that Legionaries would take control of the state as more and more people adopted Legionary values. Unfortunately for Haynes’ model, Codreanu never spoke of a “parallel society,” and her interpretation of some of Codreanu’s circulars is hard to reconcile with other Legionary writings about the elitist nature of Legionary nests or with the crucial role that violence and electoral propaganda played in Legionary propaganda.

Outside of the Romanian context, a number of historians have asked what fascism meant to those who embraced it. Michael Mann’s study of Europe’s six largest fascist social movements suggests that “fascists only embraced more fervently than anyone else the central political icon of our time, the nation-state, together with its ideologies and pathologies.”⁸⁵ Nationalism – or in Mann’s terminology, “nation-statism” – was certainly important for fascists, and Mann doggedly tries to understand why it appealed to some social groups more than others. But just because many non-fascists endorsed nationalism does not mean that fascists were part of

⁸² Valentin Săndulescu, “Sacralised Politics in Action: The February 1937 Burial of the Romanian Legionary Leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2 (2007): 259-269; Valentin Săndulescu, “‘Taming the Body’: Preliminary Considerations Concerning the Legionary Work Camps System (1933-1937),” *Historical Yearbook* 5 (2008): 85-94.

⁸³ Rebecca Haynes, “Work Camps, Commerce, and the Education of the ‘New Man’ in the Romanian Legionary Movement,” *Historical Journal* 51/4 (2008): 944.

⁸⁴ Cf. Haynes, “Orthodox Rituals of Revolution,” 129-142.

⁸⁵ Mann, *Fascists*, 1.

the political mainstream. Their terror tactics, symbolism, and extremist views put them at odds with the political elites in their respective countries. As Juan Linz observes, fascists defined themselves more consistently by criticizing, rejecting, and seeking to overthrow their societies than by proposing a coherent ideology of their own.⁸⁶ Sven Reichardt and others have argued with particular reference to the Italian *Squadristi* (Blackshirts) and the Nazi *Stoßtruppen* (Stormtroopers) that group violence drew fascist youth together and decisively shaped the fascists' image in the public sphere.⁸⁷ Reichardt's research usefully explains these paramilitary groups but not fascism as a whole, and his conclusions cannot be applied to the less violent elements in fascist parties. Others have asked what might have motivated rational people to join fascism, and what role class, gender and participation in other community groups played in stimulating fascist activism.⁸⁸

Fascists placed a strong emphasis on symbols and rituals in their meetings. George Mosse has shown that leisure activities, mass gatherings, sexuality, gender norms, and political symbols developed at the same time as European nationalisms. All of these components of society influenced nationalism, and were influenced by it in such a way that they could be easily

⁸⁶ Juan J. Linz, "Some Notes Toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective," in Walter Laqueur ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 4-5, 15-23.

⁸⁷ Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristismus und in der deutschen SA* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002). Cf. Adrian Lyttelton, "Fascism and Violence in Post-War Italy: Political Strategy and Social Conflict," in Wolfgang Mommsen Gerhard Hirschfeld eds., *Social Protest, Violence, and Terror in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982) 257-274; Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Kevin Passmore, "Boy Scouting for Grown-Ups? Paramilitarism in the *Croix de Feu* and the *Parti Social Francais*," *French Historical Studies* 19/2 (1995): 527-557; Rory Yeomans, "Militant Women, Warrior Men and Revolutionary Personae: The New Ustasha Man and Woman in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 83/4 (2005): 685-732.

⁸⁸ Richard Evans, "German Women and the Triumph of Hitler," *The Journal of Modern History* 48/1 (1976): 123-175; Colin Winston, *Workers and the Right in Spain, 1900-1936* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Rudy Koshar, "From Stammtisch to Party: Nazi Joiners and the Contradictions of Grass Roots Fascism in Weimar Germany," *The Journal of Modern History* 59/1 (1987): 1-24; Detlef Mühlberger, *Hitler's Followers: Studies in the Sociology of the Nazi Movement* (New York: Routledge, 1991); William Brustein, "The 'Red Menace' and the Rise of Italian Fascism," *American Sociological Review* 56/5 (1991): 652-664; Timothy Mason, *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Karina Urbach ed., *European Aristocracies and the Radical Right 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Daniella Sarnoff, "Interwar Fascism and the Franchise: Women's Suffrage and the *Ligues*," *Historical Reflections* 34/2 (2008): 112-133.

appropriated by fascists during the interwar period.⁸⁹ Mosse's work inspired a large number of studies of fascism's cultural artifacts, but the vast majority of these focus on culture under fascist regimes and not on social movements.⁹⁰ The most extensive research on how fascist social movements manipulate commonly accepted symbols, ideas and practices, has focused on the French *Ligues* and on Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF). Julie Gottlieb and Thomas P. Lineham, the editors of an influential volume on *The Culture of Fascism* (2004), argue that "British fascism is not merely a political movement, but also a cultural movement, a (failed) attempt at *Kulturkampf* and a culturally-informed expression of political belief."⁹¹ These sorts of studies deal with the importance of uniforms, images of violence, participation in parades and charity events, gender, art, theatre, music, connections to other fascist movements, and sociality.⁹² My work is heavily influenced by the questions that cultural historians are asking

⁸⁹ George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic wars through the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1975); George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: H. Fertig, 1985); George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁹⁰ Perry Willson, "Cooking the Patriotic Omelette: Women and the Italian Fascist Ruralization Campaign," *European History Quarterly*. 27/ 4 (1997): 531-547; Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Ara H. Merjian, "Fascism, Gender, and Culture," *Qui Parle* 13 (2001): 1-12; Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (New York: Berg, 2004); D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

⁹¹ Julie Gottlieb and Thomas P. Linehan, "Introduction: Culture and the British Far Right," in Julie Gottlieb and Thomas P. Linehan eds., *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) 2.

⁹² Stephen Cullen, "Four Women for Mosley: Women in the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940," *Oral history* 24/1 (1996): 49-59; Julie Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement, 1923-1945* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000); Michael Spurr, "'Living the Blackshirt Life': Culture, Community and the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940," *Contemporary European History* 12/3 (2003): 305-322; Dan Stone, "The English Mistery, the BUF, and the Dilemmas of British Fascism," *The Journal of Modern History* 75/2 (2003): 336-358; Paul Mazgaj, *Imagining Fascism: The Cultural Politics of the French Young Right, 1930-1945* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007); Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Laura Downs, "'Each and Every One of You Must Become a Chef': Toward a Social Politics of Working-Class Childhood on the Extreme Right in 1930s France," *The Journal of Modern History* 81/1 (2009): 1-44.

about fascism, but as my interest in *Alltagsgeschichte* suggests, I remain unconvinced that fascism can be reduced to its cultural or ideological dimensions.⁹³

1.4 CHANGE OVER TIME

So far I have spoken about fascism as if it referred to a stable collection of movements throughout the interwar period. In fact, fascist movements appeared, disappeared, and merged with remarkable regularity, and the relationships between them altered as their influence in local and European politics fluctuated. The anti-Semites who first established the Legion of the Archangel Michael identified themselves with ultra-nationalist movements abroad from the early 1920s onwards, but the label “fascist” referred almost exclusively to Mussolini’s Fascists until the early 1930s. My story begins in the mid-nineteenth century because Legionaries consistently used Romanian nationalism and politics as their point of reference. Although they allied themselves with fascist groups elsewhere, being a Legionary was first and foremost about being a Romanian nationalist. Part I focuses on the origins of anti-Semitic organizing in Romania, showing how militant anti-Semitic movements based themselves on talk about patriotism and defending the nation. Chapter two shows how hatred of foreigners and Jews became central to the ideology of Romanian nationalism and what forms nationalist organizing took during the nineteenth century. It also discusses political corruption to show why fascists rejected their country’s leaders despite the fact that nationalism and anti-Semitism were a normal part of Romanian politics. Chapter three looks at the growth of an ultra-nationalist community in early

⁹³ For debates over the so-called “New Consensus”, see Roger Griffin, “The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37/1 (2002): 21-43; Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2006).

twentieth century Romania. This was not a unified movement, but ultra-nationalists became conscious of each other through newspapers and short-lived leagues and political parties.

Violent student protests erupted in university campuses across the country in 1922, and chapters four and five follow the emergence of an anti-Semitic student movement. Unlike the dispersed ultra-nationalists, the students saw each other every day, they had clear and specific grievances, and they made effective use of the existing mainstream media whose attention they grabbed with spectacular trials and ostentatious weddings. They also forged connections with student groups outside of Romania and borrowed ideas from anti-Semitic students in Germany. Chapter four follows the student movement itself, while chapter five examines the relationship between the student movement and the ultra-nationalists who supported it.

One of the key figures in the anti-Semitic student movement of the 1920s was Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, who founded the Legion of the Archangel Michael in 1927. Part II tells the story of the Legion from its beginnings until Codreanu officially dissolved it in 1938. Chapter six examines how Codreanu established the Legion by breaking away from another ultra-nationalist group known as *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC). It follows his attempts to attract former LANC members to the new movement, and shows how Legionaries used violence in their attempts to take over anti-Semitic student societies allied with the LANC. Legionaries were not only students, however, and chapter seven examines Legionary propaganda in rural areas. Chapter eight follows Legionaries into factories, discussing their attempts to win over workers, tradesmen, and soldiers during the great depression. Chapter nine discusses how Legionaries used newspapers, pamphlets, and other printed material to connect with each other and to attract new members. The production of propaganda materials involved recruiting amongst intellectuals and this chapter focuses both on printing and

distribution as well as on the people who wrote Legionary ideology. Chapter ten explores the other side of propaganda, election campaigns, and asks how violence and assassination impacted the movement's attempts to grow. The nature of Legionary propaganda changed over the course of the decade, and chapter eleven shows how Legionaries used work camps and businesses to replace their image as violent hooligans with that of conscientious workers.

Part III focuses particularly on the years between 1933 and 1938, analyzing Legionary activities, music, artworks, and funerals to explain what fascism meant for rank and file Legionaries. Legionaries very explicitly stated that the Legion was a "school," and chapter twelve discusses the movement's organization, what happened in small group meetings, and the various types of educational programs Legionaries used to train and indoctrinate a "new" type of human being whose virtues would rejuvenate their country. Chapter thirteen asks how Legionaries imagined these "new men." It examines music, artworks, and doctrinal writings to explain the what the ideal Legionary was supposed to look like. Heroism and suffering were two key Legionary virtues, and chapter fourteen focuses on how Legionaries expressed these virtues in their music, their funerals, and their deeds. Legionaries idealized suffering because they suffered for their movement, and this chapter dwells on the how illegality and violence impacted Legionaries' lives in concrete ways.

The dissertation ends with the death of Codreanu in November 1938, after which hundreds of key leaders were imprisoned and killed and the Legion became an underground organization run by a leadership in exile. This persecution ended when King Carol II invited three Legionaries to join Ion Gigurtu's cabinet in July 1940. The Legionary collaboration with Gigurtu's government lasted only three days, but two months later they overthrew Carol's royal dictatorship by staging a coup together with General Ion Antonescu. Persecution and the

establishment of the National Legionary State (6 Sept 1940 – 22 Jan 1941) issued in a new era for the Legionary movement, one which looked back on the Codreanu era as a golden age of heroism and ideals.

1.5 LEGIONARIES IN A FASCIST EUROPE

I see an entangled history of European fascisms as a useful way to move beyond the essentialism inherent in the comparative study of fascisms. Exasperated by the endless debates over definitions and comparisons, in 1979 Gilbert Allardyce exclaimed, “There is no such thing as fascism. There are only the men and movements that we call by that name.”⁹⁴ But there are also the men and women, movements and regimes *who called themselves* fascists, and who thought of fascism as a pan-European movement.⁹⁵ Related to *Transfergeschichte* and *histoire croisée*, entangled history focuses on cross-border connections between self-consciously fascist movements in order to understand fascism as a transnational phenomenon that was rooted in specific national contexts.⁹⁶

Research into the transnational nature of fascism is not new but it remains an underdeveloped field, particularly when compared to the copious literature on comparative fascism. For many years historians focused primarily on Mussolini’s limited and unsuccessful attempts to influence foreign fascist groups through the Fascist International or through

⁹⁴ Gilbert Allardyce, “What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept,” *The American Historical Review* 84/2 (1979): 369.

⁹⁵ Dietrich Orlow, “Fascists Among Themselves: Some Observations on West European Politics in the 1930s,” *European Review* 11/3 (2003): 250.

⁹⁶ Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45/1 (2006): 30-50; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka eds., *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

propaganda amongst Italian émigrés.⁹⁷ The influence of the Nazi Party's Anti-Comintern on European fascism was minimal, although German diplomats did promote Nazism amongst ethnic Germans living outside of Germany.⁹⁸ In part, Germany's lack of interest in cooperation with other fascist movements can be explained by Mark Mazower's suggestion that Hitler was much more interested in empire than in allies, regardless of their political ideologies.⁹⁹ But international fascist collaboration was possible even without the support of the major fascist regimes. Robert Gerwarth has argued that the counter-revolutionary movements in Germany, Austria and Hungary in the immediate aftermath of the First World War were influenced by each other, and established "a transnational zone of paramilitary violence in Central Europe that outlasted the Great War by several years."¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Judith Keene's research into international volunteers in Franco's army shows that the impulse for transnational fascist collaboration often came from below rather than from carefully organized international treaties.¹⁰¹ Most importantly, research into fascist transnationalism shows that international collaboration was always a two-way street. Minor fascist parties interpreted the politics of fascist

⁹⁷ Michael A. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972); Luca de Caprariis, "'Fascism for Export'? The Rise and Eclipse of the Fasci Italiani all'Estero," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35/2 (2000): 151-183; Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism: Italian Fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (Oxford: Berg, 2003); Francesco Guida, "La droite radicale roumaine et l'Italie dans les années 1930," in Catherine Horel, Traian Sandu and Fritz Taubert eds., *La périphérie du fascisme: Spécification d'un modèle fasciste au sein de sociétés agraires: Le cas de l'Europe centrale entre les deux guerres*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006) 79-90.

⁹⁸ Lorna Waddington, "The Anti-Komintern and Nazi Anti-Bolshevik Propaganda in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42/4 (2007): 573-594; Tudor Georgescu, "Pursuing the Fascist Promise: The Transylvanian Saxon 'Self-Help' from Genesis to Empowerment, 1922-1935," in Robert Pyrah and Marius Turda eds., *Re-Contextualising East Central European History: Nation, Culture and Minority Groups*, (Legenda: Oxford, 2010) 55-72.

⁹⁹ Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008) 319-367. Cf. Hans Lemberg, "L'attitude des Nationaux-Socialistes allemands envers l'extrême droite et le fascisme en Tchécoslovaquie et en Pologne," in Horel, Sandu and Taubert eds., *La périphérie du fascisme*, 123-133.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Gerwarth, "The Central European Counter-Revolution: Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria and Hungary after the Great War," *Past and Present* 200 (2008): 175-210.

¹⁰¹ Judith Keene, *Fighting for Franco: International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (New York: Leicester University Press, 2001).

regimes according to their own, local interests. They were choosy about what they borrowed from overseas and when they borrowed it.¹⁰²

My own previous research has suggested that Romanian nationalist intellectuals conceived of international cooperation differently to their liberal nationalist colleagues. Whereas the League of Nations and other international organizations promoted cooperation using the rhetoric of universalism, nationalists promoted regional alliances based on “organic connections” such as shared histories and cultural traditions.¹⁰³ Legionaries approached other fascist groups as partners rather than predecessors, as allies not leaders, but they genuinely desired the cooperation and support from fascists abroad. The attitude of local Legionary activists towards European fascism is best summed up by the ironic 1937 cartoon “Nationalists of the world, unite!”

¹⁰² David Wingeate Pike, “Franco and the Axis Stigma,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 17/3 (1982): 369-407; Wolfgang Schieder, “Das italienische Experiment. Der Faschismus als Vorbild in der Krise der Weimarer Republik,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 262 (1996): 73-125; Sven Reichardt and Armin Nolzen eds., *Faschismus in Italien und Deutschland. Studien zu Transfer und Vergleich* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005); Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹⁰³ Roland Clark “Regional Cooperation According to Interwar Romanian Nationalists,” in *The Balkans and Caucasus: Parallel Processes on Opposite Sides of the Black Sea*, ed. Ivan Biliarsky, Ovidiu Cristea and Anca Ovoreanu (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012) 84-95; Roland Clark “Love Thy Neighbour: International Cooperation in the Early Thought of Dumitru Stăniloae,” in *Orthodox Christianity in Europe: Borders Constructed and Deconstructed*, ed. Alfons Bruening (Leuven: Peeters, Forthcoming).



Figure 1: “Nationalists of the world, unite!”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ “Nationalists of the world, unite!” *Buna vestire* 1/71 (20 May, 1937): 3.

PART I – ORIGINS

2.0 FOREIGNERS, NATIONALISTS, AND POLITICIANS

One of the most popular songs amongst anti-Semitic student activists during the 1920s was “*Deșteaptă-te, române*” (“Wake up, Romanian”). Students sang it during street protests, when disrupting lectures and assaulting other students, or when throwing Jews off trains.¹ The words blamed foreign oppressors for the inert and apathetic state of ethnic Romanians and called upon them to rise up as a people to overthrow the yoke of tyranny:

*Deșteaptă-te, române, din somnul cel de moarte,
În care te-adânciră barbarii de tirani
Acum ori niciodată croiește-ți altă soartă,
La care să se-nchine și cruzii tăi dușmani.*

Wake up, Romanian, from the sleep of the dead,
Into which tyrannous barbarians immersed you
Now or never, create your own fate,
At which even your harshest enemies should bow.

The lyrics to “Wake up, Romanian” were originally written by Andrei Mureșanu (1816-1863) during the 1848 revolution, when Romanians in Transylvania demanded autonomy for Romanians within the Habsburg Empire. Within weeks it was being sung in Bucharest and Iași

¹ Romanian National Archives in Iași County (Henceforth: SJAN – Iași), Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iași, Rectorat, Dosar 1022/1923, f. 467; Dosar 1024/1923, f. 125-127; Dosar 1057/1924, f. 22-23, 38-43; SJAN – Bucharest, Fond Universitatea din București, Rectorat, Dosar 4/1923, f. 65-66.

against the Ottoman and Russian Empires.² Today this song is the official Romanian national anthem, but to the anti-Semitic students of the 1920s it represented decades of nationalist struggle to claim the land for ethnic Romanians. This was a holy struggle, the anthem claimed, blessed and patronized by the Orthodox Church:

Preoți, cu crucea-n frunte căci oastea e creștină,

Deviza-i libertate și scopul ei preasfânt.

Murim mai bine-n luptă, cu glorie deplină,

Decât să fim sclavi iarăși în vechiul nost'pământ.

Priests, lead with your crucifixes! Because our army is Christian,

The motto is Liberty and its goal is holy,

Better to die in battle, in full glory,

Than to once again be slaves upon our ancient ground!

The song divided the world into Romanians and foreigners, friends and foes, and portrayed the nationalist movement as a battle for “freedom or death!” It spoke of brotherhood and camaraderie, traitors, and a widowed mother evoking supernatural powers to curse her son’s enemies. This anthem located the students within a tradition of patriotic warriors who were accepted as heroes by the state and by Romanian society at large. It provided legitimacy for their fight against Jews and “judaized” politicians, and affirmed the special calling of “elders, men, youths and boys, from mountains to the plains” to be defenders of the Romanian nation.

Believing that nations exist and are valid and meaningful collectivities deserving of allegiance is known as nationalism. Benedict Anderson describes nations as “imagined

² Viorel Cosma, *De la cântecul zaverei la immurile unității naționale* (Timișoara: Editura Facla, 1978) 33-64.

communities” similar to religions or kinship groups – collectivities extending through space and time that people identify themselves with.³ The song “Wake up, Romanian” commanded the students: “raise your broad forehead and look around you / Like fir trees, hundreds of thousands of heroes are standing tall.” These heroes belonged to the feudal armies who defended the patrimonies of medieval princes, but nationalist propagandists claimed that they were simultaneously fighting for the modern Romanian nation. Mureșanu called upon “Romanians from the four corners, now or never / unite in thought, unite in feeling,” as if a noblewoman from Timișoara would sit down together with a locksmith from Galați and a serf living on the outskirts of Siret. Anderson suggests that people feel solidarity with other members of their nation even though they will never meet them because technologies such as languages, maps, newspapers, and common time zones remind them that their basic everyday experiences are shared by other people who also identify with their nation. Nationalism is therefore closely connected to literacy and channels of communication.⁴ Rituals, myths and symbols such as national histories, anthems, flags, and state weddings and funerals intensify that solidarity through moments of collective focus on the national community.

Over the past two hundred years the idea of nations has been used to justify territorial claims, so cultural artifacts like history and language have taken on important political and geopolitical functions. The idea of nations is so important politically, in fact, that nationalists like Andrei Mureșanu began speaking about “the Romanian nation” at a time when that nation was identified primarily as a literary movement.⁵ For this reason, the sociologist Rogers Brubaker has argued that nationalist discourses are not really based on the nations that they constantly speak

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

⁴ Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1966).

⁵ Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006) 129-134.

about but are actually political stances used by social actors for their own goals.⁶ As those goals changed, so too did the purpose of speaking about nations: A discourse that in 1848 was used to justify a revolution became a war cry in 1916 and an excuse for anti-Semitic violence in 1922. When Mureșanu wrote that “the Danube is stolen / Through intrigue and coercion, sly machinations,” he was referring to Hungarians, Russians and Turks. But anti-Semitic propaganda of the late nineteenth century had connected words such as intrigue, coercion, and slyness with Jews and by the 1920s it was easy to apply Mureșanu’s lyrics to a political platform seeking to limit Jewish influence in Romanian public life.

2.1 FOREIGNERS AND JEWS

Foreigners – and the quintessential foreigner, the Jew – constituted an important problem for Romanian nationalists throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nineteenth century ultra-nationalists and then twentieth century fascists rejected anyone who cooperated with foreigners as traitors, while they celebrated xenophobes and nationalist militants as heroes. Foreigners were a particular obsession for Romanian nationalists because the territory of present-day Romania was ruled by the Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Empires until these empires collapsed in the early twentieth century. Despite frequent rebellions, Wallachian princes (*domni* or *domnitori*) began paying tribute to the Ottomans in 1390 and the Moldavians did the same during the 1450s. In return they received self-governance, were spared the settlement of Muslim landowners in their territories, and princes generally had a strong say in the appointment of ecclesiastical officials.⁷ The power of the native *domnitori* declined in the eighteenth century and

⁶ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 60.

⁷ Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 121; Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 18-19.

they were replaced with Greek rulers known as Phanariots, who also owed their positions to the Ottoman sultan. Those regions of Moldavia that were not governed by the Ottomans – Bukovina and Bessarabia – fell under Habsburg and Russian control. Anti-Phanariot sentiment grew among the Romanians in these principalities and culminated in 1821 when Romanian forces supported the Ottomans against the attempt by Alexander Ipsilantis (1792-1828) to resurrect the Byzantine Empire, which was to include Wallachia and Moldavia.⁸ Although technically still governed by the Ottomans, Wallachia and Moldavia both fell under Russian military occupation in 1826. Russian armies occupied the principalities eight times between 1711 and 1854, but this occupation involved thoroughgoing and unpopular agrarian reforms, the introduction of a cash economy, the subordination of the church to the state, and the consolidation of the legal rights of the Romanian boyars to their estates.⁹ Even though they were officially under foreign rule, intellectuals in the Romanian principalities had the liberty to develop Romanian culture in relative freedom while being able to blame the region's economic and social problems on a litany of foreign invaders. Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol (1847-1920), one of Moldavia's most influential historians of the late nineteenth century, wrote about the Phanariot rulers that “when each lord (*domn*) entered the country, weighed down with debts and thinking only of how to escape from them, ... [he] had to pillage the country whether he wanted to or not.”¹⁰

The mythology of modern Romanian nationalism originated with a group of Uniate intellectuals during the late eighteenth century known as the “Transylvanian School” (*Școala ardeleană*), which defined Romanianness vis-à-vis foreign stereotypes about Romanians. Westerners had begun to generalize about Eastern Europe as a whole during this period,

⁸ Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774-1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 141-152.

⁹ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2000) 90-91.

¹⁰ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor în Dacia Traiană*, vol. 10 (Bucharest: Editura “Cartea Românească”, 1925) 96.

characterizing it as exotic, backward, uncivilized, sensuous, and prey to despotic rulers.¹¹

Attempting to correct what one of its leading figures, Petru Maior (1756-1821), called the errors of “those foreign authors who pour the vomit of their pens on the Romanian people,” the Transylvanian School described Romanians as descendents of the ancient Romans who invaded Dacia in 105-106 CE. They argued that these Romans had been persecuted, downtrodden and corrupted by foreigners to the extent that they now occupied one of the lowest places in the hierarchy of nations and lacked the moral drive to better themselves.¹² It was a Transylvanian Saxon historian of this period, Martin Felmer (1720-1767), who first used the word “Romania” to refer to the territory we now call Romania, although the terms “Dacia,” “*Țara românească*,” and “Moldova” remained the more popular designations until the mid-nineteenth century.¹³ The nationalist statesman and scholar Mihai Kogălniceanu (1817-1891) claimed that when he wrote about *Roumanie* during the 1830s, this was the first time the word had been used in French.¹⁴ Building on the legacy of the Transylvanian School, a national movement gradually developed in the region that fought for equal rights for Romanians within the multinational Habsburg Empire.¹⁵

The principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia had their own national movements, and individuals claiming to be “working for the benefit of the Romanian nation” appear in the

¹¹ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹² Sorin Mitu, *National Identity of Romanians in Transylvania*, trans. Sorana Corneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001) 15 and passim.

¹³ Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, trans. James Christian Brown (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001) 34; Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 9.

¹⁴ Shannon Woodcock, ““The Țigan is not a man”: The Țigan Other as Catalyst for Romanian Ethnonational Identity,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2005) 79.

¹⁵ Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Discovered: Romanian Intellectuals in Transylvania and the Idea of Nation 1700-1848* (Bucharest: The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999); Keith Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality: Andreiu Șaguna and the Rumanians of Transylvania, 1846-1873* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania 1860/1914* (Bucharest: The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999).

sources as early as the eighteenth century.¹⁶ These national movements were facilitated by newspapers and a growing literary scene influenced by French intellectual culture, the rise of liberal nationalism throughout Europe, and encouraged by the Romanian Orthodox Church. The influence of nationalism was limited because it was rarely discussed outside of elite circles – the leaders of the Romanian national movement in Transylvania during the latter half of the nineteenth century were predominately bourgeois males or high-ranking clergymen at a time when only 5% of Romanians belonged to the middle classes.¹⁷ Many Romanians in Transylvania were legally serfs up until the 1854 emancipation, and even then they remained in an economically subordinate position vis-à-vis their Saxon or Hungarian neighbors.¹⁸ Similarly, most Romanians in Wallachia and Moldavia were impoverished and illiterate peasants who had little hope that they would benefit from the wave of nationalist uprisings that rocked the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire during the first part of the nineteenth century. The abolition of serfdom in the principalities followed by the rise of a nascent capitalism left many former serfs without cultivatable land and in a position of dependency on the large landholders, creating a rural proletariat who remained in a state of “neo-serfdom.”¹⁹ No one has studied national consciousness among the Romanian peasantry of this period, but Ukrainian and Polish peasants living under Habsburg rule were typically very slow to identify themselves with their national movements, which were led by intellectuals, not peasants.²⁰ It is likely that Romanian peasants were equally slow to embrace a national identity. Mihail Kogălniceanu observed in 1891 that

¹⁶ Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 10.

¹⁷ Hitchens, *A Nation Affirmed*, 103-110.

¹⁸ Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 219-222.

¹⁹ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Neoiobăgia: studiu economico-sociologic al problemei noastre agrare* (Bucharest: Editura “Viața Românească”, 1910) 56-73; Virgil Madgearu, *Agrarianism, capitalism, imperialism: contribuții la studiul evoluției sociale românești* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1999) 22.

²⁰ John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988); Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

most peasants identified themselves according to the region or social class they came from instead of as Romanians, and in 1905 the ultra-nationalist activist A. C. Cuza (1857-1947) complained that “the popular masses are unaware even of their nationality.”²¹

Between 1830 and 1860, Romanian elites increasingly adopted Western fashions, leisure activities, ideas and legal codes. Even though the former appreciated Western imports, both nationalist propagandists and the peasants they were hoping to make into Romanians saw foreigners as their enemies.²² As Romanians lived within multi-ethnic states, foreigners were neighbors as often as they were outsiders. The Romanian word for “foreigners” (*străini*) referred equally well to Phanariot or Russian administrators, Turkish or Jewish traders, and Hungarian or German peasants, all of whom lived in the same towns and villages as Romanians. In 1848, the year Andrei Mureșanu wrote “Wake Up, Romanian,” nationalists held revolutionary congresses in Bucharest, Iași, and Blaj demanding autonomy or independence for “the Romanian nation.” Most of the revolutionaries belonged to a group of French-educated intellectuals from the lower nobility who came of age during the 1830s and 1840s. The *Pașoptiști* (Forty-Eighters), as they later came to be known as, maintained close ties with liberal revolutionaries elsewhere in Europe, and they cultivated a Romantic sense of the Romanian nation which encompassed Romanian speakers of all social classes. In Transylvania, where serfdom was still practiced, their program included abolitionist demands, and in Wallachia the Pașoptists patronizingly celebrated their manumission (*dezrobirea*) of Roma slaves as evidence that their nation was part of “civilized” Europe.²³ They coined the term “Romanianism” (*Românism*), by which they meant a commitment to Romanian greatness, a word that would become one of the key slogans in the

²¹ Alexandru C. Cuza, *Naționalitatea în arta: expunere a doctrinei naționaliste, principii, fante, concluzii* (Bucharest: “Minerva,” 1915) ix; Woodcock, “The Țigan is not a man,” 84.

²² Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa: acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)* (Iași: Polirom, 2010) 112.

²³ Hitchens, *The Romanians*, 231-272; Woodcock, “The Țigan is not a man,” 78-93.

nationalist vocabulary until after the Second World War.²⁴ The revolutionaries were quickly defeated, but great-power rivalries between Russia, Britain and the Ottoman Empire provided an unexpected bounty; both Wallachia and Moldavia were granted independence at the end of the Crimean War. Few Romanians had discussed uniting the principalities between 1770 and 1830, but the “Romanian Question” was still a regular topic of conversation amongst the Great Powers, and amongst Romanian émigrés from the early 1850s.²⁵ Although the Convention of Paris in 1858 said nothing about joining Wallachia and Moldavia, the Romanians took the initiative and the following year the two principalities united under the personal rule of a leader of one of the Wallachian revolutionaries from 1848, Alexandru Ion Cuza (1820-1873).

Romanian nationalists used negative stereotypes about Roma – who they called “*țigani*” (gypsies) – as uncivilized people in need of wise rulers to justify their claim to be worthy of a nation-state, and they spoke about *străini* as a way of emphasizing that Romanians were not yet in full control of their own country. When they riled against foreigners, nationalist propagandists usually meant those ethnic groups whose elites ruled over Romanians; but with the gradual success of the national movement, Romanian nationalists slowly lost interest in Phanariots and Turks and came to see Jews as their most immediate enemy. Jews had lived in the territory of present-day Romania since at least the late middle ages, but modern anti-Semitism in Romania dates to the wave of Jewish immigration from Polish Galicia during the eighteenth century. The Phanariot regime gave the new immigrants a hostile welcome, and Greek and Bulgarian merchants afraid of new competition stirred up anti-Semitic violence in Brăila, Galați, Giurgiu, and Iași.²⁶ Over the next century, Romanian documents portrayed Jews as sly, deceitful, ugly, smelly, cowardly, and lazy. They spoke about Jews as Christ-killers who practiced ritual

²⁴ Alexandru Zub, *Istorie și istorici în România interbelică* (Iași: Editura Junimea, 2003) 279.

²⁵ Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 23-25; Hitchins, *The Romanians*, 276-294.

²⁶ Gabriel Asandului, *Istoria evreilor din România (1866-1938)* (Iași: Institutul European, 2003) 15-18.

sacrifices with Christian babies to strengthen their pact with the devil. Romanians also accused Jews of corrupting morality by running taverns and of monopolizing commerce to the exclusion of Romanians, even though census data shows that only 2.5% of publicans and 21.1% of merchants were Jewish at the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁷

Alexandru Ion Cuza's regime increased Romanian society's contact with the West, borrowing heavily from foreign investors and importing consumer products in ever greater quantities.²⁸ Greater familiarity gave rise to new fears about foreigners, particularly as Romania moved from the Ottoman periphery into a European periphery and discovered that once again its agricultural and industrial products were leaving the country for meager profits.²⁹ Romania's small bourgeois class included more Jews than ethnic Romanians, and as the economic importance of this class grew, concerns developed about who truly held the power in the country – the (Jewish) bankers or those (Romanians) who worked the land. One of the harshest polemicists against what he believed was a parasitic exploitation of Romanians by “foreigners” was the poet and journalist Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889), who targeted Jews in particular. He wrote in 1879 that, “the Jew does not deserve rights anywhere in Europe because he does not work. ... He is the eternal consumer, never a producer.”³⁰ Anti-Semites believed that Jewish power depended on the cooperation of Romanian politicians, and according to Eminescu, the ultimate cause of Romania's social and economic problems were the “red” (Liberal) governments who “lulled Romania to sleep with patriotic words while at the same time, whenever possible, doing the work of foreigners.”³¹

²⁷ Ibid., 32; Andrei Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew: Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central-East European Cultures*, trans. Mirela Adăscăltei (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009) 176 and passim.

²⁸ Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 113.

²⁹ Ilie Bădescu, *Sincronism european și cultură critică românească* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984) 231-235.

³⁰ Mihai Eminescu, quoted in Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology*, 12.

³¹ Mihai Eminescu, quoted in Bădescu, *Sincronism european*, 284.

Jews had unsuccessfully argued that they deserved equal rights in 1848, and renewed Jewish petitions sparked anti-Semitic tirades from Romanians such as Eminescu's. In 1861 a Jewish doctor named Iuliu Barasch (1815-1863) published a pamphlet entitled *L'émancipation des Israélites en Roumanie (The Emancipation of Jews in Romania)* asking for civil rights, and Alexandru Ion Cuza granted Jewish emancipation in December 1865. But Cuza was overthrown two months later and replaced by a member of the Hohenzollern dynasty, Prince Carol (1839-1914). Article 7 of the new 1866 constitution specified that “only foreigners of the Christian religion are eligible to become Romanians,” effectively denying Jews political rights in the Romanian principality.³² When a softened version of that article went before the legislature later that year, a crowd surrounded the building, drowning out the proceedings with angry shouting until the proposed amendment was dropped. Cheering, the protesters moved on to the center of the city where they destroyed a recently completed synagogue.³³

Andrei Oișteanu argues that from the mid-1860s onwards nationalist intellectuals appropriated anti-Semitic stereotypes from popular culture and then re-introduced them through polemical texts.³⁴ The stereotype of the swindling Jew, for example, expressed through sayings such as “until he cheats, the Jew does not eat,” is found in collections of popular fables gathered during the nineteenth century.³⁵ One of the many intellectuals who reformulated this stereotype was the famous historian Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940), who wrote in an edition of his newspaper, *Neamul românesc (The Romanian People, 1906-1940)*, that “the Jews in Romania, especially those in Moldavia, live on trade, on exchange, *on double-dealing* to the prejudice of others, and

³² Victor Neumann, *Istoria evreilor din România: Studii documentare și teoretice* (Timișoara: Editura Amarcord, 1996) 169.

³³ Paul E. Michelson, “Romanian Development, Nationalism and Some Nationality Issues Under Carol I, 1866-1914,” in *Națiunea română: idealuri și realități istorice*, eds. Alexandru Zub, Venera Achim, and Nagy Pienaru (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Romane, 2006) 336.

³⁴ Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew*, 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

they shun any hard work. *They are intelligent but cunning* and, pursuing solely their own interests, seek to corrupt the mores.”³⁶ Iorga distributed free copies of *Neamul românesc* to teachers and priests in villages throughout Moldavia, giving a politicized and learned image to existing folk wisdom.³⁷ During the 1860s, a number of intellectuals argued loudly against granting Jews more rights, usually on the grounds that they refused to assimilate and lived from usury and exploitation instead of from productive labor.³⁸

Article 7 of the 1866 constitution was debated again in 1878, when the Great Powers officially recognized Romania’s independence from the Ottoman Empire. Despite strong pressure from the Western powers, the Liberal government of the day refused to extend any more rights to Jews.³⁹ The refusal took place during a general reorganization of the balance of power in the Balkans and within a context of growing anti-foreigner sentiment in the country. Southern Bessarabia had oscillated between Moldavia and the Russian Empire since 1812, but it had been part of Moldavia since 1856. Russia re-annexed it in 1878 despite Romania’s support for Russia during the Empire’s war against the Ottoman Empire in 1877-78. Although Romanian statesmen had only begrudgingly agreed to an alliance with Russia because no other options were available to them, the annexation pushed Russia ahead of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires as Romania’s imperial enemy and made the eastern territories with their large Jewish populations the focus of renewed nationalist attention.⁴⁰ If the Great Powers were not willing to return southern Bessarabia then Romanian politicians were certainly not about to extend rights to their country’s Jewish minority. By the late 1870s, anti-Semitism had become one of the most popular

³⁶ Nicolae Iorga, *Neamul românesc*, 5 June 1907; quoted in Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew*, 144.

³⁷ Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew*, 144.

³⁸ Neumann, *Istoria evreilor*, 173-191; Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology*, 12-15.

³⁹ Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie (1866-1919): De l’Exclusion à l’Emancipation* (Provence: Éditions de l’Université de Provence, 1978) 153-180.

⁴⁰ Michelson, “Romanian Development,” 342-343; Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977) 184-190.

ways to manifest patriotism and to express national sentiment. In 1879 the National Liberal politician Pantazi Ghica (1831-1882) described Jews as “a nation within a nation,” warning that they constituted a fifth column that threatened to undermine Romania from within.⁴¹ That same year the philosopher Vasile Conta (1845-1882) affirmed that “if we do not fight against the Jewish element we will perish as a nation.”⁴²

In addition to his academic work, Conta was associated with a literary society in Iași known as “Junimea.” Through weekly lectures and lively debates that were attended by the city’s intellectual elite and then diffused through the society’s journal *Convorbiri literare* (*Literary Conversations*, 1867-1944), the Junimists established a tradition of *éngagé* literary activity in the service of Romanian culture. Although it was primarily an intellectual forum, many of Junimea’s leading figures eventually became key Conservative politicians and government ministers. They introduced important new ways of thinking about foreigners and the nation into the Romanian public sphere. Despite the anti-Semitic polemics of Eminescu, Conta, and other Junimists, the movement as a whole was respectful of foreigners and in 1877 its leaders supported modifying Article 7 in favor of the Jews.⁴³ The most significant contribution of the Junimists to Romanian thinking about foreigners can be summed up in Titu Maiorescu’s (1840-1917) famous phrase “forms without substance” (*forme fără fond*). Unlike the French-educated Pașoptists who embraced the “universal” ideals of the French revolution, the Junimists were educated in Germany and were indebted to Schopenhauer’s romantic view of the nation as an organic community evolving over time.⁴⁴ When Maiorescu spoke about “forms without substance,” he

⁴¹ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România: de la emancipare la marginalizare 1919-1938*, trans. Țicu Goldstein (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 2000) 150-151.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 152.

⁴³ Zigu Ornea, *Junimea și Junimismul* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1978) 236.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 120-145.

was referring to the fact that most of Romania's elite culture was imported from abroad and did not evolve out of existing conditions in the country. He wrote in 1868:

According to foreign statisticians of cultural forms, Romanians today appear to possess almost all Western civilization. We have politics and science, journals and academies, schools and literature, museums, conservatories, theater, and we even have a constitution. But in reality these are all dead products, baseless pretence, phantoms with no bodies, illusions without truth, and so the culture of Romania's higher classes is null and worthless, and the abyss that separates us from the lower classes becomes deeper every day. The only real class in our country is the Romanian peasant, and his reality is suffering, as he moans beneath the phantoms of the upper classes.⁴⁵

Maiorescu and the Junimists celebrated autochthonous cultural production and placed the peasantry at the center of their vision of the Romanian nation. According to them, terms like "bourgeoisie" and "the proletariat" described the realities of other countries but neither of those classes existed in Romania because capitalism itself was an artificial foreign import.⁴⁶

With their aristocratic backgrounds, the Junimists kept a paternalistic distance from actual peasants, but their belief in the importance of the peasantry inspired another literary movement at the turn of the century that called itself "Poporanism." Led by the former socialist Constantin Stere (1865-1936), who had spent eight years in Siberian prisons for his involvement in the "going to the people" movement (*narodnichestvo*) in Bessarabia, the Poporanists sent young middle-class intellectuals into Romanians villages to promote adult education and

⁴⁵ Titu Maiorescu, "În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română," (1868); reprinted in Laurențiu Vlad, *Conservatorismul românesc: concepte, idei, programe* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2006) 150.

⁴⁶ Ornea, *Junimea*, 191-206.

scientific ideas they believed would improve life in the countryside.⁴⁷ Poporanist intellectuals also entered politics, where they joined the Liberal Party and promoted platforms such as agrarian reform and universal suffrage. They were receptive to foreign ideas so long as they were properly adapted to the Romanian situation and carefully assimilated into peasant culture, and as such they opened Romanian elites to European – especially German – political and social trends.⁴⁸

In the same period as Poporanism – between 1890 and 1910 – another literary movement known as Sămănătorism emphatically rejected anything foreign. Sămănătorists cultivated an anti-liberal nationalism by promoting folk values in art and arguing against the free circulation of foreign literature and the recognition of foreign degrees.⁴⁹ These intellectuals romanticized the peasantry, nostalgically hoping to return to an imagined age before Romania was “corrupted” by capitalism, industrialization and other foreign imports.⁵⁰ The Sămănătorist notion of corruption also extended to Jews. In the Sămănătorist journal *Făt Frumos* (*Prince Charming*, 1904-1905) the anti-Semitic essayist A. C. Cuza bemoaned “the diminishing of the Romanian nation that is obvious through the large number of foreigners living on its land. Foreigners of another race, other laws, with other cultural principles, who do not assimilate: Kikes.”⁵¹ Even when they were not openly anti-Semitic, the writings of the Junimists, Poporanists and Sămănătorists presented “Romanian culture” and “foreign culture” as binary opposites that could be separated from one another. They saw foreigners as at best a mixed blessing, and at worst as national enemies. Thanks to the intellectual prestige and the political clout of these movements, such ideas became deeply entrenched in the national imaginary. While leading Junimists heavily influenced

⁴⁷ Zigu Ornea, *Poporanismul* (Bucharest: Editua Minerva, 1972) 70.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴⁹ Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*, (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1971) 167-188.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 128-164.

⁵¹ Cuza, *Naționalitatea*, x. cf. Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*, 288-290.

Romanian politics during the late nineteenth century, many young ultra-nationalists during the 1920s read newspapers and magazines edited by former Sămănătorists periodicals. Sămănătorist ideas about folk values and national pride became commonplace in Romanian literary and artistic circles after the First World War and were promoted by a number of professors in the universities.⁵²

Outside of intellectual circles, anti-Semitic sentiment occasionally overflowed into acts of violence. Small-scale violence against Jews took place in the cities of Iași and Bucharest in 1891, 1898 and 1899.⁵³ In Chișinău, then still part of the Russian Empire, a large pogrom occurred in 1903. It was sparked by an anti-Semitic newspaper, *Bessarabeț*, which was edited by Pavel Crușevanu (1860-1909). A member of the Black Hundreds and an influential journalist, Crușevanu claimed that a Russian boy from a nearby town had been murdered by Jews. Indignation over the murder led to widespread anti-Semitic violence even though the true murderer – one of the boy’s relatives – was later found and convicted.⁵⁴ Attacks on Jews also took place during the peasant revolts of this period. The first of these involved widespread, coordinated attacks on manorial estates in 1888, when peasants burned records, houses, and assaulted *arendași* (estate administrators). In many places peasants also attacked local politicians, taverns, businesses, and the houses of wealthy peasants. The focus of this revolt was anti-government, not anti-Semitic, but the fact that many *arendași* were Jewish makes it likely that there was also an ethnic flavor to some of the violence.⁵⁵ On a much larger scale, hundreds

⁵² Roland Clark, “Orthodoxy and Nation-Building: Nichifor Crainic and Cultural Politics in 1920s Romania,” (Forthcoming).

⁵³ “10 Mai la Iași,” *Universul*, 17/128 (13 May 1891): 4; Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Carp und die Judenfrage* (Vienna: Buchdruckerei “Industrie”, 1900) 9; Eugen Herovanu, *Orașul amintirilor* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1975) 177.

⁵⁴ Iurie Colesnic, *Basarabia necunoscută*, vol. 3 (Chișinău: Museum, 2000) 28-41; Monty Noam Penkower, “The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903: A Turning Point in Jewish History,” *Modern Judaism*, 24/3 (2004): 187-225.

⁵⁵ Constantin Corbu, *Răscoala țăranilor de la 1888* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1978) 146-215; N. Adăniloie, *Răscoala țăranilor din 1888* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1988)

of thousands of peasants from all over Romania rose up in 1907 to protest against absentee landlords and their *arendăși* in a revolt that left at least 11,000 dead and many Jewish families homeless.⁵⁶ Although the goals of the revolt were neither anti-Semitic nor nationalist, this time much of the rhetoric against *arendăși* did focus on their Jewish ethnicity. In 1905 the Poporanist Spiru Haret (1851-1912) wrote that “the class of Rumanian *arendăși* is on the way to disappearing in the face of Jews and Greeks, for whom pity for the peasants is an unknown thing and who, on top of it all, after they have amassed millions in a few years, cart [the money] abroad...”⁵⁷ The peasants agreed. In Wallachia, where few *arendăși* were Jewish, peasants generally left Jews in peace, but in Moldavia where the revolt began, peasants attacked Jewish homes and businesses together with manorial estates.⁵⁸

The stance of mainstream politicians towards Jews and foreigners was rarely clear cut. The National Liberal Party, whose ideological program embraced tolerance and openness towards the West, periodically espoused anti-Semitic slogans or supported anti-Semitic legislation in an attempt to win support in Moldavia, where its electoral base was weakest.⁵⁹ The majority of Romania’s Jews lived in Moldavia, and this was also where anti-Semitic sentiment was strongest. In 1900 the socialist writer Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855-1920) claimed that “pro-European” Conservative politicians were financing anti-Semitic periodicals and orchestrated the pogroms that took place in Bucharest and Iași in 1898 and 1899.⁶⁰ Romanian Jews described government policies against them as being characterized by “a complete lack of

138-216. Neither Corbu nor Adăniloiaie mention pogroms, which reflects a standard policy of the Romanian Communist Party to censor ethnic violence against Jews from both history and literature. This policy is discussed in Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew*, 25-26.

⁵⁶ Eidelberg, *The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt*; Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie*, 230-233.

⁵⁷ Spiru Haret, *Chestiunea țărănească*, 1905; quoted in Philip Gabriel Eidelberg, *The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt of 1907: Origins of a Modern Jacquerie* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974) 120. Cf. *Ibid.*, 202-210.

⁵⁸ Ion Popescu-Puțuri ed., *Marea răsccoală a țăranilor din 1907* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1987) 75

⁵⁹ Michelson, “Romanian Development,” 337; Eidelberg, *The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt*, 157.

⁶⁰ Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Carp und die Judenfrage*, 9, 25-26.

mercy.” “For over fifty years,” they wrote in 1913, these policies “have been carried out without concessions and without interruptions. A constant, daily persecution, based on cold logic, with a predetermined aim.”⁶¹ Carol Iancu sums up the situation of Romanian Jews in the early twentieth century in this way:

Professing a systematic state anti-Semitism, liberal and conservative governments ... forbade Jews from entering the judiciary, education or the state administration. Excluding Jews from public functions and from numerous economic activities, they still required them to perform military service though they would not allow them to become officers. Their children were accepted in schools with difficulty, and then only in return for higher fees.⁶²

The hostility that Romanian Jews faced at the turn of the century attracted international attention in France and the United States, and resulted in high levels of emigration. A third of the Jewish community – over 90,000 people – left the country between 1899 and 1914.⁶³

The end of the First World War posed problems for Romanian statesmen because Britain, France and the United States insisted on resolving the Jewish Question as part of the peace negotiations. The Great Powers imposed minorities treaties on most of the new or expanded states in Eastern Europe at this time, giving them a legal excuse to intervene in domestic politics if any of these states did not respect the conditions of the treaties.⁶⁴ Romania’s Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu (1864-1927) made overtures to the Jewish community in France in the hope

⁶¹ Uniunea Evreilor-Pământenii, “Memoriul Evreilor-Pământenii, 4 Nov 1913; in Jean Ancel ed., *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust* vol. 1 (New York: The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986) 23.

⁶² Carol Iancu, *Emanciparea evreilor din România (1913-1919)*, trans. Țicu Goldstein (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1998) 357.

⁶³ Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie*, 256-264; Gustave Rouanet, *Les Juifs en Roumanie* (Paris: Éditions de la *Revue Socialiste*, 1902).

⁶⁴ Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 133-170.

that French Jews might influence their delegates to support Romania's case for full representation at the Peace Conference, and in the process he issued two decrees giving Jews increased civil rights. Neither decree gave Romanian Jews full constitutional rights – the second decree, which granted Jews citizenship, was actually unconstitutional – but they were seen by the Great Powers as a step in the right direction.⁶⁵ Two months before he issued the second decree in May 1919, Brătianu declared, somewhat optimistically and inaccurately, that “we have completely solved the Jewish Question and there is no longer any Jewish Question or any anti-Semitic party, although there may still be slight anti-Semitic tendencies, but in the name of the Romanian government I commit myself to combating Romanian anti-Semitism with all of my energy and with all my heart.”⁶⁶ When asked to sign the Minorities Treaty that made the Great Powers guarantors of Jewish rights, however, Brătianu refused and returned to Romania, complaining angrily that the Minorities Treaty limited Romanian sovereignty. Five months and two governments later, Romanian delegates signed the treaty in order to guarantee their territorial gains and to avoid the diplomatic sanctions threatened by the Great Powers.⁶⁷ Amidst the interminable discussions surrounding the peace process, the Jewish Question became symptomatic for Romanian nationalists of their country's small power status amongst Europe's nation-states and of the power that its largest minority had to influence foreign policy. The ultra-nationalist publicist A. C. Cuza articulated a widely-held belief when he said in December 1920 that the Peace Conference created first- and second-class states and denied Romania “the right to self determination and the freedom to dictate its own destiny.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Iancu, *Emanciparea evreilor*, 222-229, 294-310.

⁶⁶ Ion I. C. Brătianu, quoted in *ibid.*, 291.

⁶⁷ Iancu, *Emanciparea evreilor*, 336-344.

⁶⁸ Alexandru C. Cuza, *Îndrumări de politică externă: desființarea “Ligei națiunilor,” revizuirea tratatelor, alianță României cu Germania, discursuri parlamentare rostite în anii 1920-1936* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1941) 11-12.

The new constitution of 1923 granted citizenship to Romanian Jews, but anti-Semitism continued to be practiced in official circles after the First World War. Although hostilities ceased in most of Europe in November 1918, Romanian soldiers continued fighting in order to occupy Transylvania, hoping to present the Great Powers with a *fait accompli*. The rhetoric of the war framed it as a crusade against communism after Béla Kun came to power in Hungary on 21 March 1919. That November, with the question of the Minorities Treaty still unresolved, police distributed anti-Semitic posters around the country on the orders of the short-lived government led by Arthur Văitoianu (1864-1956). These posters identified members of Béla Kun's Communist Party as Jewish and denounced all Jews as Bolsheviks who had to be liquidated. Isolated attacks on Jews and on Jewish property followed, including some by Romanian soldiers acting under orders, with no legal repercussions.⁶⁹ In the Bessarabian town of Leova that year, which had also just come under Romanian occupation, Jewish travelers were arrested, beaten and tortured before being transferred to Chişinău where they were forced to bribe their way out of police custody.⁷⁰ In 1922 the Liberal Minister of Education, Constantin Angelescu (1870-1948), authorized the distribution of an anti-Semitic pamphlet entitled “*Înfruntarea Jidovilor*” (“Facing up to the Kikes”) to schools throughout the country.⁷¹ The Romanianization of schools in Bucovina from 1918 onwards involved creating special Jewish schools for students who had previously had access to Austro-Hungarian Empire's best institutions. These new schools then faced budget cuts, staff replacements or demotions, and changes to the language of instruction.⁷² International involvement may have limited expressions of anti-Semitism in Romania's political

⁶⁹ Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 143-144; “Memorandum on Roumanian Riots for Conference, December 19, 1926,” USNA, Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, 1910-1944, f. 3.

⁷⁰ Iancu, *Evreii din România*, 145.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁷² Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 68-72.

culture, but public hostility towards Jews continued to be respectable throughout the interwar period.

2.2 NATIONALIST CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

Alongside literary circles and official anti-Semitism, Romanian nationalism received strong support from grassroots organizations run by local intellectuals. Apart from isolated moments such as Avram Iancu's campaigns against Hungarian forces during the 1848 revolution, Romanian nationalist activism was peaceful and reformist during the nineteenth century. In the Habsburg provinces of Transylvania and Bucovina, nationalists formed cultural associations, feminist groups, ethnic choirs, and reading societies that they then used to promote national sentiment and to mobilize the Romanian population around nationalist causes. One of the first of such movements was *Reuniunea Femilor Române pentru ajutorul creșterii fetițelor orfane române mai sărace* (the Union of Romanian Women for Raising Poor Romanian Orphan Girls). The wealthy women who led the movement had close connections to the revolutionaries of 1848 and were supported by Romanian bankers and businessmen as well as by the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Churches.⁷³ Simona Stiger has identified 62 feminist Reunions in Transylvania between 1850 and 1914. Most claimed to meet to beautify churches or cemeteries, but these were actually some of the most active hubs of nationalist organizing in the region.⁷⁴ As the movement gained momentum the leaders of the feminist Unions became more confident in expressing their actual goals. The Union founded in the Transylvanian town of Bran in 1897 said that it was formed by “the wives of the intellectuals from this part of the country [who want] to contribute

⁷³ Ștefania Mihăilescu, “Introducere,” in Ștefania Mihăilescu ed., *Din istoria feminismului românesc: antologie de texte (1838-1929)*, (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002) 23.

⁷⁴ Simona Stiger, *Asociaționism și emancipare în Transilvania până la primul război mondial* (Arad: Editura Fundatiei “Moise Nicoara”, 2001) 85-86.

to the education of young girls in the spirit of the national struggle.”⁷⁵ They founded schools, ran orphanages, and held cultural gatherings to promote Romanian culture. Their goal was to develop a Romanian civil society that could unite rural and urban intellectuals. Comparable feminist organizations emerged gradually inside Romania itself, culminating in the establishment of *Societăți Ortodoxe Naționale a Femeilor Creștine din România* (the National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women, SONFR) in 1910. Like their counterparts in Transylvania, the wealthy women involved in the SONFR dedicated themselves to education and to charitable activities with a nationalist flavor, experimenting with new ways of nationalist mobilization and asserting a strong female presence in the public sphere.⁷⁶

Working alongside and in conjunction with the feminist organizations was *Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român* (the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, ASTRA), which was modeled on the slavic *Matice*, literary foundations used by ethnic minorities in the Habsburg Monarchy to agitate for nationalist causes.⁷⁷ When ASTRA was founded by the Orthodox bishop Andrei Șaguna in 1861, the Habsburg authorities insisted that the association have no political or religious agenda and so Șaguna focused its activities on cultural issues of national importance. At first ASTRA concentrated on awarding scholarships to needy students, building up a Romanian library, sponsoring craft exhibitions and publishing its own journal, *Transilvania*.⁷⁸ As time went on, it extended its activities into literacy education, brochures and lectures on topical issues, and farmers’ associations.⁷⁹ By the time that the First World War broke out, ASTRA had

⁷⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 81.

⁷⁶ Alin Ciupală, *Femeia în societatea românească a secolului al XIX-lea: între public și privat* (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 2003) 86-94.

⁷⁷ Stanley Kimball, *The Austro-Slav Revival: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Literary Foundations* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973).

⁷⁸ Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality*, 255-256.

⁷⁹ Eugen Hulea, *Astra: istoric, organizare, activitate, statute și regulamente* (Sibiu: Editura Astrei, 1944) 7.

also established an ethnographic museum, published numerous scholarly works on Romanian culture, and founded a boarding school for Romanian girls. ASTRA mobilized local priests and teachers in the national cause, and it ran 179 adult literacy courses in villages between 1909 and 1913 alone. It was also instrumental in promoting Romanian economic development through the founding of the “Albina” banks in 1871 and later played a key role in organizing the village cooperatives that allowed Romanians to avoid buying from businesses owned by “foreigners.”⁸⁰ Like the feminist unions, ASTRA made grassroots nationalist organizing respectable and channeled the energies of local intellectuals into voluntary service to the peasantry in the name of the national cause.

In the Habsburg province of Bucovina, Romanian high school students and politicians in Suceava established a nationalist movement known as *Arcaşii lui Ştefan cel Mare* (The Archers of Stephen the Great) in 1905. Like the Czech *Sokoli*, the Archers was ostensibly a gymnastics association but it had strong national overtones.⁸¹ When it was founded, a local Suceava newspaper reported that “unions of village youths (*flăcăi*) will be called Archers, and their goal will be training in firearms, gymnastics and helping in firefighting.”⁸² Soon the Archers added literacy education, accountancy courses, anti-alcoholism campaigns and Romanian libraries to its repertoire, although it remained primarily a youth organization focused on fitness, discipline and pre-military training.⁸³ In a similar spirit, *Cercetaşie* (Scouting) was introduced in Romania in 1912 and it was officially recognized in 1914. Scouts ran camps for young people, taught discipline, physical education and practical skills, and promoted community service in a

⁸⁰ Valer Moga, *Astra și societatea 1918 - 1930* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitara Clujeană, 2003) 23-26.

⁸¹ Claire Nolte, “‘Every Czech a Sokol!’: Feminism and Nationalism in the Czech Sokol,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, 24 (1993): 79-100.

⁸² *Voința Poporului* (8 Jan 1905), quoted in Filaret V. Doboş, *Arcaşii: Gânduri și fapte din țara de sus, 1905-1940* (Cernăuți: Tipografia Cernăuțeanu Teodot, 1940) 52.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 106-108.

nationalist spirit. Like the Archers, they organized uniformed youth into sporting competitions and parades that displayed the militaristic elements of the movement.⁸⁴ A brochure from 1913 explained that “Scouting is a school of physical, civic and moral education that seeks to transform an unformed boy into a vigorous, conscientious and worthy youth, always ready with a helping hand and continuing the tradition of chivalry in our anemic, selfish and cowardly age.”⁸⁵ Both the Archers and the Scouts made social work and church attendance regular parts of their programs. Together, these associations mobilized young people into the nationalist movement through outdoor, community-focused activities that promoted discipline, physical fitness and nationalist values.

The feminist Unions, ASTRA and the Archers were populated by Romanians living in the Habsburg Monarchy. The largest cultural association inside Romania itself was known as *Liga Culturală pentru Unitatea Românilor de Pretutindeni* (the Cultural League for the Unity of Romanians Everywhere). The Cultural League was founded in 1890 by intellectuals and publicists in Bucharest with the explicit goal of bringing Transylvania into the Romanian state through the cultivation of Romanian language and culture. Unification had become popular during the previous decade after the merger of Transylvania’s nationalist parties into *Partidul Național Român* (the National Romanian Party) in 1881 gave a boost to Romanian politicians in Austria-Hungary.⁸⁶ Like the cultural associations outside of Romania, the Cultural League founded reading rooms and libraries, published books, held lectures and patriotic gatherings, and celebrated the anniversaries of events of national importance.⁸⁷ In this way it helped keep alive

⁸⁴ N. Camărașescu, “Privind înapoi,” *Cercetașul* (Jan 1930): 2-3.

⁸⁵ Gabriel Giurgea, “Cercetașii,” in *O școală de înțepănire: Cercetașii* (Bucharest: Asociației Cercetașii României, 1916) 61-62.

⁸⁶ Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*, 20-21.

⁸⁷ Victor Crăciun, *Liga Culturală pentru Unitatea Românilor de Pretutindeni: 1890 – 1948, 1989 - 2003* (Bucharest: Liga Culturală pentru Unitatea Românilor de Pretutindeni, 2003) 25-26.

the sense of Romanians as an oppressed people and of the national movement as an urgent priority for all patriotic Romanians. Unlike its counterparts to the north, the Cultural League also cultivated anti-Semitic sentiments because, its newspaper explained in 1898, “wherever many Yids (*jidani*) mass together, they are always a serious impediment to the national aspirations of the indigenous peoples. For the Yids have no country, and they have no connection to the land or to the population that they overrun.”⁸⁸

Discussions about incorporating Transylvania into the Romanian state intensified during the Balkan Crisis of 1912-1913 in the context of increasing tensions between Romania and Austria-Hungary.⁸⁹ The Peasantist politician Vasile Kogălniceanu (1863-1921) wrote in 1913 that “with the three hundred thousand bayonets of the Romanians from Austria-Hungary, *Românism* will become a force of a million valiant warriors, which no state in the world will be able to ignore.”⁹⁰ Three years later Romania entered the First World War on the side of the Triple Entente. Romanian statesmen hoped that joining an alliance against Austria-Hungary might help them win Transylvania, even if fighting alongside Russia meant sacrificing the dream of acquiring Bessarabia from the Russians. In the tradition of the earlier nationalist cultural societies, supporters of the war organized themselves into organizations such as “The League for the Political Unification of All Romanians,” the “National Action Committee,” and the “Unionist Federation,” mobilizing students in street protests and encouraging the government to take action.⁹¹ Once the country formally declared war, the pressure of nationalism caused Romanian

⁸⁸ “Chestiunea Naționalităților,” *Liga română*, 3/17 (26 Apr 1898): 266.

⁸⁹ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 149-154.

⁹⁰ Vasile M. Kogălniceanu, *Criza națională: România și conflictul balcanic* (Bucharest: Dimitrie C. Ionescu, 1913) 42.

⁹¹ Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner and Beatrice Marinescu, *Bucureștii în anii primului război mondial, 1914-1918* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1993) 9-12.

elites to unite around a pro-French orientation and those who refused to renounce their contacts with Germany found themselves facing treason trials by the war's end.⁹²

Nationalist organizing through the pro-war Leagues, the Cultural League, and other cultural associations took place firmly within the respectable mainstream of Romanian society. These associations attracted the wealthiest and most civically active members of Romanian communities both inside and outside the country and directed their energies towards creating and sustaining the sense that a Romanian nation existed, was threatened, and was worth fighting for. In doing so, they maintained the tradition of nationalist struggle encompassed in Mureșanu's anthem "Wake Up, Romanian," and helped associate virtues such as community service, discipline, chivalry, education and physical fitness with the idea of *Românism*.

2.3 POLITICIANS AND TRAITORS

During the 1890s the Sămănătorist historian Nicolae Iorga argued that in sharp contrast to the patriotic activities of nationalist community associations, nineteenth century Romanian politicians were concerned entirely with using their positions for personal gain.⁹³

Shortly after the turn of the century, another Sămănătorist, the philosopher Constantin Rădulescu-Motru (1868-1957), attacked what he called "politicianism," by which he meant "that type of political activity – or better, an elaborate abuse of political rights – through which some citizens of a state try and sometimes succeed in transforming public institutions and services ... into means for promoting their personal interests."⁹⁴ Like *Românism*, anti-politicianism became a

⁹² Boia, "Germanofili", 339.

⁹³ Nicolae Iorga, *Opinions pernicieuses d'un mauvais patriote: articles de critique et d'histoire, publiés dans l'Indépendance Roumaine* (Bucharest: Imprimerie de l'Indépendance Roumaine, 1900) 61-158; Nicolae Iorga, *Cuvinte adevărate* (Bucharest: Institutul Minerva, 1904) 32-37, 304-311.

⁹⁴ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Cultura română și politicianismul* (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay, 1904) 3. cf. Nicolae Iorga, *Tulburările bisericești și politicianismul (1909-11)* (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia "Neamul Românesc", 1911).

catchword for reformers and nationalists throughout the interwar period. Addressing a genuine problem that had no simple solution, it allowed for criticism of the democratic system as a whole, and buttressed calls for revolutionary new options such as fascism. Whereas Legionaries did appropriate some elements of the dominant Romanian culture such as its xenophobic nationalist rhetoric and its privileging of chivalry, discipline and community service as civic virtues, they vocally rejected this culture as a whole because, they said, it had sold itself to foreign (Jewish) interests and had betrayed the Romanian people.

Complaints about corruption were as old as the Romanian political system itself. Outlining the Pașoptist vision for a nation-state under the direction of ethnic Romanians, Nicolae Bălcescu wrote in 1844 that, “We will leave behind this party-spirit and base ambition, we will take hold of those true principles that must guide social life so that we might save ourselves. ... [We must] establish ourselves in patriotism and courage and develop steadfastness.”⁹⁵ Bălcescu’s dream did not live up to expectations, and once modern political parties began to form in the 1850s they reproduced many of the same evils that the Pașoptists and others had criticized in Ottoman, Phanariot and Russian rulers. Accusations of bribery, election rigging and of the corruption of justice at the highest levels were common and sometimes even demonstrated in court.⁹⁶ In 1871 Prince Carol published an open letter in which he laid the blame for the problems of a country that was “so well provisioned by nature and yet poor beyond belief,” squarely at the feet of its indigenous political class.⁹⁷

The two-party system that developed between the union of the principalities in 1859 and the election of Prince Carol in 1871 divided Romania’s political elites into those who

⁹⁵ Nicolae Bălcescu, *Propășirea*, 1844; quoted in Zub, *Istorie și istorici*, 278.

⁹⁶ Titu Maiorescu, *Istoria contemporană a României (1866-1900)* (Bucharest: Editura Universității Titu Maiorescu, 2002) 40-51, 62-66.

⁹⁷ Prince Carol, *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* (15/27 Jan 1871), quoted in *ibid.*, 22.

disapproved of the 1848 revolutions and were mostly satisfied with the current political system (Conservatives) and those who agitated for liberal reforms and greater independence for the new state along the lines proposed in 1848 (Liberals).⁹⁸ These groupings did not necessarily reflect the ideologies of conservative and liberal parties elsewhere in Europe, and were more like convenient alliances of interest groups than ideological positions. In general, the Conservatives sought to maintain free trade and the existing agricultural system, both of which benefited the landed aristocracy, while the National Liberals agitated for protectionist economic policies, agrarian reform and increased industrialization.⁹⁹ Neither party represented the interests of a single class, however, and the landed aristocracy now shared power with financial barons, university professors, lawyers and industrialists.¹⁰⁰

The workings of Romania's political system changed once Carol was proclaimed King in 1881. King Carol I personally appointed both the judiciary and the Prime Minister. Between 1881 and 1914 he negotiated with both major parties before deciding which he would ask to form the next government. Carol's chosen government would organize the upcoming elections, which including appointing county prefects who supervised the elections. These county prefects and local officials then influenced the outcomes of elections, ensuring that the king's preferred party won.¹⁰¹ As Keith Hitchins dryly notes, "no government designated by the king was ever

⁹⁸ Paul Michelson, *Romanian Politics, 1859-1871: From Prince Cuza to Prince Carol* (Iași: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998) 38.

⁹⁹ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 25-27.

¹⁰⁰ Apostol Stan, *Grupări și curente politice în România între unire și independență* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1979) 9; Ștefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română: origina și rolul ei istoric* (Bucharest: Cultura națională, 1925) 139, 220.

¹⁰¹ Ultra-nationalist description of how local elections were rigged in the favor of government candidates can be found in I. R. "Cum se fac alegerile la țară," *Neamul Românesc*, 2/57 (18 Nov 1907): 904-908; Ion Zelea Codreanu, "Discursul rostit în ședința Adunării Deputaților," 19 July 1920; reprinted in Ioan Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta în România: origini, manifestări, evoluție, 1919-1927* (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 1996) 210-211.

disappointed at the polls.”¹⁰² Once a government was elected, only a dispute with the king could topple it. Armed policemen were regularly used to intimidate political opponents, as were bands of armed thugs that policemen were unable or unwilling to control.¹⁰³ Four events from the spring and summer of 1884 give a sense of the methods used by politicians of this era to maintain power: In April, a crowd protesting against “the disloyal and unpatriotic politics of the present government, the dilapidation of public funds, the arbitrariness and incompetence of the monarch in the administration of this unhappy nation, [and] the system of corruption that threatens the new generations,” was assaulted and beaten by the police with the prior knowledge of government ministers. In May, one hundred students marching to the Austro-Hungarian Legation singing “Wake Up, Romanian” were forcibly dispersed by the police prefect. In June, protesting students were attacked on the street by bands of thugs who had been organized and armed by the police. In July, the government used police and armed gangs in the provinces to prevent electoral propaganda by opposition parties.¹⁰⁴ This was ordinary politics for the period, and 1884 was not a particularly turbulent year.

In addition to political violence and the king’s right to appoint new governments, the hegemony of the elite was guaranteed by the fact that very few people in Romania had the right to vote.¹⁰⁵ Political rivalries were of a very personal nature and on many occasions individuals crossed the floor of parliament, agitated in the press against members of their own parties, or formed dissident alliances within the major parties.¹⁰⁶ Paul Michelson sums up the political culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in this way:

¹⁰² Hitchins, *Rumania*, 94.

¹⁰³ Florin N. Șinca, *Din istoria poliției române*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Tipografia RCR Print, 2006) 85-89.

¹⁰⁴ Frédéric Damé, *J. C. Brătianu: L’ère nouvelle – la dictature* (Bucharest: Bureaux de l’Indépendance Roumaine, 1886) 241-304.

¹⁰⁵ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 94.

¹⁰⁶ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 96-127; Ion Bulei, *Sistemul politic al României moderne: Partidul Conservator* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1987) 201-203, 279-280, 304-317.

Whereas in an open political order, elections usually determine the government, in nineteenth and early twentieth century Romania, the government determined elections. The lack of genuine participation in the system and the throttling of local initiatives and representation prevented the emergence of true political parties, which remained merely factions or quasi-kinship groups organized more around personalities and patron-client relationships rather than ideas, ideologies or programs. It has been estimated that the effective political elite in this era was composed of fewer than 3,000 men.¹⁰⁷

Electoral reform finally came in 1917, and universal male suffrage was implemented for the first time in 1919, radically changing the constitution of parliament with 83 percent of those elected entering public office for the first time.¹⁰⁸ The end of the First World War meant considerable territorial gains for Romania, and post-war governments faced the challenge of implementing the electoral reforms together with extending bureaucratic procedures from the Old Kingdom into the new provinces to solidify their power there. The laws governing how elections were to be carried out changed frequently between 1917 and 1920. Each of the new provinces had different electoral procedures, and inconsistencies and vague wording confused many voters. The electoral system was not streamlined until 1926, when the National Liberal Party pushed through a series of amendments that gave genuine advantages to the major parties.¹⁰⁹ A significantly expanded electorate posed new challenges for the traditional parties. The Conservative Party, which had been the second major party alongside the National Liberals for most of the

¹⁰⁷ Michelson, "Romanian Development," 333. An even more disparaging assessment can be found in Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga: A Biography* (Iași and Portland: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998) 86-87.

¹⁰⁸ Sorin Radu, *Electoralul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919-1937)* (Iași: Institutul European, 2004) 73.

¹⁰⁹ Radu, *Electoralul din România*, 16-50.

nineteenth century, effectively disintegrated after the First World War amidst personal rivalries.¹¹⁰ Those that remained changed their names, their organization and their rhetoric in order to win the hearts of first time voters.¹¹¹ More often than not this new rhetoric was a nationalist one. Wartime heroes such as General Alexandru Averescu (1859-1938) used militaristic slogans to demonstrate their commitment to *Românism*, and nationalist parties from the new territories such as *Partidul Național Român din Transilvania* (the National Romanian Party of Transylvania) became significant political forces for the first time.¹¹²

The aftermath of the war revealed a wide gap between the official nationalism promoted by the government and local ways of thinking about war, community and nation. Led by the example of the royal family, politicians and other public figures moved quickly to commemorate the war dead. Huge crowds gathered to inaugurate a mausoleum at Mărășești, where one of the war's bloodiest battles had been fought, and similar monuments were erected all over the country. The King founded an organization known as "Heroes Cult," which was charged with caring for the graves of the dead soldiers, and a number of other civil society groups actively participated in memorializing the war dead.¹¹³ But the hegemony of this official culture was challenged even before it had begun. Private mourners were concerned that the bodies of their loved ones receive proper religious burials and commemorations (*parastase*) so that their souls might rest in peace, and they created a parallel culture of mourning that fulfilled their needs more effectively than official monuments did. Reflecting on these parallel cultures, Maria Bucur has argued that "often state policies were ineffective because they did not reach their intended

¹¹⁰ Mircea Iosa and Traian Lungu, *Viața politică în România, 1899-1910* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1977) 34-79, 126-161.

¹¹¹ Radu, *Electoratul din România*, 64-72.

¹¹² Hitchens, *Romania*, 391-397; Paul A. Shapiro, "Romania's Past as Challenge for the Future: A Developmental Approach to Interwar Politics," in Daniel N. Nelson ed., *Romania in the 1980s* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981) 20-37.

¹¹³ Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009) 98-143.

audience and were not viewed as representing a legitimate authority. Local populations did not recognize the kind of official nationalism that these policies sought to embody.”¹¹⁴

Just as many Romanians were uninterested in state-sponsored war memorials, it is debatable to what extent most people embraced the moderate nationalism of the ruling elites. Suddenly responsible for a much larger country with significant minority populations, the various populist and liberal governments of the early 1920s made consolidating the new borders their first priority. This meant Romanianizing the newly incorporated territories by imposing Romanian law, bureaucracy and education, carrying out land reforms and nationalizing industry, and reorganizing the Romanian Orthodox Church.¹¹⁵ Popular dissatisfaction with the implementation of these reforms manifested itself among ethnic Romanians in the 1920s through strikes and rural protests.¹¹⁶ Local elites in the newly incorporated territories also resented the imposition of Wallachian and Moldavian culture in their regions.¹¹⁷

One of the key reasons for popular distrust of politicians was that 1920s elites continued many of the corrupt practices perfected before the war. Thinking specifically about the political practices of the National Liberal Party that dominated Romanian politics during the 1920s, Keith Hitchins writes,

The liberalism practiced by the Liberal Party differed substantially from the Western European variety. In politics the Liberals used whatever means they had to in order to assure victory at the polls: they mobilized the police, the civil service, and the all-powerful prefects to further their own ends and discourage the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 4, 49-72.

¹¹⁵ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*; Hitchins, *Rumania*, 282-290; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2006) 429-437; Maurice Pearton, *Oil and the Romanian State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 109, 117.

¹¹⁶ Pearton, *Oil and the Romanian State*, 131; Constantin Ștefănescu, “Munca în viața economică,” in *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 3, ed. Dumitru Gusti, (Bucharest: Asociațiunea Științifică pentru Enciclopedia României, 1939) 81.

¹¹⁷ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 47-48.

opposition. They ran the economy in a similar authoritarian way. Without hesitation they organized cartels, set tariffs, and distributed subsidies and other financial favors.¹¹⁸

The Liberal Party's protectionist agenda meant that it maintained close ties with bankers and industrialists, passing legislation and granting permits to benefit certain companies and to exclude unwanted foreign competitors from the market.¹¹⁹ Scandals filled the headlines when evidence of compromising links between supposedly patriotic politicians and Jewish financiers or foreign arms dealers emerged that compromised the credibility of the political establishment as a whole.¹²⁰ When Ion I. C. Brătianu's National Liberal Party won the elections of January 1922, both the National Romanian Party and the Peasants Party openly accused the government of electoral violence and fraud.¹²¹ Successive governments also struggled with academics for control of the universities. The appointment of chancellors in particular was a highly politicized process that became associated with accusations of favoritism or incompetence.¹²²

Among the ultra-nationalists, the students were the ones who most vehemently rejected this corrupt political culture. Speaking to an audience of students in 1935, the Legionary theologian Father Grigore Cristescu asserted that "the older generation has strayed from the ancestral faith and should step aside to make room for the young generation."¹²³ Rather than abandoning the nationalist heritage cherished by both ultra-nationalists and mainstream

¹¹⁸ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 390.

¹¹⁹ Pearton, *Oil and the Romanian State*, 109; Ludovic Báthory, *Societățile carbonifere și sistemul economic și politic al României (1919-1929)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1999) 54-55.

¹²⁰ Nagy-Talavera, *N. Iorga*, 229-232; Mihail Chioveanu, "Afacerea Skoda," *Sfera Politicii* 8/84 (2000): 16-20.

¹²¹ Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 247-249.

¹²² Petre Cioraseanu, "Tot criza universitară," *Contimporanul*, 2/32 (24 Feb 1923): 2; Stelian Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței: viața universitară ieșană interbelică* (Iași: Junimea, 1977) 215-218; Cătălin Botoșineanu, "Politica din spatele "capetlor sparte", la Universitatea din Iași. Alegerile pentru funcția de rector din 1923," *Archiva Moldaviae*, 1 (2009): 54-78; Vasile Pușcaș, *Universitate, societate, modernizare: organizarea și activitatea științifică a Universității din Cluj (1919-1940)* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2003) 352-353.

¹²³ CNSAS, Fond Cristescu Grigore, I.258626, f. 109.

politicians, Legionaries claimed that as young people they, and not their elders, were the legitimate successors of nineteenth century nationalist heroes. Another Legionary, the sociologist Ernest Bernea, pointed out in *Youth and Politics (Tineretul și politică, 1936)* that the revolutionary heroes Nicolae Bălcescu, Ion Brătianu, C. A. Rosetti, and Avram Iancu were all in their twenties in 1848. Like the Legionaries, he said, they were young men of action, not of words.¹²⁴ Ultra-nationalists rejected the dominant political culture and its representatives as traitors, but they did not break with the past entirely. The mythology, symbolism, and values of Romanian nationalism remained central to interwar fascism, and the organizational innovations of the national movement laid the foundation for fascist mobilization during the 1920s and 1930s.

¹²⁴ Ernest Bernea, *Tineretul și politică* (Bucharest: Rânduiala, 1936) 4.

3.0 ORGANIZING ULTRA-NATIONALISTS

By the twentieth century it was not only the rich and the highly educated who were forming nationalist organizations. In April 1924 a high school teacher, two shop keepers and a tenant farmer met together in the city of Ploiești to talk about establishing a *Ligă Antisemită* (Anti-Semitic League) after the Easter holidays. They planned to gather support by holding small gatherings in the suburbs as well as large public meetings. One of the four, the shopkeeper Moise Gavanescu, immediately began doing propaganda amongst his friends and acquaintances. He told them that the Jews controlled the press and the economy, and that forming a common front to drive the Jews out of industry and commerce was the only way to reduce the cost of living. Gavanescu belonged to the local branch of *Societatea Apărătorii Patriei* (the Defenders of the Fatherland Society) and he used his connections there to promote the League among war veterans as well.¹ The *Siguranța* quickly lost interest in Gavanescu's proposed League so there is no record of how long it lasted or how many people joined.

Ploiești was not the only place where such meetings took place. Ultra-nationalist leagues and political parties with significant numbers of members sprang up all over the country once the dust settled from the Hungarian-Romanian War of 1919, drawing on networks that clearly predated the parties themselves. Many used a vocabulary that was increasingly popular amongst members of the extreme right throughout Europe, blending fraternity, militarism, and religious ideas into a new ultra-nationalist idiom. The *Frăția de Cruce* (Blood Brotherhood), for example, which was founded in the Apuseni mountains by Amos Frâncu (-1933) in June 1919, spoke of itself as the “watchman of peaceful Latin civilization at the gates of the wintry Orient.” Members wore white flowers on their cufflinks, a white cross on their left arms, and practiced sport and

¹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 8.

marksmanship together.² The Blood Brotherhood still spoke about cultural propaganda, but the non-violent tone of nineteenth century nationalism was now gone. By the beginning of the interwar period ultra-nationalist newspapers were financed, distributed and read by sympathetic audiences in major cities throughout the country. When the students protested against Jews in the winter of 1922, pockets of ultra-nationalists appeared who apparently already knew that they could count on one another's support in their efforts to help the students' cause. Such organizations point to the existence of a group of people who knew each other either personally or by reputation prior to 1922, and for whom anti-Semitism was an active political stance rather than a prejudice or a passive hatred. According to ultra-nationalists, "practically and theoretically, anti-Semitism is the same as nationalism."³ One of the leading ultra-nationalists of the late nineteenth century, Mina Savel, explained:

For someone to be an anti-Semite today ... means to be a devoted fighter against a materialist current that puts money above honor, virtue, and the highest sentiments worthy of human nature. At the same time, to be an anti-Semite is to be a martyr and defender of one's nation, of the rights and institutions that, together with the spirit of liberty, contribute to the progress of a nation. An anti-Semite fights not only against Yids, but also against those judaized people who support them.⁴

I call these people "ultra-nationalists." They simply called themselves "nationalists" or "anti-Semites," but those labels risk confusing them with those mainstream politicians who articulated both nationalism and anti-Semitism as an ordinary part of Romanian political culture. Ultra-

² Statut de organizare a Frăției de Cruce, 29 June 1919; reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 181-185; Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 98.

³ "Antisemitismul este naționalismul," *Străjerul*, 1/1 (4 Oct 1926): 1.

⁴ Mina Savel, "Cine sunt antisemiții," *Antisemitul* (Craiova), 1/5 (31 Mar 1898): 1.

nationalists shared the nationalism and anti-Semitism that was dominant in Romanian society at the time but they articulated these ideas in terms of an extremist ideology that most of their compatriots were not prepared to accept.

Ultra-nationalists were spread out across the country but appeared most frequently in large urban centers like Bucharest, Iași, Galați and Cluj. Carol Iancu writes about an “anti-Semitic movement” made up of “clergy, army officers, state functionaries, teachers and students,” which manifested itself through “groupings, associations, and clubs whose members were recruited among the different professions with the declared goal of combating Jews economically and of organizing systematic boycotts against them.”⁵ Iancu uses the word “movement” because ultra-nationalists themselves spoke of an “anti-Semitic movement” at the beginning of the twentieth century, but this was not an organized group with a clear leadership or hierarchy. Ultra-nationalists maintained social ties with each other and regularly moved in and out of various anti-Semitic organizations, but before the mid-1920s no single organization united them all.⁶

Ultra-nationalists embraced the central ideas of Romanian nationalism that had been developed during the nineteenth century, even while they rejected the Pașoptists, Junimists, and Liberals as Westernizers.⁷ They saw Romanians as a downtrodden but noble people who had lived under foreign oppression for centuries.⁸ *Românism* was a moral imperative for them, and required sacrificing time, money and if necessary, respectability.⁹ They blamed politicianism for their country’s economic and social woes and charged that the democratic parties had sold

⁵ Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie*, 220.

⁶ “La mormântul lui Crușevan,” *Naționalistul*, 1/3 (3 Sept 1922): 3.

⁷ “Junimiștii și ‘Adevărul’,” *Antisemitul* (Bucharest), 1/45 (12 Oct 1899): 1-2; Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria evreilor în țerile noastre* (Bucharest: Academia Română, 1913) 37.

⁸ Mina Savel, *Istoria Iudaismului* (Iași: Tipografia M.P. Popovici, 1902) 158.

⁹ I. Manolescu-Mladian, “Invitare cordială frățescă,” *Strigătul*, 1/1 (19 Jan 1892): 4.

Romania out to foreigners.¹⁰ In the ultra-nationalist imagination, the quintessential foreigners were Jews, whom they considered the ethnic, religious, economic and social enemies of their people.¹¹ They advocated expelling Jews from the country.¹² They believed that the solution to Romania's problems lay in cultivating autochthonous Romanian "traditions" and not in foreign imports, but that Romanians themselves needed to be reformed through discipline and sacrifice.¹³ All of these elements can be found in the discourses of Romanian nationalism and anti-Semitism that evolved over the course of the nineteenth century. Ultra-nationalists synthesized these notions into a single worldview and committed themselves to working towards its realization.

3.1 EARLY ANTI-SEMITIC ORGANIZING

Whereas anti-Semitic sentiment was closely tied into the story of Romanian nationalism, the first expressions of organized anti-Semitism were influenced by developments elsewhere in Europe. Anti-Semitic political parties appeared in Vienna at the beginning of the 1880s amidst growing dissatisfaction with liberalism, as Georg von Schönerer (1842-1921) pioneered a new brand of xenophobic nationalist politics in Central Europe.¹⁴ Wilhelm Marr (1819-1904) coined the word "anti-Semitism" in 1879, and he founded the *Antisemitenliga* (The League of Anti-Semites) in Germany that same year.¹⁵ The inaugural congress of the "Universal Anti-Israelite Alliance" was held in Bucharest in 1886 with support from the National Liberal government. Delegates came from Romania, Hungary and France, and they elected Edouard Drumont (1844-1917), the author of *La France Juive* (*Jewish France*, 1886) and the future founder of the *Ligue nationale*

¹⁰ *Antisemitul* (Bucharest), 1/2 (17 Aug 1887): 1; "Jidovul P.P. Carp," *Ecoul Moldovei*, 2/65 (11 Feb 1893): 2; Gheorghe Roșianu, *Pășania lui Gheorghe Roșianu în Focșani* (Focșani: Atelierele Gh. A. Diaconescu, 1914) 4-5.

¹¹ Comitetul antisemit din Bârlad, "Manifestul Program al partidului național-antisemit," (1899); in Ancel ed., *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry*, 3.

¹² Un bun român, *Chestiunea Ovreiască* (Bucharest, 1913).

¹³ Cuza, *Naționalitatea în arta*, xiii.

¹⁴ Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 116-133.

¹⁵ Brustein, *Roots of Hate*, 130-131.

antisémitique de France (National Anti-Semitic League of France, 1889), as their President.¹⁶ By 1887 Romania could boast a “Romanian Anti-Semitic Society,” a “Romanian Anti-Semitic Alliance,” and a “Universal Anti-Semitic Alliance.”¹⁷

In the 1890s the Dreyfus Affair catalyzed anti-Semitic sentiment across Europe. The mainstream Romanian dailies rarely mentioned the anti-Semitic nature of the Dreyfus Affair, although they did provide blow-by-blow coverage of the trials. Even the Conservative newspaper founded by Mihail Eminescu, *Timpul* (*The Times*, 1877-1924), which often spoke about “Yids” exploiting Romanians, was remarkably objective in its reporting on the trials.¹⁸ Ultra-nationalist newspapers such as *Ecoul Moldovei* (*The Echo of Moldavia*, 1890-1918), *Jos jidanii* (*Down with the Yids*, 1897), and Craiova’s *Antisemitul* (*The Anti-Semite*, 1898-1901, 1904-1906) hailed the affair as proof of the treachery of assimilated Jews and took from it the lesson that “it is nice to be merciful, to welcome the porcupine into your house to warm itself, but you also have to think of the consequences. The French did not think when they gave, or more accurately, when they permitted, Jews to become citizens. Now they are suffering, and who knows how much more they have to suffer.”¹⁹ Ultra-nationalists were well aware of international trends and they drew heavily on foreign literature in their polemics against Jews, sometimes even going so far as to plagiarize it and claim it as their own.²⁰ Ultra-nationalist newspapers frequently reported on the successes of anti-Semites elsewhere in Europe, and Romanian activists attended international conferences.²¹ Constantin K. Zamfiroiu cited both the Dreyfus Affair and Karl Lueger’s success in

¹⁶ Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie*, 220-222. On Duront, see *ibid.*, 118-129.

¹⁷ *Antisemitul* (Brăila), 1/2 (17 Aug 1887): 4.

¹⁸ Raluca Moldovan, “L’echo de l’Affaire Dreyfus dans la presse roumaine,” *Les Actes du colloque Dreyfus* (Montpellier: Paul Valéry University Press, Forthcoming).

¹⁹ “Evreii în Franța,” *Ecoul Moldovei*, 7/32 (6 Feb 1898): 1-2.

²⁰ Peter Manu and Horia Bozdoghină, *Polemica Paulescu: știință, politică, memorie* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2010) 135.

²¹ “Antisemitismul în Austro-Ungaria,” *Alarma Moldovei*, 1/3 (16 Sept 1888): 3; Mina Savel, “România față cu Iudaismul,” *Alarma Moldovei*, 1/11 (7 Jan 1889): 1-2; “Antisemitismul în America,” *Ecoul Moldovei*, 1/61 (14 Jan

Vienna as his motivations for founding a *Liga Antisemită* (Anti-Semitic League) in Craiova in 1898.²²

Some of the best sources on ultra-nationalist organizing during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are anti-Semitic newspapers. Sometimes individuals established these sorts of publications to make money or to gain public office.²³ In 1892 retired army officer named Ion Manolescu-Mladian launched *Strigătul* (*The Cry*, 1892) in Iași to publicize his entry into politics.²⁴ His first move was to invite the presidents of fifteen guilds and community groups to a meeting where he hoped they would agree to collaborate with his project to promote *Românism* by fighting Jewish commerce in the city.²⁵ Subsequent issues of the newspaper do not mention whether anyone came to his meeting, and the newspaper soon disappeared from the stands. It is difficult to know how successful such publications were, but according to N. Ștefănescu, when he launched *Antisemitul* (*The Anti-Semite*, 1906) in Brăila its first issue sold out so quickly that he immediately increased its print run to 20,000 copies and arranged for national distribution.²⁶ Not all anti-Semitic newspapers did even that well. After its second issue Bucharest's *Antisemitul* (1887) had to give up selling through street vendors at all, sending copies directly to subscribers only.²⁷ Anti-Semitism was not always good business, as Gheorghe Roșianu discovered when he printed a forty page brochure entitled *Deșteaptă-te Române!* (*Wake Up, Romanian!*) in Focșani in 1899.²⁸ Roșianu was a seasonal laborer in his early thirties who

1893): 2-3; "Emigrarea ovreilor din România și Bulgaria," *Apărarea Națională*, 1/54 (11 Mar 1900) 1; "Manifestul grupului antisemit din Franța," *Dorul Românului*, 1/29 (30 Oct 1898): 3.

²² Const. K. Zamfirol, "Prospect: Pentru ce a aparut Antisemitul?" *Antisemitul* (Craiova) 1/1 (1 Mar 1898): 1.

²³ For example, see the career of Pavel Crușevan in Chișinău. Iurie Colesnic, *Basarabia necunoscută*, vol. 3 (Chișinău: Museum, 2000) 28-41.

²⁴ I. Manolescu Mladian, "Nu facem reclamă electorală," *Strigătul*, 1/1 (19 Jan 1892): 1-2.

²⁵ I. Manolescu Mladian, "Invitare cordială frățescă," *Strigătul*, 1/1 (19 Jan 1892): 4.

²⁶ *Antisemitul* (Brăila), 1/2 (28 July 1906): 4. By way of comparison, that same year the now famous literary journal *Sămănătorul* (*The Sower*, 1901-1910) struggled to sell more than 500 copies a week. Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*, 69.

²⁷ *Antisemitul* (Bucharest), 1/2 (17 Aug 1887): 1.

²⁸ Gheorghe Roșianu, *Deșteaptă-te Române!* (Focșani: Tipografia Gheorghe A. Diaconescu, 1899).

often found himself unemployed during the winter. He says, “I thought that I would have a great success, but I was bitterly deceived, for the Romanians in Focșani are all partisans of the Yids.”²⁹ The first publisher he went to stole his money, and then the city’s notables told him that “I am misguided if I have the audacity to write against the Yids, saying that Romanians could not live in their country if Romania was not overwhelmed by Jews, because the Yids control all of the commerce and all of the money in the country.”³⁰

Other publications gradually introduced anti-Semitic agendas over time. Em. Al. Manoliu’s *Ecoul Moldovei* (*The Echo of Moldavia*), for example, was one of the most successful anti-Semitic newspapers of the early twentieth century, but in its first issue it defended a Jewish businessman against libel and did not begin printing anti-Semitic articles until its third year of publication.³¹ Similarly, *Meseriașul român* (*The Romanian Tradesman*, 1887-1888) avoided anti-Semitism entirely during its first eight months and only started attacking Jews after the peasants’ revolt of 1888.³² Father Ion Moța (-1940), whose *Libertatea* (*Liberty*, 1902-1941) was another popular publications amongst ultra-nationalists, rarely mentioned anti-Semitism until 1925, when he introduced a regular rubric attacking Jewish bankers.³³ Instead, the newspaper focused on local news from the town of Oraștie where Fr. Moța lived, folk culture, and patriotic editorials. It began at the turn of the century as an organ of the Transylvanian nationalist movement. *Libertatea* carried irredentist articles with the collaboration of some of Transylvania’s most renowned activists and its editors were taken to court twice in its first two

²⁹ Gheorghe Roșianu, *Emigrarea Ovreilor din România* (Focșani: Tipografia “Aurora” Gh. A. Diaconescu, 1901) 6, 15-22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-6; Roșianu, *Pățania*, 13-14.

³¹ “Asimilanții din Iași,” *Ecoul Moldovei*, (1/1, 15 Sept 1890): 3. The first anti-Semitic article was Sc. P. “Antisemitismul,” *Ecoul Moldovei*, 1/60 (7 Jan 1893): 2.

³² “Emigrația ovreilor,” *Meseriașul român*, 1/21 (1 May 1888): 1. Earlier articles about the revolt did not mention Jews as a cause of peasant dissatisfaction. “O privire asupra situațiunei țerei noastre” *Meseriașul român*, 1/17 (14 Apr 1888): 1.

³³ Fr. Ioan Moța, *42 de ani de gazetărie* (Orăștie: Tipografia Astra, 1935) 78.

years for anti-Hungarian propaganda. Fr. Moța transformed it into a popular newspaper aimed at village audiences when most of the original collaborators pulled out in 1905 leaving him in complete control of the newspaper.³⁴ As an iconic nationalist publication in the years leading up to Transylvania's incorporation into Greater Romania, many readers took out subscriptions not only for themselves but also for others in their villages, bringing the number of subscribers up to 16,000 in 1914.³⁵

3.2 ULTRA-NATIONALISTS AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Related tangentially to the mainstream nationalist movement and initially connected mostly through short-lived anti-Semitic newspapers or leagues, ultra-nationalists were far from united. Activists in the provinces complained that their more successful comrades in Bucharest acted as if they did not know they existed.³⁶ Despite the grandiose claims of propagandists, ultra-nationalists only gained a sense of themselves as a group once they began to organize into political parties. Five of these parties stand out for their ability to mobilize large numbers of people from a variety of social backgrounds into hierarchical organizations with clear leadership, ideologies and goals. When the Nationalist Democratic Party was established in 1910 it was the first attempt by ultra-nationalists to form a traditional political party. It lasted only six years and had little success at the polls, but it brought ultra-nationalists together and promoted several key militants to celebrity status amongst like-minded individuals. Another short-lived movement was the Guard of the National Conscience, which mobilized workers and students in Iași against Bolshevism, provoking brawls with left-wing workers and bringing ultra-nationalist politics onto the streets. On a much grander scale, the National Romanian Fascists (FNR) created branches all

³⁴ Ibid., 19-33.

³⁵ Ibid., 46; "Bunavoință," *Libertatea*, 14/12 (12/25 Nov 1915): 6.

³⁶ Const. C. Zamfiroiu, "Pentru 'Apărarea Națională,'" *Dorul Românului*, 4/31 (17 Jan 1902): 1.

over the country, adapting the ideology and rhetoric of Italian Fascism to the Romanian context. When leadership struggles ended the FNR's brief career, those people who had been mobilized and indoctrinated in its ranks moved into other ultra-nationalist parties. In Cluj, Romanian Action was the product of a handful of ultra-nationalist intellectuals who hoped to continue the struggles of the pre-1918 national movement within the context of an expanded Romania. Although their support base was limited, it included prominent elite figures and laid the basis for ultra-nationalist organizing in northern Transylvania. The spoils of these various movements fell to *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC), which was led by a law professor from Iași named Alexandru Constantin Cuza. He established his party as a patron of the anti-Semitic student protesters, using LANC periodicals, meetings and channels of communication channels to link the ultra-nationalist community to the fascist social movement in the universities. To these five one could add *Uniunii Foștilor Luptători* (the Veterans' Union), *Uniunii Ofițerilor de Rezervă* (the Reserve Officers' Union), *Organizației Foștilor Gardiști* (the Former Guards Association) and *Ligii Drepturilor Omului* (the Human Rights League), all of which promoted ultra-nationalist doctrines.³⁷

Ultra-nationalist veterans associations did exist in Romania, but the most important right-wing organizers after the First World War were those who had already established themselves as public anti-Semites during the early twentieth century. Veterans were crucial supporters of fascist movements in Italy, Germany, Austria, and Hungary – all countries that had lost territory during the war.³⁸ In contrast, Romania had won territory in the war. Instead of a large group of disappointed veterans, Romanians had to contend with large minority populations who had previously dominated the occupied regions both economically and culturally. According to the

³⁷ Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 373-375.

³⁸ Mann, *Fascists*, 68-69, 151-154, 213, 240.

1930 census, Hungarians were by far interwar Romania's largest ethnic minority, followed by Germans, Jews, Ruthenians and Ukrainians.

Ethnic Group	Population	Percentage
Romanian	12,981,324	71.9
Hungarian	1,425,507	7.9
German	745,421	4.1
Jewish	728,115	4.0
Ruthenian and Ukrainian	582,115	3.2
Russian	409,150	2.3
Bulgarian	366,384	2.0
Roma	262,501	1.5
Other	556,511	3.1
Total	18,057,028	100

*Table 1: Ethnic groups in Romania in 1930.*³⁹

Jews were by no means the largest of these minority groups, but Jews and Roma – and to a lesser extent Ukrainians and Ruthenians – were the only minorities that did not have a strong state nearby to protect their rights. Romanian authorities restricted access to Ukrainian-language education and cultural societies in the early 1920s, and Ukrainian nationalist organizing had little success in Romania.⁴⁰ Ultra-nationalists and state officials alike ignored Roma during the interwar period because nationalists were concerned with establishing the authority of ethnic Romanians in the newly expanded state, and Roma's status as a powerless and disadvantaged

³⁹ Table based on Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, xxiv.

⁴⁰ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 49-88.

group had been well-established in the nationalist imagination since the mid-nineteenth century.⁴¹ Jews, on the other hand, had economic influence and occupied important positions within the country's educational and cultural institutions. As Romanians struggled to assert control over the new territories, the pre-war rhetoric about Jews as the quintessential foreigners who dominated helpless Romanians once again came to the fore.

3.3 THE NATIONALIST DEMOCRATIC PARTY (1910-1916)

Partidul Naționalist Democrat (the Nationalist Democratic Party) was the first attempt to organize Moldavia's most prominent ultra-nationalists into a major political party. Among its key figures were Ion Manolescu-Mladian, who began his career in anti-Semitic politics with the newspaper *Strigătul* in 1892;⁴² Vasile M. Kogălniceanu, who made his name as a spokesman for the small landlords during the 1907 peasant rebellion;⁴³ Ion Zelea Codreanu (1878-), who had founded the nationalist society *Munca* (Work) at Huși in 1907 and in 1910 was facing disciplinary action for encouraging high school students to wear national costumes instead of their school uniforms;⁴⁴ and Corneliu Șumuleanu (1869-1937), an outspoken anti-Semitic professor of Chemistry at the University of Iași.⁴⁵ The joint presidents of the party were Nicolae Iorga and A. C. Cuza. Both were university professors and members of the Cultural League, but Iorga had been complaining for several years that the League had become "vegetative" due to its moderate leadership.⁴⁶ Both were also leading Sămănătorists, Iorga as the editor of the magazine

⁴¹ Woodcock, "The Țigan is not a man," 36-37.

⁴² I. Manolescu Mladian, "Nu facem reclamă electorală," *Strigătul*, 1/1 (19 Jan 1892): 1-2.

⁴³ Eidelberg, *The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt*, 155-189.

⁴⁴ Ion Zelea Codreanu, "Zile înalțătoare la Huși," *Neamul românesc*, 1/73 (18 Jan 1907): 307-308; N. N. de Tigheciu, "Școală partidelor și a Cahalului," *Neamul românesc*, 5/44 (6 Apr 1910): 2-6; N. N. de Tigheciu, "Școală partidelor și a Cahalului," *Neamul românesc*, 5/53 (3 May 1910): 837-841.

⁴⁵ Manu and Bozdoghină, *Polemica Paulescu*, 147.

⁴⁶ Nicolae Iorga, "Datoria Ligei Culturale," *Neamul românesc*, 1/32 (27 Aug 1906): 531-532; Nicolae Iorga, "Liga culturală se pune în serviciul Culturii românești," *Neamul românesc*, 2/54 (8 Nov 1907): 849-851.

Sămănătorul between 1903 and 1905, and Cuza thanks to his contributions to a sister-magazine from Bârlad called *Făt-Frumos*.⁴⁷ The Sămănătorist program built on the nationalist writings of both men during the previous decade. During the 1890s Iorga had published a number of articles against politicianism in various nationalist publications and Cuza had written a series of anti-Semitic studies on economic and social issues.⁴⁸ Iorga writes in his memoirs that during this period both he and Cuza arrived independently at the same conclusions about the need for protectionism in Romanian culture and about the threat that Jews posed to the Romanian nation.⁴⁹ Iorga's earlier writings accused Jews of harboring irredentist feelings for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Cuza believed that they were strangling Romanian culture. Whereas Iorga demanded that Jews renounce their culture, language and dress to become Romanians, Cuza wanted them out of the country entirely.⁵⁰

From 1906 onwards Iorga and Cuza collaborated regularly on Iorga's newspaper, *Neamul românesc*, and in 1908 they began holding public meetings to publicize the nationalist-democratic movement, which became a formal political party two years later.⁵¹ Most of these meetings involved speaking about the goals of the new party, but Iorga's defining moment as an ultra-nationalist demagogue came two years earlier, on 13 March 1906. That day Iorga agitated amongst university students to arrange a protest against a French-language play being performed at the National Theater. He had attempted such protests before, always with prior approval and with little success. This particular protest got out of hand once the students started a riot, overturning trams and throwing rocks and tiles at mounted gendarmes. Iorga himself quickly left

⁴⁷ Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*, 59-81; 287-291.

⁴⁸ Bozdoghină, *Polemica Paulescu*, 123-127.

⁴⁹ Nicolae Iorga, *O viața de om așa cum a fost* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1984) 205.

⁵⁰ Iorga, *Cuvinte adevărate*, 177-264; Cuza, *Naționalitatea în arta*, 1-12, 230-246.

⁵¹ Mihail Oprișescu, *Partidul Naționalist Democrat condus de Nicolae Iorga (1910-1938)* (Bucharest: Fed Print, 2000) 25-32.

the scene, but the incident made Iorga and the Sămănătorist movement famous as defenders of Romanian culture who were willing to operate on the edges of the law. Iorga followed up on his success with a national speaking-tour, during which he laid the foundations for a future political party based on Sămănătorist values.⁵² Six years later some of the students involved in these protests founded the Nationalist Democratic newspaper *Unirea* (*Unification*, 1912-1915, 1918-1920, 1924), claiming that the riot of 1906 was “a spontaneous movement for defending unappreciated Romanian culture, [which] suddenly became an unstoppable awakening of national consciousness ... that later became the Nationalist Democratic Party.”⁵³

The Nationalist Democratic program spoke about harnessing the peasantry as a political force, destroying Jewish involvement in Romanian politics, society and commerce, and strengthening Romania’s international influence.⁵⁴ Once he was elected as a Nationalist Democratic deputy, Iorga gave a lengthy speech in parliament outlining how Jews had exploited Romanians for decades and were a threat to Romanian domination of the state.⁵⁵ A propaganda poster from 1911 announced that “the goal of the Democratic Nationalists is to give this country back to the people who worked it.”⁵⁶ By this they meant taking the country back from the “exploiting Yids” into whose hands they said Romania had fallen.⁵⁷ Aware of his party’s affinities with the extreme right elsewhere in Europe, Iorga contacted the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, in 1910, hoping to secure his support for the Romanian Nationalist-Democrats.⁵⁸ The party also now threw its support behind the Cultural League, which became

⁵² Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*, 190-196; Iorga, *O viața de om*, 281-284.

⁵³ “Pe drumul cel nou,” *Unirea*, 1/1 (1 Jan 1912): 1.

⁵⁴ Horia Bozdoghină, *Nicolae Iorga și Partidul Naționalist Democrat în viața politică a României* (Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga, 2007) 70-75; Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga*, 162.

⁵⁵ Nicolae Iorga, *Problema Evreiască la cameră, o interpelare* (Vălenii de Munte: Tip. Neamul Românesc, 1910).

⁵⁶ Opreșescu, *Partidul Naționalist Democrat*, 51.

⁵⁷ Cuza, A. C. “Presa jidovească și studenții universitari,” *Neamul românesc*, (5 Dec 1908): 2995.

⁵⁸ Iorga, *O viața de om*, 307.

more radical during the period of heightened nationalism leading up to the First and Second Balkan Wars.⁵⁹

Iorga understood nationalism to be a political ideology that dictated specific policies such as royalism, agrarian reform, and economic protectionism. To describe nationalism as liberal or conservative would have been nonsensical to Iorga, who believed that once he put the interests of the Romanian people first, everything else would logically follow.⁶⁰ He explained: “Nationalism is a political doctrine, a certain conception of the life of a state placed in the service of the people [*neam*] seen as an organic, decisive being. ... Nationalism is not a sentimental coloring for any political creed; it is itself a creed, and an exclusive one.”⁶¹ It was also a secular creed. Influenced by the Junimists as young men, both Iorga and Cuza were well-known as atheists and they did not try to support their party through appeals to religious duty.⁶² Secularism was not an unusual position for pre-war ultra-nationalists. Another prominent anti-Semite of the period defended the rationality of his position by stating proudly that, “I have no type of religious faith, being a complete atheist. I am guided only by national sentiment, by love for my people.”⁶³

One issue that the nationalist creed was apparently not very clear about was foreign policy. As Romania vacillated from 1914 to 1916 between joining the Central Powers or the Triple Entente in the First World War, most political parties were also divided on the issue. In 1916 the two nationalist-democratic presidents definitively parted ways when Iorga declared himself in favor of an Anglo-French alliance and Cuza insisted on supporting Germany and its allies. Each man claimed to be the legitimate leader of the party, and each promoted “nationalist

⁵⁹ Alex Cusin, “O instituție care va trăi: Ligă Culturală,” *Unirea*, 1/21 (21 Mai 1912): 1.

⁶⁰ William Oldson, *The Historical and Nationalistic Thought of Nicolae Iorga* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1974) 42-43.

⁶¹ Nicolae Iorga, quoted in Ornea, *Sămănătorismul*, 199.

⁶² Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga*, 56, 102; Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology*, 23.

⁶³ I. D. Protopopescu, *Pericolul Ovreesc* (Craiova: Editura Ramuri, n.d.) 4. Another prominent anti-Semite whose atheism was important for his anti-Semitism was Vasile Conta. Manu and Bozdoghină, *Polemica Paulescu*, 120.

democratic” positions through his own newspaper, Iorga in *Neamul românesc* and Cuza in *Unirea*.⁶⁴ Iorga continued to lead the Nationalist Democrats after the war, while Cuza and Codreanu ran as candidates for General Averescu’s People’s Party (*Partidul Poporului*), which came to power in March 1920. A month after the elections, Cuza and Codreanu renounced their affiliation with the governing People’s Party and claimed to represent those Nationalist Democrats “who have not abandoned [the Party’s] doctrines.”⁶⁵ They recognized that the position of the nationalist movement had been irrevocably changed by the creation of Greater Romania and the introduction of universal suffrage, but were unwilling to admit that organized nationalism no longer had a purpose. The ultimate goal of the blood spilt during the war, *Unirea* argued in 1918, was “the purification of our social atmosphere, the ending of political parasitism, the abolition of club-house politics, of partisanship and toadyism.”⁶⁶ The war may have enlarged Romania’s territory, but it had not resolved the problem of politicianism, nor had it rid Romania of its Jews. The nationalist struggle was far from over, Cuza and Codreanu argued – its goals had just become more precise.

3.4 THE GUARD OF THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE (1919-1920)

While Cuza and Codreanu riled against politicianism, other ultra-nationalists turned their attention to Bolshevism, which looked ever more dangerous as Béla Kun’s Communist Party took control in Hungary and as Bolshevik forces steadily gained the upper hand in the Russian Civil War. In August 1919, a group of workers from Iași led by the tradesman Constantin Pancu established *Garda Conștiinței Naționale* (the Guard of the National Conscience) to defend their

⁶⁴ Bozdoghină, *Nicolae Iorga*, 57-61.

⁶⁵ Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 203-206. Cf. “Pentru ca să se știe,” *Naționalistul*, 1/7 (1 Oct 1922): 1; Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 95-96.

⁶⁶ Mihail Dragoș, “Frontul Nou,” *Unirea*, 4/1 (29 Oct 1918): 3.

country from its “enemies” – Bolsheviks – who they said were making rapid headway in the city’s factories. Although they promised to work towards their goals “peacefully and not through terror or by imposing foreign points of view,” the language of the ultra-nationalists gathered around Pancu drew on military metaphors about “defense” and “standing guard.”⁶⁷ The war was not over, they said, because Bolshevism was still threatening Romania and must be actively resisted.⁶⁸

The city of Iași was home to 102,595 people in 1930, including 37,634 Jews.⁶⁹ A contemporary tourist guide described it as a “modern city, with imposing buildings, beautiful gardens, electric lighting, a tramway, and all sorts of transportation.”⁷⁰ The major agricultural products of the region were wheat, oats, rice, and rye, and almost all of the fertile land was owned by ethnic Romanians, who also dominated the trades guilds.⁷¹ Most of the city’s money came from commerce, however, as wholesalers used it as a centre for shipping foodstuffs and industrial goods throughout Moldavia. It was also the region’s administrative hub, which supported a growing financial and banking sector.⁷² Iași had a thriving Jewish community in the interwar period, which organized its own schools, theatres, literary and cultural life, as well as hospitals and charities.⁷³ Jews controlled many of the city’s financial institutions, which created friction between the Romanian businessmen and the Jewish bankers on whom they depended for credit.

⁶⁷ Garda Conștiinței Naționale, “Scopul nostru,” *Conștiința*, 1/1 (30 Aug 1919): 1.

⁶⁸ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “Un cuvânt către muncitorii români care au trecut sub steagul cel roș al dușmanului,” *Conștiința* (9 Feb 1920); reprinted in Scurtu ed., *Totalitarismul*, 192-197.

⁶⁹ Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, 246.

⁷⁰ N. A. Bogdan and C. I. Eremia, *Cel mai nou ghild al Iașului* (Iași: Editura Damaschin, 1932) 2.

⁷¹ Adrian I. Mironescu, *Structura economică a orașului și județului Iași, 1932-1938* (Câmpulung-Mold.: Tipografia Societății Școala Română, 1939) 30-34, 84.

⁷² Bogdan and Eremia, *Cel mai nou ghild*, 14; Dumitru Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Asociațiunea Științifică pentru Enciclopedia României, 1936) 633-640.

⁷³ H. Gherner and Beno Wachtel, *Evreii ieșeni în documente și fapte* (Iași: Tipografia Opinia, 1939).

25,809 people, or 25.1% of the active population of Iași, worked in industry by the time of the 1930 census, although that was at the end of a decade of intense industrialization.⁷⁴ In addition to the rise of communist governments elsewhere in Europe, one factor that would have made the threat of Bolshevism seem urgent was the rapid increase in strike action after the war. Workplace legislation relating to safety, hygiene and child labor was only introduced in Romania in the last years of the nineteenth century and many issues were not addressed until after the First World War. Collective conflicts involving industrial workers were an increasingly common occurrence in the early twentieth century. New laws regulating collective conflicts between workers and employers came into effect in 1920, sparking a wave of industrial action as workers attempted to clarify what the new legislation meant and to force employers to abide by the new rules.⁷⁵

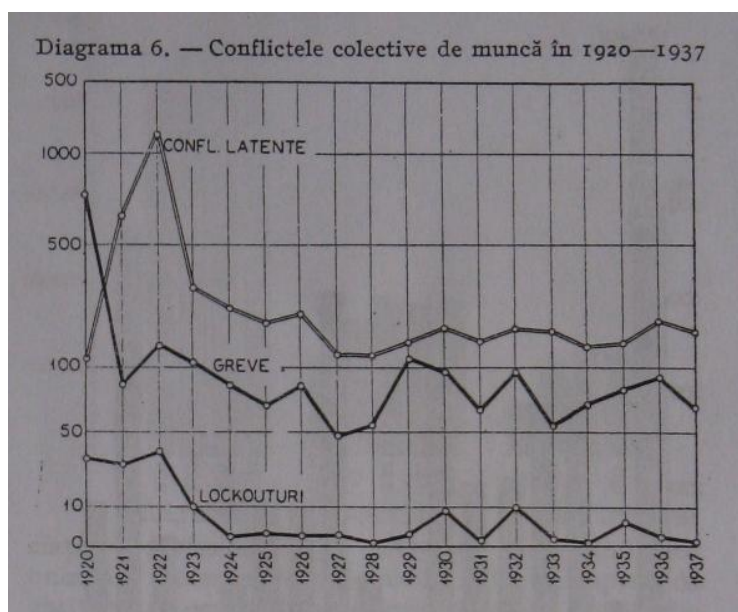


Figure 2: Collective labor conflicts in 1920-1937⁷⁶

Confl. Latente (Latent Conflicts); Greve (Strikes); Lockouturi (Lock-outs)

⁷⁴ Sabin Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 9, 789.

⁷⁵ Gr. Trancu-Iași and D. Constantinescu, "Legislația muncii în România," in Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1, 593-595.

⁷⁶ Ștefănescu, "Munca în viața economică," in Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 3, 81.

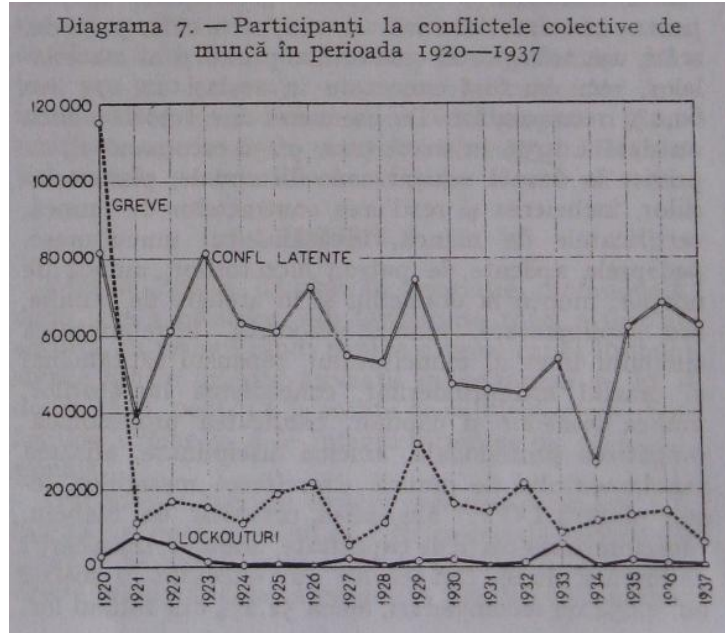


Figure 3: Number of participants in collective labor conflicts in 1920-1937.⁷⁷

Unions were also a relatively new form of labor organization. They first began to take shape after a 1909 law gave legal basis to professional associations.⁷⁸ These new entities quickly found their voices, and in 1910 alone unions were involved in 15 boycotts, 107 strikes and 3 lock-outs.⁷⁹

Members of the Guard formed “nationalist unions” to represent the interests of ultra-nationalist workers. They negotiated with private employers side by side with the socialist unions, although the two types of unions quickly fell into conflict.⁸⁰ The Guard’s newspaper, *Conștiința* (*The Conscience*, 1919-1920), frequently reported on workers or tradesmen who were

⁷⁷ Ștefănescu, “Munca în viața economică,” in Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 3, 81.

⁷⁸ Strat, “Organizația socială a muncitorilor,” in Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1, 587.

⁷⁹ Gh. Cristescu, “Raportul moral al Comisiunii Generale,” reprinted in Institutul de Studii Istorice și Social-Politice de pe lângă C.C. al P.C.R., *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1968) 83.

⁸⁰ Constantin Pancu, “Lupta împotriva trândăviei și a anarhiei,” *Conștiința*, 2/17-18 (9 Feb 1920): 1; “Din activitatea “Gărzi Conștiinței Naționale,”” *Conștiința*, 2/17-18 (9 Feb 1920): 2; “Rezultatul tratativelor dela fabrica de tutun,” *Conștiința*, 2/20 (23 Feb 1920): 2; Constantin Pancu, “Împotriva banditismului,” *Conștiința*, 2/21 (1 Mar 1920): 1.

assaulted by communists, making nationalists out to be victims of violent radicals.⁸¹ Nationalist unions also acted as strikebreakers. Iași had become a regional center for the railways in 1919, resulting in a sudden influx of new workers for whom there was not sufficient accommodation or funds for salaries. Dissatisfaction with poor working conditions created a sizeable protest movement led by socialist workers that eventually brought the country's railways to a halt.⁸² Refusing to participate in a major strike at the railway factories in 1920, leaders of the Guard accompanied by students, university professors, and a crowd of 2,000 people marched through Iași and planted two Romanian flags on the factory walls in order to demonstrate their control of the premises and the weakness of the socialist unions.⁸³

In contrast to the new class-based way of imagining social solidarities, Pancu's Guard invited people from any class or confession to join.⁸⁴ Initially a small group made up of tradesmen, workers, priests, functionaries, and students, within eight months the weekly meetings had become so well-attended that Guardists had to move to local cinemas and a nearby gymnasium.⁸⁵ They held public meetings in villages, factories, and on the streets of Iași with sympathetic audiences.⁸⁶ The Guard called its agenda "national socialism," which it said involved preventing communist propaganda, economic speculation and administrative corruption, but it also promoted workers rights and women's suffrage through speeches and

⁸¹ "Ca la noi la nimeni," *Conștiința*, 1/7 (3 Nov 1919): 2; Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 20.

⁸² Ion Mitican, *Un veac prin gara Iași* (Galați: Editura Sport Turism, 1983) 128-136.

⁸³ Rep., "Marea mișcare Națională din Iași," *Conștiința*, 2/26 (3 May 1920): 1; "Reluarea lucrului în atelierele Statului," *Conștiința*, 2/29-30 (14 June 1920): 3; C. Pancu, "Banditismele dela Atelierele C.F.R. Frumoasa," *Conștiința*, 2/31 (21 June 1920): 1; Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 20-22.

⁸⁴ C. D. Palade, "O lămurire," *Conștiința*, 1/1 (30 Aug 1919): 1.

⁸⁵ "Apel," *Conștiința*, 1/1 (30 Aug 1919): 4; "Ședința de joi seară," *Conștiința*, 2/23 (22 Mar 1920): 2. Codreanu says that there were roughly twenty people in attendance at the first meeting he attended in Fall 1919 but that eventually this number grew to 10,000. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 19. If Codreanu's higher figure is accurate, this would mean that 16% of the ethnic Romanians in Iași attended Guardist meetings.

⁸⁶ "Garda Conștiinței Naționale" la Huși," *Conștiința*, 2/19 (16 Feb 1920): 2.

publications.⁸⁷ Romania's national socialists supported feminist groups in Moldavia, and female members wrote that women had an obligation to join the nationalist struggle alongside men.⁸⁸ They invited other women to form reading circles where they would read the Guard's newspaper as well as *Foaea Gospodinelor* (*The Housekeeper's Sheet*, 1919-1921) a feminist review directed by Valentina Focșa from Piatra Neamț.⁸⁹

The Guard was a family-friendly organization, holding balls and cultural evenings where high school students recited poetry or performed athletic displays.⁹⁰ Deciding that Iași needed a meeting-hall specifically for use by Romanians, the Guard announced that it wished to build a “national house” in the city where people could hold weddings, engagements, balls and other parties.⁹¹ As part of its social program it established a job-placement service for tradesmen and workers.⁹² It was also well connected with civil society, explicitly asking local community groups to send delegates to represent them within the Guard. Thirty groups gave positive responses almost immediately, including clerical organizations, workers' unions, tradesmen's guilds, popular banks, and veterans associations, all of whom were willing to publically associate themselves with the Guard's program.⁹³ One printer in Iași, M. M. Bogdan, printed the first issue of *Conștiința* for free and regularly advertised in its pages.⁹⁴ Pancu's Guard continued the

⁸⁷ “Apel,” *Conștiința*, 1/1 (30 Aug 1919): 4; F. Gugui, “Socialismul și “Garda Conștiinței Naționale”,” *Conștiința*, 1/2 (18 Sept 1919): 3; “Pentru muncitoare și funcționare,” *Conștiința*, 1/13-14 (5 Jan 1920): 2. Codreanu later claimed that no-one in the Guard had heard of German National Socialism at this time. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 23.

⁸⁸ “Trebuie să participe femeile la “Garda Conștiinței Naționale”?” *Conștiința*, 1/1 (30 Aug 1919): 2; C. P., “Socialismul Național și Femeile,” *Conștiința*, 1/10 (15 Dec 1919): 2; “Dela Asociația feminist “Centrala Iași,”” *Conștiința*, 1/13-14 (5 Jan 1920): 2.

⁸⁹ “Pentru “cercușoare”,” *Conștiința*, 2/15 (19 Jan 1920): 2.

⁹⁰ “Pentru Balul proiectat,” *Conștiința*, 1/1 (30 Aug 1919): 2; “Mare Bal,” *Conștiința*, 1/8 (24 Nov 1919): 2; “O șezătoare Artistico-Literară,” *Conștiința*, 2/29-30 (14 June 1920): 3; “Șezătoarea noastră de joi seară,” *Conștiința*, 2/31 (21 June 1920): 3.

⁹¹ “O casă națională la Iași,” *Conștiința*, *Conștiința*, 1/13-14 (5 Jan 1920): 3.

⁹² “Anunț,” *Conștiința*, 2/24 (19 Apr 1920): 4.

⁹³ “Apel către meseriașii, muncitorii, soldații și țărani români,” *Conștiința*, 1/1 (30 Aug 1919): 3; “Rubrica adesiunilor,” *Conștiința*, 1/2 (18 Sept 1919): 4.

⁹⁴ “Informații,” *Conștiința*, 1/1 (30 Aug 1919): 3.

nineteenth century practice of nationalist organizing through community events, but it introduced rallies and strike-breaking into the ultra-nationalist repertoire, and shifted the emphasis away from anti-Semitism towards a more broadly defined program that included anti-Bolshevism and anti-politicianism.

3.5 THE NATIONAL ROMANIAN FASCISTS (1922-1925)

Self-consciously “fascist” organizing began in 1921 when Elena Bacaloglu (1878-1947), a journalist living in Italy, gained Mussolini’s begrudging support to form a *Movimento nazionale fascista italo-romeno* (Italian-Romanian National Fascist Movement). Despite support from influential relatives and a group of scientists at the University of Cluj, Bacaloglu’s movement met with little success until it merged with *Fascia Națională Române* (the National Romanian Fascists, FNR) in 1922.⁹⁵ The FRN described itself as “a voluntary national group ... working to strengthen and raise the moral and material situation of the Romanian people and to retain unblemished the situation won by Romania through its sacrifices in the Great War.”⁹⁶ Although fascists emphasized the Romanian nature of their movement and claimed the anti-Semitic poet Mihai Eminescu as “the fascist of the last generation,” Romanian fascists were clearly inspired by the rise of Benito Mussolini’s Fascist Party in Italy.⁹⁷ The first issue of their newspaper, *Fascismul* (*Fascism*, 1923) boasted that in the past four years nationalist or conservative governments had come to power in Italy, Austria, Germany, Spain, France, Sweden, England,

⁹⁵ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 102-104.

⁹⁶ *Statutul Fasciei Națională Române*, in ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 49/1924, f. 55-62.

⁹⁷ The FRN was particularly sensitive to accusations that it was a foreign political import from Italy. Virgil Albescu, “Fascia în județul Hunedoara,” *Fascismul*, 1/4 (1 Aug 1923): 2; Inginer Russo, “Lamurirea,” *Fascismul*, 1/5 (15 Aug 1923): 1. The Italian influence was clear however in articles such as L. B., “Vedere și concepție Napoleoniana din partea lui Mussolini,” *Fascismul*, 1/6 (1 Sept 1923): 1; V. Spătar, “Benito Mussolini,” *Fascismul* 1/7 (15 Sept 1923): 1.

the Netherlands, Turkey, Finland, Greece and Hungary.⁹⁸ As with Panu's Guard of the National Conscience, fascist anti-Semitism took third place to fears about communism and politicianism, although they saw all three as being different faces of the same enemy.⁹⁹ The problem, they said, was not just the number of foreigners but the dependent relationship that Romanian elites had with "foreign" capital: "Romania today is in many ways similar to what it was during the Phanariot era. Then, *as now*, rich men, aristocrats and scholars were on the side of foreigners."¹⁰⁰ They exposed how the National Bank rested in the hands of a couple of individuals, and emphasized the corruption of leading politicians.¹⁰¹

Fascists promised to overcome politicianism through a radical reorganization of the state. They proposed forming vast corporations that would govern factories, the railways, the postal service and other major enterprises before beginning an expansive public works project to increase the roads and railway systems, to build irrigation canals, and to further exploit Romania's oil supplies. They promised to guarantee private property while nationalizing all landed estates larger than 100 hectares, to simplify the taxation system and to cut the number of state functionaries by a third. At the same time they spoke about the need to expand the schooling system and to overcome illiteracy. All of this, fascists claimed in 1923, could be done "within a year, maximum two," during which they would restore "order, honesty and equilibrium" to the country.¹⁰²

In contrast to the dominant political culture, fascists claimed, "We are not a movement of scholars, of celebrities or of fatcats, but a movement of the needy Romanian classes and

⁹⁸ "Unde merg Popoarele?" *Fascismul*, 1/1 (15 June 1923): 2.

⁹⁹ For examples of fascist anti-Semitism, see M. Gh. Brateș, "Fariseii," *Fascismul*, 1/7 (15 Sept 1923): 1 and N. Al. Niculescu Iancu, "Antisemitismul care trebuie!" *Fasciștii constructivi*, 1/3-4 (20 Dec 1923): 1. On anti-Bolshevism, see "Regimul sovietic în Rusia," *Fascismul*, 1/2 (1 July 1923): 1.

¹⁰⁰ "Un catechism al Fascismului," *Fascismul*, 1/3 (15 July 1923): 1.

¹⁰¹ Th. Voinea, "Regimul partidelor de guvernământ a eșuat," *Fascismul*, 1/6 (1 Sept 1923): 1; L. B. "Dezastrul evident și iminent," *Fasciștii constructivi*, 1/1 (20 Oct 1923): 1.

¹⁰² "Fascismul nostru," *Fascismul*, 1/1 (15 June 1923): 1.

especially of Romanian youth.”¹⁰³ To demonstrate their commitment to ordinary Romanians, fascists organized themselves into “corporations” of 25 members each, which worked to “protect the interests of Romanian workers in their conflicts with employers and the authorities.”¹⁰⁴ The FNR was not primarily a workers’ movement, however. It was formed in December 1922 under the leadership of Dr. D. C. Pădeanu who had held a “moral and philosophical study circle” at his home for the past ten years, where “members of the elite [met] to taste such superior studies,” until eventually “the idea of a citizen’s intervention to help the state, which was suddenly threatened by the post-war moral crisis began to take hold.”¹⁰⁵ The group’s leading figures included retired senior army officers, university professors, and journalists.¹⁰⁶ The sociological composition of the FNR in the provinces changed from city to city. In Iași the FNR was led by university students and most members were high-school students. In Târgu Ocna a teacher named Henrietta Gabrilescu carried out FNR propaganda in nearby villages, bringing out a newspaper named *Conflictul (The Conflict)* to promote fascist ideology. In the eastern counties of Covurlui, Tecuci and Tutova the most active cells were also to be found in villages instead of in the big cities. In Bukovina a retired officer, Major Urșianu, and a student named Teodosie Popescu took responsibility for FNR organizing, recruiting mainly amongst former volunteers in the Italian army. In Orăștie, both the LANC and the FNR were led by Father Ion Moța, whose newspaper *Libertatea* supported any and every ultra-nationalist group. Most FNR members lived in the Banat, however, with its stronghold in the city of Caraș-Severin. Members came from all social

¹⁰³ “Un catechism al Fascismului,” *Fascismul*, 1/3 (15 July 1923): 1.

¹⁰⁴ “Regulamentul Corporațiilor Fasciste,” *Fascismul*, 1/2 (1 July 1923): 2.

¹⁰⁵ “Quintezența fascistă,” *Fasciștii constructivi*, 1/1 (20 Oct 1923): 1.

¹⁰⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 36/1923, f. 9-10, 16-17.

classes, but here it was especially popular amongst functionaries and railway workers.

Police reports from December 1924 estimate that FNR members throughout the country numbered in their tens of thousands.¹⁰⁷

The FNR was a movement that prized hierarchy and discipline above all else, and that was quick to label dissent as “treason.”¹⁰⁸ Leaders bickered about whether their primary focus should be anti-Semitism or anti-Bolshevism, and were concerned that their party should not be confused with the hooliganism of anti-Semitic students.¹⁰⁹ The beginning of the end came when the leadership in Bucharest broke into two camps in August 1923, each claiming to be the sole representative of the FNR. Provincial branches vacillated about which group to support until eventually most simply left the FNR and joined the LANC.¹¹⁰ That same month three ministers in Ion I. C. Brătianu’s National Liberal government were discovered to have been supporting fascism and the scandal resulted in attacks on the FNR by leaders of most major parties.¹¹¹ The FNR effectively collapsed under the pressure of discord and unpopularity, but members carried the memories of its success into other ultra-nationalist organizations.

¹⁰⁷ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 36/1923, f. 9-10, 16-21. Another report from 1924 gives much lower numbers, emphasizing that most FRN members had already joined the LANC by this time. Ibid., Dosar 49/1924, f. 135-140.

¹⁰⁸ *Statutul Fasciei Naționale Române*; George Lungulescu, “Strigatul țării,” *Fascismul*, 1/7 (15 Sept 1923): 2; Radu Oprescu, “Trădarea,” *Fascismul*, 1/10 (22 Oct 1923): 2.

¹⁰⁹ “Noul program, al fasciștilor. Partidul Liberal și fascismul,” *Adevărul* (12 Sept 1923); reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 376-378.

¹¹⁰ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 36/1923, f. 9-10, 16-17.

¹¹¹ “Guvernul se ocupa de fascism” *Aurora* 3/532 (2 Aug 1923): 1; George Lungulescu, “Jos masca trădătorilor,” *Fascismul*, 1/5 (15 Aug 1923): 2.

3.6 ROMANIAN ACTION (1924-1925)

On a much smaller scale, nineteen intellectuals from Cluj founded *Acțiunea Românească* (Romanian Action) on 7 June 1924, an ultra-nationalist organization dedicated to “reducing the economic, cultural and political power of foreigners, especially Jews, to a just proportion,” and to overcoming those Romanians who, “fallen prey to unjustifiable pessimism or excessive egotism, dishonor Romanians through their work and actions and prevent the economic and moral renewal of our country.”¹¹² Led by a handful of university professors but including lawyers, doctors, and students among its founding members, Romanian Action addressed itself to the cultural elite of Cluj’s Romanian community. A major Transylvanian commercial center since the Middle Ages, Cluj was home to 100,844 people in 1930, of whom only 34,895 identified themselves as ethnically Romanian. The rest were predominantly Hungarians (47,689), Jews (13,062), or Germans (2,500).¹¹³ Farmers from the surrounding region sent their produce to Cluj for sale and the city boasted a number of factories and financial institutions, but it was most important because of the prestigious schools and major university located there.¹¹⁴ Romania re-organized the University of Cluj after taking over Transylvania in 1919, but the university’s history dated back to 1581, when it had been founded as a Jesuit college. Many prominent Romanian intellectuals moved to Cluj as part of the “Romanianization” of the university, and it quickly became a third pole of Romanian intellectual life alongside Bucharest and Iași.¹¹⁵

Anti-Semitic students in Cluj had begun riots against Jews in December 1922, and FRN had a solid but declining presence in the city – an estimated 2000 members in 1923 that dropped

¹¹² Comitetul Central, “Cuvântul Acțiunii Românești către cetitor,” *Acțiunea românească*, 1/1 (1 Nov 1924): 1-2.

¹¹³ Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, 134.

¹¹⁴ Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 2, 600-606.

¹¹⁵ Vasile Pușcaș, *Universitate, societate, modernizare: organizarea și activitatea științifică a Universității din Cluj (1919-1940)* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2003).

to 400 in 1924.¹¹⁶ Romanian Action began by holding public meetings in Cluj and in five nearby cities and a joint congress with the FRN in May.¹¹⁷ It managed to attract several thousand people to its public meetings, but its activities were always limited to the region immediately surrounding Cluj.¹¹⁸ Romanian Action also announced a series of weekly “cultural lectures” on topics such as nationalism, pseudo-democracy, alcoholism, syphilis, and national hygiene, before the government banned these and other meetings, and gendarmes barricaded the entrance to the lecture hall.¹¹⁹ Taking a much firmer stance against anti-Semitism in Cluj than they had in Iași or Bucharest, censors also banned the organization’s fortnightly newspaper, *Acțiunea românească* (*Romanian Action*, 1924) in December 1924 after only four issues. The editors responded by launching a new newspaper in January called *Calendarul românesc* (*Romanian Calendar*, 1925), and then *România integrită* (*United Romania*, 1925) in February, with the same format and from the same press.¹²⁰ All three newspapers were adorned with swastikas and carried attacks on Romanian Jews while ignoring Hungarians almost completely. They also printed translations and lengthy reviews of anti-Semitic works from France and the United States, reproduced anti-Semitic texts from the nineteenth century, and reports on ultra-nationalist activism throughout Romania.¹²¹ They also printed articles about alcoholism, biopolitics, and the Romanian Orthodox Church, all issues of interest to the ultra-nationalist community at large.

Romanian Action and *Partidul Social-Creștin* (the Social Christian Party) from Gherla – a city near Cluj, merged with A. C. Cuza’s LANC in May 1925, forming a new organization called *Acțiunea Națională Creștină* (National Christian Action). The new organization launched

¹¹⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 49/1924, f. 135-140.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., f. 11; Comitetul Central, “Cuvântul Acțiunii Românești către cetitor,” 1-2.

¹¹⁸ “Informațiuni,” *Ogorul nostru*, 2/23 (3 Mar 1924): 3.

¹¹⁹ “Conferințele “Acțiunii Românești,”” *Acțiunea românească*, 1/2 (15 Nov 1924): 1.

¹²⁰ Subscribers to *Acțiunea românească* automatically received a subscription to *România integrită* in lieu of having their money returned. “Știri, fapte și polemici,” *România integrită*, 1/1 (1 Feb 1925): 15.

¹²¹ A good summary of Romanian Action’s anti-Semitism can be found in Maria Ghitta, “Interwar Anti-Semitic Ideologists in Transylvania: A Professor and a Student,” *Transylvanian Review*, 15/3 (2006): 91-97.

Înfrațirea românească (Romanian Brotherhood, 1925-1931) to replace the older Romanian Action newspapers.¹²² Five months later, the leaders of National Christian Action met in Bucharest with representatives of FRN and the LANC, and officially merged all three organizations into the now-hegemonic LANC.¹²³ After the merger, some of Romanian Action's leading members, including Iuliu Moldovan (1882-1966) and Iuliu Hațieganu (1885-1959), turned their energies towards *Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român* (the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, ASTRA), where they promoted eugenics, physical education and biopolitics with a nationalist emphasis.¹²⁴

3.7 THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN UNION (1922-1923) AND THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN DEFENSE LEAGUE (1923-1935)

The organization that ultimately absorbed most of the ultra-nationalist community was *Liga Apărării Național Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC), formed by the former Nationalist Democrat A. C. Cuza and the physiologist Nicolae Paulescu (1869-1931), whose anti-Semitic and anti-Masonic works were well-known in ultra-nationalist circles. Paulescu deduced philosophical laws about “social instincts” and “human conflicts” from the study of biology, and used them to argue that Christian morality was based on ethical principles derived from nature.¹²⁵ Without explaining his sudden conversion, Cuza too suddenly discovered religion at the beginning of the interwar period. Acknowledging that he was a heretic, he said

¹²² “Un moment istoric: Unirea organizațiilor naționaliste,” *Înfrațirea Românească*, 1/1 (1 May 1925): 1.

¹²³ “Act de Unire,” *Înfrațirea Românească*, 1/11 (1 Oct 1925): 4.

¹²⁴ Moga, *Astra*, 216-232; Aurel Morariu and D. Almășanu, *Iuliu Hațieganu și ideea educației fizice în România* (Bucharest: Editura Consiliului Național pentru Educație Fizică și Sport, n.d.); Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002) 26-36, 209-212.

¹²⁵ See Paulescu's articles in *Dascălul*, 1/1-5 (Nov 1909 – June 1910).

that his religion was based on “logic,” which he believed proved that Jesus had preached “the end of satanic Judaism” and that Christ’s “true fight” had been “against the Yids.”¹²⁶ Cuza argued that the dogmas of the Orthodox Church had misunderstood Jesus, and called on it to follow Jesus by embracing anti-Semitism. Before the LANC was established, Cuza and Paulescu worked together with several other former Nationalist Democrats and anti-Semites – including Corneliu Șumuleanu, I. D. Protopopescu, Alexandru Naum, Ion Zelea Codreanu and Constanța Ghika – to lead *Uniunea Națională Creștină* (the National Christian Union, UNC), which they founded in May 1922. The leaders of the UNC were all respected members of Moldavian society. Several were professors at the University of Iași, and from 1922 onwards Cuza was president of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies.¹²⁷

As had the German National Socialists a year earlier, the UNC took the swastika as its emblem. Just as Pancu’s Guard and the FRN had, the UNC was eager to dismiss any suggestion that it’s symbolism came from Germany. In order to make it represent *Romanian* nationalism, Cuza described the swastika as a cross-shaped symbol used by the ancient Pelasgians, whom he said were the ancestors of modern Romanians.¹²⁸ According to its propaganda, the organization’s main purpose was to solve the “Yid problem.” Unlike other nations, Cuza wrote, the Jews have no territory, only “a doctrine of greed and hate” that constituted the core of their religious beliefs. He wrote:

The principle of the Yid religion [is] based on the “covenant” between Yahweh, the “jealous God,” and the “chosen people” who will fight against the other gods and destroy their peoples so that he can ensure his domination of the earth:

¹²⁶ A. C. Cuza, *Învățătura lui Isus: Judaismul și teologia creștină* (Iași: Editura “Ligii Apărării Naționale Creștine,” 1925) 11, 23.

¹²⁷ Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology*, 27.

¹²⁸ A. C. Cuza, “Ce este svastica,” *Apărarea națională*, 2/16 (15 Nov 1923): 1-6.

Deuteronomy 7:22, 24. “The Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. ... He will give their kings into your hand, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. (8:1) So that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors.”¹²⁹

This sort of religious anti-Semitism was typical of Paulescu’s ideology, which rejected the Old Testament as the work of a vengeful God who had nothing in common with the Christian deity.¹³⁰ Most of Cuza’s earlier writings concentrated on the economic threat that Jews posed to the Romanian state, but he had touched on these themes in his Sămănătorist articles, where he made the impossible argument that “Jesus was not a Yid” because metaphysically Jesus was the Son of God, and physically he was Galilean, not Jewish!¹³¹ Anti-Semitism took pride of place in UNC publications, overwhelming anti-politicianism and anti-communism as ultra-nationalist preoccupations. The UNC program proposed excluding Jews from state-run industries, education, the bureaucracy, and politics, as well as working to “re-capture” commerce for ethnic Romanians and to force Jews to migrate to Palestine.¹³²

The UNC became the National Christian Defense League (LANC) when UNC leaders met at one of the biggest churches in Iași on 4 March 1923 for a religious commemoration (*parastas*) for soldiers who died in the war. They arranged for the officiating priests to sanctify seventy flags bearing swastikas and swore an oath to the Church, Romania, and the LANC.¹³³ The founding of regional branches followed a similar pattern. When a local branch of the LANC was established six months later in Ungheni, a small rural district (*plasă*) to the east of Iași that

¹²⁹ A. C. Cuza, “Uniunea Națională Creștină,” *Apărarea națională*, 1/1 (1 April 1922): 4.

¹³⁰ Nicolae Paulescu, *Spitalul, Coranul, Talmudul, Cahalul, Francmasoneria* (Filipeștii de Târg, Prahova: Antet XX Press, 2001) 34-35.

¹³¹ Cuza, *Naționalitatea în arta*, 287-300.

¹³² “Programul Uniunii Naționale Creștine,” USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne, Reel #133, Dosar 4/1922, f. 7-8.

¹³³ “Actul de constituire al LANC,” and “SSI Nota privind constituirea LANC;” reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 311-313.

was home to 650 people, all of them ethnic Romanians, the ceremony began with a church service and the sanctification of the LANC flag by the local priest.¹³⁴ According to the police report, 200 people turned out for the event, which was held on a market day to ensure that the district was as crowded as possible. Ion Zelea Codreanu travelled out from Iași for the occasion, and spoke about the importance of the church service, the Jewish peril, and the LANC's program.¹³⁵ Not all LANC leaders knew a great deal about the party. In his memoirs the Legionary I. C. Crișan writes that when he was a student he gave a speech in a village, encouraging people to join the LANC, even though he himself was not yet a member. They immediately made him the LANC representative for the region.¹³⁶ More important ultra-nationalist celebrities travelled to speak when LANC meetings were held in larger towns, and they were generally met at the station by cheering crowds who followed them to the church for the sanctification of the flags.¹³⁷ Political meetings were sometimes accompanied by cultural performances and displays by ultra-nationalist choirs, artists and dancers.¹³⁸ Priests did not always agree to sanctify the flags, and when this happened they were roundly condemned by LANC speakers.¹³⁹

People learned about the LANC from these sorts of public meetings, from conversations with friends, and from brochures that members distributed on trains, stuck onto government

¹³⁴ On the ethnic composition of Ungheni, see Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, 250.

¹³⁵ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 13.

¹³⁶ I. C. Crișan, "Amintiri despre Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," in Gabriel Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, (Norcross GA: Criterion, 2001) 56-61.

¹³⁷ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 1. Descriptions of similar LANC meetings from this period can be found in USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne, Reel #133, Dosar 2/1922, f. 44, 76; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 156-157; and "Intrunirea LANC din T-Severin," *Ogorul nostru*, 1/11-1 (17 Sept 1923): 3.

¹³⁸ "Politice," *Unirea* (Craiova), 1/11 (1-15 Mar 1926): 3; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 2/1926, f. 46.

¹³⁹ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 22; Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 1151, f. 12-14.

vehicles, and posted on the walls of council offices by state officials.¹⁴⁰ LANC newspapers sold small lapel swastikas so that members could advertise their allegiance to the movement.¹⁴¹

Members even gave out LANC pamphlets at the gates of the Metropolitan residence in Iași. This attempt to attract priests backfired when the Patriarch himself received one of Cuza's pamphlets in which he wrote that Romanian Orthodoxy had been "judaized" because it used the Old Testament. The Patriarch became very upset and promised to issue a circular warning priests not to associate themselves with the movement.¹⁴² Undeterred, the LANC continued to criticize the Church hierarchy's ties to the major political parties and its refusal to align itself with ultra-nationalist politics.¹⁴³

The economic mobilization of Romanians was another important element of the LANC's program and in addition to paying membership fees, one could buy shares in a specially constituted *Societatea Apărarea Natională* (National Defense Society) from banks throughout the country.¹⁴⁴ Sometimes members contributed funds directly to build churches, fund propaganda, or for other charity projects.¹⁴⁵ The LANC repeatedly attempted to organize boycotts of Jewish stores, using a catch-phrase that had been circulating in Romania for over fifty years – "Not even a needle from the Yids!"¹⁴⁶ Anti-Semites claimed that Jewish businessmen sold products under fake brand names or using dishonest scales.¹⁴⁷ Regional newspapers printed lists of approved Romanian businesses, as well as publicizing which local

¹⁴⁰ N. N. Manolescu, "Sunt antisemit, dar "cu sufletul"," *Buzduganul*, 1/1 (5 Sept 1926): 1; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 36/1923, f. 1; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #133, Dosar 2/1922, f. 6; AN – Brașov, Fond Prefectura Județului Brașov – Serviciul Administrativ, Dosar 13/1924, f. 119-120.

¹⁴¹ "Informațiunii," *Unirea* (Craiova), 1/1 (1-15 Oct 1925): 4.

¹⁴² USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #133, Dosar 2/1922, f. 57.

¹⁴³ "Neorânduielele în Biserică," *Naționalistul*, 13/4 (21 Jan 1926): 2.

¹⁴⁴ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #133, Dosar 4/1922, f. 19.

¹⁴⁵ "Darea de Seamă," *Frația creștină*, 1/11 (21 Oct 1923): 1; "Listă de subscripție," *Deșteaptă-te creștine!* 2/13 (22 May 1927): 3.

¹⁴⁶ Nicolai N. Manolescu, "Nici un ac dela Jidani!" *Buzduganul*, 1/1 (5 Sept 1926): 2.

¹⁴⁷ "Negustorul jidan și consumatorul român," *Frația creștină*, 1/4-5 (17-24 June 1923): 3.

businesses were owned by Jews.¹⁴⁸ They also included regular columns on corruption scandals surrounding Jews and other local elites who were not anti-Semites.¹⁴⁹ LANC organs were avid supporters of Romanian banks and of the village cooperative movement, which had been helping support Romanian commerce since the late nineteenth century.¹⁵⁰ In 1926 the LANC established its own bank using the properties of several important landholders as collateral. The bank reported significant profits in its first year of operation, and sought the backing of *Banca Națională a României* (the Romanian National Bank, BNR) to allow it to extend affordable credit to approved customers.¹⁵¹

We can get a sense of the size and social composition of the early LANC by looking at who was receiving its newspapers. Until Cuza's old Nationalist Democrat newspaper *Unirea* reappeared in March 1924, the LANC's official newspaper was *Naționalistul* (*The Nationalist*, 1923-1924), owned by a wealthy engineer from Iași named Gheorghe Bejan. At the time that *Unirea* took over, *Naționalistul* was printing 4,000 copies per issue, most of which were sent through the post or delivered in person by Bejan to villages in Bessarabia, Bukovina and Moldavia.¹⁵² By 1926, a local LANC newspaper from Buzău called *Deșteaptă-te creștine!* (*Wake Up, Christian!*, 1926-1927) had a circulation of 5,500 copies per issue.¹⁵³ More people read newspapers than were members – one activist reported in 1926 that most of his acquaintances

¹⁴⁸ "Lista neagră," *Ogorul nostru*, 2/23 (3 Mar 1924): 2; "Listă negustorilor Români din Focșani," *Lancea*, 1/7 (1 Nov 1925): 4; "Frați Creștini," *Chemarea*, 1/2 (25 Dec 1925): 2; "Români Brașoveni," *Sabia lui Traian*, 1/3 (13 Dec 1930): 4.

¹⁴⁹ "Marele Financiar Max Zoller," *Lancea*, 1/3 (1 Sept 1925): 1; "Pedagogul Simca Berman," *Naționalistul*, 13/5 (28 Jan 1926): 3; "Un primar abuziv," *Deșteaptă-te creștine!* 2/9 (6 Feb 1927): 3; "Curtea," *Sabia lui Traian*, 1/2 (1 Nov 1930): 3.

¹⁵⁰ "Creștinismul și cooperația," *Deșteaptă-te creștine!* 1/3 (6 Aug 1926): 2; "Cooperativa Înfrățirea," *Deșteaptă-te creștine!* 1/7 (12 Dec 1926): 2; "Banca Națională a României," *Apărarea națională* (Arad) 1/2 (10 June 1928): 4.

¹⁵¹ "De la Banca LANC – Iași," *Apărarea națională* (Iași) 6/19 (6 May 1928): 2; "Banca "Apărarea Națională," *Apărarea națională* (Arad) 1/6 (8 July 1928): 3.

¹⁵² ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 50.

¹⁵³ *Deșteaptă-te creștine!* 1/7 (12 Dec 1926): 1.

sympathized with the LANC’s anti-Semitism but still voted for the National Liberal party.¹⁵⁴ But membership numbers also grew. The number of members in Covurlui county increased from 170 at the inaugural meeting in August 1922 to 353 in September 1923.¹⁵⁵ During 1924 the *Siguranța* obtained the distribution list to the LANC’s newspaper in this county, *Frația creștină* (*Christian Brotherhood*, 1923-1929). Of the 787 people receiving the newspaper, 402 were LANC members, 40 were paid subscribers, 68 received honorary subscriptions, and 204 were local priests, teachers or lawyers who received free copies of the newspaper. 82 of the members had their occupations listed here, giving us a hint of what the LANC looked like in Covurlui county, one of the organization’s strongholds.

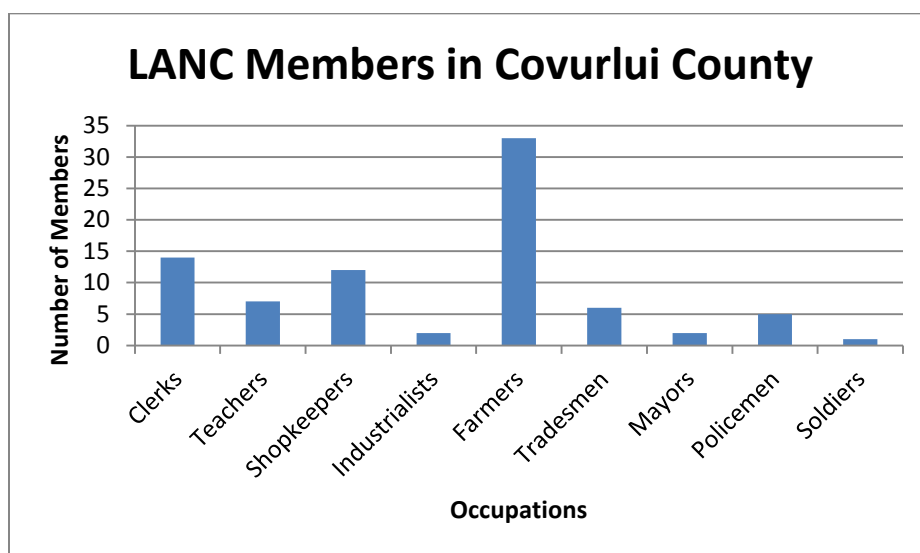


Figure 4: LANC Members in Covurlui County, 1924.¹⁵⁶

Peasants (*plugari*) are heavily in this sample because all of these people came from small towns and villages. We can supplement this list with another from January 1924, which names 257 LANC members in Galați, the largest city in Covurlui county. Occupations are not reported for

¹⁵⁴ N. N. Manolescu, “Sunt antisemit, dar “cu sufletul”,” *Buzduganul*, 1/1 (5 Sept 1926): 1.

¹⁵⁵ “Darea de Seamă,” *Frația creștină*, 1/11 (21 Oct 1923): 1.

¹⁵⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, 34-45.

most members on this list either, but the 68 which we do know about confirm the importance of clerks, shopkeepers and tradesmen to the early LANC.

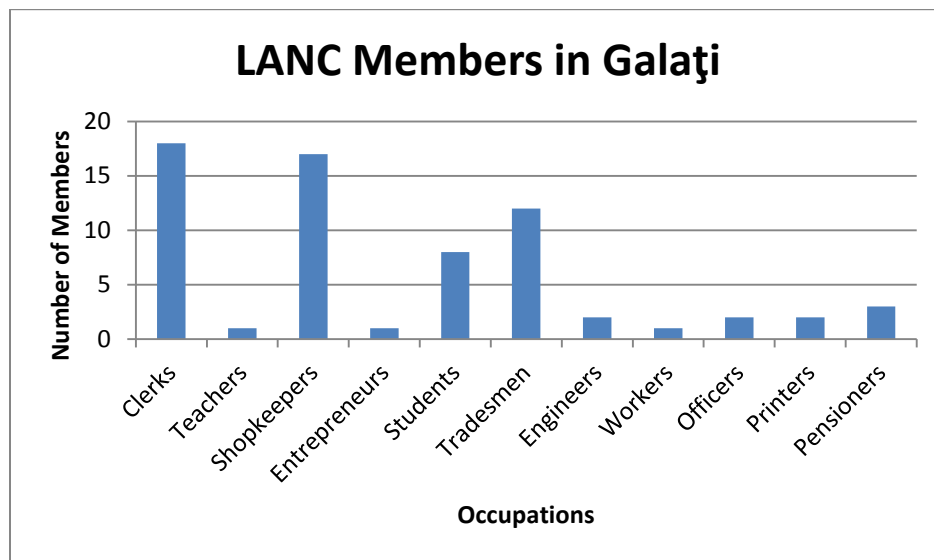


Figure 5: LANC Members in Galați, January 1924.¹⁵⁷

Unlike Romanian Action or the student movement, the LANC was not confined to the universities. Nor was it limited to one city, as Pancu’s Guard of the National Conscience had been. Drawing support from both the villages and the cities, LANC activists made a conscious effort to reach out to rural intellectuals such as teachers and priests, even going so far as to send them free copies of its publications. By June 1923 twenty villages (*comune*) in Bălți county alone had already established LANC committees.¹⁵⁸ As did most ultra-nationalist groups of the early 1920s, the LANC actively courted women and sometimes had local branches run by female leaders. Even though women were involved at all levels of the organization, LANC writers usually stereotyped them as mothers instead of encouraging them to be activists and mocked the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., Dosar 16/1923, f. 2-4bis.

¹⁵⁸ “Informații,” *Naționalismul*, 1/6 (8 June 1923): 2.

idea of a political party run by women.¹⁵⁹ The LANC's obsessive anti-Semitism certainly limited the range of ultra-nationalist interests by marginalizing anti-politicianism and anti-communism, but its concerns broadened as ultra-nationalists from the smaller organizations began to swell LANC ranks and the grievances of all of these groups came to be included in Legionary ideology during the 1930s. Through their cultural gatherings, balls, newspapers, banks, workers' unions, and political rallies, ultra-nationalist organizations connected like-minded people and spread their ideology throughout the country. This network of respectable members of society with its considerable financial and political resources was to prove crucial for sustaining the more radical student movement and its successor, the Legion of the Archangel Michael.

¹⁵⁹ C. "Femeile in luptă naționalistă," *Frația creștină*, 1/13 (26 Nov 1923): 3; Major Alex Constantinescu, "LANC și femeile," *Apărarea națională* (Arad), 1/12 (19 Aug 1928): 2; "Că nu-i glumă," *Apărarea națională* (Arad), 2/14-15 (10 Apr 1929): 5; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 2/1926, f. 46-47.

4.0 THE ANTI-SEMITIC STUDENT MOVEMENT

While the “old” nationalism of the nineteenth century provided models and ideas for twentieth century ultra-nationalist, and the “new” nationalism of *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC) organized them into a united movement, the crucible in which Legionary repertoires and relationships were forged was the anti-Semitic student movement that traced its origins back to the protests of 10 December 1922. Fourteen years later those who participated in the protests looked back on them as “a holiday symbolizing the breaking forth of youthful energy in the face of an enemy invasion.”¹ For the next two decades students, Legionaries and other ultra-nationalists commemorated every 10 December with church services, marches, and anti-Semitic violence.² That day between 3,000 and 4,000 students from all over the country met in the amphitheater of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Bucharest where they declared a general strike and complained about overcrowded living conditions in the dormitories and poor food in the canteens. At the top of their list of demands was a *numerus clausus*, meaning that they wanted the number of Romanian, Hungarian, and Jewish students enrolled at university to correspond to the size of their ethnic groups as a percentage of the general population.³ This was explicitly targeted at Jews, who at the time of the 1930 census represented 14.2% of students but only 4.0% of Romania’s population as a whole.⁴ Of the 136 students who graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at Cluj in 1922, only 64 were Romanians.⁵

¹ D. S. Enăchescu, “Îndemn pentru 10 decembrie,” *Sfarmă piatră*, 2/55 (10 Dec 1936): 8.

² Mihail Daneș, “Ce este 10 Decembrie,” *Porunca vremii*, 5/599 (11 Dec 1936): 3; AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #129, Dosar 1057/1924, f. 4-58; AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Drept, Dosar 92/1927, f.9.

³ Napoleon N. Crețu, “Acum 14 ani,” *Sfarmă Piatră*, 2/55 (10 Dec 1936): 4.

⁴ Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, xxxii; Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 238.

⁵ Maria Someșan, “Mișcarea studențească din 1922,” *Anuarul Institutului Român de Istorie Recentă*, 1 (2002): 192.

As soon as the protesting students left the amphitheater they were met by cordons of gendarmes and soldiers, and when they refused to back down the gendarmes fired on the crowd. Battles between students and soldiers continued all day, following which the dormitories and student canteens were evacuated and the students went on strike indefinitely.⁶ Similar protests took place on the same day in Iași and Cluj, where Jewish students were assaulted and prevented from attending classes.⁷ Student violence filled the newspapers for two weeks prior to the meeting on 10 December. On 21 November a crowd gathered outside the home of the chancellor of the University of Iași, calling him “judaized” and demanding his resignation for dismissing a student leader in one of the dormitories and for starting administrative action against the Dean of the Law Faculty, A. C. Cuza.⁸ On 29 November protestors in Cluj ejected Jews from the campus and from their dormitories before devastating the offices of the Zionist newspaper *Uj-Kelet* (*New East*, 1919-1940), burning manuscripts and assaulting its editors and other journalists.⁹ One Jewish student was killed and four badly wounded in the fighting.¹⁰ The next day students in Cluj interrupted an opera performance with cries of “Down with the Jews!” and violence spread to nearby villages.¹¹ In Iași Jewish stores were closed on 6 December because of an anti-Semitic protest rally attended by 400 students that ended with the office windows of two newspapers broken and with several students wounded.¹² Three days later students from Iași travelled to

⁶ “10 Decembrie 1922, Mărășești studențimii române,” *Porunca vremii*, 5/599 (11 Dec 1936): 3; “Manifestația studențească de Duminică,” *Universul*, 11/284 (13 Dec 1922): 3; “Agitațiile studențești,” *Dimineața*, 14/5788 (13 Dec 1922): 3; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #133, Dosar 4/1922, f. 1.

⁷ “Membrii Marelui Colegiu Universitar și agitațiile antisemite,” *Lumea* (10 Dec 1922); reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 260-261; “În jurul manifestațiilor din Iași,” *Dimineața*, 14/5788 (13 Dec 1922): 4.

⁸ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 175-176.

⁹ “Manifestația studenților creștini din Cluj,” *Universul*, 11/274 (1 Dec 1922): 7; “Incidente sângeroase la Cluj între studenți,” *Dimineața*, 14/5775 (30 Nov 1922): 7.

¹⁰ “Dezordinile studențești din Cluj,” *Dimineața*, 14/5776 (1 Dec 1922): 7.

¹¹ “O punere la punct,” *Universul*, 2/276 (3 Dec 1922): 7; “Dezordinele antisemite din Cluj,” *Dimineața*, 14/5777 (2 Dec 1922): 7.

¹² “Tulburările antisemite din țară,” *Dimineața*, 14/5783 (8 Dec 1922): 3.

Braşov and Oradea Mare, where they attempted to stir up the inhabitants against the Jews.¹³ Anti-Semitic violence spread throughout the country over the course of the following month. Students devastated a Jewish coffee-house in Bârlad, a Jewish child in Huşi was stabbed and left unconscious, windows of Jewish homes and synagogues were broken, crowds of students clashed with police in Cernăuţi, and Galaţi witnessed the looting of Jewish shops and street fighting between groups of Jews and anti-Semitic students after roughly 200 students – mostly from Iaşi – congregated outside a Yiddish play at the Central Theater waiting for Jewish youths to come out.¹⁴

The protests in Romania were part of a wave of anti-Semitic activism that swept through East-Central European universities in late 1922 and 1923. The Hungarian government had introduced a *numerus clausus* in September 1920 in an attempt by the lower bourgeoisie and the professional classes to overcome their socio-economic frustrations by limiting competition from Jews and other ethnic minorities.¹⁵ Student anti-Semitic activism in Hungary increased steadily during 1922 and eventually broke out in several days of rioting in March 1923, during which a number of students were injured and the offices of Jewish newspapers in Budapest attacked.¹⁶ In Czechoslovakia, ultra-nationalist students rioted against the election of Professor Steinhertz – a Jew – as chancellor of the German Prague University in 1922. The protests were muted because students with liberal or socialist sympathies refused to join them, but they caused ultra-nationalist deputies to propose *numerus clausus* legislation in the Czechoslovak parliament that

¹³ “Agitațiile studențești din țară,” *Dimineața*, 14/5786 (11 Dec 1922): 3.

¹⁴ “Anti-Semitic Riots Spread in Rumania,” *New York Times* (20 Dec 1922): 2; “Attack Jews in Rumania,” *New York Times* (27 Dec 1922): 4; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #132, Dosar 1/1922, vol. 1, f. 14-15; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 2, f. 320; “Manifestații antisemite la Bârlad,” *Dimineața*, 20/5809 (3 Jan 1923): 4; “Turburările antisemite la Huşi,” *Dimineața*, 20/5815 (11 Jan 1923): 2.

¹⁵ Karady Victor and Kemény István, “Antisemitisme universitaire et concurrence de classe,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences Sociales*, 34 (1980): 67-96; Vera Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999) 129-131; Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) 83, 110.

¹⁶ “Anti-Semitic Students Start Budapest Riots,” *New York Times* (24 Mar 1923): 3.

year.¹⁷ The controversial Jewish Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau (1867-1922) was assassinated in Berlin in June 1922 by anti-Semites who believed that he was one of the supposed 300 Elders of Zion who secretly ruled the world.¹⁸ At the University of Kaunas, in Lithuania, students formed a militant nationalist movement in 1922 known as “Neo-Lithuania”. The pinnacle of their success came in 1926 when, after clashes between students and police, the students managed to stage a right-wing *coup* in cooperation with the army and leading nationalist political parties.¹⁹ To the west, in Riga, students at the University of Latvia went on strike in March 1923, demanding that the government restrict the number of Jews at Latvian universities.²⁰ Student fraternities and dormitories in Poland excluded and persecuted Jews. Universities in Lemberg and Posen, and a high school of Katowice introduced their own *numerus clausus* restrictions, and students at the University of Warsaw also agitated for limits on the number of Jews allowed to enroll.²¹ Nationalist parties such as Roman Dmowski’s Endecja recruited heavily amongst student activists, and anti-Semites managed to pass a short-lived *numerus clausus* law in 1923.²² In Vienna student rioters in 1922 tried to prevent Jewish students attending classes, and demanded that the number of Jewish professors and students be limited to 10%. The Technical School in Vienna met their demands by introducing its own *numerus clausus*.²³ When they heard about the events in Romania the Viennese students sent their

¹⁷ Harry Schneiderman, *The American Jewish Year Book 5684*, vol. 25 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1923) 89.

¹⁸ Carole Fink, “The Murder of Walter Rathenau,” *Judaism*, 44/1 (1995): 259-271. One the Elders of Zion, see Michael Hagemester, “*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*: Between History and Fiction,” *New German Critique*, 103/1 (2008): 83-95.

¹⁹ Romuald Misiunas, “Fascist Tendencies in Lithuania,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 48/110 (1970): 92-93.

²⁰ Schneiderman, *The American Jewish Year Book 5684*, vol. 25, 91.

²¹ Schneiderman, *American Jewish Year Book 5684*, vol. 25, 90-91.

²² Celia Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977) 119-120; Livezeanu, “Interwar Poland and Romania,” 411.

²³ “1922: Jews Vilified,” *International Herald Tribune* (29 Nov 1997): 6; I. Simionescu, “Ne strigă Europa?” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/31 (11 Sept 1923): 1; Schneiderman, *American Jewish Year Book 5684*, vol. 25, 89-90.

greetings and sought to form a closer alliance between the anti-Semitic movements in the two countries.²⁴

Romanian universities had been plagued by ultra-nationalist student violence since 1919. In Iași small groups of nationalist students scuffled with communists and stole their distinctive buttons or hats, disrupted lectures by shouting anti-Semitic slogans, tried to prevent Jewish students from attending courses, and hindered the university's opening ceremony.²⁵ They also quarreled with the press, assaulting journalists and newspaper salesmen, vandalizing newspaper stands and burning newspapers that criticized them.²⁶ One of the leaders of the student gangs was Corneliu Zelea Codreanu – the son of the Nationalist Democrat Ion Zelea Codreanu, a protégée of A. C. Cuza, and an activist in Constantin Pancu's Guard of the National Conscience. He was expelled from the university in June 1921 for assault and vandalism, but he continued to play an active role in student politics and his expulsion did little to curb the radicalism of the ultra-nationalist students.²⁷ Similar problems occurred in Cluj, where the university had been newly “Romanianized” and professors as well as students complained about the number of “foreigners” – particularly Hungarians – who still worked there.²⁸ Members of *Centrul Studențesc* “*Petru Maior*” (the “Petru Maior” Student Center) published an ultra-nationalist newspaper called *Dacia Nouă* (*New Dacia*), wrote libelous articles against their professors, held raucous parties, and vandalized medical laboratories that they said were used by a disproportionate number of Jews.²⁹

²⁴ “Academia din Viena,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/4 (28 Jan 1923): 2.

²⁵ Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, 41-45, 68-69; Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 78, 83, 90-99.

²⁶ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 99-100; Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 200-202, 250-253.

²⁷ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 90-91.

²⁸ Pușcaș, *Universitate*, 202.

²⁹ “Tinerime universitară română,” *Apărarea națională*, 1/1 (1 Apr 1922): 20; Stelian Neagoe, *Viața universitară clujeană interbelică*, vol. 1 (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1980) 163, 187, 204.

The issue that sparked the new wave of protests in 1922 was a debate over the use of Jewish cadavers for dissection by medical students. Eastern European Jews believed that the soul would stay with the body longer if the dead person was not buried before sunset on the day that he or she died, and that even then it remained attached to the body for up to twelve months. They therefore strongly resisted the use of Jewish bodies in medical classrooms, and rabbinic *responsa* from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries only permitted autopsies when they could be used to help an existing patient. Vienna's anti-Semitic mayor Karl Lueger had created a scandal over this very issue in 1903 and it was far from being a new problem for Jewish-Christian relations in East-Central Europe.³⁰ The students said that during November 1922 Jewish students had begun to steal Jewish bodies from the medical stores to protect them from dissection, even though they were willing to dissect Christian cadavers.³¹ C. M. Râpeanu, one of the leaders of the anti-Semitic students at this time, later claimed that the Jews attacked Romanian students with swords when they gathered to protest the thefts.³² Anti-Semitic student rioting broke out in Cluj the next day.

It is crucial to keep in mind the social and intellectual environment of Romanian universities to understand why students were so easily mobilized behind ultra-nationalist causes. A large proportion of students enrolled in Romanian universities during the 1920s were the first in their families to have ever attended university. Professors complained that their students were hopelessly unprepared for university educations, stating that they were "ignorant of even the most fundamental and elementary notions" of biology or the classics.³³ Only 10 percent of students who enrolled in Romanian universities between 1929 and 1938 actually graduated with

³⁰ Tatjana Buklijas, "Cultures of Death and Politics of Corpse Supply: Anatomy in Vienna, 1848—1914," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 82 (2008): 598-605.

³¹ Delaromanu, "Cadavrele..." *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/3 (15 Jan 1923): 3.

³² C. M. Râpeanu, "Începuturile mișcării studențesc," *Sfarmă Piatră*, 2/55 (10 Dec 1936): 5.

³³ SJAN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea din Cluj, Facultatea de Știință, Dosar 204/1930, f. 18.

a diploma.³⁴ Confronted with an academic environment that they were not equipped to succeed in, poor living conditions, with overcrowded classes, and with little hope of having successful careers after graduating if they did not have the right connections, students needed an outlet for their frustrations. With free rail passes that let them travel to student congresses cheaply and just enough education to find the politics of ultra-nationalist professors such as A. C. Cuza convincing, the predominantly male student population found that outlet in anti-Semitic violence.

The atmosphere in Romanian student societies closely reflected that of the German *Burschenschaften* of the previous century. Romanian student societies and universities were both organized according to the German model, which encouraged tribalism and belligerent behavior.³⁵ The nineteenth century *Burschenschaften* were student fraternities that defined themselves through dueling, group colors, insignia, and other medieval paraphernalia to cultivate an elitist culture that privileged masculinity, chivalry, and ethnic exclusivity. Hierarchy was very important in the *Burschenschaften*, which were led by older students and recent graduates, just as the Romanian student centers were. Also like their Romanian counterparts, the German societies valued unity and dictated their members' political activities for them. Most importantly, membership was only open to ethnic Germans.³⁶ Belonging to a *Burschenschaft* provided important social connections that persisted for years to come, and students continued to be involved in these societies long after they had graduated. In keeping with their socially elitist character, the *Burschenschaften* did not simply exclude Jews and socialists; they actively

³⁴ Roger, *Fascistes, communistes et paysans*, 117-118.

³⁵ Stelian Neagoe shows that the students who originally founded the student societies in Romania were influenced by the models they had seen in Vienna and Berlin, and according to *Siguranța* agents Codreanu's trip to Berlin in 1922 had the specific goal of "forming student centers here on the [German] model." Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 39; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 324. On German influences on the organization of Romanian universities during the early twentieth century, see Pușcaș, *Universitate*, 37, 69, 91, 98.

³⁶ Gilbert Gillot, "Les corporations étudiantes: un archaïsme plein d'avenir (Allemagne-Autriche, 1880-1914)," *Le Mouvement social*, 120 (1982): 45-75.

persecuted them in the name of defending and purifying German culture.³⁷ As the new democracy tried to marginalize the power of the *Burschenschaften*, reforms in 1919 created compulsory *Studentenschaften*, but the troubles of the early 1920s brought anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalist ideology straight back into German universities.³⁸ Right-wing student radicalism only lasted until Germany's political turmoil settled down in 1924, however, and German students soon turned back to their studies.³⁹

4.1 VIOLENCE AND HOOLIGANISM

The university authorities in Romania responded to the provocations of 10 December 1922 by closing the universities and expelling the leading troublemakers. They also gave in to several of the students' demands. On 4 January 1923 the Minister of Education decided that everyone who was not a Romanian citizen should be exmatriculated from the universities. This measure did not affect Romanian Jews and nor did it come into effect immediately.⁴⁰ Later that year the Senate of the University of Iași decreed that Christian students would dissect Christian cadavers, and Jewish students, Jewish ones. If the Jewish students were unhappy about cutting up Jewish cadavers then they could go to the museum and study the exhibits there.⁴¹ By this time the issue of cadavers had taken second place to demands for a *numerus clausus* and for more power to student bodies, and ultra-nationalist students continued intermittent protests until the establishment of a royal dictatorship in 1938.

³⁷ Ibid., 66-70; Christopher Dowe and Stephan Fuchs, "Katholische Studenten und Antisemitismus im Wilhelminischen Deutschland," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 30/4 (2004): 571-593.

³⁸ Wolfgang Zorn, "Student Politics in the Weimar Republic," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5/1 (1970): 128-143.

³⁹ Ibid., 135; Gottfried Mergner, "La mobilisation national-socialiste parmi les étudiants allemands," *Le Mouvement Social*, 120 (1982): 115.

⁴⁰ AN – Bucharest, Fond Universitatea din București, Rectorat, Dosar 4/1923, f. 264.

⁴¹ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1022/1923, f. 372-375, Reel #121, Dosar 1025/1923, f. 21-25.

In Bucharest, the student newspaper *Cuvântul studențesc* (*The Student Word*, 1923-1940) announced that a gang of 150 Jews armed with clubs, boxing gloves, and revolvers had attacked 25-30 Romanian students in class during January 1923.⁴² They also reported that eight students – including one female – were attacked and “tortured” by Jewish gangs when they entered the mostly Jewish suburb of Văcărești to sell copies of *Cuvântul studențesc*. When Romanian police intervened, the Jews apparently assaulted them too.⁴³ Published photos of one victim show him with numerous scars across his face.



Figure 6: “Their Victim”⁴⁴

Neither of these accounts is recorded in non-fascist sources. In fact, several students were arrested that month for acts of violence in suburb of Văcărești, which casts doubt on the

⁴² “Jidovii ne-au declarat război,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/5 (31 Jan 1923): 2.

⁴³ N. N. Crețu, “Vânătoare de creștini,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/6 (1 Feb 1923): 1.

⁴⁴ “Victima lor,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/6 (1 Feb 1923): 2.

reliability of ultra-nationalist accounts of Jewish violence against Romanians.⁴⁵ This manner of framing the incident as a Jewish attack on Christian was common in the right-wing press at the time. In August 1925, a major newspaper with nationalist sympathies reported that, “groups of Jews [in Băcești] molested young Christians caught on the street alone or in pairs.”⁴⁶ Jews reportedly assaulted taxation officials in Chișinău, Romanian students in Hațeg, and one Romanian teacher was attacked by his Jewish students.⁴⁷ In Piatra Neamț, the right-wing press reported that Jews beat up school children who threw a rock through the window of their Synagogue during a service.⁴⁸

Despite the popularity of such stories, it was usually the Romanian students who attacked Jews. Throughout the spring semester of 1923 ultra-nationalist students in Bucharest intermittently entered classrooms and laboratories and demanded that everyone leave the room. If people refused to move, the intruders shouted, sang songs, banged on doors, and made continuing the lesson impossible. Sometimes they attacked Jewish students after they left the room.⁴⁹ Ultra-nationalists forced anyone whom they suspected of being Jewish to present his or her identity card, which had each student’s ethnicity written on them.⁵⁰ The police arrested student leaders and confiscated copies of their newspaper, but to no avail.⁵¹ Parts of the city were blocked off and barriers were still in place in late February 1923; gendarmes were brought onto campus during April; and in December they were replaced by the Romanian army.⁵² Even though they were supposed to be policing student unrest, many of the soldiers admired the

⁴⁵ Someșan, “Mișcarea studențească,” 199.

⁴⁶ “Măsuri de ordine în toată Moldova,” *Universul*, (18 Aug 1925).

⁴⁷ USHMM, Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 2/1926, f.111; “Incidente regretabile la Hațeg,” *Universul*, (23 June 1926); “Învățătorul Bodrugă a încercat ... asasinarea elevilor evrei?” *Universul*, (24 July, 1926).

⁴⁸ “Incăerările dela P.-Neamț,” *Universul*, (1 Oct 1926).

⁴⁹ AN – Bucharest, Fond Universitatea din București, Rectorat, Dosar 4/1923, f. 61, 65-66, 76.

⁵⁰ Mihail Sebastian, *De două mii de ani: roman* (Bucharest: Editura Nationala-Ciornei, 1934) 19, 31-32.

⁵¹ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #132, Dosar 1/1922, vol. 1, f. 45.

⁵² Aladin, “Tâlcul Scandalului,” *Contemporanul*, 2/29 (3 Feb 1923): 1; “Jandarmul în universitate?” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/10 (15 Apr 1923): 1; “Armata în universitate,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/46 (18 Dec 1922): 1.

students' nationalist stance, and two army officers were arrested in February 1923 for participating in a student demonstration.⁵³

In May University Senates in Bucharest, Cluj and Iași began expelling students who were known troublemakers and collecting identification cards when students entered the building as a way of blacklisting problem students.⁵⁴ Later that month Romanians in Bucharest assaulted Bulgarian students in the canteen of the Faculty of Medicine.⁵⁵ Trouble continued once studies began again in the Fall, with Jewish students complaining that they were insulted, threatened and attacked on a daily basis.⁵⁶ In 1925 the authorities decided to immediately expel students for acts of violence, but then they welcomed them back on the condition that they recognize their mistakes and ask for forgiveness. The students said that such measures were offensive and humiliating, but many availed themselves of the opportunity nonetheless.⁵⁷

In Cluj, students continued to disturb classes and prevented Jewish students from attending lectures throughout January 1923.⁵⁸ The strike continued, and individual students gave declarations to the faculty saying that “the spirit of collegiality and national consciousness dictates that so long as the Jewish students are at work I cannot return to the laboratory.”⁵⁹ In February they attacked the offices of minority newspapers again, and threatened policemen with revolvers when they tried to intervene.⁶⁰ On 10 March a handful of students were arrested for

⁵³ Dana Beldiman, *Armata și mișcarea legionară* (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2002) 53-54.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Dosar 4/1923, f. 91-92; AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Știința, Dosar 76/1922, f. 53, 95.

⁵⁵ AN – Bucharest, Fond Universitatea din București, Rectorat, Dosar 4/1923, f. 80-81.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Dosar 4/1923, f. 137, 140-141. Cf. Sebastian, *De două mii de ani*, 7, 17, 19, 53; Pană *Născut în '02*, 137-145.

⁵⁷ “În preajmă deschiderei Universităților,” *Lancea*, 1/7 (1 Nov 1925): 1; AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #121, Dosar 1084/1925, f. 34-36; AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Știința, Dosar 76/1922, f. 110-113.

⁵⁸ AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Știința, Dosar 76/1922, f. 3, 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Dosar 76/1922, f. 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Dosar 76/1922, f. 9.

wandering through several suburbs shouting insulting remarks and assaulting Jews.⁶¹ In April, Jewish medical students were attacked again outside their classrooms, and a meeting of 346 students voted to continue their boycott of classes.⁶² In May the faculty began keeping attendance lists for their classes, which were submitted to the Dean at the end of each day. Sometimes no students showed up at all, and the majority of names of those students who did attend classes are recognizably Jewish.⁶³ The anti-Semitic students became increasingly brazen and later that month several shots were fired into the chancellor's home.⁶⁴ In 1924 a crowd of students broke down the door to the chancellor's office in order to assault the prefect of police, Ovidiu Gritta, who was hiding inside. While they did so, the students shouted to the chancellor to be careful and to stand back from the door so as not to get hurt.⁶⁵ As of February 1925, 40 gendarmes permanently occupied the campus with strict orders to arrest anyone who caused trouble.⁶⁶

The story in Iași was similar, albeit even more violent. Here the worst troublemakers were law students, who disrupted classes in the faculty of medicine.⁶⁷ The authorities suspended courses in March 1923, but trouble continued as soon as classes began again.⁶⁸ Student demonstrations and meetings often ended with the participants marching through the streets singing nationalistic songs.⁶⁹ When the police tried to stop students singing they were greeted

⁶¹ Ibid., Dosar 76/1922, f. 21.

⁶² Ibid., Dosar 76/1922, f. 24, 26, 41-42.

⁶³ Ibid., Dosar 76/1922, f. 61-82, 88-89. Often the professor explicitly noted which of the students in attendance were Jewish.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Dosar 76/1922, f. 92, 216.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Dosar 96/1923, f. 5-8.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Dosar 109/1924, f. 42.

⁶⁷ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #121, Dosar 1024/1923, f. 2, 42-44.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Reel #121, Dosar 1024/1923, f. 45-46.

⁶⁹ "Acțiunea studenților naționaliști," *Lumea* (Dec 9, 1922), reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreaptă*, 259-260.

with volleys of vinegar and rotten eggs.⁷⁰ On 5 December 1923 Jewish students in Iași reported that they could not go to classes because armed students guarded the entrances to the buildings.⁷¹ Another 44 Jewish students wrote to the chancellor that they were attacked in Corneliu Șumuleanu's class on 11-12 December 1923. Șumuleanu was a leading member of the LANC, and he apparently turned a blind eye when his Romanian students began beating the others with clubs. The Jews ran outside to wait for the chancellor, but had to return to get their hats and coats because of the cold weather. The Romanians were waiting for them when they returned and now they attacked them with metal rods. This time it was medical students who were disrupting lectures in the Faculty of Law.⁷² Attendance lists were introduced at Iași that month and the Romanian army occupied the campus.⁷³

Romanian students learned from the German student movement while it was in its most radical phase at the beginning of the 1920s. They formed an "Association of Romanian Students in Berlin" in 1921 to promote cultural exchanges, and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, travelled to Germany in Fall 1922 to observe the anti-Semitic movement there.⁷⁴ Students from Iași borrowed 8,000 lei from one of the LANC's financiers to pay for Codreanu's journey, and he arrived in time to witness student violence on the streets of Berlin that November.⁷⁵ He later wrote that the reason for his trip was that "from the study we had done we realized that the Yid problem has an international character and that the reaction must also be on an international scale."⁷⁶ Codreanu did not get to know German students, but he keenly purchased every anti-

⁷⁰ "Provocătorul Manciu," *Naționalistul*, 10/44 (4 Nov 1923): 3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Dosar 1022/1923, f. 511-512.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Dosar 1022/1923, f. 474-477. Cf. Sebastian, *De două mii de ani*, 33.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Dosar 1022/1923, f. 538, 546.

⁷⁴ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 966/1921, f. 41.

⁷⁵ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 248-250, 320.

⁷⁶ Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, 57.

Semitic book and pamphlet available.⁷⁷ On his return from Berlin, Codreanu promised that in March 1923 he would hold a “great student gathering” in Iași that would include delegates from Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.⁷⁸ But the promised meeting never took place, and when Czechoslovak students did visit Romania in September 1923, their letter of thanks never mentioned the anti-Semitic struggle, though they did say that they felt very welcomed by the Romanian students and hoped for closer collaboration between student centers in the two countries.⁷⁹

Codreanu was still in Berlin when student protests broke out in Romania during December 1922, but when he returned in February 1923 he brought with him new organizational ideas as well as broaches and tie-clips with swastikas on them, which immediately became popular amongst the Romanian students.⁸⁰ He also commissioned female students to begin making flags bearing swastikas in their dormitories.⁸¹ Victims of student violence in Iași identified their attackers by the swastikas they wore, showing that in a short time these pieces of jewelry had become a distinctive characteristic of ultra-nationalist fashion.⁸² Within a couple of years Jews travelling on trains at night learned to wear swastikas on their coats so as to avoid being attacked.⁸³ Codreanu continued to import fascist jewelry from Germany until late 1924, but by mid-1923 the Bucharest Student Center had already designed its own insignia, which it sold to raise money.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ Interrogation of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu on 31 October 1923; reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 387.

⁷⁸ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 321.

⁷⁹ “Relațiile dintre studenții Cehoslovaci și Români,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/34 (25 Sept 1923): 2.

⁸⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 324.

⁸¹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 15/1923, f. 8-10.

⁸² AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1087/1925, f. 15, 18-19.

⁸³ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 1/1925, f. 162.

⁸⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 119-120; “Insigna studentească,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/22 (10 July 1923): 4.

Trouble continued when students tried to celebrate 10 December as a student holiday and met resistance from the faculty. On 9-10 December 1924, a crowd of 100 students surrounded the chancellor's office, shouting and whistling at the chancellor. Others barricaded the Dean of Medicine in his office until soldiers arrived and rescued him. Students occupied the university's main auditorium for the whole day, talking, singing nationalist anthems, and reading. In this case, much to the chagrin of the university authorities, the police preferred not to intervene because it would only have escalated the situation. The military also managed to look ridiculous during scuffles with students in Mihai David's geography laboratory on 10 December, where students periodically began singing "Long Live the King," at which signal the soldiers stopped fighting and stood at attention.⁸⁵ In another incident on 28 January 1925, Romanian students entered Dr. Emil Savini's class at Saint Spiridon Hospital and gave the usual orders: "Yids get out!" In Savini's declaration to the disciplinary committee he says that he heard screaming outside after the Jews had left the room so he waited for the noise to die down before he continued teaching.⁸⁶

Students from other university cities expressed sympathy with the ultra-nationalist cause. Those in Cernăuți declared a strike on 28 December 1922 and promised that they would prevent Jewish students from sitting their exams.⁸⁷ Students in the law school at Oradea Mare wrote to the chancellor of the University of Iași declaring their solidarity with the anti-Semitic movement there.⁸⁸ Those at the Technical School (*Politehnica*) in Timișoara voiced their support for the movement in Bucharest and emphasized that they too struggled with overcrowded living

⁸⁵ Ibid., Dosar 1051/1924, f. 55-67.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Dosar 1087/1925, f. 34.

⁸⁷ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1021/1923, f. 222-224.

⁸⁸ Ibid., Dosar 1087/1925, f. 41. There was no university in Oradea Mare, but the city did have a law school which was affiliated with the University of Cluj.

conditions and under-resourced facilities.⁸⁹ Individuals travelled between these cities to share news and to learn what was going on in other universities.⁹⁰ From 1923 onwards students also began travelling to non-university towns and villages where they distributed pamphlets and carried out ultra-nationalist propaganda during their holidays.⁹¹ As had pre-war nationalist organizations, the students also held national celebrations and fundraisers where they spread their message and raised financial support.⁹²

Using only accounts from mainstream national Romanian newspapers, the American Legation in Bucharest recorded anti-Semitic disturbances from 1922 to 1926, many of which involved Jews being physically beaten or Jewish property destroyed.⁹³ The number of incidents recorded in their report can be summarized as follows:

Year	Nov-Dec 1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
No. of incidents	19	85	30	31	47

Table 2: Incidents of Anti-Semitic violence, 1922-1926

Student violence usually took place in groups, and most descriptions of these attacks mention 40 to 100 students assaulting only a handful of Jews. Victims could usually only identify the ringleaders and most attackers remained anonymous.⁹⁴ Sometimes the attackers were not even

⁸⁹ Aurel Ciochină, “Studentii Timișoarei,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/4 (28 Jan 1923): 4.

⁹⁰ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1085/1925, f. 30-34; AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Știință, Dosar 109/1924, f. 60.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Reel #132, Dosar 1/1922, f. 75-76, 84, 142; “Studentii în propagandă,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/19 (19 June 1923): 4; “Pentru studenți,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/22 (10 July 1923): 4.

⁹² “Informațiuni,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/20 (26 June 1923): 4; “Din activitatea studentească,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/32 (18 Sept 1923): 2.

⁹³ USNA, Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, MII98, Reel #7, American Legation Despatch 366. Enclosure 4.

⁹⁴ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #129, Dosar 1057/1924, f. 9.

students, or did not eat at the canteens where the attacks took place.⁹⁵ The size of the groups suggests that perpetrators joined in if and when they wanted to, and that this was not the work of hierarchical, tightly-bound gangs or paramilitary squads. Nonetheless, the students did have clear leadership, the violence was usually premeditated, and targets were chosen to maximize publicity. Of the five professors from Iași mentioned above – the chancellor, the Dean of Medicine, Mihai David, Corneliu Șumuleanu, and Dr. Emil Savini, – only Șumuleanu was not a member of the University Senate. If the formal complaints that were made by victims are representative of the incidence of violence, then students attacked the classrooms of prominent or sympathetic faculty members much more often than those of their less well-known colleagues.

As the singing, shouting, and hooliganism of anti-Semitic demonstrations suggest, student crowds were also fun. During one protest in 1927, students carried a boiler full of food down the street with the sign “Taste it to convince yourselves how badly we are fed.”⁹⁶ Two examples from the mid-1930s give a sense of the convivial, less-than-serious atmosphere associated with student crowds. After students were shot during demonstrations in Bucharest on 25 January 1933, the leaders there sent a telegram to Teodor Mociulschi (1903-), who was the leader of the *Asociației Studenților Creștin* (Christian Students’ Association, ASC) of Iași, asking him to arrange for a protest that weekend.⁹⁷ In response, on Sunday students in Iași attended a church service, after which Mociulschi gave a speech and the crowd began a peaceful protest march before making a sudden turn towards an old building undergoing renovations that was owned by a prominent Jewish family. The students began tearing down the walls, and when a professor named Eugen Pavlescu arrived they spoke back to him and refused to show their

⁹⁵ Ibid., Dosar 1125/1926, f. 6.

⁹⁶ “The Government and the Needs of the Students,” USNA, Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, 1910-1944.

⁹⁷ CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, P.000324 , vol. 8, f. 126.

identity cards. The policemen in attendance refused to intervene, even when the students began throwing tiles at them. Eventually Pavlescu himself marched into the middle of the crowd and the students immediately changed their tone, cheering “Long Live the Professor!” and swearing to him that they had not been the ones throwing tiles.⁹⁸ These students seem to have thought of their vandalism as little more than a joke, of policemen as harmless playthings, and of their professors as people who could be friends or foes depending on the whims of the students.

On another Sunday evening in 1935, groups of students wandered through Cișmigiu Park in the center of Bucharest where they stopped passers-by and demanded to inspect their identification cards. If someone turned out to be Jewish, they promptly assaulted them. Eventually the groups of students grew in number and drifted onto the nearby boulevards where they continued harassing passing Jews until they became concerned about police retaliation and returned to the park. By now numbering roughly one thousand students, the crowd began a cheer of “Down with the Jews!” and moved on to the medical students’ dormitory two blocks away. The balconies of the dormitory were full of students and someone made a speech about how holy and just the student cause was. Becoming bored, students returned to the street to check identification cards on passing buses and vandalize shop windows. Police and gendarmes intervened when the crowd reached the Jewish commercial district of Lipscani Street. They fired several shots and hit students with their rifle butts, so the troublemakers dispersed and went home.⁹⁹ Afterwards, *Centrul Studențesc București* (the Bucharest Student Center, CSB) wrote to the Minister of the Interior that they had carried out their own investigations into the incident and “discovered that *agents provocateurs* of this movement are members of the National-Liberal Party Youth, and some of them are *Siguranța* agents. We even surprised police sergeants and

⁹⁸ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 52/1933, f. 83-89; Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #305, Dosar 1596/1935, f. 32.

⁹⁹ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 1, f. 32-45.

commissars who mingled with the protesters and cried out, pointing at individuals: ‘Hit him, he’s a Yid!’”¹⁰⁰

The students appear to have had no specific goals in mind, and the locations where they congregated were places where they would normally have spent their leisure time. The speeches were ad hoc and vague. The aggressors targeted any Jews, and not specific enemies of the student movement. Checking identification cards is something that policemen do, and the students were mimicking legitimate authority figures as they distributed their vigilante justice, but they seem to have treated it more as a game than as a serious attempt to rid the area of Jews. When they did encounter armed resistance, the students immediately yielded. When called to account, they made farcical claims about liberals and secret policemen having engineered the whole incident. Hooliganism and violence was a serious matter for Jews, university faculty, and officers of the law, but for the ultra-nationalist students it was an excuse to enjoy themselves, to be part of a group, and to insist that the Romanian students – not Jews or policemen – dominated the country’s streets and public spaces.

4.2 STUDENT SOCIETIES

Leadership of the student movement was provided by formally constituted student societies with democratically elected leadership. Some of these groups were illegal, such as the Petru Maior Student Center in Cluj, which the University Senate officially dissolved on 28 September 1923, soon after it expelled Ion Moța and other troublemakers from the university.¹⁰¹ Despite being closed, its members continued to hold meetings wherever they could find space – including

¹⁰⁰ “Măsurile represive împotriva dezordinelor,” *Adevărul*, (12 Apr 1935).

¹⁰¹ Neagoe, *Viața universitară clujeană interbelică*, vol. 1, 209-210, 213; CNSAS, CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 3, f. 19.

inside a beer factory.¹⁰² The ASC in Iași also played a leading role in student organizing in that city even though university authorities repeatedly forbade its establishment on the grounds that confessional societies were not allowed in the university.¹⁰³ Others had unofficial leadership, such as *Societatea studenților de la Facultatea de Drept* (the Society of Law Students) at Iași. In November 1921 the University Senate dismissed the Society's president, Nelu Ionescu, for his involvement in anti-Semitic disturbances, but his replacement, Stelian Popescu, also threw his support behind the movement. New elections were called, and the students overwhelmingly elected Corneliu Zelea Codreanu as their president even though he was technically no longer a student after his expulsion from the university six months earlier.¹⁰⁴

These societies drew heavily on the language of nineteenth century Romanian nationalism, blending it with interwar ultra-nationalism. The statutes of the ASC in Iași described it as “a voluntary organization with an integral nationalist character.” They specified that, “Based on the principle that led the whole student struggle for two years, ‘the defense of Romanian national culture that the Yids are threatening to corrupt,’ the association has a double purpose, expressed through two activities: a) The reciprocal education (physical, moral and intellectual) of members in order to form *character*; [and] b) national activity, through the spreading and strengthening of the national ideal at all levels of society.”¹⁰⁵ Apart from the anti-Semitic emphasis and the reference to integral nationalism, with their focus on education, Romanian culture, character building, and the national ideal, had they been written fifty years earlier these could easily have been the aims of the feminist Unions, ASTRA, or the Archers.

¹⁰² AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Știința, Dosar 76/1922, f. 114.

¹⁰³ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #121, Dosar 1025/1923 f. 49-50; Dosar 1051/1924, f. 54-55.

¹⁰⁴ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 101, 109-110.

¹⁰⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1087/1925, f. 79.

Some of the ultra-nationalist student organizations grew directly out of their nineteenth century forebears. *Centrul Studențesc “Arboroasa”* (the Arboroasa Student Center) in Cernăuți was formed in 1919 as an amalgamation of five student societies established at the University of Cernăuți between 1875 and 1905, while it was under Austro-Hungarian rule.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the Petru Maior Society was founded by Romanian students studying in Budapest during the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ Many of these earlier societies were extremely conscious of their national character, and made this clear through public statements in support of Romanian politicians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire or by mobilizing support for the 1877 war.¹⁰⁸ Anti-Semitism played an important but not central role in pre-war student societies. Jews were occasionally excluded from Romanian student societies, and speakers who suggested admitting them at student congresses were booed off stage with shouts of “Shame on those who’ve judaized!” and “We don’t need no Yids!”¹⁰⁹ Sometimes student groups in Moldavia held anti-Semitic protests or printed anti-Semitic propaganda, but this was not consistent throughout the country.¹¹⁰ Other nationalist student societies were equally opposed to Greeks or Hungarians, depending on which minority group they saw as representing the most immediate threat to Romanian interests.¹¹¹ Codreanu claims that the first student congress after the war was philo-Semitic, and that were it not for the students from Iași and Cernăuți, Jews would have been allowed to join Romanian Student Centers.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol.6, f. 16.

¹⁰⁷ Someșan, “Mișcarea studențească,” 176.

¹⁰⁸ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 40; Pușcaș, *Universitate*, 68, 70.

¹⁰⁹ “Congresul studenților români la Piatră și goană jidanarismului din sânul congresului,” *Alarma Moldovei*, 1/7 (23 Oct 1888): 1, 3; Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 217.

¹¹⁰ V. T. Cancicov, “Rolul tău tinerime!” *Jos Jidanii*, 1/1 (23 Nov 1897): 1; Comitetul Național Studențesc din Iași, “Manifestul studenților din Iași,” *Antisemitul* (Bucharest), 1/1 (17 Jan 1899): 3.

¹¹¹ “Protest,” *Jos mileniul*, 1/1 (23 Apr 1896): 1; “Cuvânt înainte,” *Alarma deșteptărei naționale*, 1/1 (10 Aug 1906): 1.

¹¹² Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, 34-35.

Ultra-nationalists such as Nicolae Iorga and A. C. Cuza first began to use student violence with the riots at the National Theater in March 1906. When *Centrul Universitar Studențesc Iași* (the Iași University Student Center) was founded in 1909 it defined its focus as “the peasant question, the national economic movement and spiritual union through the spreading of Romanian culture to all Romanians.”¹¹³ These were all key platforms of the Nationalist-Democratic Party that Iorga and Cuza were in the process of forming, and both men spoke at the Center’s inaugural meeting. It is likely that the levels of violence associated with the student movement increased in the years leading up to the First World War. Student unrest in Iași became so bad in 1916 that the authorities temporarily closed the university.¹¹⁴ The famous sociologist Petre Andrei (1891-1940) mentions having been a cuzist anti-Semite when he was a student in 1909, but says that he abandoned the cause when it became violent.¹¹⁵ A similar escalation in student politicization and violence occurred in Bucharest immediately after the war. *Societatea Studenților în Medicină* (the Society of Medical Students) at the University of Bucharest was founded in 1875 and was dominated by students with left-wing sensibilities until it became heavily politicized in 1918, when noisy demonstrations called for a radical reorganization of medical education as a whole. While the students explicitly targeted certain professors in their protests, other faculty members placed themselves at the front of the student movement and like Iorga and Cuza, used the student movement to their own advantage.¹¹⁶

Not all student groups had ultra-nationalist leanings. *Federația Asociațiilor Creștine Studentești din România* (the Federation of Christian Student Associations of Romania, FACSR),

¹¹³ Alex. C. Cusin, “De la ‘Centrul Studențesc Universitar – Iași’,” *Neamul românesc*, 5/24 (22 Feb 1910): 9-11.

¹¹⁴ A. C. Cuza, *Închiderea Universității din Iași* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1916).

¹¹⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1051/1924, f. 4-39.

¹¹⁶ Cezar Petrescu writes that the leaders of the 1918 student protests were the professors Măldărescu, Geota, Parhon Bărdescu, G. Nanu, Botescu, Iacobovici, Danielopol, Ion Jianu, Gomoiu, Pailian and Topa. Cezar Petrescu, “Anarhia Universitară,” *Cuvântul*, 1/13 (20 Nov 1924): 4; V. Gomoiu, “Oligarhia medicală și tragedia universitară,” *Cuvântul*, (6 Feb 1925); Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 218.

for example, was formed in 1923 as an umbrella organization for the Christian Student Associations from each university. Its goal was to help students live Christian lives and it included the only minority group accepted by any Romanian students – the Magyar Christian Student Association (IKE) from Cluj. Other groups with a religious focus included *Asociația Studenților Creștini din România* (the Christian Student Association of Romania, ASCR), which was founded in 1921 as an initiative of the American-based YMCA, and *Societatea Studenți Creștini Misionari* (the Society of Christian Student Missionaries), which sent teams of 5-6 students into villages to spread Romanian Orthodoxy and to combat Neo-Protestantism. Others were purely academic associations, sporting groups, regional societies, or cultural associations.¹¹⁷ Even amongst students who did embrace extremist positions, politics was not the only reason for meeting together. Students involved in ultra-nationalist groups held masked balls and costume parties, and travelled together on guided tours around the country where they relaxed, visited tourist attractions, and experienced rural life.¹¹⁸

In 1925, six of the most active Student Centers – including the technically dissolved Petru Maior Student Center from Cluj – merged with the ASC in Iași and the Student Society from the Technical School in Timișoara to create *Uniunea Națională a Studenților Creștini din România* (the National Union of Christian Students in Romania, UNSCR).¹¹⁹ These were all ultra-nationalist groups that fully subscribed to the anti-Semitism of the UNSCR’s newspaper, *Cuvântul studențesc*, and had been meeting in annual student congresses since 1923. Over the

¹¹⁷ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 2-4; Neagoe, *Viața universitară clujeană interbelică*, vol. 1, 233-239; Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 75-76.

¹¹⁸ “Mare bal,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/4 (28 Jan 1923): 3; “Mare bal,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 2/4 (12 Feb 1924): 3; “Excursiune,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/19 (19 July 1923): 3; C. H. Nicolau, “Pe Valea Bistriței,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/30 (4 Sept 1923): 3.

¹¹⁹ The founding members of the UNSCR were *Centrul Studențesc București*, *Asociația Studențesc Creștini Iași*, *Centrul Studențesc “Petru Maior” Cluj*, *Centrul Studențesc Cernăuți*, *Societatea Studențească Scoală Politehnică Timișoara*, *Centrul Studențesc Oradea Mare*, *Centrul Studențesc Arad*, and *Centrul Studențesc Chișinău*. CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 1.

next six years, representatives from student centers in Sibiu and other non-university cities joined the Union, strengthening its claim to represent all Romanian students in the country. The leadership of the UNSCR was chosen from the Bucharest Student Center, which made for easy central coordination but occasionally caused resentment amongst the regional delegates.

ANUL	PREȘEDINȚIA UNSCR	CONGRES		PREȘEDINȚII CENTRELOR												
		NAȚION.	INTERNAT.	BUCUREȘTI	IASI	CLUJ	TIMIȘOARA	CERNĂUȚI	CHIȘINĂU	ORADEA	ARAD	SIBIU				
1925	INFUNȚAT: 9 Febr. 1925 C.M. Răpeanu N. Dragoș			C. Dănulescu	Ion Sava Ilie Gârneață	Emil Pascu I. Moveanu	Corneliu Mareș C. Iorgulescu									
1926	C. Dănulescu	Iasi	Praga	Paraschiv Angelescu	Elinor Usatuc	C. Ivan	Ion Fotiade									
1927	Iulian Sârbu	Oradea	Roma	Victor Ionescu	Mihail Bicleanu	Th. Vidican	Ion Fotiade									
1928	Lorin Popescu			Gh. Cronț Gh. Sârbulescu	Gh. Urziceanu Nicu Petrașcu	Liviu Gomboși	Ion Ștefulescu Iuliu Orbonaș	INFUNȚAT: 1927 Laur Gârbu		INFUNȚAT: 1928 Bredan						
1929	Gh. Sârbulescu	Craiova	Brașov- Ios.	Andrei Ionescu	Nicu Petrașcu	Artur Anderco	Vasile Bardas Aurel Colin	Gh. Țățu		Bredan		INFUNȚAT: 1929 V. Ciurescu				
1930	Gh. Popescu- Botoșani	Brăile	Paris	Andrei Ionescu	Gh. Crețulescu M. Panait	Oct. Stanca	Ion Davidescu	Dragoș Vltenca Oct. Rusu	Gh. Năchescu I. Petculescu Șt. Proteanu	Abrudan		V. Ciurescu				
1931	Gh. Popescu- Botoșani M. C. Panait	Sibiu	Buc.	Dumitrescu Argeș Tr. Coligă	Th. Mociulski	Oct. Stanca	Ion Davidescu	Ilie Imbrescu Ion Negură	Al. Cristian Dumitru Borcea	Nonu Terențiu		Horia Vișoiu	INFUNȚAT: 1931 T. Moldoveanu			
1932	C. Tănăsescu	Brașov	Riga	Tr. Coligă	Virgil Gavrilescu	Alex. Buia	Gh. Stanciu	Ion Costache	Y. Mărășcu	Nonu Terențiu		Petre Selageanu		V. Bodogai		
1933	Șt. Cămpineanu		Veneția	Florin Becescu	Roman Filimon	Emil Popa	Gh. Stanciu	Valeriu Dobos-Boca Mircea. Of N. Plămădă		Bozântan				V. Coman		

Figure 7: Organization of the UNSCR, 1925-1933.¹²⁰

The UNSCR claimed to represent the wishes of all Romanian students, but it is difficult to know how true this was. According to a police report from 1930, the organization had roughly 25,000 members, which implied that all students who were ethnically Romanian were part of the UNSCR.¹²¹ This was certainly an exaggeration. A Jewish student named Sașa Pană (1902-1981) wrote in his memoirs that at the University of Bucharest “the departments were split in two – not

¹²⁰ “Huliganii în istorie,” *Sfarmă piatră*, 2/55 (10 Dec 1936): 7.

¹²¹ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 1.

only the students but also the professors. Some wanted quiet, order, and study. Others, the nationalists, ‘agitated’.”¹²² The short-lived attempt to create a minorities-friendly “Union of Independent Romanian Students” in 1925 shows that at least some students were uncomfortable with the anti-Semitism of the ultra-nationalists.¹²³ Other students occasionally petitioned university authorities in the name of “the majority of students,” rejecting the ultra-nationalist movement and requesting that the universities be reopened as soon as possible.¹²⁴ In 1923 the *Cercul Studenților din Județul Soroca* (Circle of Students from Soroca County) asked the University of Iași for permission to hold a congress at which they could discuss how to respond to “the efforts of some students to prevent the normal functioning of university life.”¹²⁵ In 1925 ten law students from Iași petitioned the authorities to allow them to site their exams, emphasizing that they had “nothing in common ... with that handful of students who make threats.”¹²⁶ It is unclear exactly how common this sentiment was, however, as such petitions only ever had a small number of signatories compared to those from the well-organized anti-Semitic students.

A clearer picture of the strength of ultra-nationalism in the universities can be gleaned from three ultra-nationalist petitions from 1924, one from Iași and two from Cluj, and a membership list of the ASC in Iași from the same year. The ASC had 131 formal members in 1924, but was able to convince 404 students to sign its petition, at a time when there were 4,634 students enrolled at the university.¹²⁷ Bad handwriting makes many of the names on this petition difficult to read, but 15 percent are recognizably female at a time when women accounted for

¹²² Sașa Pană, *Născut în '02: memorii, file de jurnal, evocări* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1973) 137.

¹²³ “Uniunea Studenților Români Independenți,” *Curentul studențesc*, 1/17-25 (July – Aug 1925): 1.

¹²⁴ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1021/1923, f. 452; Dosar 1087/1925, f. 23-25.

¹²⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1021/1923, f. 452.

¹²⁶ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1087/1925, f. 23-24.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Dosar 1087/1925, f. 82-84, 104; Ministerul Industriei și Comerțului, *Anuarul Statistic al României 1925* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Eminescu, 1926).

roughly 32 percent of Romanian students enrolled at the University of Iași.¹²⁸ In Cluj, the two petitions had 131 and 299 signatures, when the total number of students enrolled at Cluj was 1,967.¹²⁹ Based on these statistics, ultra-nationalists probably constituted between 8 and 15 percent of the country's students, which is far less than their grandstanding would have us believe, but is still enough for them to have seemed omnipresent on campus.

The most significant international student organization that Romanian students took part in was the International Student Confederation (*Confédération Internationale des Étudiants*, CIE), which was formed in Strasbourg in 1919 with Romania as one of the founding member states. The CIE was primarily concerned with cultural exchanges and problems of student life, avoiding politics or student attitudes towards broader social issues. Like other international student organizations, the CIE was less a movement so much as a confederation of national student groups, each with its own goals and preoccupations.¹³⁰ Incorporating German students into the CIE after the First World War was difficult because they insisted on protesting against the Treaty of Versailles, but international academic and sporting competitions eventually led both sides to an uneasy truce.¹³¹ Romanian students bickered with Hungarian, Ukrainian, Jewish, and English students in the CIE over Romania's poor treatment of minorities, and the UNSCR consistently sent its most militant leaders to CIE congresses.¹³² The German students eventually pulled out of the CIE in 1930 after their quarrels with French, Polish, and Czechoslovak students

¹²⁸ Ministerul Industriei și Comerțului, *Anuarul statistic al României 1924* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Eminescu, 1925) 246-249; Ministerul Industriei și Comerțului, *Anuarul statistic al României 1926* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Eminescu, 1927) 314-317.

¹²⁹ AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Știința, Dosar 76/1922, f. 96-99, 103-104; Neagoe, *Viața universitară clujeană interbelică*, vol. 1, 211.

¹³⁰ Philip Altbach, "The International Student Movement," *Comparative Education Review*, 8/2 (1964): 157, 159.

¹³¹ Harald Oelrich, *Sportgeltung - Weltgeltung: Sport im Spannungsfeld der deutsch-italienischen Aussenpolitik von 1918 bis 1945* (Münster: LIT, 2003) 68-78.

¹³² Ion N. Georgescu, "Confédération internationale des étudiants, CIE," *Cuvântul studentesc*, 4/1 (24 Nov 1927): 5.

over revising the Versailles Treaty could not be resolved.¹³³ The UNSCR considered resigning from the CIE in solidarity with the Germans, but instead it formed an “anti-revisionist alliance” with countries such as Croatia and Slovakia to resist arguments about returning territory lost at Versailles.¹³⁴ In 1931 the German students began abortive talks with groups from other East-Central European countries, including Romania, about establishing an “international confederation of anti-Semites.”

4.3 STUDENT CONGRESSES

The universities whose students took part in the ultra-nationalist student movement were separated by hundreds of miles, but students met in congresses that were held at least once a year. Student congresses were usually accompanied by acts of vandalism and violence, and the authorities were always wary when students asked to meet, placing extra guards on the trains and at stations in case students began attacking Jews on their way to the congresses.¹³⁵ The first of these congresses was to be held in Cluj during July 1923, with university professors and prominent ultra-nationalists from a variety of organizations being invited to speak on anti-Semitic themes.¹³⁶ The government refused permission but the students met anyway in Iași, forcing their way through a cordon of gendarmes into the university’s assembly hall and then

¹³³ Zorn, “Student Politics,” 140; Oelrich, *Sportgeltung*, 150, 228-236.

¹³⁴ AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Știința, Dosar 204/1930, f. 16-17; CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 7-8.

¹³⁵ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #132, Dosar 1/1922, f. 161-162, 171, 178, 190; Fond SRI Files, Reel #106, Dosar 1151, f. 301-305; AN – Brașov, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Serv. Exterioare, Dosar 253/1927, f. 5

¹³⁶ The invited speakers were I. C. Cătuneanu, A. C. Cuza, Vasile Dumitru, Mihail Dragomirescu, Găvănescul, Gheorghiu, Iuliu Hațieganu, I. Mândrescu, S. Mehedinți, Ec. C. Nazarie, Cezar Papacostea, Nicolae Paulescu, M. Ștefănescu, Octavian Goga, C. Vasiliu-Bolnavu, Alexandrina Gr. Cantacazino, Leonte Moldovanu, and Amos Frâncu. “Programul congresului,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/27 (14 Aug 1923): 1; AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #121, Dosar 1024/1923, f. 194.

finishing the last two days of the congress at the nearby Cetățuia Monastery.¹³⁷ They spoke about reorganizing the Student Centers, supporting Romanian populations in Macedonia and the Serbian Banat, and about continuing their battle against Jews, the government, and the university authorities.¹³⁸ The discussions at later congresses stuck to similar themes, but were supplemented by church services and musical and artistic performances.¹³⁹ Student congresses rarely limited themselves to issues that solely concerned students. At the UNSCR's general congress at Iași, in November 1926, as well as complaining about the cost of train fares and the need for financial aid, the students requested (i) the introduction of a *numerus clausus*; (ii) forcing Jewish students to provide their own cadavers for dissection; (iii) aid for war invalids; (iv) the firing of non-nationalist professors; (v) the suppression of a Jewish newspaper; (vi) the exclusion of Communists from student dormitories; (vii) the suppression of the YMCA, which they believed to be communist; (viii) the revocation of suspensions given to nationalist students; and (ix) the revocation of scholarships given to Jewish students. Furthermore, they pledged their support for the Romanian church, ethnic-Romanians living abroad, and for Nicolae Totu, a student then on trial for shooting a Jewish high school student in Cernăuți.¹⁴⁰

The most notorious student congress of the decade took place in Oradea Mare, a city in Transylvania near the Romanian border with Hungary. When a student congress at Oradea Mare was first proposed, it was rejected by local officials, who were afraid of student violence in their town. Their objections were overruled by government ministers, who promised to provide the

¹³⁷ "Congresul studențesc oprit," *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/26 (7 Aug 1923): 1; "Congresul delegaților întregei studențimii române din țara," *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/30 (4 Sept 1923): 1. Romanticized later accounts claim that after the initial clashes with gendarmes, the students held their congress in the woods. Tua, *Garda de Fier*, 40-41.

¹³⁸ "Hotărârile studențimii române în congresul de delegați," *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/30 (4 Sept 1923): 1-2.

¹³⁹ "Programul congresului," *Cuvântul studențesc*, 4/1 (26 Nov 1926): 2; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, 1/1924, f. 163.

¹⁴⁰ General Congress of the Rumanian Christian Students, "A Motion," Iași, 28-30 Nov 1926; translated and reprinted in USNA, Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, MII98, Reel #7, American Legation Dispatch 366, Enclosure 3.

troops necessary to keep order.¹⁴¹ An edition of *Cuvântul studențesc* from November 24, 1927, carried two articles that were to prepare students for the congress. In the first Lorin Popescu, the UNSCR president, called for students to come to the congress “with calm faces and open spirits.”¹⁴² The second listed thirty examples of Christian students who had been the subject of recent Jewish attacks.¹⁴³ Such mixed messages did not bode well for a peaceful few days. By 1 December, police circulars were warning of anti-Semitic brochures being circulated on trains in order to stir up the population.¹⁴⁴ Three days later, the young journalist Mircea Eliade defended the “adorable idealism” of the student agitators in the pages of *Cuvântul studențesc*, interpreting the disturbances as the growing pains of an “authentic rebirth of religiosity.”¹⁴⁵ Attacks on Jews began the same day.

Students had free train travel to the congress and some were accommodated in hotels, but the citizens of Oradea – including Jews – were asked to accommodate the rest of the students in their homes.¹⁴⁶ Students used their trip across the country to vandalize train stations and to visit sympathizers in towns along the way.¹⁴⁷ An estimated 6,000 students entered Oradea Mare for the congress, which was held in a hall with a capacity for 1,500. Plenty of students attended the discussions about a *numerus clausus* in day one, but fewer and fewer students stayed on to discuss minor details.¹⁴⁸ The rest, according to the American Legation in Bucharest, “were running through the streets shouting, carrying long sticks that they had stolen at a market place, their pockets loaded with stones which they had collected from the edge of a river in the town,

¹⁴¹ Téreza Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, trans. Liviu Borcea (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1997) 140.

¹⁴² Lorin Popescu, “La Oradea,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 4/1 (24 Nov 1927): 1.

¹⁴³ Article, “La Răboj,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 4/1 (24 Nov 1927): 5.

¹⁴⁴ “Circulara Ministerului de Interne,” Dec 1, 1927; reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, vol. 2, 87.

¹⁴⁵ Mircea Eliade, “O generație,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 4/2 (4 Dec 1927): 1.

¹⁴⁶ Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, 141.

¹⁴⁷ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, vol. 2, 91-92, 95.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 98-100.

and gendarmes pursuing them everywhere.”¹⁴⁹ According to the American account, most shops were closed, and the streets were deserted except for the rioting students, who stole without payment, destroyed four synagogues, and assaulted Jews on the streets and on the trains. The police later wrote that students “destroyed all window displays and businesses, breaking shutters and destroying shops, right up to the most ordinary things.”¹⁵⁰ One Jewish man recalled being beaten by students, and then chasing them into the Synagogue, begging them to stop destroying sacred objects. “These reckless [students] broke and destroyed everything that they came across, he reported. “They took cult objects with them and, dressed in prayer mantles, they began a wild dance in the courtyard.”¹⁵¹ Another Jewish man protected Torah scrolls with sword in hand.¹⁵² After the congress some students went on to Cluj and other nearby towns, where they continued rioting for several more days. Roughly forty Jewish houses, a tube factory and a synagogue were destroyed in Cluj. Only one Jew and the police sub-commissar were assaulted.¹⁵³ Students traveling directly to Bucharest jumped off at various train stations on the way to destroy things or assault anyone they identified as Jewish while the train was stopped. Approximately 400 students were arrested when they alighted from the trains in Bucharest.¹⁵⁴

When challenged, the students responded by blaming the government for the disturbances. They protested against the expulsion of 380 students who had not been formally charged with crimes.¹⁵⁵ During the trial of two students, Gherghel and Disconescu, the UNSCR President Lorin Popescu testified that the chief of police in Oradea Mare had warned them that they would be provoked by communists and that 10,000 armed factory workers had been

¹⁴⁹ “A Bird’s-eye View of the Students’ Congress, the Riots, and the Effects,” USNA, Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, MII98, Reel #7, American Legation Dispatch 510, Enclosure 3.

¹⁵⁰ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, vol. 2, 98-100.

¹⁵¹ Marțial Magrini, quoted in Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, 142.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁵³ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, vol. 2, 98-100.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol 2., 118-119, 123-124.

¹⁵⁵ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 8/1925, f. 74-76.

mobilized to attack the students. Moreover, argued Popescu, “the first student protest took place in perfect quietness, but then ... the butchers Friedman and Gutman beat the students Gherghel and Disconescu. Due to the number of soldiers, students were prevented from responding to these provocations.”¹⁵⁶ Later in 1928, Popescu led the students in a general strike to protest the treatment that they had received at the hands of the police and the chancellor of the University of Bucharest moved to dissolve the UNSCR that May.¹⁵⁷

Not everyone who was attacked was Jewish. One Romanian boy who attended a Jewish school was assaulted despite his cries of “I am not a Yid!”¹⁵⁸ Romanian and American reports only mention the ultra-nationalist students destroying Hungarian property, and never discuss Hungarian victims. Mentioning that some of the victims were Hungarians would have involved Romania in further international conflicts that it was eager to avoid. The Oradea pogrom took on international significance anyway because one of the injured was Captain Wilfred N. Keller, an American businessman and former YMCA worker who was part owner of the Hungarian newspaper *Minoritar Nagyvarad (The Oradea Minority)*, printed in Oradea. The Romanian Foreign Minister, Nicolae Titulescu (1882-1941), reported to the American ambassador that Mr. Keller had been warned beforehand to stay away from the students, a report that, if true, means that certain foreigners had been the focus of specific police attention before the congress. Titulescu’s report also stated that Keller’s newspaper “had been guilty of very violent attacks on the Rumanian Government and people,” which may explain why the students paid it particular attention.¹⁵⁹ The newspaper’s official declaration with regards to the destruction stated that “not only did they destroy the four front rooms of the editors and administrators, but they [also]

¹⁵⁶ “Procesul studenților la Cluj,” *Cuvântul*, (3 Mar 1928).

¹⁵⁷ “Studentimea va declara greva generală,” *Cuvântul*, (13 Dec 1927); “Dizolvarea organizațiilor studențești,” *Cuvântul*, (13 May 1928).

¹⁵⁸ “Devastările studențești de la Oradea,” *Adevărul*, (9 Dec 1927).

¹⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, vol. 3, 643-646.

destroyed all of the objects inside,” – portraits on the walls, desks, cupboards, books, telephones, and electric candles.¹⁶⁰ Keller eventually received US\$2,500 in indemnity payments from the Romanian government.¹⁶¹ Press coverage of the attack on Keller forced the United States government to abandon its previously ambiguous attitude towards anti-Semitism in Romania. The American ambassador to Romania, W. S. Culbertson, had reported to the U.S. Secretary of State in January 1927 that,

There have never been pogroms in Rumania or events that could be described as remotely resembling such. ... Jewish students have encountered difficulties and isolated cases have occurred in which Jews have been attacked by students and rowdies to furnish amusement. Generally speaking, however, they are not molested and certainly there exists no organized persecution of Jews.¹⁶²

Expanding on these statements in a later memorandum, he stated that “the question has many angles and ... provocation has come from both the Rumanian and the Jew.”¹⁶³ Culbertson was forced to change his tune after the Oradea pogrom, despite his obvious dislike for Jews. Jewish leaders in America put pressure on the United States government to intervene and prevent further pogroms.¹⁶⁴ For the next few years, the American press could speak of little else apart from anti-Semitism when they mentioned Romania.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, 143.

¹⁶¹ “Gets Rumanian Indemnity,” *New York Times* (19 Feb 1928): 30.

¹⁶² U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, vol. 3, 638.

¹⁶³ Telegram, Culbertson to the Secretary of State, Feb 4, 1927; USNA, Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, MII98, Reel #2.

¹⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, vol. 3, 819.

¹⁶⁵ “Differ on Hostility to Jews in Rumania,” *New York Times* (14 July 1928): 17; “Anti-Jewish Riots Recur in Rumania,” *New York Times* (22 May 1930): 8; “Anti-Semitic Attacks Renewed in Rumania,” *New York Times* (8 August 1930): 23.

Europeans were also upset. English and Hungarian students attempted to prevent Romanians from attending the international student congress in France in August 1928.¹⁶⁶ In Paris 5,000 people staged a protest rally to condemn the pogrom and in Bucharest the Liberal newspaper *L'Indépendance Roumaine* (*Romanian Independence*, 1880-1944) published a telegram from France blaming the government for the unrest.¹⁶⁷ The French communist daily *L'Humanité* (*Humanity*, 1904-present) presented the violence as having been part of an official “‘Romanianization’ and ‘national integration’ expedition directed against the Jews and Transylvanians of the country, who were torn away from Hungary by the treaty of Trianon.”¹⁶⁸ As might be expected given the 1919-1920 war over Transylvania, the most hostile reaction to the Oradea violence came from Hungary. In 1927 Romania and Hungary were involved in a dispute over property in Transylvania owned by Hungarian nationals. The case was before a League of Nations tribunal, but discussions had broken down because Romania withdrew its arbitrator just before the riots occurred.¹⁶⁹ Riots in a town dominated by ethnic Hungarians surely did little to help resolve this dispute.¹⁷⁰ Both Hungarian journalists and politicians violently condemned the riots, using them as an example of how Romania was not protecting its minorities and therefore did not deserve the post-1918 territorial enlargement that had taken Transylvania, including Oradea Mare, away from Hungary and given it to Romania.¹⁷¹ The pogrom also upset Hungarian anti-Semites, who quickly distanced themselves from the students’

¹⁶⁶ “Studentții români vor fi excluși dela congresul internațional?” *Luptă*, (5 Aug 1928).

¹⁶⁷ “Rally Against Rumania,” *New York Times* (1 Feb 1928): 29; Stelian Popescu, *Memorii* (Bucharest: Editura Majadahonda, 1994) 114.

¹⁶⁸ F. Meunier, “Comment la clique de Bucarest ‘roumanise’ une province,” *L'Humanité*, (14 Dec 1927): 3.

¹⁶⁹ „Rumania and Hungary,” *Times of London*, 44756 (5 Dec 1927): 10.

¹⁷⁰ In 1930, 51.6% of Oradea’s population were ethnic Hungarians. Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, xlii.

¹⁷¹ “Marea agitație din Ungaria din cauze exceselor din Oradea,” undated clipping in USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel# 135, 1/1924, f. 176; “Atitudinea Ungariei după Oradea Mare,” *Apărarea națională*, 5/20 (25 Dec 1927): 1.

violence.¹⁷² Not even the German Nazis stood up for the Romanian students. The Nazi daily, *Völkischer Beobachter* (*National Observer*, 1920-1945), disapproved of the pogrom because students damaged German and Hungarian property as well, and it insisted that “the guilty students should be exmatriculated.”¹⁷³

For most students, what mattered more than the international implications of their violence was that the movement changed their everyday lives so drastically. The universities were either closed or occupied by gendarmes and soldiers, dormitories and canteens were evacuated and closed, and students were insulted or physically attacked almost on a daily basis. Such events must have made the student movement very difficult to ignore. Being thrown out of a dormitory or attending congresses such as the one in Oradea Mare are likely to have been defining moments in many students’ university careers, causing them to either violently reject anti-Semitism or to join in and become ultra-nationalists themselves.

¹⁷² “Die Trümmerstätte in Großwardein,” *Vossische Zeitung*, (8 Dec 1927): 3.

¹⁷³ “Englischer und amerikanischer Schritt in Bukarest,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, 289 (14 Dec 1927): 3; “Rumänischer Aufruhr,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, 293 (18-19 December, 1927): 3.

5.0 SUPPORTING THE MOVEMENT

At first glance the success of the student movement seems remarkable. A group of young men and women, barely out of their teens, managed to close down all of the major universities in the country, perpetrate numerous acts of vandalism, assault and murder, run their own newspapers, and spark diplomatic crises. When they were taken to court for their actions, they were often acquitted. When expelled from the university, they were frequently allowed back in. Comparable left-wing movements such as the Romanian Communist Party received no such leniency and remained small and unimportant throughout the interwar period.¹ The secret to the students' success lay in their connections to older ultra-nationalists. These people provided funds, buildings, and land for the student movement and defended students in court, at university, and in the press. I told these stories separately in chapters three and four, but their fates were actually closely interconnected. This chapter explores those connections by following the exploits of a handful of student leaders who became ultra-nationalist celebrities during the 1920s. Their dependency on older and more established ultra-nationalists increased as their fame spread throughout the country, sparking discussions about youth, heroism, justice, and honor as cardinal virtues that defined ultra-nationalist activists in the interwar period. My concern is less with the deeds of these young men than on how the student movement and other ultra-nationalists rallied around them and used the scandals they ignited to articulate their own values and self-consciousness.

¹ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 397-400.

5.1 YOUTHFUL HEROISM AND THE PLOT OF THE VĂCĂREȘTENI

On 8 October 1923, police in Bucharest charged six young men with plotting “to spark a civil war” by assassinating government ministers and Jewish bankers, at which signal they apparently hoped that Romanians would rise up and murder Jews throughout the country. Not all of the would-be assassins knew who their victims were or what they looked like, the Prosecutor General said, but they had instructions on how the plot was to be carried out and had met in Bucharest the night before to assign targets and procure revolvers.² A number of students were allegedly involved in the plot, though only six took the spotlight – Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ion Moța, Ilie Gârneața, Radu Mironovici, Teodosie Popescu, and Corneliu Georgescu.³ These men were all leaders in the student movement but collectively they came to be known as the “Văcăreșteni” after the Văcărești prison, where they were held for six months awaiting trial. All six had different stories about why they had met in Bucharest, but a written declaration signed by Ion Moța (1902-1937) explains that at the August student congress in Iași he had become convinced that the majority of students were “tired, exhausted, ready to return to normal (that is, to abandon their holy movement) unconditionally.” Moța decided that only a small, dedicated group ready to sacrifice everything could save the movement, and when hiking together with Codreanu and his girlfriend in September, Moța spoke to them about a plan “to shake the country once again, to wake it up to the danger that threatens it.”⁴ In a letter written from prison at the beginning of 1924, Codreanu admitted that he and his friends had plotted “against this march of

² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 2, f. 16-18.

³ Other people implicated in the plot included Leonida Bandac, Nicolae Dragoș, Aurelian Vernichescu, C. Dănulescu, Traian Breazu, and Ion Zelea Codreanu.

⁴ Ibid., P.013207, vol. 2, f. 178-180, vol. 3, f. 206-207. Interrogations of the others are found in f. 185-199, 218-285; Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 129.



Figure 8: Postcard featuring the Văcăreșteni, 1924.⁵

our people towards death,” and against “an attack on the Romanian soul” by the Jews.⁶ Codreanu and Moța set about recruiting other conspirators, and the plot of the Văcăreșteni was born.

All of the Văcăreșteni had activist pasts. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu had been expelled from the University of Iași two years earlier for numerous acts of vandalism and assault and he was a well-known ultra-nationalist agitator in the city.⁷ In June 1923 he led a gang of youths around Huși, where his family lived, breaking windows, assaulting Jews, and burning a house down.⁸ Ion Moța was a law student in Cluj and the president of the belligerent *Centru Studențesc* “*Petru Maior*” (“Petru Maior” Student Center), which constituted the vanguard of the student movement in Cluj. He was expelled from university just two weeks before being arrested as part

⁵ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 101.

⁶ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Scrisori studențești din închisoare* (Bucharest: Editura Ramida, 1998) 14-15.

⁷ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 14-22, 35-40; Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 90-91.

⁸ “Dezordinele cuziste dela Huși continua,” *Aurora* 3/530 (30 July 1923): 4.

of the Văcărești plot.⁹ Teodosie Popescu was a theology student at Cernăuți, where he had been instrumental in organizing *Fascia Națională Române* (the National Romanian Fascists, FNR) and was president of the Cernăuți Student Center.¹⁰ Corneliu Georgescu (1902-1945) studied pharmacy first at Cluj and then at Iași, taking an active part in the student movement in both cities.¹¹ Ilie Gârneța (1898-1971) studied law at Iași, and was president of *Asociația Studențescă Creștini Iași* (the Christian Students Association of Iași) at the time of his arrest.¹²

The last of the group, Radu Mironovici (1899-1979), studied electrical engineering at the University of Iași, where he quickly became involved in the student movement. His family disagreed with his political involvement and broke off relations with him when he refused to abandon Codreanu.¹³ According to a declaration he made years later, some of Mironovici's closest friends at this time were: Mille Lefter (1902-), a law student who together with Codreanu and Pancu had been one of the ultra-nationalist strike-breakers in Iași during 1920;¹⁴ Constantin Bușilă, an engineering student who led attacks on Jewish villages in Tutova county during July 1924;¹⁵ Candiani, one of the most violent thugs on campus;¹⁶ Constantin Antoneanu, who came from a vehemently ultra-nationalist family and was later arrested in connection with the plot;¹⁷ Nellu Ionescu, a former president of the anti-Semitic Society of Law Students;¹⁸ and C. Ifrim, the president of the Student Circle at Bacău.¹⁹ The ties formed during this period were binding, and

⁹ Neagoe, *Viața universitară clujeană interbelică*, vol. 1, 209-210, 213; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 3, f. 19.

¹⁰ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 36/1923, f. 18-21; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 2.

¹¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 2.

¹² Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 137.

¹³ CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, I.234687, vol. 1, f. 7-9; vol. 3, f. 48.

¹⁴ CNSAS, Fond Lefter Simion, I.259143, vol. 1, f. 222-228.

¹⁵ "Din Bârlad," *Aurora*, 612 (9 July 1924).

¹⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 248-250; AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1125/1926, f. 7.

¹⁷ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 2, f. 319; vol. 3, f. 3.

¹⁸ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 101.

¹⁹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 79/1927, f. 1.

together with the Văcăreșteni, all of these men remained committed followers of Codreanu until his death in 1938. Though Mironovici does not mention them, one might add to this list the three law students Ioan Sava, Iulian Sârbu, and Gheorghe Urziceanu, who were at the forefront of most of the gang violence at the University of Iași in 1923-24; and Constantin Capra, a literature student who organized groups of high school students to carry out anti-Semitic violence in Ilie Gârneața's home town of Darabani.²⁰ Although the plot catapulted the Văcăreșteni into ultra-nationalist celebrity, these young men were part of a larger group of committed students whose individual acts of aggression or leadership spearheaded the movement in Iași.

This trial was the first opportunity that ultra-nationalists had to support the student movement by rallying around a specific cause. Gifts of money, prison visits, or letters of support were well publicized. One letter published in *Cuvântul studentesc* described a gift “sent by the Moți from the Apuseni Mountains. They each scraped together two, three, or five lei out of the corner of a drawer or out of a handkerchief, and they walked the valleys, over the paths that Iancu travelled, to send this money together with their best wishes a long way away, over the mountains to Văcărești, where they had heard that their children were locked up because they wanted to save them from need and injustice, from poverty and malice.”²¹ The Moți were a people group who live in the Apuseni Mountains in Transylvania. They were notoriously poor during the interwar period, but were loved by Romanian ultra-nationalists because of their connection with the uprising led by Avram Iancu (1824-1872) in 1848.²² Some ultra-nationalists – including Corneliu Georgescu's mother – were horrified at the idea of the Văcărești plot, but

²⁰ AN - Fond Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #129, Dosar 1057/1924, f. 4; CNSAS, Fond Gârneața Ilie, I.211932, vol. 2, f. 35-43; Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 535-536.

²¹ “Obolul Moților,” *Cuvântul studentesc*, 2/7 (4 Mar 1924): 2; reprinted in Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 142-143.

²² “Situția disperată a moșilor: Răportul alarmant al Dl. Ion C. Pop adresat primului ministru,” *Calendarul*, 461 (2 Sept 1933): 2; A. Vântu, “Tragedia Moșilor,” *Axa*, 1/14 (15 June 1933); N. Mladin, “Problema motiilor,” *Sfarmă piatră*, 3/73 (22 Apr 1937).

their voices never entered ultra-nationalist publications.²³ In general, the Văcăreșteni reveled in the encouragement they received. Codreanu wrote letters thanking their supporters from prison, which were published in 1925. The list of addressees in the volume reveals what sort of admirers ultra-nationalists valued: students from Piatra-Neamț and Cluj, a child, a high school class, and older men from Vaslui, Codreanu's mother, a major, a captain, two young women, two married women, the Archers from Bucovina, and high school girls from Sibiu. Selecting letters to children and women was clearly intended to convince readers that the Văcăreșteni enjoyed widespread support from the most vulnerable elements of society. This collection of letters reinforced the idea that the Văcăreșteni were fulfilling their duty as young men to defend those who could not defend themselves. The old aristocracy no longer had the power to protect ordinary Romanians, Codreanu wrote, so they were duty-bound to form a new "aristocracy of the sword" and to earn their titles in battle.²⁴ At this time Romanian liberals, conservatives, nationalists, and ultra-nationalists all believed that politics was a man's responsibility and that men should protect and guide women as one would a child.²⁵ Neither women nor children could vote, own property, or represent themselves in court, but this booklet suggested that had they been able to, women would have chosen the Văcăreșteni as their champions.²⁶

Codreanu's letters emphasized the important contribution of children who loved their country and of girls who sewed national flags, but the student movement spoke even more often

²³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 2, f. 331; vol. 3, f. 126; Ion I. Moța, *Axa*, 1/4 (1933): 5. One exception, which criticized student hooliganism ten months before the plot was uncovered, is "Mișcarea studențească și armata neamului românesc," *Apărarea națională*, 1/19 (1 Jan 1923): 22-26.

²⁴ Codreanu, *Scrisori studențești*, 44.

²⁵ Mihaela Miroiu and Maria Bucur (eds.), *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești* (Bucharest: Editura Polirom, 2002) 25-216.

²⁶ Codreanu, *Scrisori studențești*, 52-55. On the legal and social status of women prior to the 1923 constitution, see Alexandru Stourdza, *La femme en Roumanie: Sa condition juridique et sociale dans le passé et le présent* (Paris: V. Giard & E. Brière, 1911). The 1923 constitution granted women some civil rights, but these were of a very limited nature. Maria Bucur, "Between the Mother of the Wounded and the Virgin of Jiu: Romanian Women and the Gender of Heroism during the Great War," *Journal of Women's History*, 12/2 (2000): 32-33.

about the virtue, strength, and courage of young men during these years. One song from May 1923 proclaimed:

Brother students, great apostles	<i>Frați studenți, măreți apostoli</i>
Good and strong Romanians,	<i>Români buni și plini de vlagă,</i>
Today our gentle nation	<i>Mântuire azi așteaptă</i>
Awaits its salvation!	<i>Blânda nație întreagă!</i>
From a danger that threatens it	<i>De un pericol ce-o amenință</i>
With a consuming flood	<i>Cu potopul de perzare,</i>
Of leprous Yids	<i>De a jidovilor lepră</i>
Who spread out ever further	<i>Ce se-ntinde tot mai tare</i>
We are its apostles	<i>Noi suntem ai ei apostoli</i>
Young and spotless,	<i>Tineri și fără de pată,</i>
Our nation calls out together with us	<i>S'o chemăm cu noi alături</i>
To pay the valleys their tribute...	<i>Să dăm văilor răsplată...²⁷</i>

Militant students are referred to here as “brothers” and the nation is described as feminine and gentle because even though women were well represented within the student movement, ultra-nationalist writers typically thought of virtue, strength, and courage as male characteristics, whereas they characterized women as nurturing, caring, pious, and self-sacrificing.²⁸ Female acts of bravery or heroism during the First World War went unnoticed even by non-nationalist Romanians, in part because society expected women to be mothers rather than fighters.²⁹ Youth was as important to ultra-nationalist masculinity as virtue was because, in the words of one

²⁷ S. Șciovan, “Înainte,” *Apărarea națională*, 2/4 (15 May 1923): 21.

²⁸ Maria Bucur, “In Praise of Wellborn Mothers: On the Development of Eugenicist Gender Roles in Interwar Romania,” *East European Politics and Societies*, 9/1 (1995): 129.

²⁹ Bucur, “Between the Mother of the Wounded,” 30-56.

student manifesto, young people “represent the energy of the nation.”³⁰ Ultra-nationalist ideologues emphasized that only the new generation could make a new future because it could lead Romania in a new direction.³¹

In the ultra-nationalist imagination, the importance of the Văcăreșteni lay not only in the fact that physically and mentally they epitomized Romanian masculinity, but that this perfection was threatened. If they rotted in prison then the Jewish bankers and judaized politicians who apparently controlled the country would have destroyed the very best of Romania’s present and future. The Christian resonances of innocent men dying for others were not lost on contemporaries. *Cuvântul studentesc* spoke of the Văcăreșteni as a “sacrificial group” who had decided to lay down their lives to defend Romania from the Jews.³² A newspaper of the Archers pushed the metaphor even further: “The students were determined to die to give us life. And they gave us, without dying, proof that Christ is with us.”³³

The ultra-nationalist press threw its full support behind the arrested students. Fr. Moța’s newspaper *Libertatea* received poems that children had written in support of the students.³⁴ FRN newspapers praised the students for their acts of heroism.³⁵ *Apărarea națională*, the official periodical of *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC) ridiculed the idea that such a plot even existed, and claimed that the liberal press had exaggerated the threat that six young men posed to the state.³⁶ *Naționalistul* asserted that the students were

³⁰ “Tinerime universitară română,” *Apărarea națională*, 1/1 (1 Apr 1922): 20.

³¹ Benone Negrețu, “Tineretul LANC,” *Apărarea națională*, 6/17 (22 Apr 1928): 1; Codreanu, *Scrisori studentesti*, 37.

³² “Pedepsirea trădătorului Vernichescu,” *Cuvântul studentesc*, 2/11 (29 Mar 1924): 1.

³³ “Jertfă pentru jertfă,” *Arcașul*, 1/1 (14 Apr 1924): 6.

³⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 68.

³⁵ Alexandru Uimara, “Complotul,” *Fascismul*, 1/10 (22 Oct 1923): 1; Th. Voinea, “Atentatul,” *Fascismul*, 1/10 (22 Oct 1923): 1-2.

³⁶ “Un complot monstru,” *Apărarea națională*, 2/14 (15 Oct 1923): 18.

being unfairly imprisoned and were persecuted because of their patriotism.³⁷ *Frăția creștină* spoke of how the Văcăreșteni had saved “the honor of a great and holy struggle.”³⁸ The student newspaper *Cuvântul studențesc* published thank you messages to people who supported the Văcăreșteni by donating money, food, and clothing during their time in prison.³⁹ It reasoned that because the Prime Minister was not on the list of victims, the alleged plot was obviously a warning, not an attempt at revolution. The newspaper portrayed the trial as a test of whether the justice system was “unbiased” enough to identify the true traitors. “For over a year,” the anonymous journalist wrote, “20,000 young people have been raising the alarm about an enormous plot that two million murderous Yids have launched against our country.”⁴⁰ As the day of the trial approached, *Cuvântul studențesc* emphasized that “to fight to ensure that the Romanian people have an ethnically Romanian ruling class by excluding the Yids is not an attack on the Romanian state! ... Nor is defending a people threatened with destruction a crime punishable by law.”⁴¹ On the contrary,

It will not be the students who will be judged, but current and past governments, all of whom have collaborated with the Yids who are ruling Romanian lands today. ... The judiciary will determine if the Yids are the mortal enemies of our people, if a Yid problem exists, and if its immediate solution is a problem of life and death for us. Through the verdict which it gives, the judiciary will decide if it is with us or with them: if it recognizes truth and reality, or negates them.⁴²

³⁷ “Protest,” *Naționalistul*, 10/4 (4 Nov 1923): 3; Tăzlăuanu Huși, “Dl. Ion Zelea Codreanu în lanțuri!...” *Naționalistul*, 10/4 (4 Nov 1923): 3.

³⁸ “O aniversare,” *Frăția creștină*, 2/4 (12 Oct 1924): 1.

³⁹ “Mulțumiri,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 2/11 (1 Apr 1924): 2.

⁴⁰ “Complotul,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 1/38 (30 Oct 1923): 1. Romania had only 748,115 Jews according to the 1930 census, and as I suggested above (p. 128), the estimate that there were 20,000 people involved in the anti-Semitic student movement is also inaccurate.

⁴¹ “Procesul studenților arestați la Văcărești,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 2/10 (25 Mar 1924): 1.

⁴² “La 29 martie,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 2/10 (25 Mar 1924): 1.

On the day of the trial students in Cernăuți staged a demonstration supporting the Văcăreșteni, while others travelled to Bucharest, where thousands filled the streets around the courthouse dressed in national costumes.⁴³ A newspaper of the Archers described how on 29 March 1924 the accused entered the courtroom wearing national folk costumes that one would usually wear for a festival, and commented that “both in the courtroom and on the streets, amongst numerous military cordons, [there were] crowds of male and female students and other Romanians dressed in traditional holiday garments (*haine de sărbătoare românești*).” These crowds joined together with “mothers, sisters, brothers, and parents” all over the country who were awaiting the verdict with baited breath. “This is what Romanians are like,” the article concluded, “their spirits are so great that they wear holiday garments both for life and for death.”⁴⁴ The trial ended up involving both life and death, because in the middle of the proceedings Ion Moța pulled out a gun and shot a student named Aurelian Vernishevski, who had originally been part of the plot but then betrayed them to the authorities. Despite having confessed planning murder, the jury found the students innocent of attempting to cause a revolution and released them to a cheering crowd.⁴⁵

After the trial the Văcăreșteni returned home as heroes. When Ilie Gârneața arrived in Darabani, where his family lived, he was welcomed by a crowd of 100-150 high school students organized by Constantin Capra, who followed him down the street shouting “Long live the Romanian students!” and “Romanian youth!”⁴⁶ Corneliu Georgescu and Teodosie Popescu returned to leading roles in the ultra-nationalist movement in Cluj and Cernăuți respectively.⁴⁷

⁴³ Scurtu et al. ed., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 410-413.

⁴⁴ “Jertfă pentru jertfă,” *Arcașul*, 1/1 (14 Apr 1924): 6.

⁴⁵ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 148. The defense lawyers argued that the plot could not have been treasonous or revolutionary because none of the intended victims were heads of state. CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 2, f. 140, 143-148, 151-155.

⁴⁶ CNSAS, Fond Gârneața Ilie, I.211932, vol. 2, f. 36.

⁴⁷ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 62-63, 153.

Codreanu was greeted warmly by the students in Iași but angry policemen attacked him when they saw him back on the streets of their city.⁴⁸ Ion Moța remained in prison awaiting trial for Vernichescu's murder until October 1924, as did Vlad Leonida, who was charged with smuggling Moța's gun into the prison. Both received enthusiastic support from students and ultra-nationalists in Cluj, where they had been students. Their supporters here distributed numerous flyers and wrote to the judge and jury members defending their innocence and condemning Vernichescu for not even having the courage to hang himself, as Judas had after betraying Jesus.⁴⁹ In Orăștie, Moța's father received letters and money from Romania and the United States, expressing solidarity with Vernichescu's murder and telling him how proud he must be to have such a son.⁵⁰ *Acțiunea românească* reported that when Moța was acquitted, "in every place he passed through he was received with triumph as an apostle of a holy cause. In his birthplace, Orăștie, they called local peasants out from their modest villages to see his homespun ancestral costume, to feel his Romanian soul, and to understand from him that there are still some who put the needs of the people above their own."⁵¹ Such displays served to unite the most radical and mobile elements of the student movement with sedentary ultra-nationalists scattered throughout the country.

5.2 ULTRA-NATIONALIST JUSTICE

Codreanu made use of his new celebrity to begin collecting money for a *Cămin Cultural Creștin* (Christian Cultural Hearth) that he had decided to build in Iași.⁵² He gathered university and high school students together in a garden that a noblewoman named Constanța Ghica made available

⁴⁸ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 149.

⁴⁹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 101-106.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 68-73, 107.

⁵¹ "Un simbol: Ioan Moța," *Acțiunea Românească*, 1/1 (1 Nov 1924): 4.

⁵² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 162.

to them specifically for this purpose. Here he spoke to them about the need for a place where students could meet together without being under the authority of the university.⁵³ Ultra-nationalist students had tried organizing within the dormitories and bullied outsiders who tried to enter, but the chancellor dismissed students leaders who used their authority to promote political groups within subsidized student accommodation.⁵⁴ Students had been protesting since 1922 against the overcrowded and under-resourced conditions in the *cămine* (dormitories), but it was an uneven battle because the university authorities could revoke scholarships and deny students the right to live in the dormitories, measures that they regularly used to limit student activism.⁵⁵ One of Codreanu's goals was that the students build their own *cămin*, which they could not be thrown out of and that the university had no right to interfere in. More precisely, this was a *Cămin Cultural* (Cultural Hearth), meant to resemble the Cultural Hearths being built in villages across the country by the Prince Carol Cultural Foundation.⁵⁶ The Royal Foundation intended its Cultural Hearths to promote literate and "modern" Romanian culture within villages. Each Cultural Hearth was to house a ballroom, a library, an office, a medical dispensary, and a bathroom, as well as being surrounded by a garden full of fruit trees. It was to be raised through donations from the villagers, but financial support was also available from the Foundation. The vision was that "a Cultural Hearth is every villager's second home. When it is ready, it should be the pride of the village, its ornament, a nest, a house of books."⁵⁷ Codreanu named his building a *Cămin Cultural*, but this was a "second home" for the ultra-nationalist students, not a means for the Royal Foundation to spread its version of national culture. By emphasizing that this was a

⁵³ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 155.

⁵⁴ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 175-176; AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Dosar 1021/1922, f. 263-264.

⁵⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #121, Dosar 1025/1923, f. 2-3, Dosar 1051/1924-1925, f 68-71.

⁵⁶ ANIC, Fond Fundațiile Culturale Regale Centrală, Dosar 13/1924, f. 1-6.

⁵⁷ Gh. D. Măgur, *Căminul cultural: îndreptar pentru conducătorii culturii la sate* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală "Principele Carol", 1922) 18.

“Christian” *Cămin*, he identified it with the Anti-Semitic student movement, which used the epithet “Christian” to contrast itself with Jewish and “judaized” Romanian culture.

This was not the first ultra-nationalist building project in Iași. Several leading LANC members, including A. C. Cuza and the wealthy engineer Grigore Bejan, had already built a cultural centre in 1919. Bejan later wrote that “I, Ifrim, Cuza, and Father Mihăilescu, thought that it would be good to erect a *cămin cultural* in a part of the town where there are not so many Jews.”⁵⁸ Together with other leading anti-Semites in Iași they established the Popular Athenaeum in the suburb of Tătărași. In 1924, Grigore Bejan donated some land on Elizabeth Boulevard at Râpa Galbena for Codreanu and his colleagues to build on, and the students approached businesses asking them to provide the construction materials free of charge. Some responded positively. The Moruzzi family from Dorohoi gave 100,000 lei, General Cantacuzino provided three wagons of cement, and Romanians living in the United States sent 400,000 lei, not to mention smaller donations from peasants scattered throughout the country.⁵⁹ Codreanu led roughly twenty six students to a property in the village of Ungheni that had been offered to them by the businessman Olimpiu Lascăr, where they began making bricks.⁶⁰ They borrowed tools from the locals, and the village priest blessed the opening of the brickworks. Locals soon began to mix with the Codreanu and his followers, and students, graduates, tradesmen, workers, and peasants all worked side by side. A convivial atmosphere developed and Codreanu writes that the volunteers ended each day in the tavern “singing happy songs.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Gabriel Asandului, *A. C. Cuza: politică și cultură* (Iași: Fides, 2007) 85.

⁵⁹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 200.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 156. Other sources record that the land was provided by Zemstva Bălți. CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 52.

⁶¹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 157; Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 3.

By 1924 the ultra-nationalist community in Iași was well connected with the student movement. At the Ungheni brickworks that August, Codreanu became engaged to Elena Ilinoiu (1902-1994), the daughter of a railway controller from Iași who ardently supported the movement. He immediately moved into his future father-in-law's house and began holding planning meetings there.⁶² Once he was acquitted, Ion Moța also moved to Iași and became engaged to Codreanu's sister Iridenta. Together with Elena and Iredenta, a female medical student named Elvirea Ionescu was also extremely active in the student movement. She was dating Ilie Gârneața, and police reports say that these three men never did anything without first consulting their girlfriends.⁶³ Such relationships are significant because they show how ultra-nationalist leaders created family ties amongst themselves, making activists' political affiliations into lifelong alliances that were difficult to break. Unsubstantiated rumors from the 1960s say that A. C. Cuza's son Gheorghe impregnated another of Codreanu's sisters, Silvia, at this time, which could explain why the relationships between Cuza and the Codreanu family soured suddenly and why Cuza arranged for Codreanu and Moța to leave the country for France in 1925.⁶⁴ Apart from Codreanu's gatherings in Constantin Ilinoiu's house, ultra-nationalists also regularly met at the Hotel Bejan, which was owned by the same LANC member who had donated land for the students' Cultural Hearth. The hotel served as a de facto LANC headquarters in Iași. Members met here to relax together and students gathered on the veranda before moving off to commit acts of vandalism or assault.⁶⁵

⁶² Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 165; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 013207, vol. 1, f. 5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 162-165.

⁶⁴ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.10160, vol. 1, f. 78-79. The same source, written by a group of legionaries during "reeducation" in Aiud Prison in 1964, says that Constanța Ghica provided land for the students because she was having an affair with Ion Zelea Codreanu. *Ibid.*, f. 84.

⁶⁵ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 244-246, vol. 2, f. 269-271, vol. 3, f. 206-207; USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 1151, f. 4323, 4514.

Most of the student leaders in Iași were also LANC members, and A. C. Cuza continued to be deeply implicated in the student movement, as he had been from the beginning. Cuza was the Dean of the Faculty of Law when Codreanu was expelled from university in 1921, and he refused to recognize Codreanu's expulsion on the grounds that only the Dean has the right to expel a student – not the chancellor or the University Senate. A number of the professors supported him, some like Corneliu Șumuleanu and Ion Găvănescu out of ultra-nationalist convictions, and others, such as Ion Coroi and G. Tabacovici, because Cuza's relaxed leadership allowed them to live in Bucharest and to travel to Iași for classes when it suited them.⁶⁶ Cuza continued allowing Codreanu to attend classes and issued him a certificate when he graduated, but his diploma remained unsigned by the chancellor.⁶⁷ Cuza's intransigence over Codreanu's expulsion was part of a larger conflict between Cuza and the Senate over the power of the Dean and against the left-wing tendencies of the Senate, which continued for several years. Cuza consistently refused to turn up to meetings and when he did, he dominated the proceedings, opposing disciplinary measures and defending any and every action of the students on the grounds that "a national problem of this importance cannot be resolved through simple correctional measures, which themselves become odious alongside the great purpose with which the students have imbued these events."⁶⁸ The students themselves sought out Cuza's patronage, and they delegated him to represent them before the Minister of Education, who was tolerant of Cuza's violent tactics because it gave him extra leverage with the Senate.⁶⁹

Student violence did not abate in the universities, and conflict soon developed between the ultra-nationalist community and the police prefect in Iași, Constantin Manciu. Prefects were

⁶⁶ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 137-138, 245.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 101-103, 115-119.

⁶⁸ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #121, Dosar 1024/1923, f. 52-58; Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 193-204.

⁶⁹ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 219; Botoșineanu, Cătălin, "Politica din spatele," 54-78.

political appointments, and Manciu had been chosen specifically in order to suppress the student movement. When he was appointed in September 1923, Manciu immediately set about removing corrupt policemen, arresting students, and directing the military occupation of the campus. From then on, policemen in Iași began receiving regular death threats in the mail, and a police sergeant was beaten when he tried to prevent four students from breaking into Manciu's house in November 1923.⁷⁰ Manciu reported that from this time ultra-nationalists in Iași identified him as their worst enemy, and "failed politicians" such as Constantin Pancu, Ioan Butnaru, and Ioana Voicu, and "elements forced to resign from the army," including Major Ambrozie and Major I. Dumitriu launched a campaign against him.⁷¹

At 4am in to the morning on 31 May 1924, Manciu led a group of policemen to Constanța Ghica's garden, where they found Codreanu speaking to a group of roughly sixty young people, holding a floor plan of Manciu's house in his hand. The police arrested a number of those in attendance. They interrogated them at the police station and then released them the following day.⁷² In less than twenty-four hours the students collected sixty signatures asserting that the arrests were illegal and demanding that Manciu be punished.⁷³ Some of the arrested individuals were high school students, and Manciu claimed that those whose parents were not ultra-nationalists were grateful for his intervention. Others, led by Major Amrozie, Major Dimitriu, Elena Hănescu, Gheorghe Vasiliu, and Ioan Butnaru accused him of abusing their children and laid formal charges against him complete with medical examinations taken immediately after the children were released. Codreanu later claimed that they had been beaten

⁷⁰ "Complotul studentesc," *Cuvântul*, 1/4 (9 Nov 1924): 4; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 2, 244-246; AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #121, Dosar 1022/1923, f. 518-523, Dosar 1025/1923, f. 28-39.

⁷¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 244.

⁷² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 3, f. 383-384.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, P.013207, vol. 4, f. 4.

with canes and riding crops for hours on end.⁷⁴ On the first day of Manciu's trial for abuse, Codreanu followed Manciu out of the courtroom following an argument with the prosecuting attorney and shot him repeatedly on the steps of the courthouse, killing Manciu and wounding two of his companions in the process.⁷⁵

Codreanu was immediately arrested, as were the other Văcăreșteni, and rumors circulated that the Liberal Club in Iași had sworn to kill him before he stood trial.⁷⁶ As it had a year earlier, the ultra-nationalist community rose in his defense, sending money, writing petitions, and filling its newspapers with supportive articles.⁷⁷ Thousands of people sent forms to the president of the jury requesting that their names be recorded as Codreanu's defenders.⁷⁸ Students protested first in Iași and then in Bucharest, where they distributed pamphlets defending Codreanu and staged demonstrations in his support.⁷⁹ The ASC in Iași claimed responsibility for the assassination, but few people took much notice of them.⁸⁰ Some students faced legal charges for trying to justify the crime, but were acquitted on the grounds that they had done so for patriotic motives.⁸¹ Together with numerous other pamphlets and posters, the LANC published a collection of twenty five songs honouring Codreanu and promising to support him at his upcoming trial in Turnu-Severin. Many were hymns and anthems written by university students, while others reflected more popular, folkloric song forms. These used simple rhyming schemes and botanical references common in peasant music at the time:

⁷⁴ "A început judecarea procesului Corneliu Z. Codreanu," *Universul*, 43/115 (22 May 1925): 4; "Sălbăteciile fostului prefect de poliție din Iași C. Manciu," *Ogorul nostru*, 3/34 (11 May 1925): 2.

⁷⁵ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 4-8, 244-246; Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 166-183.

⁷⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 367.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, P.013207, vol. 1, f. 264-265, 293, 449-451, vol. 4, f. 179-181; Scurtu et al., eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 473-477, 479-484, 488-492.

⁷⁸ Examples are collected in *ibid.*, P.013207, vol. 4, f. 167-171, 175-178, 182-297, 302-321, vol. 5, f. 1-145, 200-220. Codreanu writes that 19,300 petitions of this nature were submitted. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 191.

⁷⁹ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 275; "Descoperirea organizației teroriste din Capitala," *Cuvântul*, 1/1 (6 Nov 1924): 3; Scurtu et al., eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 514.

⁸⁰ Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 291.

⁸¹ "Achitarea studentului Răpeanu," *Curentul studentesc*, 1/5 (13 Apr 1925): 3.

Green bay leaves	<i>Foaie verde de dafin,</i>
Let's go brother to Severin,	<i>Hai, frate la Severin,</i>
To stand in defence of Cornel,	<i>Să stăm straje lui Cornel,</i>
When he's judged by Mârzel!	<i>Când l'o judeca Mârzel!</i> ⁸²

A testimony to the effectiveness of ultra-nationalist propaganda is that two previously neutral cities were overtaken by anti-Semitic sentiment in the wake of concerted campaigns by students and other Codreanu supporters. The trial was originally scheduled to be held in Focșani, which Codreanu considered to be “the strongest Liberal citadel in the country.” Focșani was a minor regional center, with only 30,000 inhabitants. Its nine factories employed Romania’s fast-growing industrial working class, and the town was useful to its hinterland as a center for wine distribution.⁸³ The students from Iași, Codreanu writes, were “very worried” when they heard that the trial had been moved here, and hundreds of students flooded the town carrying anti-Semitic literature.⁸⁴ Despite its reputation as a “Liberal citadel,” Focșani also had a strong nationalist heritage. The Cultural League had a very active presence in the city, and a number of national commemorations were held there in the early 1920s because Focșani and its surrounding villages were the site of some of the hardest fighting of the First World War. The LANC had been active in the city since 1924. It was lead by a relative of Constanța Ghica, and already had three anti-Semitic newspapers that appeared sporadically.⁸⁵ By the time the trial was scheduled to start, support for Codreanu was so strong that riots broke out when it was suspended on the first day. He was quickly transported to Turnu-Severin on the other side of the country. The

⁸² E. L. *Cântecelul lui Corneliu Zelea Codreanu* (Turnu-Severin: Editura Ziarului Ogorul Nostru, 1925) 20.

⁸³ Dumitru Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia româna*, vol. 2, Bucharest: Asociațiunea Științifică pentru Enciclopedia României, 1939, 623-624.

⁸⁴ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 188.

⁸⁵ Cezar Cherciu, *Focșanii: o istorie în date și mărturii (sec XVI-1950)* (Focșani: Editura Andrew, 2010) 318-352, 360, 368-374, 381-382.

rioters were only an estimated 100 students and 200-300 hooligans, but the lack of police control meant that they were able to inflict considerable damage.⁸⁶ Even if many of the rioters were outsiders, it is notable that for a few days at least, the voices of 300-400 ultra-nationalists were more prominent than those of the 4,240 local Jews who had lived in Focșani all their lives and were active participants in the city's civic life.⁸⁷

Whereas it is difficult to know what most of Focșani's population thought about the rioters devastating their town, in Turnu-Severin many locals clearly came out in support of Codreanu. Turnu-Severin was not an anti-Semitic stronghold any more than Focșani had been, but hundreds, and eventually thousands, of students descended on the city, as did two battalions of gendarmes and one battalion of soldiers.⁸⁸ This time the students did not riot, and when some tried to destroy Jewish shops they were stopped by the soldiers.⁸⁹ Drawing on eyewitness testimonies, Irina Livezeanu writes that,

Local anti-Semitic merchants put Codreanu's portrait in their windows. Daily meetings, involving ever larger groups of the local population, were organized by Codreanu supporters under different pretexts. ... On the eve of the trial, the whole town was wearing national colors, people sported swastikas, and walls were covered with incendiary manifestoes. Postcards with Codreanu in national folk costume had been sent by the thousands to the provinces, and the route he was supposed to travel to the courtroom was covered with flowers.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Dinu Dumbrava, *Fără ură! Pregătirea și desfășurarea evenimentelor din Focșani în zilele de 17 și 18 martie 1925*; Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 283.

⁸⁷ Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, 350; Cherciu, *Focșanii*, 361, 381, 386.

⁸⁸ "Procesul Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," *Cuvântul*, 2/161 (23 May 1925): 2.

⁸⁹ C. "Procesul Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," *Adevărul*, 38/12713 (24 May 1925): 7.

⁹⁰ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 284-285.

In contrast to the groundswell of ultra-nationalist support, communists who were planning a protest rally against Codreanu were arrested before they even finished their preparations.⁹¹

As it had during the trial of the Văcăreșteni, the ultra-nationalist community framed Codreanu's trial as a problem of "justice." Ultra-nationalists were quick to distinguish between justice as a fair recompense for moral actions, and justice as a product of the legal system. The "supreme law" was not a written code, but "common sense and human logic."⁹² They condemned judges as corrupt, and did not think that true justice could be secured through legal means in a Romania controlled by Jews and Masons. *Ogorul nostru* (*Our Field*, 1923-1926), an ultra-nationalist newspaper from Turnu-Severin, argued: "The justice system is profaned in an odious manner by those who by interfering and applying pressure from above influence judges to change their beliefs and to alter justice for political and personal motives."⁹³ Nellu Ionescu, a former president of the Law Students Society in Iași, wrote in an ultra-nationalist student newspaper that the students had tried bringing Manciu to court for abusing students twice before but without success.⁹⁴ A. C. Cuza complained during the trial that "the Romanian legal system has to be badgered repeatedly before it will act, and justice can only be achieved by forcing the issue."⁹⁵ Codreanu had done just that by murdering Manciu. Rather than judging Codreanu, ultra-nationalists asserted that the purpose of the trial was to bring the justice system into line with the moral values of Romanian ultra-nationalism. Once again, it was the state that was on trial, not Codreanu. Valeriu Roman, one of Codreanu's lawyers, argued that "if the members of

⁹¹ Cuțana, "În jurul procesului Codreanu," *Adevărul*, 38/12709 (20 May 1925): 6.

⁹² Paul Iliescu, "Asasinatul dela Iași," *Ogorul nostru*, 3/31 (19 Mar 1925): 2.

⁹³ "Apelul națiunii," *Ogorul nostru*, 3/31 (19 Mar 1925): 1.

⁹⁴ Nellu Ionescu, "În jurul morții lui Manciu," *Cuvântul Iașului*, 2/Ediție specială (27 Oct 1924): 1.

⁹⁵ "Procesul lui Corneliu Codreanu," *Adevărul*, 38/12710 (21 May 1925): 6.

the jury believe that the time has come to correctly apply the law in the Romanian lands, then they have the duty to acquit Codreanu.”⁹⁶

The message of Codreanu’s trial was conveyed as much through its theatricality as through the arguments and newspaper commentaries that accompanied it. The trial was held in the ballroom of the city’s largest theater so as to accommodate the largest possible audience, but spectators still lined up an hour and a half early to get a seat.⁹⁷ Codreanu and the other defendants were dressed in folk costume – as were the multitudes who filled the streets – and this time one jury member also wore a folk costume while the others wore swastikas on their jackets.⁹⁸ The jury’s choice of lapel pins suggests that the ending of the trial was decided before it had begun.⁹⁹ The selection of defense lawyers reinforced the trial’s message that the whole country supported Manciu’s killer. Codreanu’s lawyers included such senior LANC figures as A. C. Cuza, Corneliu Șumuleanu, Ion Găvănescu, Paul Iliescu, Alexandru Bacaloglu, and Nellu Ionescu, as well as representatives from the bar associations of thirteen different cities. Valer Pop spoke on behalf of *Acțiunea românească* (Romanian Action), Ioan Sava on behalf of the students from Iași, and each of the other student centers also sent a representative. One of the jurors who would have tried Codreanu in Focșani signed on as a lawyer for the defense, and not to be outdone, the mayor of Turnu-Severin enrolled himself as another of Codreanu’s lawyers.¹⁰⁰

Rather than discussing Codreanu’s deed, the testimonies for the defense focused on Manciu’s

⁹⁶ N. Clocârdia and Leontin Iliescu, “Procesul Corneliu Z. Codreanu: ziua IV-a,” *Universul*, 43/119 (27 May 1925): 6.

⁹⁷ Leontin Iliescu, “Procesul Corneliu Z. Codreanu: ziua II-a,” *Universul*, 43/117 (24 May 1925): 3; Cuțana, “În jurul procesului Codreanu,” *Adevărul*, 38/12709 (20 May 1925): 6.

⁹⁸ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 285; N. Clocârdia and Leontin Iliescu, “Procesul Corneliu Z. Codreanu: ziua IV-a,” *Universul*, 43/119 (27 May 1925): 4.

⁹⁹ Newspapers hostile to Codreanu also recognized that the verdict was predetermined. N. D. Cocea, “Achitarea Corneliu Codreanu,” *Facla*, 7/27 (29 May 1925): 1; Ad. “Achitarea lui Codreanu,” *Adevărul*, 38/12716 (28 May 1925): 1.

¹⁰⁰ Leontin Iliescu, “A început judecarea procesului Corneliu Z. Codreanu,” *Universul*, 43/115 (22 May 1925): 4; N. Clocârdia and Leontin Iliescu, “Procesul Corneliu Z. Codreanu: ziua IV-a,” *Universul*, 43/119 (27 May 1925): 6.

persecution of the students, his violent character, the “noble” goals of the student movement, and Codreanu’s allegedly distinguished record in high school. The prosecution witnesses, on the other hand, focused entirely on reconstructing the moment of the assassination, rarely even alluding to Codreanu’s own extremely violent past.¹⁰¹

The trial resembled a LANC rally more than an investigation into whether Codreanu was a murderer. Manciu’s widow withdrew from the trial after the second day and left town in disgust, together with one of the wounded policemen. The prosecutor general, C. G. Costa-Foru, later wrote that both in town and in the courtroom Adelina Manciu was the object of “hostile glares, offensive remarks and threatening gestures.”¹⁰² When Costa-Foru began to speak on the third day, the proceedings took on elements of melodrama. Costa-Foru argued that, “we should not spread the idea that assassination leads to glory and apotheosis. That would be dangerous for the country.” He then asked rhetorically, “Who amongst the parents in this room would like to see their son in the defendants’ box?” The room immediately filled with cheers of “All of us! All of us!” The president of the jury then continually interrupted him when he began to speak about anti-Semitism, telling Costa-Foru that no pogroms had ever taken place in Romania and that introducing the question of minorities into the discussion was irrelevant. When he mentioned that he had a Jewish son-in-law, Costa-Foru was heckled so badly by the crowd that A. C. Cuza had to intervene to quiet the audience.¹⁰³ Codreanu was acquitted on the fifth day to the sound of thunderous applause.¹⁰⁴ Students in Bucharest celebrated the acquittal with singing, shouting,

¹⁰¹ Leontin Iliescu, “A început judecarea procesului Corneliu Z. Codreanu,” *Universul*, 43/115 (22 May 1925): 4; Leontin Iliescu, “Procesul Corneliu Z. Codreanu: ziua II-a,” *Universul*, 43/117 (24 May 1925): 3.

¹⁰² C. G. Costaforu, “Impresii dela procesul Codreanu,” *Adevărul*, 38/12715 (26 May 1925): 1.

¹⁰³ Leontin Iliescu, “Procesul Corneliu Z. Codreanu: ziua III-a,” *Universul*, 43/118 (25 May 1925): 3.

¹⁰⁴ N. Clocârdia and Leontin Iliescu, “Procesul Corneliu Z. Codreanu: ziua IV-a,” *Universul*, 43/120 (28 May 1925): 2.

and demonstrations, while those in Iași held a banquet.¹⁰⁵ As had the trial of the Văcăreșteni in 1923, Codreanu's trial polarized the country between those who agreed with Manciu's murder and those who did not. Among those who disapproved of Codreanu's action, N. D. Cocea (1880-1949), a socialist activist and prolific journalist, blamed the government for Manciu's murder, because their excessive use of force gave the students the moral high ground.¹⁰⁶ The editorial staff at the center-left newspaper *Adevărul* (*The Truth*, 1888-1913, 1924-1938) suggested that perhaps the jury acquitted Codreanu because they did not want him to suffer when it was really A. C. Cuza who was responsible for most of the ultra-nationalist violence.

It did not take long before the whole episode was dramatized as a four-act play. That year another of the Văcăreșteni, Corneliu Georgescu, led a team of students from town to town performing a play he had written called *Vremuri de restriște* (*Hard Times*).¹⁰⁷ The first act presents Herșcu, a treacherous Jew, selling information to the Germans during the First World War and then accusing a Romanian publican from his village of espionage in order to steal his wealth. In the second act, set several years after the war has ended, Herșcu is now a multi-millionaire and controls the entire region, including the police prefect. When the prefect beats peasants and steals their vineyards, the student Ileana explains to her father who has just lost his land that "Justice is decided by money these days Father, and we have no money to buy some." When Ileana protests to the prefect, he tries to rape her. She is saved just in time by the student Ștefan Dascălul, the son of the publican who was ruined by Herșcu during the war. The third act opens with Dascălul chained up in a dungeon, where the prefect tries to bribe him to join their side. Dascălul resists and is saved by five students singing "*Imnul studentesc*" (the "Student

¹⁰⁵ "Manifestația studenților din capitală," *Universul*, 43/120 (28 May 1925): 3; "După achitarea lui Corneliu Codreanu," *Cuvântul*, 2/166 (29 May 1925): 1.

¹⁰⁶ N. D. Cocea, "Achitarea lui Corneliu Codreanu," *Facla*, 7/27 (29 May 1925): 1.

¹⁰⁷ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #132, Dosar 1/1922, f. 141.

Hymn”). Justice comes in the fourth act, when the prefect poisons himself and Herșcu is sent to Palestine.¹⁰⁸ The references to Codreanu’s murder of Manciu are all too obvious. We do not know how local audiences reacted to the play, but ultra-nationalist students certainly appreciated it. Iustin Ilieșiu (1900-1976), one of the movement’s leading poets and songwriters, described the play as “very necessary food for the soul” because of Georgescu’s “Romanian sentiment that throbs with power from the beginning to the end.”¹⁰⁹

After his acquittal in Turnu-Severin on 26 May 1925, Codreanu returned to Iași. He had been in prison for twelve out of the twenty months since he first achieved national prominence in October 1923. Crowds met him at every station, and Codreanu estimated the gathering at Bucharest to contain over 50,000 people.¹¹⁰ A police report from Buzău stated that when Codreanu passed through “he got out off the train, and was lifted up and carried on the arms of university and high school students from that town, making a grandiose parade and shouting ‘Down with the Yids!’ Codreanu shouted together with them, as did his fiancé, who remained in the train.” Jews who were found on or near the train were beaten by the students.¹¹¹

5.3 WEDDINGS AND BAPTISMS

Codreanu and his fiancé Elena travelled through the country in this manner and when they arrived in Focșani, he says, they were met by a delegation who told him, “if we were not given the pleasure of having the trial in our town, you have to have your wedding here. Come to

¹⁰⁸ This summary is based on Iustin Ilieșiu, “Cuvinte în jurul unei cărți,” *Înfrățirea românească*, 4/2 (15 Nov 1927): 6-7. The second act was changed when the third (extant) edition was published in 1940. Ileana’s conversation with her father was edited out, as was the prefect’s attempt to rape her. Corneliu Georgescu, *Vremuri de restriște* (Bucharest: Muntenia, 1940).

¹⁰⁹ Ilieșiu, “Cuvinte în jurul unei cărți,” 6-7.

¹¹⁰ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 195.

¹¹¹ Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 519-523.

Focșani on 14 June, and you will find everything arranged.”¹¹² As they had promised, the ultra-nationalists in Focșani hosted and organized the wedding, actively participating in a spectacle that presented ultra-nationalists as a warm, sharing, and hospitable community celebrating together as a family. Codreanu’s wedding appears to have been an important event for young sympathizers. In his memoirs the Legionary Mircea Dumitriu mentions attending the wedding as a 12 year old child as a formative moment in his life.¹¹³ One high school girl committed suicide when her parents told her that she was not allowed to attend the wedding, and after the ceremony the wedding guests collected money to help pay for her funeral.¹¹⁴

In many parts of rural Romania at the end of the nineteenth century, a couple would send selected young people (*vorniceii*) throughout the village who called all of the local inhabitants to come to the wedding. This practice was less common in Moldova, where it was usual to invite only those on a predetermined list.¹¹⁵ Taking the role of *vorniceii*, students distributed invitations to Corneliu and Elena’s wedding in public places and posted them on trains, inviting strangers as well as friends to participate, and treating the nation as one big village.¹¹⁶ Making use of more modern methods of communication, LANC members also circulated post cards featuring the bride and groom, just as they had for Codreanu’s trials.

The wedding costs were covered by a landowner named Hristache Solomon, who was an active member of the LANC in Focșani and a grape farmer experiencing what was to be the last

¹¹² Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 196.

¹¹³ Mircea Dumitriu, “Istorie comentată a mișcării legionare, 1927-1999,” in Gabriel Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa* (Norcross GA: Criterion, 2001) 62-82.

¹¹⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 14, f. 134.

¹¹⁵ Simeon Florea Marian, *Nunta la români: studiu istorio-comparativ etnografic*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Saeculum, 2008) 191-193.

¹¹⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 51/1925, f. 1-2; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 2, f. 15-16.



Figure 9: Postcard of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Elena Ilinoiu.¹¹⁷

prosperous year for the region's wine industry for some time.¹¹⁸ Codreanu described him as “not very rich, but a man with great moral authority.”¹¹⁹ Tens of thousands of people travelled to Focșani for the wedding and they were housed by locals for the duration of the event. Hospitality is often celebrated by Romanian nationalists as a national virtue, and in welcoming so many travelers into their town, the Focșaneni become Romanians par excellence. It is unclear what percentage of the city's population was involved in the celebrations, but it must have been a major event for the local community. Romanian weddings usually involve the union of two families, and are organized by the community in which the couple grew up, in this case, Iași or Huși.¹²⁰ The choice of Focșani meant that this wedding was primarily about the ultra-nationalist

¹¹⁷ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 51/1925, f. 4.

¹¹⁸ Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 289; Cherciu, *Focșanii*, 388; Cezar Cherciu, *Jariștea, vatră de istorie și podgorie românească* (Focșani: Editura Andrew, 2007) 179-181.

¹¹⁹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 187.

¹²⁰ Gail Kligman, *The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 81.

movement and less about the families of the bride and groom. It symbolized the victory of Codreanu and the LANC over the government and the strong Jewish community in Focșani.¹²¹

Little research has been done on processional spectacles in early twentieth century Eastern Europe, but studies on processions elsewhere suggest that the arrangement and order of participants is highly significant.¹²² Codreanu certainly thought so. His account recorded the names of prominent ultra-nationalist men in the procession, while forgetting to even mention the name of his bride.

On the morning of the second day, they brought me a horse – that was the program – and after I rode past the bride’s house, I left town at the head of a column [of people], to Crâng. People lined both sides of the road, children perched in the trees, and on the road behind me came my godparents in ornate carriages, led by Professor Cuza and General Macridesco, Hristache Solomon, Colonel Blezu, Colonel Cambureanu, Tudoronescu, Georgică Niculescu, Major Băgulescu, and others. Then the bride’s carriage followed with six oxen, covered with flowers. After that came the other wedding guests. There were 2,300 carriages and automobiles in total, all covered with flowers and people dressed in national costume. I arrived in Crâng, 4.3 miles away from town, and the end of the column had still not left Focșani.¹²³

¹²¹ 13 percent (4,243 people) of Focșani’s 1930 population were Jewish. Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, 350

¹²² The only studies that I am aware of are Steven Beller, “Kraus’s Firework: State Consciousness Raising in the 1908 Jubilee Parade in Vienna and the Problem of Austrian Identity,” in Bucur and Wingfield (eds.) *Staging the Past*, 46-74; and Patrice Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). On processions elsewhere, see Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Alan E. Knight, “Processional theatre and the rituals of social unity in Lille,” in Alan Hindley (ed.), *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1999) 99-109.

¹²³ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 199.

Codreanu was clearly the center of attention. Riding a horse while everyone else was on foot, in carriages, or in cars, he stood out, and assumed a regal role. Although most peasant brides walked to the church on foot, it was not unusual to use ox-drawn carts for longer distances, such as for the journey between Focșani and Crâng.¹²⁴ Using such peasant trappings for urban weddings was a way of artificially appropriating peasant practices, as Prince Ferdinand and his new bride had done in 1893 when they acted as godparents to thirty-two couples in Bucharest to celebrate their own marriage. In both cases the newlyweds were transported in ox-drawn carriages meant to symbolize the rural heritage of Romania.¹²⁵ Codreanu was not a monarch and neither he nor Elena were peasants, but there was no carnivalesque irony here; like renaissance festivals, this one was about displaying the magnificence of the great.¹²⁶

Between 80,000 and 100,000 people attended the wedding, which was filmed and broadcast in Bucharest.¹²⁷ It would have been hard to have lived in Focșani without being aware of the ultra-nationalist presence in the town, especially because of the large number of flags on display.¹²⁸ As marches in contemporary Northern Ireland remind us, in addition to co-opting participants, processions also make claims to ownership of the territory over which they pass.¹²⁹ Given that the town had been devastated by anti-Semitic rioting only a few months earlier, the presence of so many ultra-nationalists in one place must have appeared very threatening to the Jews who lived in Focșani. Police blocked off roads to ensure that wedding guests did not travel through Jewish districts, and Jewish shops and taverns were closed for the day. Local Jews telegrammed the authorities that “the city is in a state of terror. Peaceful Jewish citizens are

¹²⁴ Marian, *Nunta la români*, vol. 1, 292.

¹²⁵ Maria, Regina României, *Povestea vieții mele*, vol. 2 (Iași: Editura Moldova, 1991) 21.

¹²⁶ On the presentation of magnificence in renaissance festivals, see Strong, *Art and Power*, 20.

¹²⁷ Petre Abeaboeru, “Nunta lui Zelea Codreanu: Un exemplu de marketing politic,” *Historia*, 10/100 (2010): 38.

¹²⁸ Cherciu, *Focșanii*, 388.

¹²⁹ David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 63.

beaten in their houses.”¹³⁰ The sheer number of people might explain why the ceremony was held outside the town, and not in the Orthodox Cathedral in Focșani. Old European towns are often not suitable for large processions because of their narrow streets, and the 4.3 mile ride out of town would have allowed as many people to participate as possible.¹³¹

Codreanu tells us that “The wedding took place in Crâng, on a wooden stage specially prepared for the occasion.”¹³² Romanian Orthodox weddings usually happen inside a church, where the couple are surrounded by icons and by a multitude of saints painted on the walls. Here the ceremony took place on a stage, and the saints were replaced by the crowds surrounding the couple as they took their vows. Codreanu’s account continues:

After the religious ceremony was over, the dancing (*hora*), games and partying began. Then followed a meal spread out on the grass. Everyone brought some food, and the people of Focșani provided for those who had come from elsewhere. All of this took place in national costume, which was filmed together with the Romanianness, the life and the enthusiasm. ... The wedding ended towards evening in a general feeling of brotherhood and goodwill.¹³³

Codreanu emphasized community and conviviality in his account. After the wedding, everyone sat down and ate a meal together. Eating together is an almost universal means of reinforcing communal bonds, and whereas the groom’s parents usually paid for the food and seated the guests at tables, this time the meal was a collective effort of the whole community, but especially

¹³⁰ Cherciu, *Focșanii*, 388-389.

¹³¹ Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989) 20.

¹³² Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 199.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 199.

of the people of Focșani.¹³⁴ Less formal and therefore seemingly more spontaneous than most wedding banquets, the afternoon's eating and dancing on the grass allowed ultra-nationalists to celebrate together, rather than making the guests into passive onlookers at a prearranged spectacle.

The ultra-nationalist presence in Focșani only increased after Codreanu's wedding, with more anti-Semitic vandalism and a new LANC newspaper established in late July and August.¹³⁵ Codreanu and A. C. Cuza returned to Focșani two months later to act as godfathers to children born since the wedding. Once again, activists distributed invitations widely, inviting "all good Christians" to come and have their children baptized, and locals were asked to bring food to feed the guests.

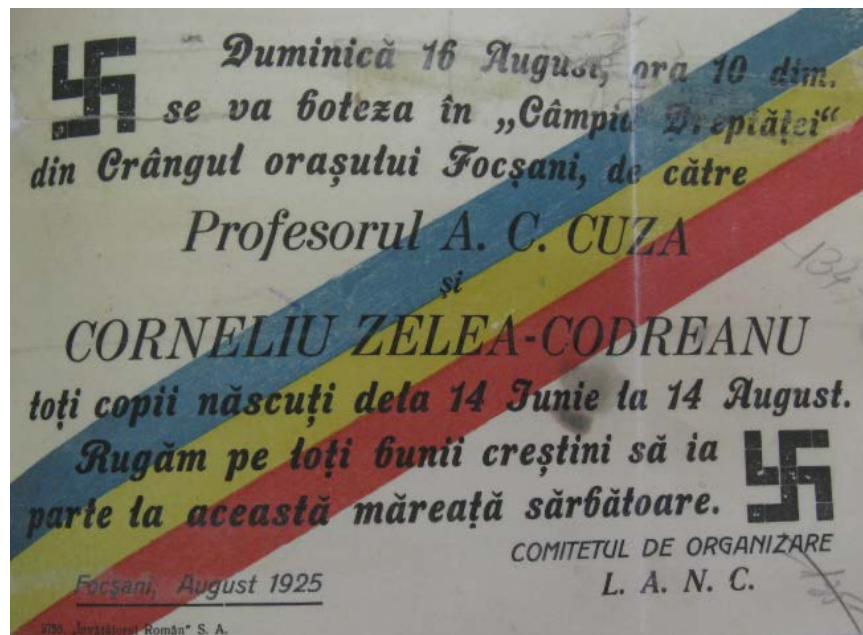


Figure 10: Invitation to a mass baptism in Focșani with A. C. Cuza and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu acting as godparents.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Marian, *Nunta la români*, vol. 2, 178.

¹³⁵ "Asupra pretinselor vandalisme antisemite dela Focșani," *Lancea*, 1/1 (6 Aug 1925): 1; Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 529-531.

¹³⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 134, 137.

In Romanian Orthodox baptisms, a godfather brings the child to the priest, renounces the devil on behalf of the child, and requests the sacrament for him or her. He acts as a guarantor that the child will receive a Christian education and will be raised in the ways of the faith.¹³⁷ Confusing the ultra-nationalist cause with the Christian faith as LANC publications often did, *Lancea* (*The Spear*, 1925-1926) from Focșani described the mass baptism as “the enlistment of new soldiers in the great army of Christ,” concluding “may the glory of their ancestors enlighten the minds of the new soldiers and open the way for them to build a Greater Romania that belongs only to Romanians.”¹³⁸

When mothers arrived in Focșani to have their children baptized they found the area cordoned off by gendarmes because a state of emergency had been declared several days before.¹³⁹ The crowd of roughly 5,000 people moved on to the village of Golești, which was also sealed off by gendarmes, and then to Slobozia. Sixty-five babies were eventually baptized, including some whose parents were Seventh Day Adventists. *Lancea*'s account said that “Father Dumitrescu from Bucharest, a saint in our eyes, jostled his way through the bayonets dressed in his robes and with a cross in his hand. Many mothers gave their children to the soldiers, telling them to take them because they did not want to return home with pagan babies.”¹⁴⁰ Asking mothers with small infants to clash with armed gendarmes pitted ultra-nationalists against the state, and by provoking the state into forbidding a baptism, the LANC made it look like the Romanian state was anti-Christian. Baptisms proved to be such an effective local propaganda

¹³⁷ Simeon Florea Marian, *Nașterea la români: studiu etnografic* (Bucharest: Editura Saeculum, 2008) 127-130.

¹³⁸ “O faptă creștinească,” *Lancea*, 1/2 (16 Aug 1925): 1.

¹³⁹ “Cum se aplică starea de asediu la Focșani,” *Adevărul*, 12785 (18 Aug 1925).

¹⁴⁰ “Cum s’au efectuat botezurile oprite,” *Lancea*, 1/3 (1 Sept 1925): 1.

exercise that they continued the following month, with other important LANC figures baptizing small groups of children in more isolated areas.¹⁴¹

5.4 TRIALS, VIOLENCE, AND POLITICS

The LANC pursued a strategy of provoking official reactions and then portraying themselves as victims for the next few years. The University Senate lost patience with A. C. Cuza after Manciu's murder and the disturbances of 10 December 1924, and in April 1925 Cuza faced court charged with being the "moral author" of the student unrest. The Senate refused to allow classes to take place in the Faculty of Law until its leadership officially condoned the punishments handed out to belligerent students. Six professors, including Cuza, resigned in protest, but were soon reinstated.¹⁴² Students argued that Cuza was the victim of political machinations, and they held demonstrations in Bucharest during his trial.¹⁴³ Cuza appeared in court once again after a Jew named Ghern Lerman approached him on the street and punched him in the face on 1 August 1925.¹⁴⁴ Later that year the student Gheorghe Urziceanu fired four bullets into a Jew who he claimed had planned an assassination attempt against Cuza.¹⁴⁵ Writing in Urziceanu's defense, Ion Delapoiiană said, "the jury in Iași will not have to decide whether Urziceanu is guilty or not according to the law, which has been shown so many times to be too restrictive, but it will ask: 'Does the Romanian people have the right to defend its life and honor or not?'"¹⁴⁶ Within days of Urziceanu's acquittal, the peasant Mihai V. Budeanu from the village of Brehuești, near

¹⁴¹ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Reel #132, Dosar 2/1922, f. 112; Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 3, 98.

¹⁴² Neagoe, *Triumful rațiunii împotriva violenței*, 304-308; Asandului, *A. C. Cuza*, 21. One of the six, Matei Cantacuzino, had actually handed in his resignation earlier in protest against A. C. Cuza's refusal to submit to university policies. The other four resigned together with Cuza.

¹⁴³ "Cronica," *Apărarea națională*, 4/1 (20 Apr 1925): 21.

¹⁴⁴ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 131; Corneliu Șumuleanu, *Atetnatul jidănesc împotriva profesorului A. C. Cuza* (Bucharest: Tipografia "Cultura Poporului," 1925).

¹⁴⁵ "Procesul Urziceanu," *Naționalistul*, 13/5 (28 Jan 1926): 2; "Informațiuni," *Chemarea*, 1/7 (10 Mar 1926): 3.

¹⁴⁶ Ion Delapoiiană, "Dela procesul Gh. Urziceanu," *Înfrațirea românească*, 2/9 (1 Mar 1926): 8.

Botoșani, was tried for murdering a Jewish landowner named Avram Abramovici with an axe. Cuza and other LANC lawyers came to Budeanu's defense and he too was acquitted on the grounds that it was not an individual crime, but an act of social protest against the Jewish menace threatening the country.¹⁴⁷

The most widely discussed ultra-nationalist trial of the latter half of the decade was that of a student named Nicolae Totu (1905-1939). The conflict began with protests by Jewish students over the administration of the newly-introduced baccalaureate examination for high school graduates. Results from the exam's first year in 1925 showed that examining committees disproportionately failed Jewish and other minority students during the oral sections of the exams. Traian Brăileanu (1882-1947), a sociology professor from Cernăuți University and an outspoken LANC supporter, led the 1926 committee, sparking concerns that Jewish students would be discriminated against once again. Crowds of disgruntled students followed the examining committee around town, heckling them and at times threatening violence.¹⁴⁸ One of the committee members, Emil Diaconescu, distributed a pamphlet after the protests claiming that the Jewish students had thrown rocks at him, and that a student named David Fallik told him: "You've come from the Old Kingdom to ask tricky questions so that students will fail. But we know more than all the students from the *Old Kingdom* put together, and even more than the teachers!"¹⁴⁹ Diaconescu circulated his pamphlet around town for free, stirring up ultra-nationalist sentiment against what he called an insult "to the prestige of the Romanian state's authority."¹⁵⁰ Nicolae Totu, a student in Iași, responded to this insult by shooting David Fallik.

¹⁴⁷ H. Vasiliu, "Achitarea lui M. V. Budeanu," *Chemarea*, 1/7 (10 Mar 1926): 1.

¹⁴⁸ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 79-84.

¹⁴⁹ Emil Diaconescu, *Agresiunea de la Cernăuți din ziua de 7 octombrie 1926 împotriva profesorilor din Comisiunea No. 1 a examenului de bacalaureat* (Iași: Tipografia "Albina", 1926) 4.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 10; CNSAS, Fond Totu Nicolae, P.015671, vol. 3, f. 27.

42,500 Jews lived in Cernăuți – a city of 112,427 people – and an estimated 30,000 of them turned out for Fallik’s funeral.¹⁵¹ Jewish homes and businesses displayed black flags and closed for three hours in the middle of the day as a sign of mourning.¹⁵² Ultra-nationalists reacted just as strongly, describing the murder as necessary vigilante justice and as a display of youthful heroism. In LANC newspapers Paul Iliescu labelled Totu’s act a “supreme sacrifice,” and N. Mucichescu-Tunari called it an expression “of the entire Romanian revolt” against the Jews.¹⁵³ Students distributed pamphlets about how despite official apathy in the face of the attacks on Diaconescu, “the young Totu took revenge and washed away [Romanian] shame.”¹⁵⁴ Supporters in Iași collected 22,000 lei to give to Totu, but it was stolen by Aurel Morărescu, the lawyer responsible for taking it to Cernăuți.¹⁵⁵ In his memoirs, the Legionary Vasile Coman remembers his parents in the Transylvanian town of Luduș reading about Totu’s trial in *Libertatea* and taking up a collection to send to Totu via Father Moța.¹⁵⁶ Thousands travelled to Câmpulung for Totu’s trial in February 1927, staying in the homes of ultra-nationalist supporters there. Both before and after the trial, they attacked Jews on trains and vandalized Jewish property near train stations, as well as breaking up a Jewish wedding in Pașcani and assaulting the party-goers.¹⁵⁷ The jury acquitted Totu eight to two, after only ten minutes of deliberations.¹⁵⁸

Such widely-publicized acquittals encouraged more and more acts of individual and group violence against Jews, including an attack by high school boys on a synagogue in Bălți,

¹⁵¹ Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, 120.

¹⁵² CNSAS, Fond Totu Nicolae, P.015671, vol. 3, f. 21-22.

¹⁵³ Paul P. Iliescu, “Procesul studentului Neculai Totu din Bucovina,” *Chemarea*, 2/29 (14 Feb 1927): 2; N. Mucichescu-Tunari, “Achitarea elevului Niculae Totu,” *Unirea*, 2/30 (28 Feb 1927): 2.

¹⁵⁴ CNSAS, Fond Totu Nicolae, P.015671, vol. 3, f. 38; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 44/1927, f. 23.

¹⁵⁵ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 44/1927, f. 4.

¹⁵⁶ Vasile Coman, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 1, AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 1/1980, f. 1-3.

¹⁵⁷ CNSAS, Fond Totu Nicolae, P.015671, vol. 3, f. 30, 54, 69-74; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 44/1927, f. 7.

¹⁵⁸ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 86.

which they burned down one night before it had even been finished.¹⁵⁹ Other boys threw rocks at Jews while on a school excursion.¹⁶⁰ In Piatra Neamț, a group of students left a masked ball in the middle of the night armed with sledgehammers and axes, and destroyed graves in a Jewish cemetery.¹⁶¹ In Buzău, high school students marched down the street singing nationalist anthems and then vandalized a Jewish pharmacy.¹⁶² Just as perpetrators were acquitted during the major trials, the justice system rarely punished such vandals and assailants to the full extent of the law. When a young clerk in Tulcea, Constantin Teodorescu, assaulted three Jews without provocation in August 1925, the local policeman gave him a warning and advised him to improve his behavior.¹⁶³ Officers of the law were not immune to anti-Semitic sentiments, and the next month a candidate enrolled at the Gendarmerie School in Oradea Mare travelled to the Black Sea where he and a friend beat up Jews who were sunbathing on the beach.¹⁶⁴ One particularly interesting strategy for harassing Jews was the *plugușor*, a song usually sung by children walking through the village on New Year's Day. A *plugușor* tells a story appropriate to the season and declares blessings for the listeners in return for gifts of apples and nuts. LANC *plugușor* songs added anti-Semitic themes, recounting how Jews had stolen the country's wealth and calling on Romanians to rise up against them. In 1926 groups of LANC members travelled around Jewish neighbourhoods singing anti-Semitic *plugușor* songs and taking money from Jews in return for their singing.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 1/1925, f. 180.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 77.

¹⁶¹ "Profanatorii de morminte din Piatra-Neamț," *Luptă*, (12 Jan 1928).

¹⁶² USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 122.

¹⁶³ Ibid., Reel #135, Dosar 1/1925, f. 12.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., Reel #135, Dosar 1/1925, f. 156.

¹⁶⁵ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 154-160.

When Jews assaulted Romanians, ultra-nationalists came to the victim's defense, making sure that the perpetrator received the maximum penalty for his or her crime.¹⁶⁶ Given that policemen and judges were also often anti-Semites, Jews rarely escaped harsh penalties when they got into fights with Romanians. Reporting inter-ethnic violence as Jewish attacks on Romanians was common in ultra-nationalist publications, such as an article in *Svastica* (*Swastika*, 1926) which claimed that bands of hundreds of Jews attacked a peaceful student congress in Chişinău during 1926 armed with revolvers, rocks, and metal rods.¹⁶⁷ In another incident a year earlier, gangs of Jews apparently roamed the streets of Piatra Neamţ looking for Romanian boys walking alone, and any they found were mercilessly beaten.¹⁶⁸ Reports about Jewish violence against Christians portrayed Romanians as victims who were only defending their rights if they retaliated. Neither of the incidents just mentioned were reported in any of the mainstream newspapers, suggesting that the reports might not have been entirely credible.

Capitalizing on the publicity provided by high-profile trials and acts of violence, the LANC worked to turn public sympathy into electoral success and consolidated their ties with other nationalist groups, such as the Archers of Stephen the Great. Cuzists began infiltrating Archers groups when the "Dacia" student society at Cernăuţi took an interest in them in 1923. Ultra-nationalists took control of at least one existing group but mostly formed their own, which in turn travelled to nearby villages and established new groups there. By 1928 twelve of the fifty five Archers groups in Bucovina were affiliated with the LANC. The others were influenced by Valerian Dugan, who worked at the county office in Rădăuţi and had taken responsibility for reorganizing the Archers after the First World War. Dugan insisted that the Archers remain

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., Reel #135, Dosar 1/1925, f. 189, 207, 235; "Lupta contra Cuzismului în Basarabia," *Apărarea naţională*, 6/10 (4 Mar 1928): 1.

¹⁶⁷ "Atentatele jidoveşti de la Chişinău," *Svastica*, (1926): 2, in *ibid.*, Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 147.

¹⁶⁸ "Agresiunea dela Piatra Neamţ," *Unirea*, 1/1 (1-15 Oct 1925): 2.

apolitical, and his conflict with the Dacia society effectively split the 500,000 Archers in Bucovina.¹⁶⁹ LANC leaders actively cultivated their ties with the nationalist group, and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu visited an Archers congress in 1924 after they had expressed their support for the Văcăreșteni.¹⁷⁰ His father attended a meeting of 120 Archers in September 1926, when he told them, “Captains of the Archers must hold meetings in their villages two or three times a week, teaching theory and giving instruction, so that the Archers will be as well trained as they were in the days of Stephen the Great. They will make every effort to extend their propaganda and to organize as many Archers as possible, for in time the Cuzists will come to power and will have need of these Archers, and the country will trust only them.”¹⁷¹ In addition to trusting the Archers, the LANC merged with the FRN and Romanian Action in 1925, strengthening its voting base and geographical reach.¹⁷²

Propaganda meetings involved church services and speeches to audiences made up of several hundred peasants, priests and teachers at a time in villages scattered throughout Moldova.¹⁷³ In cities, LANC members rallied with flags and singing, and separated according to gender, age, and social category.¹⁷⁴ Sometimes such meetings were specifically aimed at women, workers, or other clearly-defined groups.¹⁷⁵ When the LANC gathered in the town of Piatra Neamț in March 1926, the police blocked off major streets to allow the 2000-person strong procession to pass by, led by ten mounted students carrying maces with swastikas on their tips.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 25/1926, f. 24-25, 32, 39-42; Scurtu et al. eds., *Totalitarismul de dreapta*, 506-507; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 2/1924, f. 87, 110.

¹⁷⁰ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 49/1924, f. 81.

¹⁷¹ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 2/1926, f. 81.

¹⁷² Ibid., Reel #135, Dosar 1/1925, f. 103.

¹⁷³ Ibid., P.011784, vol. 14, f. 373; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 16/1923, f. 156-157; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 1/1925, f. 42-43, 130, 135.

¹⁷⁴ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 2/1926, f. 121, 131; Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 6-14.

¹⁷⁵ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 106, 113.

¹⁷⁶ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 1151, f. 6-8.

The democratic newspaper *Adevărul* noted that the riots that sometimes accompanied these events were not spontaneous affairs. Excuses such as sanctifying a flag were used to gather people, who were told that they had “orders” to meet at a specific place and time. Once a crowd assembled, LANC propagandists then incited the crowd to violence against any nearby Jews.¹⁷⁷

The results of LANC propaganda become clear when one looks at the party’s electoral fortunes. In the six elections that the LANC contested during the interwar period, the party obtained the following results:

Date	25 May 1926	7 July 1927	12 Dec 1928	1 June 1931	17 July 1932	20 Dec 1933
Percentage of vote	4.76	1.90	1.14	3.89	5.32	4.47

*Table 3: Votes for the LANC in National and Regional Elections, 1926-1933.*¹⁷⁸

The low results of 1927 and 1928 can be attributed to the infighting amongst LANC leadership during 1926 and 1927, resulting in the schism that produced the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Leaving those years aside temporarily, it becomes obvious that despite aggressive electioneering the LANC enjoyed the support of a relatively stable proportion of voters. Furthermore, the majority of these voters lived in Bucovina, Moldova and Bessarabia, where the majority of Romania’s Jews lived and where most of the anti-Semitic violence and ultra-nationalist gatherings took place.

¹⁷⁷ “Cum se pregătesc dezordinile: Constatuirile “Ligii creștine” la Tecuci,” *Adevărul*, (5 Sept 1925); “Incidente antisemitice la un bălci,” *Politică*, 113 (14 Oct 1926); USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 3/1926, f. 38; Reel #136, Dosar 5/1926, f. 26-28.

¹⁷⁸ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 463-465.

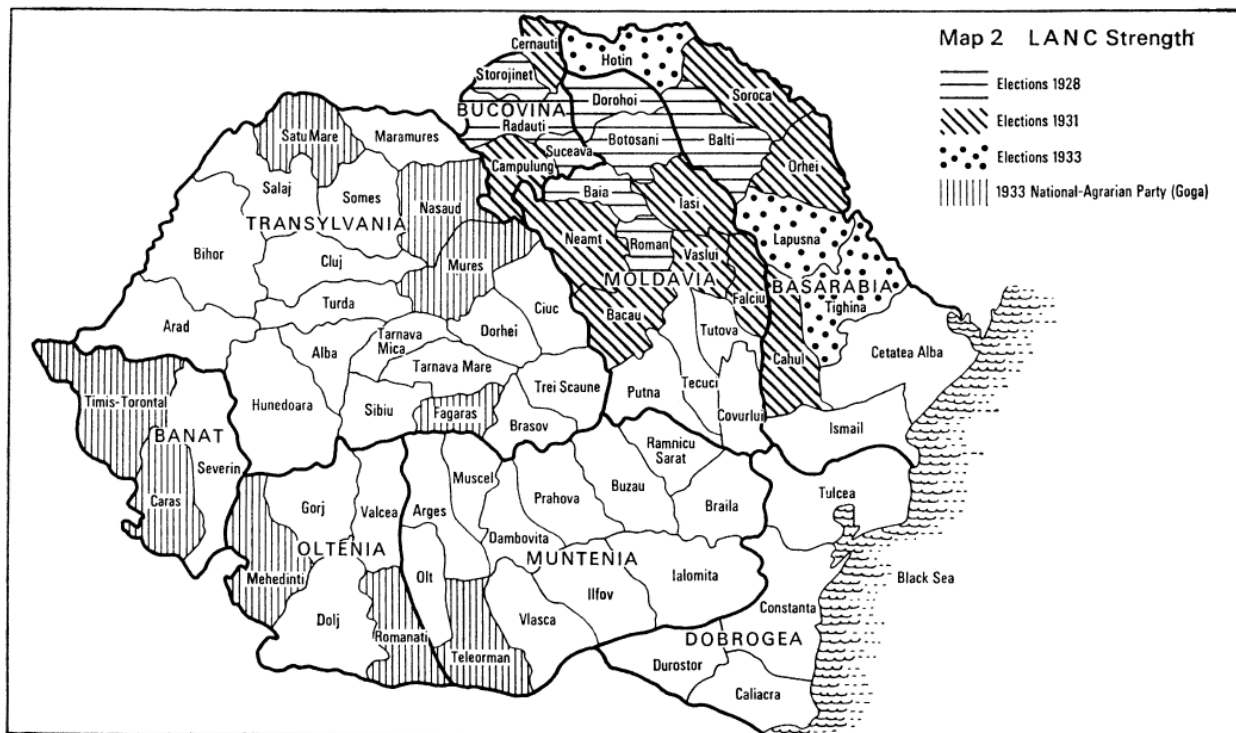


Figure 11: Counties in which the LANC received the most votes between 1928 and 1933.¹⁷⁹

Rather than drawing on a national network of influential members who garnered votes through patronage systems or expensive electoral campaigns, the LANC relied on support from local ultra-nationalists in certain regions. Even though LANC leaders like A. C. Cuza and Ion Zelea Codreanu travelled extensively to promote their cause, the majority of LANC supporters had limited influence and the party was successful only in areas where the community itself was strong.¹⁸⁰ The counties that voted LANC in 1926 were the same places that had witnessed anti-Semitic rioting, Nicolae Totu's trial, and frequent ultra-nationalist gatherings in smaller towns and villages.

¹⁷⁹ Eugen Weber, "The Men of the Archangel," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1/1 (1966): 113.

¹⁸⁰ Details on the extent and nature of LANC propaganda during the 1926 elections can be found in USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 1151, f. 1-87.

Putna county, which usually voted for the National Liberal Party, was where Codreanu had held his wedding and mass baptisms. It did not vote LANC in 1926, but this probably had more to do with the lack of support for Codreanu from other LANC deputies and the hostility of the gendarmerie to his electioneering. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu visited the village of Mândrești in Putna county during May 1926, but gendarmes stopped him and searched his car, checking the identification cards and travel permits of everyone with him. In order to ensure a National Liberal victory in the county, the prefect had proclaimed a state of emergency to give the gendarmes freedom to interfere in electoral propaganda.¹⁸¹ A scuffle ensued, during which Codreanu grabbed at the guns of the gendarmes before speeding off to the sound of gunfire. The gendarmes immediately issued a warrant for Codreanu's arrest, while he and his twenty companions went straight to Putna to complain to the police prefect, who refused to be intimidated. The prefect told Codreanu, "I'm not Manciu, but if I was I would rip the flesh off you with my teeth!" Codreanu retorted that he was made of stone and would break the prefect's teeth, threatening, "I will shoot you like I shot Manciu."¹⁸² Cuza did not visit Putna to speak in favor of Codreanu's campaign, and the young man was not able to capitalize on the excitement about ultra-nationalism created there by his trial and wedding.

The hypothesis that the political influence of the LANC was based on local concentrations of ultra-nationalists also helps explain the sudden drop in support in 1927 and 1928. No major right-wing rivals challenged the LANC in its strong counties during this period, but ultra-nationalists were bitterly divided, and disappointed with Cuza's decision to make political deals with mainstream politicians such as Octavian Goga (1881-1938), then Minister of

¹⁸¹ "Cum au decurs alegerile in Jud. Putna," *Lancea*, 2/22 (20 June 1926): 2-3.

¹⁸² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 1, f. 231-257, 299.

the Interior.¹⁸³ By dealing with Goga and alienating Codreanu and other students, Cuza had betrayed the ultra-nationalist beliefs in anti-politicianism, justice, youth, and heroism. Cuza's platform was radical enough that he needed a united front behind him if he was to win office, and divisions amongst ultra-nationalists spelt disaster at the polls.

¹⁸³ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 116.

PART II – GROWTH

6.0 SCHISM

In a front-page article reflecting on the meaning of Easter, Ioan Popescu-Mozăceni, a leading figure in *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC) and a deacon in the Romanian Orthodox Church, reminded the readers of *Apărarea națională* in 1927 that when the Son of God came to earth, “the ‘Truth’ was followed by ‘the Lie’ and by ‘the children of lies’ . The Lie (treason), even sat with him at meal times.” Popescu-Mozăceni wrote that whatever tricks the devil might play, at Easter time “the Truth (Jesus Christ) rose from the dead, and the Lie (Judas the traitor) hung himself.” Two paragraphs later, he admitted that treason had entered “the divine sanctuary of our fight for purifying the nation.”¹ The story of the Legion of the Archangel Michael begins with a split within the ultra-nationalist community, as Codreanu and his followers broke away from A. C. Cuza. Codreanu’s Legionaries spent their first years trying to justify breaking away from the LANC, which involved bringing ultra-nationalist anti-politicianism and the cult of youth to the forefront of their ideology and emphasizing that they were the legitimate heirs of the student movement of 1922. Legionaries and Cuzists clashed over who had the right to the *Cămin Cultural Creștin* in Iași, and both groups fought for control of student organizations on both a local and national level. Being a Legionary initially meant supporting Codreanu against Cuza. A distinctive Legionary identity emerged slowly, as Legionaries struggled to find symbols, rituals, and organizational structures that would differentiate them from the LANC.

The treason, or “the Yid conspiracy,” which LANC publications referred to frequently during the spring and summer of 1927 began when A. C. Cuza accused the LANC deputy Paul

¹ I. G. Popescu-Mozăceni, “Înviere și trădare,” *Apărarea națională*, 5/2 (24 April 1927): 1.

Iliescu of opposing the student struggle, of trying to take control of the party in Bucharest, and of using the LANC's bank for his own purposes.² Cuza suddenly and unilaterally expelled Iliescu without consulting the other leaders of the party. Led by Corneliu Șumuleanu and Ion Zelea Codreanu, five of the other nine deputies protested vehemently against the lack of due process in Iliescu's dismissal, and Cuza responded by expelling them as well. He claimed that they had formed an alliance with Jews and had tried to turn the LANC into a political party.³ Even if possible family quarrels took place between the Cuzas and the Codreanus in 1925, conflict between A. C. Cuza and the Codreanus came out in the open in early 1926. Most likely, a power struggle for control of the LANC lay at the heart of the conflict, with A. C. Cuza trying to establish himself as the unquestioned leader of the movement while the Codreanus and their supporters sought a more open decision-making process. Ion Zelea Codreanu clashed with Cuza in July over the selection of LANC candidates for the next election. At the same time, Ion Moța began preparations for forming a new, independent student movement while the younger Codreanu was still in France.⁴ When student hooliganism escalated during Nicolae Totu's trial in February 1927, Paul Iliescu and Ion Zelea Codreanu loudly criticized the students' lack of self-control.⁵ Dr. Ioan Istrate and Teodosie Popescu were arrested in Bucharest as part of a "fascist plot" in March 1927. They had allegedly been planning to break away from the LANC and to direct its youth wing into the Codreanus' faction, which now included the former leaders of *Acțiunea Românească* (Romanian Action) in Cluj, LANC leaders in Focșani, and a handful of prominent ultra-nationalists in Iași.⁶ The LANC was badly divided by the scandal, but most of

² "Conspirația jidanilor în LANC," *Apărarea națională*, 5/1 (17 April 1927): 2.

³ "Excluderea deputăților LANC," *Apărarea națională*, 5/6 (30 May 1927): 1; "Uneltirile contra LANC," *Apărarea națională*, 5/11 (6 Oct 1927): 1; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 18, f. 46-51.

⁴ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 2/1924, f. 86, 126-127, Dosar 2/1926, f. 6-7, 22.

⁵ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 44/1927, f. 1.

⁶ "După arestări politice," *Luptă*, (9 Mar 1927); Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 223.

the students swore their loyalty to Cuza. Student hooligans demonstrated their allegiances by interrupting a meeting held by the dissidents and forcing the hotel where it was held to be evacuated.⁷

6.1 A NEW FAITH

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu had spent 1926 in France, and when he returned to Iași in May 1927 he immediately gathered sympathetic students together and tried to form an independent group under his leadership.⁸ Accusing the older generation of destroying the LANC through self-interested bickering, Codreanu drew on the image of the purity of youth to propose “an idealistic, youthful, voluntary movement organized hierarchically.”⁹ He only managed to convince roughly twenty students to join the new movement, which he dubbed the Legion of the Archangel Michael.¹⁰ The name came from an icon of the Archangel that Codreanu’s father had shown them when he and his colleagues were in Văcărești prison in 1923. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu had commissioned several copies of the icon at the time. He deposited one at the St. Spiridon church in Iași and gave another one to his mother, which he later “borrowed” to use in the Legionary offices in Bucharest.¹¹

In the Bible, the Archangel Michael leads the armies of God against Satan in a battle that ends with Satan and his demons being cast out from heaven.¹² Michael has many other attributes in the Judeo-Christian tradition, including as protector of Jews, but the Legionaries described

⁷ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #106, Dosar 1151, f. 312-313, 320-321; “Ridicole înscenare dela București,” *Apărarea națională*, 5/4 (10 May 1927): 2.

⁸ Codreanu later wrote that he first tried to reconcile the two factions, but this is not born out by police reports from the time. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 226; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 14, f. 97; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 79/1927, f. 5.

⁹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “E ceasul vostru: veniți!” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/1 (1 Aug 1927): 5.

¹⁰ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 226-230.

¹¹ CNSAS, fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 13, f. 124.

¹² Revelation 12:7-9.

him as “the *defender of the church against wicked attacks* and as the *protector of wronged peoples*, even using his power to intervene directly in human conflicts, in earthly events, destroying immoral armies and shattering the satanic efforts of men.”¹³ In Romanian folklore, he also accompanies Christians’ souls to heaven after they die.¹⁴ According to its founders, the Legion was to continue the movement that the students had begun in 1922; the hopes and dreams of which Cuza and other LANC leaders had betrayed.¹⁵



Figure 12: Icon of the Archangel Michael.¹⁶

¹³ Ion Moța, “Sfântul Arhanghel Mihail: Voevodul puterilor cerești,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/5 (1 Oct 1927): 10-11.

¹⁴ Const. D. Ghiurghiu, *Calendarul femeilor superstițioase: credințe, superstiții și obiceiuri din țeară* (Piatra Neamț: Tipgrafia Unirea, 1893) 116.

¹⁵ Corneliu Georgescu, “Nădejdi sfărâmate,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/1 (1 Aug 1927): 10-12; Radu Mironovici, “Scrisoare către un frate dela sat,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/1 (1 Aug 1927): 12

¹⁶ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #137, Dosar 4/1929, f. 30.

Cuza's most biting accusation was that the dissidents were engaging in "politics" when the LANC was a movement, not a political party.¹⁷ In an article from the first issue of the Legion's new newspaper, *Pământul strămoșesc* (*The Ancestral Land*, 1927-1930, 1933), entitled "To the Icon!" Ion Moța responded: "We do not do politics, and we have never done it for a single day in our lives," he wrote. "We have a religion, we are slaves to a faith. We are consumed in its fire and are completely dominated by it. We serve it until our last breath." The Legionaries served Romanian ultra-nationalism, but Moța did not distinguish between the Church and the nation. Admitting that "we lost our way for a while, carried along by worldly values," he said that if the ultra-nationalist movement was to succeed it must submit itself afresh "to a life as God wanted it: a life of truth, justice, and virtue." In Moța's vision Christian virtue was not a goal in itself, but a means for the ultra-nationalist movement to overcome its enemies with divine assistance. "In this consists salvation," he wrote, "with freedom from the Yids and from all the deadly plagues that consume us: *in restoring fruitfulness* in the godly way (*în via dumnezească*), which today is sick and barren, in our nation (at least here), fallen into satanic claws that lay waste to the soul and bring it loss."¹⁸ Subsequent issues of *Pământul strămoșesc* continued Moța's focus on virtue, insisting that the foundational elements of Legionarism were "youthfulness of the soul, that is, purity in life, drive and selflessness in battle," and well as "deeds, not words."¹⁹ The increased emphasis on virtue did not mean that the Legionaries had renounced violence. Ion Banea (1905-1939) affirmed Legionary violence in an early issue of *Pământul strămoșesc* by quoting Jesus' words: "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."²⁰ When a Bucharest newspaper accused Nicolae Totu of being involved in anti-Semitic violence on a train near Dorna in August 1927, he

¹⁷ A. C. Cuza, "Marea adunare națională," *Apărarea națională*, 5/1 (17 Apr 1927): 1.

¹⁸ Ion Moța, "La icoană!" *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/1 (1 Aug 1927): 9-10.

¹⁹ "Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/2 (15 Aug 1927): 3.

²⁰ Ionel I. Banea, "La luptă!" *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/4 (15 Sept 1927): 12.

replied that he had been in Iași at the time but that he regretted having missing the opportunity to assault Jews.²¹ Ultra-nationalists who remained loyal to Cuza began arming themselves for fear of Legionary attacks.²²

The first issues of *Pământul strămoșesc* were printed by Ion Moța's father at the *Libertatea* press in Orăștie, and free copies were sent out to former LANC supporters and to villages in Moldova, while others were sold in Iași.²³ Scattered support for the Legion soon emerged. According to the second issue, one man from Panciu sent a 200 lei donation to the newspaper, and another immediately found them five new subscribers in his city of Adjud. Newspaper salesmen in the villages of Sâmnicolaul Mare and Prundul Băraului asked that their orders be doubled. Another supporter in the village of Văculești, near Dorohoi, found fifteen unsold copies that had been incorrectly addressed so he sold them himself, sending the money to the Legionaries in Iași.²⁴ The newspaper's editors published similar stories in each subsequent issue, thanking supporters for donations or for signing up large numbers of subscribers; they printed letters from individuals – young and old, male and female – who praised the new initiative. Influential former LANC figures allied themselves with the Legion immediately, among them Gheorghe Clime, an engineer who was the former LANC vice-president for Iași county; Ioan Blănaru, a former president of *Asociației Studenților Creștin* (the Christian Students' Association, ASC) in Iași; I. C. Cătuneanu, a leader of Romanian Action in Cluj; Mille Lefter, the president of the LANC in Galați; Valer Danileanu, the LANC president in Câmpulung county; and Ioan N. Grossu, Victor M. Tîlîncă, and I. Mihailă, presidents of the LANC in their

²¹ "P. S. Avertisment," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/2 (15 Aug 1927): 8.

²² Scurtu et al. ed., *Totalitarismul*, vol. 1, 618.

²³ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 79/1927, f. 6.

²⁴ "Mulțumiri," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/2 (15 Aug 1927): 15.

respective villages.²⁵ Such prominent defections hint at the extent of disillusionment within the LANC and were important for boosting the prestige of the Legion amongst ultra-nationalists. The Legion boasted 300 members at the end of its first month, and by December 1927 individuals from fifty towns and villages around the country were subscribing to its newspaper or expressing their support.²⁶

According to *Pământul strămoșesc*, the Legion was initially divided into four sections: (i) “Youth,” including a sub-section for members under 19 years old called the Blood Brotherhood (*Frația de Cruce*), (ii) “Protectors of the Legion,” for older members dedicated to sustaining, encouraging and protecting the Youth, (iii) “[Women’s] Aid,” a female section performing auxiliary functions, and (iv) “International,” incorporating sympathetic Romanians living abroad. It was to be led by a council that included the presidents of each of the Student Centers, and by a senate with representatives from each county over the age of fifty.²⁷ Codreanu set a maximum number of Legionaries at 100 per county and 3000 in total. Those who joined were required to take an oath, to dedicate fifteen minutes each day to serving the Legion, to recruit five new members within five months, and to give help to other Legionaries whenever they met them. With the exception of international members, Legionaries in each section were organized into independent “nuclei” of three to thirteen people, later called *cuiburi* (nests).²⁸ *Pământul strămoșesc* dictated that married Legionary women were to be mothers and to provide moral guidance, which included disapproving of excessive make-up, “Jewish” fashions, and immoral

²⁵ Gheorghe Clime, “Visuri. Nădejdi. Realitate.” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/1 (1 Aug 1927): 13-14; Ioan Blănaru, “Speranțe,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/2 (15 Aug 1927): 6-7; “Cum e primită revistă noastră,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/2 (15 Aug 1927): 12-13; M. I. Lefter, “După mare îngrijorare, mare bucurie,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/4 (15 Sept 1927): 6-7; “Cum e primită revistă noastră,” 1/4 (15 Sept 1927): 13; “Cum e primită revistă noastră,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/5 (1 Oct 1927): 12; Valer Danileanu, “Către soldații din Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/7 (1 Nov 1927): 13.

²⁶ “Activitatea legiunii,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/3 (1 Sept 1927): 7; “Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/10 (15 Dec 1927): 7.

²⁷ “Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/2 (15 Aug 1927): 3-4.

²⁸ “Organizarea Legiunii Arhanghelul Mihail,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/4 (15 Sept 1927): 3-4.

dancing. Single women were called “Sisters of the Legion,” and were told to organize a craft exhibition to display Legionary handiwork.²⁹

6.2 CĂMINUL CULTURAL CREȘTIN

The *Cămin Cultural Creștin* in Iași was the hub of Legionary life for the first few years. Grigore Bejan allied himself with Cuza after the schism and he made several attempts to ensure his ownership of the *Cămin* from August 1927 onwards. Bejan had donated the building site in 1924, and now he asserted that this made him the proprietor of anything built there. Codreanu retorted that Ion Moța had supplied over half of the building expenses (123,000 lei) and that therefore the *Cămin* should remain under the exclusive administration of “the students,” by which he meant the Legionaries.³⁰ Legionaries managed to finish two thirds of the roof and added a chapel on the third floor before they moved into the three completed rooms in September 1927.³¹ Unmarried Legionary women were entrusted with decorating the building.³² The Legion held its first ball on 8 November 1927 to celebrate the saint’s day of the Archangel Michael. Legionaries sold 512 tickets and raised almost 9,000 lei, a quarter of which they put into the continued construction of the *Cămin*.³³ That day the Legionaries also held a requiem at St. Spiridon Church for Moldovan heroes such as Stephen the Great and Michael the Brave, after which they marched to their *Cămin* singing “The Hymn of the Legion” (*Imnul Legiunii*). Back at the *Cămin* they solemnly mixed soil that they had ordered from the graves and battlefields of

²⁹ “Organizarea Legiunii Arhanghelul Mihail,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/5 (1 Oct 1927): 3-4.

³⁰ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 79/1927, f. 9; USHMM, fond SRI Files, Reel #106, Dosar 1151, f. 330.

³¹ “Căminul Cultural Creștin,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/2 (15 Aug 1927): 11-12; “Informațiuni,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/5 (1 Oct 1927): 15.

³² “Organizarea Legiunii Arhanghelul Mihail,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/5 (1 Oct 1927): 4.

³³ “Informațiuni,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/7 (1 Nov 1927): 14; “Informațiuni,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/8 (15 Nov 1927): 15.

those heroes whose souls they had just prayed for, and placed it in small sacks that all Legionaries were to wear around their necks.³⁴

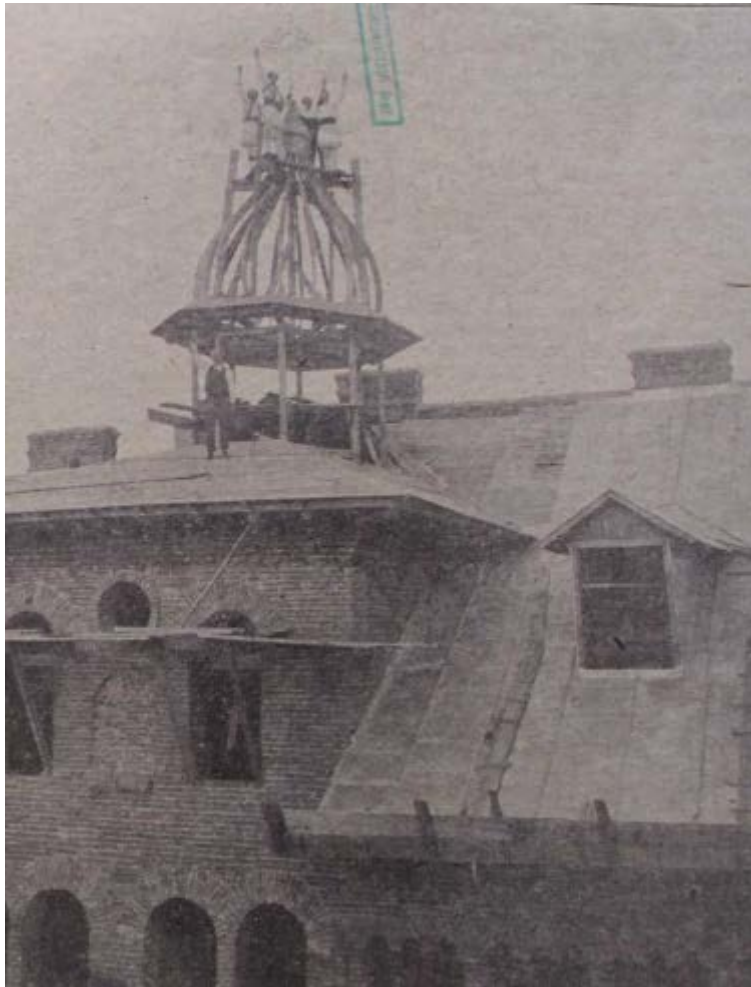


Figure 13: Cămin Cultural Creștin in September 1927.³⁵

As Christmas approached, Legionaries everywhere were asked to hold their own balls or literary evenings, to organize choirs, sell embroidery, or to organize a caroling expedition with *plugușor* songs to raise money for the Legion.³⁶ Money was a genuine problem. In April 1928,

³⁴ “Ziua legiunii la Iași,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/8 (15 Nov 1927): 3-7.

³⁵ *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/5 (1 Oct 1927): 9.

³⁶ “Ce trebuie să știe și să facă,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/10 (15 Dec 1927): 2.

only 836 of the 2,586 subscribers to *Pământul strămoșesc* paid their dues.³⁷ That October, Codreanu borrowed 82,000 lei from a local bank to fund the movement but he did not manage to repay the loan until 1933.³⁸ The Legionaries had to find money wherever they could, selling vegetables they had grown in Constanța Ghica's garden and eventually selling tiles they had put aside for the *Cămin*. Radu Mironovici learned to drive a truck bought by the Legion, and raised money transporting passengers from Iași to nearby cities and monasteries.³⁹ Legionaries asked supporters to sacrifice 100 lei per month to help fund the Legion and they gratefully publicized all donations in *Pământul strămoșesc*.⁴⁰ In August 1928, eight Legionaries decided to give up smoking and to donate the money they saved to the Legion.⁴¹ Others donated shares they owned in the LANC bank to fund Legionary building projects.⁴² Women's work was particularly useful in this regard. Ecaterina Constantinescu, a young lady from Cahul, managed to send 3,000 lei in July 1928 after selling embroidery she had done for the Legion.⁴³ Others sent their handiwork directly to the *Cămin* so that it could be displayed as part of an exhibition in Iași. This too was sold once the financial crisis struck in 1929.⁴⁴

Even though Legionaries had moved into the *Cămin*, the issue of ownership had still not been resolved. Bejan posted an eviction order towards the end of November 1927 and began court proceedings to expel the Legionaries from the *Cămin*.⁴⁵ Teodor Mociulski, a law student and an ardent Cuza supporter, attacked Codreanu in the Iași student newspaper and threatened

³⁷ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 132.

³⁸ CNSAS, fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 1, f. 139, 143. Codreanu's account gives a figure of 110,000 lei and says that it had still not been repaid in 1935. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 272.

³⁹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 272.

⁴⁰ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 133; "Comitetul de 100," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/14 (15 July 1928): 8; Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Dare de seamă rezumativă," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/21 (1 Nov 1928): 1-5.

⁴¹ "O hotărâre a Legiunii care se va întinde," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/16 (15 Aug 1928): 3.

⁴² Spiru Peceli, "Alte acțiuni," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/20 (15 Oct 1928): 3.

⁴³ "Dela surorile noastre," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/14 (15 July 1928): 6.

⁴⁴ "Dela surorile legiunii," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/24 (25 Dec 1928): 5; "Criza financiară, legiunea," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 3/1 (15 June 1929): 14-15.

⁴⁵ "O nedreptate strigătoare la cer," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/9 (1 Dec 1927): 3-5; Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Răutatea omenească," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/18 (15 Sept 1928): 4-5.

him with a revolver.⁴⁶ But the Legionaries were also ready to use violence to support their claims to the property. After Bejan accused the Legionaries of stealing tools from the *Cămin* to use at Constanța Ghica's garden in April 1928, Codreanu and six Legionaries broke into his house at 7:30am in the morning, beating him, splitting his head open, and disfiguring his face.⁴⁷

As violence surrounding the *Cămin* escalated, Legionaries began work on a new building in June 1928. They dubbed it "Saint Michael's Castle," and individuals sent financial donations to pay for building supplies. Legionaries called the project "the first anti-Semitic university in Romania," because working on it was supposed to help "educate" them.⁴⁸ They made new members prove their worth by directing activities at the brickworks in Ungheni, as well as by undergoing a "theoretical" exam covering anti-Semitic doctrine and Legionary ideology. A number of the so-called *mușchetari* (musketeers) in the Blood Brotherhood helped make bricks for the castle. Activity at the brickworks began at 5am each morning, and one boy rode his bicycle 185 miles from Galați to Ungheni so he could take part.⁴⁹ This sudden burst of enthusiasm only lasted a few months, however, and Legionaries soon went back to fighting over the *Cămin*.

Conflict began again in September 1928 when Legionaries forcefully evicted several Cuzists who were living in the *Cămin*. Cuzists immediately began preparations to do the same to the Legionaries who had taken their place.⁵⁰ A judge overturned Bejan's claims to legal ownership of the *Cămin* in July 1929, but Cuzist students fought for *de facto* possession of the

⁴⁶ CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, P.000324, vol. 8, f. 134-138; Ion Banea, "Un sfârșit de an," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 4/8 (1 Jan 1931): 1.

⁴⁷ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 14, f. 130; "Atentatul contra d-lui ing. Gr. Bejan," *Apărarea națională*, 6/9 (22 Apr 1928): 2.

⁴⁸ "Situația la cărămidărie," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/14 (15 July 1928): 3.

⁴⁹ "Vești dela cărămidărie," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/15 (1 Aug 1928): 3; Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Situația la cărămidărie," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/16 (15 Aug 1928): 1; Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Dare de seamă rezumativă," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 2/21 (1 Nov 1928): 1-5.

⁵⁰ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #137, Dosar 4/1929, f. 10.

Cămin for another twelve months.⁵¹ As time passed, the Legion grew steadily in popularity among ultra-nationalist students in Iași, and more and more Legionary students were gradually elected to the ASC in Iași. Now confident of their position, in March 1930 Legionaries offered the *Cămin* as a meeting place where the two sides could discuss further collaboration.⁵²

The *Cămin* fell into a state of disrepair during the three years that Bejan and Codreanu fought over it, but Legionaries restored it during 1930 at a cost of 200,000 lei.⁵³ The Legion had an office in Bucharest as of November 1929, but Iași remained the hub of the movement until Codreanu himself moved to Bucharest in 1933. In addition to those who lived there, many Legionaries and sympathizers used the *Cămin* as a place to socialize and relax. In an account from 2001, the Legionary N. S. Govora said that going to the *Cămin* regularly as a student at the Military High School in Iași was an important step towards his integration into the Legion. “There was an extremely friendly atmosphere,” Govora writes, “some played chess, others wrote, drew pictures, or repaired their ripped clothing.”⁵⁴ The *Cămin* was not a particularly comfortable place to live, but everything in it testified to the Legionaries’ ingenuity. In his memoirs the Legionary Dumitru Banea (1911-2000) writes about the building as “our *Cămin*,” even though he himself was not one of the twenty Legionaries who lived there in 1931. He says,

We were so poor it was unbelievable. There was no *sobă* (a type of wood heater), and the inhabitants put several electrical wires on a tile and stuck them into a power socket to get some heat. They put one tile at their heads and another at their feet. We washed our clothes there. ... When my brother could not pay his rent any more we made a room for him in the garage where we kept our truck, which we’d

⁵¹ Ibid., Reel #137, Dosar 4/1929, f. 17.

⁵² Ibid., Reel #138, Dosar 2/1930, f. 18-20, 42.

⁵³ *Cămin Cultural Creștin*, “Pământul strămoșesc”, An. IV, Nr. 8, 1 Jan 1931, p. 3.

⁵⁴ N. S. Govora, “Corneliu Zelea Codreanu,” in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 106.

named “*Căprioara*” (Deer). We found some planks in the attic and we laid floorboards down, we made him a table, a bookshelf, – I don’t remember if we made him a bed – and we set them up like a tower. Not having enough money to put blue paper on the bookshelf, we decorated it with newspapers. He no longer had to worry about rent.”⁵⁵

Despite the hardships associated with living in the *Cămin*, the inhabitants remembered it as a centre of their social life. In June 1932 they brought an icon of the Archangel Michael that they had deposited at the St. Spiridon Church eight years earlier, and hung it in the *Cămin*.⁵⁶ Vera Totu and her husband Nicolae shared one of the upper stories with three other students during 1933. Seven years later she wrote,

In the basement there was a canteen where for seven lei you’d receive a serving of food in a clay bowl and a spoonful of polenta that could satisfy a fully grown man. There was a large hall on the first floor that was whitewashed clean, swept and cared for with love. That was where the first Legionary lectures were held, that was where student gatherings took unflinching decisions. On Sunday evenings the happiest and friendliest parties took place there, with young people coming in simple clothes, with nothing in their pockets, wanting only to meet with those they were close to, to dance a big *horă* and a crazy *sârbă*,⁵⁷ to listen to the judicious words of Ionică Banea and to cool off letting loose a lively song.

⁵⁵ Dumitru Banea, *Acuzat, martor, apărător în procesul vieții mele* (Sibiu: Editura Puncte Cardinale, 1995) 10.

⁵⁶ CNSAS, fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 13, f. 124.

⁵⁷ The *horă* and the *sârbă* are both well-known Romanian folk dances.

Days passed this way at the *Cămin*, a week of work and study and an evening of good times.⁵⁸

A medical student who already had his law degree, Ion Banea was well respected by the Legionaries, but his were not the only “judicious words” that filled the hall at the *Cămin*. Most Legionary leaders lectured here at one time or another.⁵⁹ Lectures were a normal part of weekly meetings in nests, but they were also often used an excuse for large numbers of Legionaries to gather together for a celebration or a routine inspection by their leaders.⁶⁰ Several hundred Legionaries managed to fit in the room for these lectures, which sometimes ended with marches through the streets, taking oaths, or singing Legionary songs.⁶¹ In addition to speeches and dancing, they also held *parastase* (religious commemorations) here for Legionaries who had been shot by the police, inviting curious students to come and honor martyrs of the student movement.⁶²

6.3 WINNING OVER THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

The process of recruiting students to Codreanu’s cause was a slow one, and it was Cuza that the ultra-nationalist students invited as a guest of honor at their annual conference in Oradea Mare in December 1927.⁶³ Codreanu did not speak in Oradea, which one police informant interpreted as evidence of his desire “to make peace with the [student] Association.”⁶⁴ Another informant was

⁵⁸ Vera Totu, “Jilava,” *13 Jilava*, 7/1 (29 Nov 1940): 5.

⁵⁹ CNSAS, Fond Gârmeata Ilie, I.211932, vol. 1, f. 791-792.

⁶⁰ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib*, 15-18.

⁶¹ CNSAS, fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 2, f. 461; “O vizită în Iașiul naționalist,” *Calendarul*, 2/489 (25 Oct 1933): 5.

⁶² AN-Iași, Fond Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #266, Dosar 1480/1934, f. 358-359.

⁶³ USNA, Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs of Romania, MII98, Reel #7, American Legation Despatch 510. Enclosure 3.

⁶⁴ Scurtu et. al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 2, 97.

more skeptical, noting that Codreanu did not have the majority of students on his side at the meeting and that he was reticent to sacrifice his closest allies within the National Union of Christian Students in Romania (*Uniunea Națională a Studenților Creștini din România*, UNSCR).⁶⁵ Uncertainty about the group's political future after the Cuza-Codreanu split had begun to cause some UNSCR members to vacillate about their commitment to the movement. Others were fed up with inactivity, and assured their leaders that "I completely accept any decision that leads to immediate action, even violence."⁶⁶ A smaller UNSCR congress met in August 1927 in order to resolve some of these issues. The first order of business was "the liquidation of all dissidents," and the second was "the establishment of a united viewpoint within the student movement." The UNSCR president, C. Dănulescu, argued that the LANC had lost credibility. He said that a new, independent student movement should be established with no ties to Cuza's group. Codreanu attended the August congress, and the minutes show that there was heated debate. Eventually, the students unanimously voted "to continue to fight on the basis of the National Christian anti-Semitic doctrines presented by Mr. A. C. Cuza, wishing to meet in an independent youth organization that will work towards resolving the Yid problem."⁶⁷ Cuza may have won the students' support, but his influence had been badly shaken. It became even less solid after he was forced to retire from the university in November 1927.⁶⁸ International observers still thought that the future of Romanian ultra-nationalism lay with the Cuzists, however, and when the Nazi student leader Karl Motz (1906-) visited Romania in December

⁶⁵ Ibid., vol. 2, 119-120.

⁶⁶ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #135, Dosar 8/1925, f. 6-9, 13-14.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Reel #135, Dosar 8/1925, f. 19-20, 24-27, 34.

⁶⁸ Asandului, *A. C. Cuza*, 57.

1931, he focused on cultivating connections with the Cuzist-led UNSCR rather than with Codreanu and the Legionaries.⁶⁹

In Bucharest it was a law student named Andrei Ionescu (1904-) who did the most to sway ultra-nationalist students towards Codreanu's movement.⁷⁰ He had been involved in LANC organizing in Bucharest and Bârlad since 1925 and he established the first Legionary nest in the capital in October 1927. In 1929 Ionescu founded the "Stephen the Great Christian Students Association" along the lines of the ASC in Iași. In November that year he was elected president of the Bucharest Student Center (*Centrul Studențesc București*, CSB), which gave him titular control over the most powerful ultra-nationalist student organization in Bucharest. Ionescu made a passionate plea for the Legion at the UNSCR congress in December 1929, influencing more students towards Codreanu's camp.⁷¹ As a student leader in 1929, Ionescu was instrumental in forming an international confederation of students from countries who were part of the Little Entente.⁷² This was an international treaty first signed by Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia in 1920, and although most of the Czechoslovak delegates had socialist sympathies at this time, the Romanians tried to convince them of the importance of anti-Semitism and to give the congress a nationalist flavor.⁷³ In Bucharest, the CSB oscillated between the Legionary and Cuzist factions for the next two years, until Legionaries eventually

⁶⁹ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 225-226.

⁷⁰ In memoir accounts and oral history interviews, several activists mention Andrei Ionescu's organizing and speeches as the reason why they joined the Legion. Horia Sima, "Cum am intrat în Legiune," in Faust Brădescu ed., *Mărturii despre legiune* (Rio de Janeiro: Editura Dacia, 1967) 165-181; Interview with Lauric Filon (29 June 1995), in Conovici, Iliescu, and Silvestru eds. *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 37-38.

⁷¹ CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 11, f. 32-36, 39-45.

⁷² Hillgruber, *Hitler, Regele Carol și Mareșalul Antonescu*, 37-38.

⁷³ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #137, Dosar 5/1929, f. 11-12. Tensions continued between the Romanian and Czechoslovak students at congresses in 1931 and 1933 as well, apparently because the Czechoslovaks were jealous of "the elegance and beauty of the Romanian girls." USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #138, Dosar 5/1929, f. 219-224; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 37/1931, f. 117.

had enough power to dismiss the Cuzist president in 1931 and replace him with the Legionary Traian Cotigă (1910-1939).⁷⁴

In 1930 two assassination attempts boosted the Legion's reputation amongst students in Bucharest.⁷⁵ The first emerged out of a long-standing protest campaign by Aromanian colonists in Dobrogea demanding more land and better social services. Encouraged by successive Romanian governments, large numbers of Aromanians migrated from Macedonia and Bulgaria to Southern Dobrogea during the interwar period. In 1928 only 14.7 percent of the inhabitants of Southern Dobrogea were ethnic Romanians – a category that included Aromanians – while 39.3 percent were Bulgarians and 40.6 percent were Turks or Tatars.⁷⁶ Between October 1925 and February 1933, 3,003 Aromanian families settled in Duroster county, and 1,943 in Caliacra county, together with large numbers of settlers from the Wallachia, Moldavia, and the Banăt.⁷⁷

Romania had acquired Northern Dobrogea in 1878, and hundreds of thousands of ethnic Romanians – many itinerant shepherds from Transylvania – settled there over the next thirty years. Colonists received few political rights in Northern Dobrogea, state officials discriminated against non-Romanian ethnic minorities, and prefects appointed by the National Liberal Party managed the province to promote the economic interests of wealthy individuals in Bucharest. Unhappy with this state of affairs, ethnic-Romanians here formed a regionalist political movement known as Dobrogeanism. Intent on proving that they – not bureaucrats in Bucharest – were the true representatives of the Romanian nation, Dobrogeanists exploited many elements of the ultra-nationalist program, including anti-politicianism, anti-Semitism, and ethnic nationalism. A series of laws between 1909 and 1913 gave Northern Dobrogeans equal citizenship rights,

⁷⁴ USHMM, SRI Files, Reel #106, Dosar 1154, f. 22.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Reel #106, Dosar 1154, f. 21.

⁷⁶ Puiu Dumitru Bordeiu, *Mișcarea legionară în Dobrogea între 1933-1941* (Constanța: Ex Ponto, 2003) 14.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 15.

parliamentary representation, and a new judicial and administrative system, but the anti-Bucharest sentiments that lay at the heart of Dobrogeanism remained unresolved when Romania annexed Southern Dobrogea in 1913.⁷⁸ Like earlier colonists, the Aromanians soon became disillusioned with the administration of the province and radicals responded in 1927 by assassinating the county prefect, a Mr. Ghibănescu. Ultra-nationalist students in the capital, some of whom had friends or family in Dobrogea, enthusiastically supported Ghibănescu's assassination.⁷⁹ Matters did not improve, however, and in July 1930 an Aromanian student named Gheorghe Beza shot at the Subsecretary of State, Constantin Angelescu (1870-1948). Beza was upset because Angelescu had recently changed the laws governing the colonization of Dobrogea, leaving the Aromanian colonists there with smaller lots of land.⁸⁰

According to Codreanu's account, Beza had become interested in the Legion a few days before he tried to shoot Angelescu. He had a Legionary pamphlet in his pocket when he was arrested, implicating Codreanu by association. Codreanu claims to have had no knowledge of the planned assassination, but he immediately distributed a pamphlet saying that "if the Minister, Angelescu, deserved to be defended, then the young Beza deserves to be as well, both in the courts and before Romanian public opinion."⁸¹ The authorities subsequently arrested Codreanu as Beza's accomplice. In the back of the police truck he met a collection of Aromanian student activists who had also published pamphlets in support of Beza's actions, including Constantin Papanace, Anton Ciumeti, Mamuli Stamuli, Ion Caranica, Grigore Pihu, and Ion Ghița.⁸² Codreanu befriended the Aromanians in prison, and Legionary students in Bucharest held rallies

⁷⁸ Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation- and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878-1913* (Pittsburgh: Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, 2002).

⁷⁹ "Colonizarea cu Macedoneni și naționalizarea țării," *Apărarea națională*, 5/7 (6 June 1927): 2.

⁸⁰ CNSAS, Fond Papanace Constantin, I.210821, vol. 1, f. 241-248.

⁸¹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 304.

⁸² CNSAS, Fond Papanace Constantin, P.13997, vol. 1, f. 18, vol. 2, f. 13.

to defend Beza and they filled the courtroom at his trial.⁸³ One Legionary newspaper in Bucharest spoke of the imprisoned Aromanians as heroes, and berated ultra-nationalists for having forgotten the “hundreds of thousands of Romanian souls who could not even partake of the crumbs from the table of the joyous union and freedom from slavery for Romanians [in 1918].”⁸⁴

When they were released, Constantin Papanace (1904-1985) and Grigore Pihu (1903-1939) set about organizing Aromanian students in Bucharest into Legionary nests. They then sent these students as Legionary propagandists to the Aromanian communities in Duroster and Caliacra counties.⁸⁵ The Aromanians constituted an important part of the early Legionary movement in Bucharest. They alone contributed half of the funds for renting the Legion’s first office in the capital.⁸⁶ But for these students, the Legion was a means for perpetuating the Aromanian struggle. Despite their commitment to the Legion, they continued to refer to themselves as “Aromanian Legionaries” until several years after Codreanu’s death. Whereas most student nests contained members from different parts of the country, Aromanian Legionaries formed their own nests, preserving their identity as Aromanians within the Legion itself.

The second assassination attempt of 1930 took place that December. A high school student named Constantin Dumitrescu-Zăpadă walked into the offices of *Adevărul* and shot its editor, Emil Socor, wounding but not killing him. As Bucharest’s largest center-left daily, *Adevărul* was critical of the Legion, and Socor had been disliked by ultra-nationalists since he

⁸³ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 37/1931, f. 13-18, 22.

⁸⁴ St. M., “Cei 7 studenți Macedoneni închiși la Văcărești,” *Garda de Fer* (Bucharest), 1/1 (1 Sept 1930): 1.

⁸⁵ CNSAS, Fond Papanace Constantin, I.210821, vol. 1, f. 241-248.

⁸⁶ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #138, Dosar 2/1930, f. 91-93.

had exposed A. C. Cuza's major work on political economy as a plagiarism in 1911.⁸⁷

Dumitrescu refused to give any reason for trying to kill Socor, and claimed that he was following the orders of A. C. Cuza's step-son, Gheorghe Lefter.⁸⁸ He did admit to being a Legionary, but Codreanu did not take credit for ordering the assassination attempt. In the wake of Dumitrescu's crime, the National Peasant government led by Gheorghe Mironescu (1874-1949) dissolved and banned the Legion on 3 January 1931.⁸⁹ The attempted assassinations identified Codreanu and his followers as people of action who cherished deeds, not words. In a political climate characterized by empty rhetoric and broken electoral promises, public exhibitions of a political party's willingness to carry through on its threats were very attractive. Even if such actions put the Legionaries outside of the law, it gained them respect from students who had grown up hearing about revolutionary heroes like Tudor Vladimirescu (1780-1821) and Avram Iancu (1824-1872), whose willingness to shun legality had made them into national icons.

Earlier in 1930, the Legionaries had formed paramilitary "battalions" incorporated into a new organization called *Garda de Fier* (the Iron Guard).⁹⁰ Father Moța's newspaper, *Libertatea*, described the Iron Guard as a group of "fighters for people and law, the bravest and most passionate members of the Legion of the Archangel Michael from Iași, organized into disciplined ranks as in the military."⁹¹ Legionaries did not explicitly equate their battalions with the fascist paramilitary organizations elsewhere in Europe, but the similarities were not lost on contemporaries. Paramilitary violence had been central to the counter-revolutionary movements in Germany, Austria, and Hungary in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, providing

⁸⁷ Asandului, *A. C. Cuza*, 63-67.

⁸⁸ "Atentatul împotriva directorului nostru," *Dimineața*, 26/8629 (31 Dec 1930): 1; "Încercare de atentat împotriva directorului "Adevărului"," *Cuvântul*, 7/2045 (31 Dec 1930): 3.

⁸⁹ "S'au emis mandate de arestare contra șefilor "Gărzi de fier"," *Curentul*, (16 Jan 1931).

⁹⁰ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #138, Dosar 2/1930, f. 35.

⁹¹ *Libertatea* (10 July 1930); quoted in Heinen, "Arhanghelului Mihail", 181-182.

models for similar groups in the years to come.⁹² In Italy, Mussolini's *Squadristi* (Blackshirts) used distinctive uniforms, a hierarchical command structure, and gang violence to assert Fascist dominance over their Socialist rivals.⁹³ The *Squadristi*'s crucial role in Fascism's success closely linked similar movements with paramilitary violence in the European imagination.⁹⁴ In Spain, Radical Carlists and members of the *Sindicalismo Libre* (Free Trade Unions) showed how effective organized paramilitary groups could be as strikebreakers and as a means for creating a mass movement between 1919 and 1923.⁹⁵ Later in the 1920s, voters quickly came to identify the Nazi party with *Stoßtruppen* (Stormtrooper) marches, vandalism, and attacks on Jews, Communists, and Social Democrats.⁹⁶ The paramilitary units of the Iron Guard fitted neatly into this model, and showed that the Legionaries were part of a broad and increasingly successful European trend that was coming to be known as "fascism."

Once Legionaries had enough support in Bucharest they began dominating student canteens and dormitories through intimidation and violence. An investigation of one dormitory in 1932 found that gangs of theology students were involved in "militant politics" and fought with students from other faculties in the dormitories. Many of those living there were overdue in passing their exams (*repetenți*) or else had graduated. Legionaries held regular meetings in the building, and the student committee governing the dormitory had entirely lost control of the

⁹² Robert Gerwarth, "The Central European Counter-Revolution: Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria and Hungary after the Great War," *Past and Present* 200 (2008): 175-210; Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

⁹³ Adrian Lyttelton, "Fascism and Violence in Post-War Italy: Political Strategy and Social Conflict," in *Social Protest, Violence, and Terror in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe*, eds. Wolfgang Mommsen Gerhard Hirschfeld (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982) 257-274; Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristismus und in der deutschen SA* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002).

⁹⁴ Roberta Suzzi Valli, "The Myth of *Squadristismo* in the Fascist Regime," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35/2 (2000): 131-150.

⁹⁵ Colin Winston, *Workers and the right in Spain, 1900-1936* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985) 65-170.

⁹⁶ Richard Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany, 1925-1934* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Thomas Childers, "Voters and Violence: Political Violence and the Limits of National Socialist Mass Mobilization," *German Studies Review*, 13/3 (1990): 481-498; Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*.

situation.⁹⁷ There is some evidence to suggest that ultra-nationalist dominance of student dormitories had been going on in other places for some time, although earlier victims did not explicitly identify the trouble-makers as ultra-nationalists in their complaints. One student who worked at the canteen on Gutenberg street in 1931 – when Cuzists still met regularly there – said that hooligans had taken over the committee that ran the canteen and were feeding their friends for free, stealing from canteen funds, and distributing reduced-fare student train passes to non-students. When he objected they shouted him down at meetings and eventually replaced him with one of their own.⁹⁸ Another student complained of being assaulted by the porter and a student when he tried to enter a different dormitory in July that year, but the president of the dormitory supported the doorman's actions as if they were standard policy.⁹⁹

Legionaries in Iași faced more sustained opposition from the Cuzist Teodor Mociulski, who remained president of the ASC until late 1933. The ASC headquarters was only 220 yards away from the Legionary *Cămin*, and violence escalated once LANC youth organized “Assault Battalions” in March 1933.¹⁰⁰ When elections for office-holders took place later that month the Cuzists changed the date at the last minute in order to prevent Legionaries from voting. Legionaries challenged the Cuzists over this issue on 26 March. When they agreed to meet a week later to hold new elections, Mociulski advised his followers to come armed with knives and pieces of wood.¹⁰¹ Following a Cuzist meeting on the evening of the 28 March, one Cuzist student shouted “Long live our Assault Battalions” while passing the Legionary *Cămin* on the way to the ASC headquarters. A Legionary by the name of N. Arnăutu heard him and called

⁹⁷ AN – Bucharest, Fond Universitatea din București, Rectorat, Dosar 11/1932, f. 32-33, 40.

⁹⁸ AN – Bucharest, Fond Universitatea din București, Rectorat, Dosar 8/1931, f. 8-12; USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #136, Dosar 6/1927, f. 95.

⁹⁹ AN – Bucharest, Fond Universitatea din București, Rectorat, Dosar 11/1931, f. 4.

¹⁰⁰ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #1, Dosar 25.023M, f. 30.

¹⁰¹ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de poliție, Dosar 52/1933, f. 106.

back “Where are your Assault Battalions?” Arnăutu whistled, and fifteen Legionary students immediately appeared, armed and ready to fight. Only the presence of policemen prevented bloodshed.¹⁰² The conflict continued into April, when eight Legionaries and seven Cuzists were arrested after the groups clashed once again.¹⁰³

That fall, both Legionaries and Cuzists began terrorizing theaters and cinemas, demanding free entry to shows.¹⁰⁴ Legionaries stole an ASC flag when the building was evacuated by the police later that year, but then it went missing from a Legionary’s room where it was being held. Accusations of treachery immediately flew back and forth amongst Legionaries, and Ion Banea promised to shoot anyone who had allowed their rivals’ flag to be stolen.¹⁰⁵ The Cuzists responded by stealing a Legionary flag from the *Cămin*, and an open battle ensued. Both sides were armed with clubs and knives, and three of the combatants ended up in hospital with serious injuries.¹⁰⁶ Banea replaced Mociulski as ASC president later in 1933, and promptly announced “the student movement has begun anew. It is led by the Legionaries.”¹⁰⁷

Other student groups followed. In an oral history interview from 1999, Mircea Dimitriu (1913-2005) recalled that the earliest Legionary nests in Timișoara were formed of students who had been affiliated with the LANC.¹⁰⁸ By the end of 1933 both the Technical School at Timișoara and the Petru Maior Society in Cluj were firmly in Legionary hands.¹⁰⁹ Isolated Legionary cells appeared throughout the country during this period, such as the Blood

¹⁰² CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 4, f. 310-312.

¹⁰³ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #97, Dosar 566, f. 332-334.

¹⁰⁴ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #335, Dosar 1722/1937, f. 48, 50.

¹⁰⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de poliție, Dosar 52/1933, f. 123.

¹⁰⁶ “Gravă încărcare între cuziști și codreniști la Iași,” *Dimineața* (25 Apr 1933).

¹⁰⁷ AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #335, Dosar 1722/1937, f. 49; “Congresul studenților moldoveni,” *Calendarul*, 473 (16 Sept 1933): 3.

¹⁰⁸ Mircea Dimitriu, “Istorie comentată a mișcării legionare. 1927-1999,” in Gabriel Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa* (Norcross, GA: Criterion Publishing, 2001) 69.

¹⁰⁹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 252/1939, f. 242; CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 7, f. 1.

Brotherhood formed at the “Prince Nicolae” High School in Sighișoară. Led by Stelian Stăncinel, some of the students established this Blood Brotherhood after a university student named Emil Stoenescu visited them from Iași in 1929. Stoenescu told them about Codreanu and the Legion, and after he left the boys took the initiative and formed their own group. They were not in regular contact with Iași, but they still held weekly meetings while walking through the fields dressed as boy scouts, collected dues, sang “student songs,” and avidly read anti-Semitic and anti-masonic publications.¹¹⁰ The nest formed in Sibiu by Nicu Iancu also initially ran without any connections with Iași. Iancu formed the group when he returned home after the first year of his law degree in Bucharest in 1931. He gathered together some colleagues from his old high school and a couple of lawyers who had been part of the student protests of 1922, all of whom had heard of the Legion and were eager to participate.¹¹¹ Even without immediate personal ties to the Legion, such small, isolated groups were able to sustain themselves by drawing on the literature and publicity produced by Legionaries in Iași and Bucharest.

Students had been at the forefront of ultra-nationalist agitation during the 1920s, and gaining their support was crucial for the Legion’s success. An indication of how important students were for the Legion is that students featured prominently in convenience samples of Legionary activists involved in two of the movement’s defining moments – the trial over the assassination of Ion G. Duca in 1933 and the Carmen Sylva work camp in 1936. Of the 78 Legionaries accused of complicity in Ion G. Duca’s assassination, students were by far the largest social group. It is likely that those on trial represented a cross-section of the Legion’s Bucharest leadership rather than the movement as a whole, but this sample shows how important students were within the upper echelons of the Legion.

¹¹⁰ Stelian Stăncinel, *Lângă Căpitan* (Buenos Aires: Pământul Stramoșec, 1978) 6-7.

¹¹¹ Nicu Iancu, *Sub steagul lui Codreanu: momente din trecutul legionar* (Madrid: Editura Dacia, 1973) 11-13.

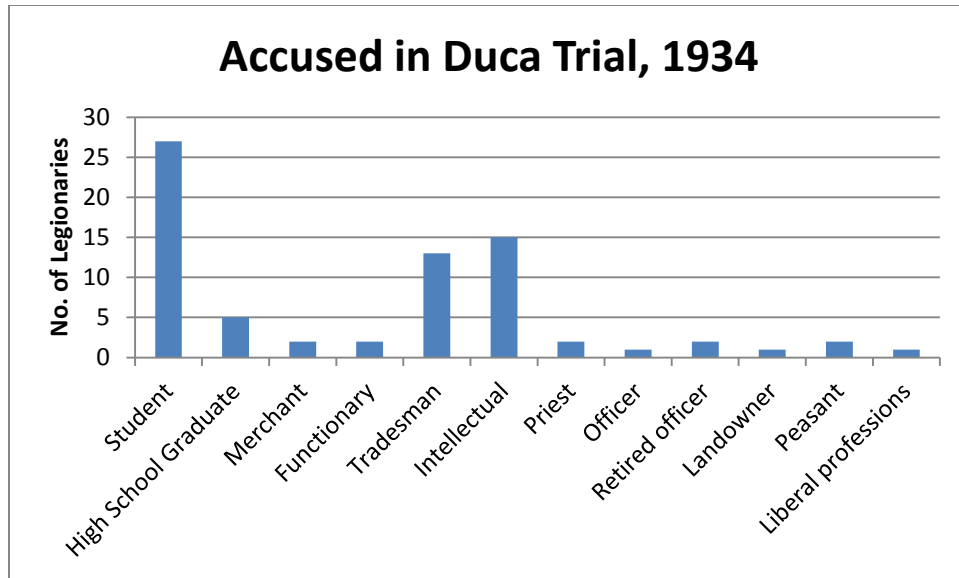


Figure 14: Legionaries accused of involvement in Ion G. Duca's assassination.¹¹²

Students were also overrepresented at the Carmen Sylva work camp in the summer of 1936. Of those whose attendance was recorded, there were 710 men, 82 women, and 50 children. Excluding children, students made up the largest social group (27.8 percent), followed by the unemployed (19.4 percent) and tradesmen (13 percent). The low numbers of workers is striking, but like those involved in customer service or office jobs, they could probably not afford to be away from their workplaces. Students were on vacation at this time, and self-employed tradesmen would also have had more flexible schedules.

¹¹² Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 364.

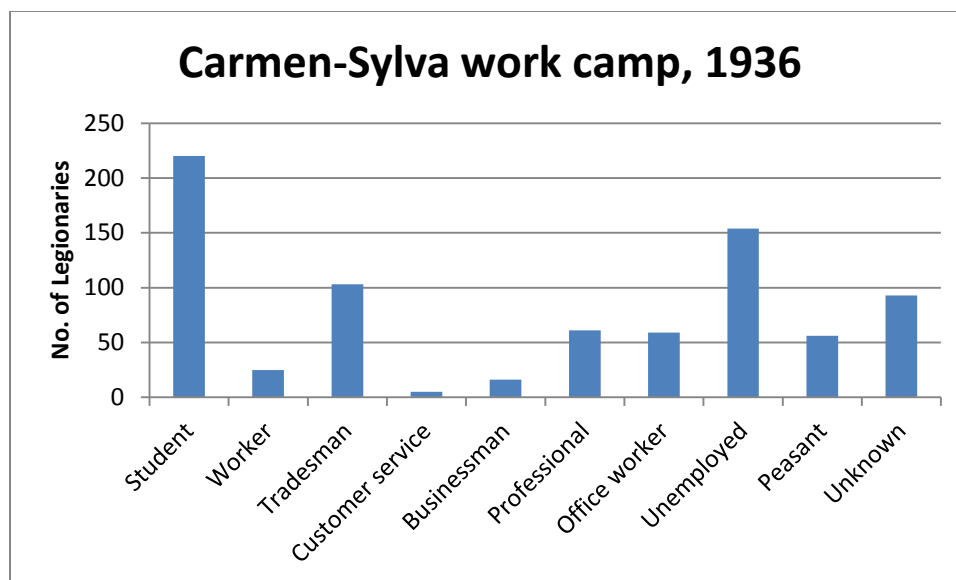


Figure 15: Occupations of Legionaries at Carmen Sylva work camp in 1936.¹¹³

In addition to university students, Armin Heinen notes that there were a particularly large number of high school students involved in the Legion. He writes, “the Iron Guard had its own groups in 139 high schools in the summer of 1935, and a year later that number grew to 205. At that time, 3,031 high school students were enrolled in the Legion, which represents exactly 2 percent of the total number of adolescents in the secondary education system.”¹¹⁴ Some of these students would have gone on to university during the late 1930s, further bolstering the importance of students to the movement.

The events of 1922 had entered into ultra-nationalist mythology by the early 1930s, and dominating groups such as the UNSCR, the ASC, or the CSB was necessary if Legionaries wanted to be seen as the legitimate successors of the movement of 1922. Sites such as the *Cămin Cultural Creștin* in Iași were hotly contested because they represented this past, as well as for the economic and social benefits they provided. Legionaries used several distinct strategies for

¹¹³ Ibid., 361-362.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 366.

taking student politics out from under A. C. Cuza's control. Inside Iași itself, gang violence, rituals, oath-taking, marches, and singing bonded the group together and gave it a distinctive, visible presence on the streets. In other major student centers Legionaries used a combination of speeches, violence, and intimidation to dominate dormitories and student societies. They distributed *Pământul strămoșesc* in areas without universities, sending propagandists to support small groups whenever they emerged in high schools or small towns. Finally, the support of prominent LANC figures in regional centers gave Legionaries access to existing ultra-nationalist networks. Seen from the perspective of the students, the Legion was just another faction within a well-established anti-Semitic movement, but already during this period Legionaries began to establish themselves as an independent fascist party with its own symbols, vocabulary, and organization.

7.0 THE LEGION IN THE VILLAGE

In November 1928 twelve Legionaries set out for villages in Moldova, Bucovina, and the Banat. As befitted an organization with no money, they went in pairs and on foot. Codreanu assigned each pair a region of between thirty and one hundred miles, and asked them to report on their progress once every two weeks.¹ From this point onwards, the Legion's presence in rural areas grew, and Legionaries introduced a number of folk elements into their propaganda, including dressing up as *haiduci* (outlaws) and dancing with peasants. *Siguranța* agents wrote in February 1931 that although the Legion's rise was slow, it was making steady gains in the countryside because "its leaders are teachers and priests scattered throughout the villages," where rural intellectuals enjoyed a disproportionate political influence.² But links between villages and towns were just as important as what was happening inside the villages themselves. The first Legionary nests in Dolj county were established by three young peasants in the village of Mârșani on 23 April 1931. Three months later, each of them led a nest of his own and another nest had been established in the neighboring village of Damian. Students from the area who were studying in Bucharest learned of these nests that winter. They immediately organized propaganda pamphlets and a Blood Brotherhood in the county capital of Craiova, adding an urban dimension to the peasants' organizing and eventually provoking police retaliation.³

The rural-urban divide was quite permeable during the early 1930s, allowing Legionaries to use cities as hubs for proselytizing rural areas where peasants had relatives or friends who lived in the cities. For example, when Codreanu acted as a godfather at the baptism of Amos Horațiu Pop's son in the Transylvanian *plasă* (a small town or collection of villages) of Luduș during 1928, the ceremony was attended by roughly a hundred local intellectuals and peasants

¹ "O nouă campanie," *Pământul stramoșesc*, 2/21 (1 Nov 1928): 6.

² USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #138, Dosar 2/1930, f. 115.

³ "Istoricul redeșptării naționale în Oltenia," *Garda Jiului*, 1/1 (4 Dec 1932): 1-2.

from nearby villages.⁴ Migration towards the cities was widespread, and only 15 percent of the inhabitants of Bucharest in 1930 had been born there.⁵ Factory workers returning home brought news and urban customs into the village, as did state-run institutions such as the army and the school.⁶ Legionaries tried appealing to peasants using folk costumes, music, and dancing, but peasant reactions show that they saw the Legionaries as people quite different from themselves. Peasants joined the Legion for a variety of reasons, but not because they were fooled into thinking that the Legionary students were peasants.

Labor activists and sociologists in Romania often did not distinguish between factory workers and farmers during the interwar period: both groups were considered *muncitori*.⁷ In 1910, for example, urban workers in Bucharest spoke about the 1907 peasant uprising as if it had been their own.⁸ Nicolae Teban, a Legionary working in an armaments factory in Cugir, recorded that his nest was run by a local peasant. His memoirs express no surprise with the fact that this should have been the case.⁹ Propagandists used cities as hubs from which to proselytize villages and they sometimes managed to establish nests in villages themselves, but villagers also came into the cities for Legionary meetings. A list of 48 Legionaries in Focșani compiled by policemen in 1930 shows that 30 percent of the Legionary movement here actually lived outside the city. None of these people worked in agriculture – most were either students or high school

⁴ Vasile Coman, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 1, AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 1/1980, f. 5-7.

⁵ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 345.

⁶ Sabin Manuila, *Structure et évolution de la population rurale* (Bucharest: Institut Central de Statistique, 1940) 22-23.

⁷ Constantin Ștefănescu, “Munca în viața economică,” in Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 3, 71-88; Executive Committee of the Social-Democratic Party of Romania, “Către muncitorii și cetățenii capitalei,” *România muncitoare*, 11 Mar 1910, reprinted in Institutul de Studii Istorice și Social-Politice de pe lângă C.C. al P.C.R., *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1968) 124-125.

⁸ Congress of the Social-Democratic Party, Jan 31-Feb 2, 1910, “Moțiuni adoptate la congres,” reprinted in Institutul de Studii Istorice, *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești*, 97-103.

⁹ Nicolae Teban, “Corneliu Codreanu și muncitorii,” in Stanescu, ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 261.

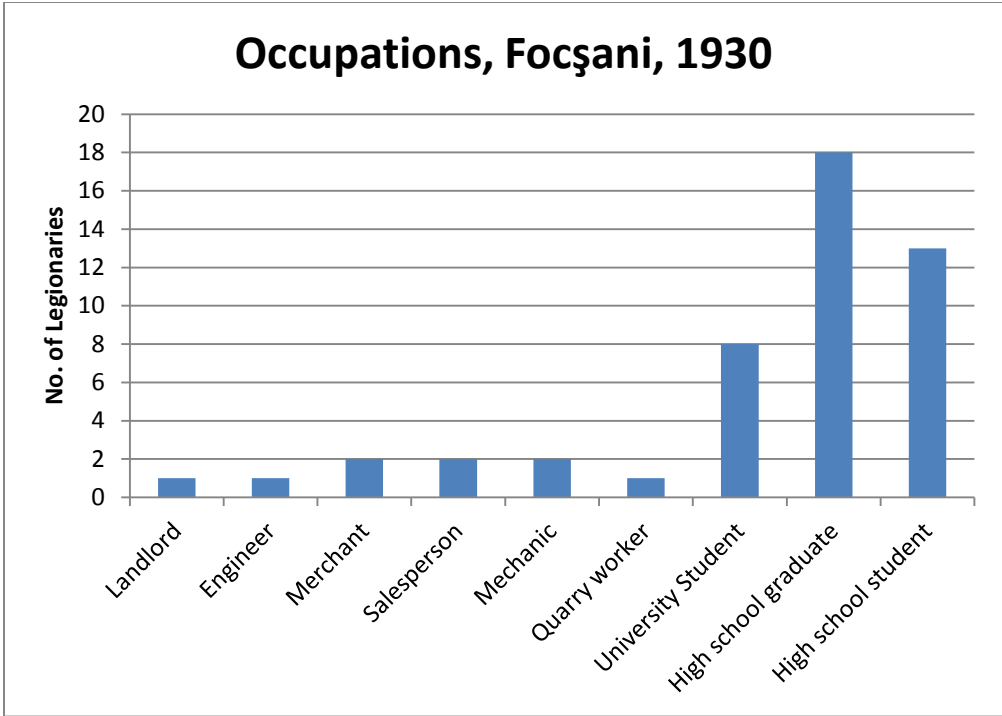


Figure 17: Occupations of known Legionaries in Focșani, 1930.

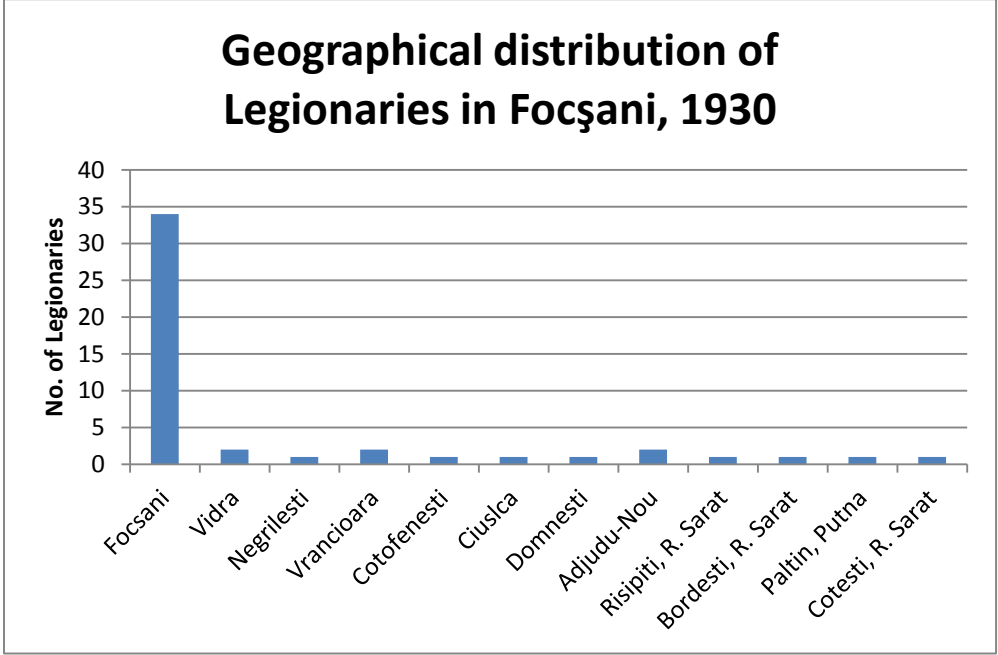


Figure 18: Geographical distribution of Legionaries in Focșani, 1930.¹⁰

¹⁰ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #140, Dosar 9/1930, f. 225.

graduates with no fixed occupation – so it is likely that they travelled into Focșani for work as well as to participate in Legionary politics.

7.1 MOUNTED PROPAGANDA TOURS

Propaganda tours amongst peasants began in earnest in December 1929, when Codreanu rode through villages in Bessarabia together with a crowd that eventually reached 30-40 horsemen, all wearing turkey feathers in their hats. Gendarmes initially prevented them from holding a public meeting at the market in Berești, but ignored them after the Legionaries set out towards more isolated villages. Groups of Legionaries ran ahead of the horsemen to announce their arrival, and villagers apparently received them with lighted candles and singing, after which Codreanu and others made speeches in the village church or the square.¹¹ The feathers were an ad hoc attempt by the Legionaries to dress themselves as *haiduci*, which became a key image for Legionaries during these years. *Haiduci* were outlaws who fought against local oppressors, and were increasingly popular in Romanian literature during the nineteenth century. Ballads celebrating these sorts of heroes were an important part of nation-building projects promoted by governments and activists throughout East-Central Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and *haiduc* tales were particularly common around Iași.¹² Legionary songs of the early 1930s placed the Legion firmly in the *haiduc* tradition. Viorica Lăzărescu, a student from Iași, sang “My ancestors were *haiduci* with muskets on their backs / Which gave justice to the poor.”¹³ Another student from Iași, Simon Lefter, promised in his music that ‘the time of the

¹¹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 285-297.

¹² Philip Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004) 39f; Gheorghe Vrăbie, *Balada populară română* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1966) 362ff.

¹³ Viorica Lăzărescu, “Străbunii mei,” April 1932, in USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #102, Dosar 700, f. 52.

haiduci is coming’, and called upon his listeners to “Leave the plow in the furrows / Abandon the scythe / The way of the forest and the gun / To embrace.”¹⁴

Codreanu and small groups of Legionaries continued mounted tours of remote areas during the winter of 1929/30, travelling to villages in Transylvania and Bessarabia where they held impromptu meetings at market places and were intermittently prevented from carrying out propaganda by local gendarmes. These self-styled “crusaders” called upon the assembled peasants to “unite” and to “create a new destiny for our people.”¹⁵ They also helped with petty tasks to demonstrate their solidarity with the peasantry. According to the Legionary Dumitru Banea, Legionaries “went into the fields and, seeing someone filling a cart with hay, one of them took his place while the others spoke to him about our doctrine and our struggle.”¹⁶ Constantin Argetoianu (1871-1952), a prominent politician and outspoken critic of the Legion, saw such practices as cynical attempts to deceive peasants into thinking that Codreanu was a messianic figure or a saint:

It was thus said that groups of students spread into villages, silently helped the peasants in their work, repaired roads and bridges, spaded channels for still waters and sprang wells in dry areas, then left announcing that in the following days ‘the One who had to come would come to the village.’ Indeed, ‘the Captain’ came: riding a white horse, accompanied by several lads, he used to stop in the center of the village, get off the horse, kiss the earth, and then go away without a word.

People watched with their eyes wide open, shook their heads and whispered:

‘Was this the Saint?’ Some Legionary agents then spread into the ‘visited’

¹⁴ Simon Lefter, “Hora legionarilor,” in “Cântecele Gărzii de Fer,” April 1932, USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #102, Dosar: 700, f. 49.

¹⁵ Secret Service Report on Codreanu’s activities, June 1927-Jan 1930, reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 2, 204-219.

¹⁶ Banea, *Acuzat*, 13.

villages and, hiding their real identity under all kinds of pretexts, completed the action of conquering the souls.¹⁷

But the Legion's approach to propaganda was also a practical one that exploited older ultra-nationalist networks such as the Archers in Bucovina. In 1930 several Archers groups reorganized themselves along the lines of the Iron Guard's paramilitary structure. Over the next two years, Codreanu followed a deliberate policy of focusing on only six counties in order to make the most of the Legion's limited resources.¹⁸ Teams of Legionaries contested two bi-elections in this manner, one in Neamț county on 31 August 1931, when Codreanu won a seat in Parliament, and the other in Tutova county on 17 April 1932; that seat went to Ion Zelea Codreanu.¹⁹ Neamț county consistently voted for whichever party stood the best chance of forming a government, but the ruling National Liberal party did not contest the seat in 1931.²⁰ The lack of a government candidate that year meant that the roughly 100 Legionary propagandists were relatively unmolested by the authorities in Neamț county. In 1932 they faced concerted opposition from the gendarmerie in Tutova county; Legionaries were shot at by gendarmes and barricaded in abandoned buildings for up to 48 hours with no food or water. When one group of propagandists arrived at the village of Băcani, where other Legionaries were losing a pitched battle with gendarmes for control of the gendarmerie post, Nicolae Totu ordered his followers to sound the bells of the church, calling out the villagers to support them as if during a popular uprising.²¹

¹⁷ Constantin Argetoianu, quoted in Iordachi, *Charisma*, 56. In an interrogation from 1938, Gheorghe Istrate confessed that "on the night of 7 June 1931 they were sent by the Legion through villages to announce to the peasants that the King, the Emperor had arrived." CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 5, f. 22.

¹⁸ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #138, Dosar 2/1930, f. 3-4.

¹⁹ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 188-197.

²⁰ Stelu Șerban, *Elite, partide și spectru politic în România interbelică* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006) 80-82.

²¹ Banea, *Acuzat*, 16-24; Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 317-319, 338-340; Tudor Bradu, "Printre legionarii mușchetari," in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 26-30.

Evoking the *haiduc* tradition in song and ringing church bells glamorized the Legion's political program and its violence. National-Peasantist politicians drove into rural areas in cars when they carried out electoral propaganda, and wore suits while speaking to pre-arranged crowds.²² Coming on foot or on horseback and helping with the harvest implied that Legionaries came from similar social backgrounds as the peasants and were thus able to better represent them than urban politicians. Groups of Legionaries ate and slept in the homes of local sympathizers at the beginning of their propaganda trips and when they were in new areas they begged hospitality from anyone who was willing to give it to them. According to Legionary memoirs, the peasants went out of their way to tend to wounded Legionaries and were extremely generous with their food and their homes.²³ Enthusiastic peasants occasionally joined the propagandists, either recruiting other villagers or joining a team as it travelled around the countryside. In Vasile Coman's account of the electoral campaign in Neamț county, one old woman told them that "from this day forward I will shout aloud all that I have learned from these gentlemen students. I will tell the women when we go to church, when I meet them at the well and wherever my path takes me."²⁴

Expressions of sympathy did not necessarily mean that peasants were exclusively committed to the Legionary movement. When questioned about their political affiliations in 1929, three policemen who joined the Legion in the Transylvanian village of Gănești told their superiors that "before they became policemen, back when they were civilians in the village, they were enrolled in the Legion of the Archangel Michael just as other villagers were – with or without their permission. They enthusiastically took part in the meetings of this League [*sic*] that

²² Vasile Coman, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 1, AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 1/1980, f. 40-48.

²³ Coman, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 1, AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 1/1980, f. 40-48; Banea, *Acuzat*, 16-24.

²⁴ Coman, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 1, AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 1/1980, f. 37.

were held in the village, but they also took part in the meetings of other parties when they were announced, especially on holidays, because like all villagers they were curious to see something new.”²⁵ These men would have lost their jobs for being Legionaries, so it is difficult to know how honest they were about their allegiances. Nonetheless, the picture they paint of peasants as swinging voters intrigued by new political trends was confirmed by a sociological study of the village of Ghigoești in Neamț county during the 1930s. This study found that just under half of the village’s 250 inhabitants actively supported a political party and were divided amongst all of the major political parties. These peasants were apparently interested only in personal gains that they hoped would materialize when their chosen party came to power. Ideology was completely irrelevant to voters in Ghigoești. Discussing the other half of the village, the sociologists commented that, “more than 50 percent view such displays with apathy, and even irony. These people generally vote with the government, or under the sway of the moment, in which case they try new groups – not because they are swayed by the party’s ideology but out of the desire to see something new, to see what others who have never been in power will do.”²⁶

7.2 RURAL PROPAGANDISTS

As the Legion became more established, nests spread from village to village. An investigation carried out by the *Securitate* in Mehedinți county in 1954 makes it possible to reconstruct how the Legion first spread through this region, showing how larger towns acted as organizational hubs for peasant Legionaries. *Securitate* agents interviewed a number of peasant leaders in the

²⁵ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #140, Dosar 9/1930, f. 210, 215-217.

²⁶ Gheorghe Mareș and Dumitru Mareș, *Monografia satului Ghigoești* (1938); quoted in Radu, *Electoratul din România*, 111.



Figure 18: Mehedinți county, 1938.²⁷

²⁷ Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 2, 277.

south of the county, collecting enough information to resolve various discrepancies between the accounts. Legionary organizing in villages around Cujmiru began in 1932, when Florea Odor (1893-) met Sergiu Storjescu, a pharmacist from the town of Vânju Mare. He had been introduced to him by Alexandru Popescu, who was working as an administrator for an estate near the village of Gârla Mare.²⁸ Florea Odor lived in Salcia, a small village near Vrața, not far from the Danube River. He had finished five classes of primary school and inherited 3.5 hectares of land from his parents. Odor had fought in the First World War, but when he met Torjescu and Popescu in 1932 he was only engaged in agricultural work.²⁹ Odor established the first Legionary nest in Salcia, which he named after Tudor Vladimirescu, a Romanian hero who had led an uprising against the Phanariots in 1821. One of his first recruits was Constantin I. Sfâr (1907-), another farmer who had finished only four years of his education but who had slightly more land – 4.85 hectares.³⁰ Sfâr formed his own nest in 1935, named Constantin Brâncoveanu after the Wallachian ruler who had died at the hands of the Turks. There were three nests in Salcia by the mid-1930s, but Sfâr had to dissolve his after only a couple of years since he could not find enough people to join it. Ion Tâmbăluța (1912-) also joined in 1932, and he became one of the region's most active Legionaries after returning from military service in 1937.³¹

Legionaries in Salcia kept in touch with developments elsewhere through Eugen Vladulescu, who was a theology student in Bucharest. He would bring news and instructions back to the nest leaders in Salcia, when then passed them on to the other members.³² Florin Odor says that he also received instructions both from Sergiu Storjescu in Vânju Mare and from

²⁸ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, P.014037, vol. 1, f. 23.

²⁹ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, I.257541, vol. 1, f. 28-29.

³⁰ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, I.257541, vol. 2, f. 45-46.

³¹ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, I.257541, vol. 2, f. 29-30, vol. 4, f. 11.

³² CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, I.257541, vol. 2, f. 45.

Legionaries in the county capital of Turnu Severin.³³ In 1936 Odor and Storjescu began doing propaganda in Vrața, a slightly larger village than Salcia, where they managed to establish three nests.³⁴ Vrața also had connections with Legionaries outside the village, in particular through Marin Iscru (1908-), a carpenter who had temporarily moved to Brașov in Transylvania in 1935 looking for work. He discovered the Legion there, and became a leader in Vrața when he returned in 1936.³⁵ Finally, another source from September 1937 mentions a sailor named Dumitru Săbău from the village of Gârla, 3.7 miles east of Vrața. Săbău lived in Vienna at this time, where he worked fueling Romanian vessels that passed through. It is not clear if he still had connections with his natal village, but he had established a Legionary nucleus in Vienna that did propaganda amongst Romanian sailors whose vessels docked there.³⁶

The first Legionary nests in Salcia and Vrața were established by peasants of average means. They had enough education to cover basic literacy skills, and owned enough arable land to support their families. The Legion's leaders in these villages had travelled for work or during military service, and both Ion Tâmbăluța and Marin Iscru became committed Legionaries immediately after returning to the village from elsewhere. In both villages it was a pharmacist from a town 23 miles away who first convinced the peasants to organize as Legionaries, which is surprising given that the mayor of Drincea, a village near Pungina, only 16 miles north of Salcia, was a Legionary who ran three nests in his own village.³⁷ The story of Legionary expansion in these villages suggests some tentative conclusions. First, it was a slow process. Large nests did not form as soon as Legionary propagandists appeared in a village, but grew steadily thanks to the work of local peasants over several years. Second, connections with urban

³³ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, P.014037, vol. 1, f. 23.

³⁴ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, P.014037, vol. 1, f. 25.

³⁵ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, I.257541, vol. 1, f. 23-25.

³⁶ AN – Cluj, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție, Dosar 381/1937, f. 115.

³⁷ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluța Ion, I.257541, vol. 1, f. 18-20.

centers through students studying in Bucharest or carpenters travelling to Braşov were crucial for sustaining the movement and for inspiring young activists, but the nests themselves were run by local peasants. Third, the story of Legionary expansion in villages was not one of perpetual growth. Sfârū may have been able to establish a third nest in Salcia in 1937, but there were not enough people interested in Legionary politics to be able to sustain three nests in such a small place. Whereas Legionaries in cities had a seemingly inexhaustible pool of potential recruits, Legionaries in rural areas had to move on to neighboring villages once they had approached all sympathetic inhabitants of their own village.

As they became more involved in Legionary activism, some people left their villages entirely and became itinerant propagandists. Vasile Coman (1912-), for example, was born in the settlement of Luduş, in Transylvania's Turda county.³⁸ He grew up reading Fr. Ion Moţa's *Libertatea*, and when Nicolae Totu murdered a Jewish high school student in Cernăuţi in 1926, his village took up a collection and sent it to Totu via Fr. Moţa's newspaper. When Corneliu Zelea Codreanu broke away from A. C. Cuza and established the Legion of the Archangel Michael in 1927, a number of people from Luduş took out subscriptions to the Legion's first newspaper, *Pămîntul strămoşesc*. Codreanu visited Luduş in 1928 to act as godfather at the baptism of Amos Horaţiu Pop's grandson, Codrenul. Pop was Coman's uncle, and as a publican he was well-connected in the town. When Codreanu visited again during a propaganda tour, Pop and other ultra-nationalists in Luduş hosted the Legionaries and organized turkey feathers for them to wear. As a 19 year old boy, Coman was eager to participate in the Legionary electoral campaign in Neamţ county in 1931, but his parents and his uncle considered him too young. Undeterred, Coman managed to get money for his travel expenses from a local school teacher,

³⁸ This account of Vasile Coman's life is based entirely on the first volume of his unpublished memoirs. These are found in AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 1/1980, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 1.

and he joined roughly 100 other young people who walked from village to village campaigning for Codreanu. Coman discovered a passion for public speaking during this campaign, and he sparred verbally with propagandists from other parties while haranguing onlookers to support him. He left home again three months after the Neamț bi-elections to help organize the Legion in the neighboring Mureș county. Coman did two propaganda marches through Mureș county during 1931 and 1932, arguing with the Greek-Catholic priests there and trying to convince local Hungarians that they were actually “magyarized” Romanians.

When the Tutova bi-elections took place in April 1932, Coman once again volunteered as a propagandist. Together with other Legionaries, he marched long distances on foot, fought with gendarmes, and was eventually arrested. Coman campaigned in his home county of Turda during the general elections of July 1932, and in 1933 he joined Legionary *echipe morții* (death teams), conducting violent Legionary propaganda campaigns in Alba county, when he was arrested once again after fighting with gendarmes. Despite being injured in these clashes, Coman travelled to Bucharest in August 1933 to help build *Casa Legionarilor Răniți* (the House for Wounded Legionaries) – later *Casa Verde* (the Green House). Here he met Legionaries from all over the country, and participated in an official visit from the Italian diplomat Eugenio Coselschi. Coman was arrested together with nine other Legionaries from Turda county when the Iron Guard was dissolved on 10 December 1933, and then again following the assassination of the Prime Minister, Ion G. Duca, on 29 December 1933. The following year, Codreanu awarded him three “White Crosses” for his contributions to the Legion. In October 1936 Coman moved to Târgu Mureș. His Legionary activities here left him no time to earn money, so he lived and ate at the houses of various Legionaries who wanted to support his activism.

7.3 MUSIC AND DANCE

Legionaries distinguished themselves during their rural propaganda campaigns by their use of folk music and dance. When they came into villages, Legionary propagandists would dance a *hora* together with the locals.³⁹ This is a peasant dance in which everyone links hands and dances in a circle. The *hora* is almost unparalleled as a vehicle for creating solidarity. Sufficiently uncomplicated to include even the least capable dancer, it draws people into the celebration rather than turning the crowd into onlookers. Grasping the hands of two other people and looking directly at other dancers, participants in a *hora* tangibly experience a joyful, organic community moving together to a common tune. A *hora* could be spontaneous, but more often it was an organized event attended by young people from several villages.⁴⁰ In his memoirs, the Legionary Nicolae-Nicu Păun writes that at a work camp in 1933 at Padina, a village near Buzău, Legionaries danced their own *hora* and sang Legionary songs at the time when villagers would normally gather to sing and dance. The Legionary *hora*, he says, “was well known among all our people there.”⁴¹ At times Legionary propaganda involved only song and dance, without explanation or political speeches.⁴² Legionaries danced *horas* both in their propaganda and when they relaxed together of an evening amongst themselves.⁴³

Early Legionary songs frequently evoked images from peasant life even though most were written by students. Interwar nationalists frequently portrayed peasants as the quintessential Romanians, and so if Legionaries were to be the perfect Romanians, they had to identify

³⁹ “Hora legionarilor,” by Simion Lefter, is sung to the folk melody “Foaie verde, iarbă deasă.” Tudor V. Cucu, *Totul pentru țară, neam și Dumnezeu* (Brașov: Editura Transilvania Expres, 1998) 301. cf. Vasile Coman, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 1, AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 1/1980, f. 31-49.

⁴⁰ P. Ștefănuță, “Hora în regiunea Iurcenilor,” *Sociologie românească*, 3/10-12 (1938): 534-537.

⁴¹ Nicolae Nicu Păun, *Un soldat pe baricadă idealului Legionary: “Audiatur et altera pars”* (Brașov, n.d.) 121.

⁴² CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 3, f. 235.

⁴³ Vera Totu, “Jilava,” *13 Jilava*, 7/1 (29 Nov 1940): 5; N.A., “O tabara studenteasca la mare,” *Calendarul*, 439 (7 Aug 1933): 3.

themselves as peasants.⁴⁴ Viorica Lăzărescu's song "*Străbunii mei*" ("My Ancestors") describes her ancestors as plowmen and shepherds as well as *haiduci*, and has them "living honestly in poor homes" and "kneeling before the cross (*troița*)" as they piously sought after their salvation. These same ancestors are now sleeping in their "holy soil," the song says, which gave Lăzărescu and her colleagues a filial imperative to defend that soil.⁴⁵ Some of these songs were very local, often reflecting the situations for which they were written. "*Marșul legionarilor Tutoveoi*" ("March of the Tutovean Legionaries"), for example, focuses on the county in which Legionaries staged an election campaign in 1932.⁴⁶ Others referred to specific regions of Romania, reminding the singer of his or her solidarity with Romanians elsewhere in the country who were living in similar situations.⁴⁷

While these songs celebrated peasant life, they rarely reproduced folk musical forms. Few extant Legionary songs are folk melodies, and even some of those that are were not necessarily Romanian.⁴⁸ Instead of folk songs, Legionaries often used marches. The three songs reproduced below were printed in *Îndemnul* (*The Advice*), a Legionary newspaper from the early 1930s. The first two were written by students and the third by a priest. All three are marches with regular meters and simple, repetitive melodies in a limited vocal range. Notably, the third song, "*Venim de la Dunărea albastră*" ("We Come from the Blue Danube"), is written in a minor key,

⁴⁴ Katherine Verdery, "National Ideology and National Character in Interwar Romania," and Marian Papahagi, "The 'National Essence' in Interwar Romanian Literary Life," in Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery eds., *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995) 103-134, 157-180.

⁴⁵ Lăzărescu, "Străbunii mei".

⁴⁶ "Marșul legionarilor Tutoveoi," in "Cântecele Gărzii de Fer," April 1932, USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #102, Dosar: 700, f. 49.

⁴⁷ Mihail Stelescu, "Venim de la Dunere," in USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #102, Dosar: 700, f. 49. Cf. the numerous region-specific marches reproduced in Cucu, *Totul pentru țară*, 266-279.

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Adriana Helbig for this observation, who noted that one of the few Legionary songs based on folk melodies was actually Ukrainian.

CÂNTECE LEGIONARE:

Înainte!

Versuri de **Viorela Lăzrescu**

Tempo de marș

E zi ua de luptă ră, în na in - te La luptă le gi' urmeo neache
 ma... șo a pa rama cu pieptu ri le noa - tre Tă mână lu' ce de
 mă nea lega noi șo a pa rama cu pieptu ri le noa tre Tă mână lu' ce de

Dreptatea e cu noi și toți străbuni
 Se dör scula din ori și ce ogor
 Și vor lupta din nou cu'nversunare
 Pentru pământul strămoșesc al lor.

E zlua bitruțelor visate.
 De vremuri suferințele sau strâne.
 Ne-am săturat de liftele streine
 Ne-am săturat de nedreptăți și plâne.

Cântec de atac

Versuri de **Mih. Stelescu**

Tempo de marș

Dez teapla-te Românoodala și nu mai fi ne pă să tor Ca
 ta ca ne mge rucăia ta De dus marul kahoșilor Hai de fi Românii
 nu mai stăți Din greul am vă deșteptăți Hai de că te faci și vă in ca ma fi Hai, efi

Doar tinerete și forță să fim
 Căci noi suntem viitorul,
 O Românie nouă să clădim,
 Să reînvițelăm poporul.
 Hai la atac, Legionare votos,
 În frunte e căpitanul.

La al său strigăt de atac vijellos,
 Să se'narmeze tot neamul.
 Politicianul și jidanul
 Sunt al poporulul călăt,
 Ne-au supt până acum țărâmul
 Ne-au 'nchis pe falnicul stăcăt.

Venim de la Dunărea-albastră

Tempo di marcia

„Ve nim de la Dunăre-albastră și li pa, Ve nim ca suntem mușche
 tari De via țo și șapte nre i ni ma plă ra, venim ca suntem lego-
 nari De via țo și șapte nre i ni ma plă ra, ve nim ca suntem legionari.

La murmurul dulce al Dunării noastre
 Aștat-am trecutul strămoșesc;
 În valuri cristale stau ș'astăzi ne șterse,
 Siveale de sânge turcesc.

Dar fruntea semeșă ș'al nostru braț
 scălt
 Va'nvinge dușmanul curând
 Și Ștefan vent-va la ceasul cel sortit
 Să aducă și spada-i la rând.

Venim de la Dunărea-albastră și lină
 Venim căci suntem la aman
 La noi toți de jale au'ntrima plină
 Șăpân e păgânul jdan.

Suntem dunărenii, voinici fără teamă
 Ce știm neînvinși să luptăm,
 Și acum când la luptă Legiunea ne
 lcheamă.

Trăească Cornelu strigăm,
 Armonizate de Pr. D. N. Ionescu

Figure 19: "Legionary Songs"⁴⁹

⁴⁹ "Cântece legionare," *Îndemnul*, 6/3 (n.d.), USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #97, Dosar 566, f. 200.

whereas most western marches are in major keys.⁵⁰ Although this is not a hard and fast rule, transposing a march into a minor key usually has the effect of making it sound more serious and melancholy, as in Chopin's famous funeral march in B-flat minor. Whether or not these were original melodies is unclear, but they bear strong similarities with the military marches that were popular throughout Europe in this period

Codreanu's 1936 book *Pentru legionari (For the Legionaries)* listed four popular Legionary songs, including one march from the military school that he had attended in 1917 and a military march attributed to the sixteenth century Wallachian prince Michael the Brave.⁵¹ These two contexts – the army and the school – are important because they are both *national* contexts that transcended the urban/rural divide. Ștefan Mareș, an old peasant from Maramureș complained in 1935 that the only songs sung in his village were those introduced by boys who had learned them while doing military service.⁵² Even those boys who were too young to have served in the army – many Legionaries were high school students – would have learned such songs through the compulsory pre-military training required of all teenage boys.⁵³ Singing and musical performances were also important parts of the extracurricular activities associated with many schools. Teachers taught their students folk songs and dances, classical pieces, and patriotic anthems.⁵⁴ Adding Legionary lyrics to musical forms that Romanians already associated with patriotic contexts doubled the impact of the song as a propaganda tool. Feelings of national pride that individuals had experienced while doing military service would be remembered, but

⁵⁰ I am grateful to José de Jesus Cerillo for this observation.

⁵¹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 235. These are "Să sune iarăși goarna," and "Ca un glob de aur."

⁵² Speranța Rădulescu, *Cântecul: tipologie muzicală*, (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1990) 64.

⁵³ That pre-military training included the singing of patriotic songs is attested to in a letter from the Inspector of Pre-Military Training to the Recruiter in Brașov, 24 June 1935. AN – Brașov, Fond Prefectura Brașov – Subinspectoratul Pregătirea Premilitară, Dosar: 2/1935, f. 73.

⁵⁴ Lists of music performed by students are included in school yearbooks such as Ioan Bunea, *Anuărul VI al Liceului de Stat Gheorghe Lăzar din Sibiu, 1924-1925* (Sibiu, 1925), and Maria Cristureanu, *Anuărul Liceului de fete "Doamna Maria," Suceava, pe anii scolari 1926/27 și 1927/28* (Suceava, 1928).

now they were bracketed together with a fascist cause, prompting the singer to collapse the two domains together on a subconscious level.

The folk costumes and songs used by Legionaries may look romanticized and patronizing today, but none of the sources suggest that villagers saw them in this way. There are several reasons for this. First, just as Sămănătorists and Poporanists had at the turn of the century, Legionaries saw peasants as the true representatives of the nation. Dressing up as peasants and singing folk songs honored peasant culture as authentically Romanian, and suggested that Legionaries did not see urban culture as intrinsically superior. Second, Legionaries expressed solidarity with villagers. In a booklet from 1937, the Legionary sociologist Traian Herseni wrote that “today the peasantry is suffering before of those who disrespect their labor and shamelessly sell it to foreigners.” This division between those who work and those who ally themselves with foreigners was the same rhetoric that had been used by the anti-Semitic movement of the 1920s. Legionaries claimed that peasants, just like students, suffered at the hands of Jews and traitors. Just as students demanded control of the universities, Legionaries offered peasants control of the land. “In the Legionary state,” Herseni promised, “even if peasants are poor – as they are now – they will be rulers, not slaves. They will be lords of their land, their labor, and their humanity.”⁵⁵ Finally, Legionaries made themselves dependent on their rural counterparts. They set out on their propaganda campaigns without enough food, and needed villagers to feed and house them. They did not have the resources to sustain a constant presence in most villages, so they needed sympathizers there to run their own nests, to proselytize neighboring villages, and even to donate money to support propaganda in the cities. Legionary propaganda was successful in rural areas because at first glance Legionaries approached peasants as their equals and because they emphasized what they had in common with peasants rather than what separated them.

⁵⁵ Traian Herseni, *Mișcarea legionara și țărănimea*, (Bucharest, 1937) 27.

8.0 WORKERS, TRADESMEN, AND SOLDIERS

The Great Depression hurt both peasants and workers, but Legionaries used economic despair as a way to appeal specifically to factory workers and tradesmen, just as they had used folk costumes and songs to attract peasants. When Legionaries approached factory workers and tradesmen, they addressed them as members of the Romanian nation who had specific grievances, but not as a class distinct from peasants or petty-bourgeois intellectuals. One institution where all of these social groups mixed was the army. All Romanian males were expected to do military service when they came of age, and Legionaries certainly recruited amongst soldiers. The same person to person propaganda and rhetoric of discipline and national renewal that attracted other social groups to the Legion also appealed to soldiers, extending the Legion's reach into yet another section of Romania's population.

Romania remained primarily agricultural until the 1950s, but industrialization increased significantly in Romania after 1887. Factories had begun to replace peasant cottage industries in some areas since the middle of the nineteenth century.¹ The first petrol distillery was built at Ploiești in 1857, and the first derrick sunk in 1861. Oil became increasingly important as the global industry developed, and major American, German and French investors established operations in Romania between 1904 and 1906.² The country had eight cotton-weaving mills by 1911, employing roughly 2,000 people, most in Bucharest. Industrial expansion meant an increase in the size of factories more than in their number. Between 1900 and 1930 the number of industrial firms actually decreased, whereas the number of workers employed in industry more

¹ G. Zane, *L'industrie roumaine au cours de la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle* (Bucharest: Editions de l'Académie de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, 1973); Virgil N. Madgearu, *Evoluția economiei românești după războiul mondial* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1995) 96.

² Gheorghe Ivănuș, *Istoria petrolului în România* (Bucharest: Editura AGIR, 2004) 568-569.

than doubled.³ Between 1924 and 1928, production levels in manufacturing grew by 188 percent and in mining by 189 percent. Oil production also rose in leaps and bounds, from 968,000 tons in 1918 to 5,800,000 tons in 1930.⁴ These changes transformed the lives of tens of thousands of people, but during the interwar period few had begun to think of themselves as “workers” in the Marxist sense. The everyday reality of living and working simultaneously in urban and rural settings caused interwar Romanians to group peasants together with industrial workers as part of the working poor. All categories of *muncitori* (workers) felt exploited by the wealthy financiers and landowners, and thus often made little distinction between the different types of labor. Socialists tried to convince workers that they were being exploited by capitalists as a class, but ultra-nationalists lumped factory workers, tradesmen, artisans and peasants together as exploited laborers and appealed to them as members of the Romanian nation.

 Laboring people would have found it especially difficult to place themselves firmly within one category or another if they worked more than one job, and roughly 6 percent of the working population in 1930 reported that they had two major professions. Of those who had a second job, 45 percent listed their secondary occupation as being in agriculture, 30 percent in industry, and 5 percent in commerce/credit.⁵ Even people who worked full-time in industry often had their primary ties in the village. A lack of housing near the factory meant that many workers lived in their villages and travelled long distances to work each day or slept in overcrowded shelters. A 1933 report from the Inspectorate of Labor in Ploiești said that some workers

³ Madgearu, *Evoluția economiei românești*, 105-106.

⁴ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 359.

⁵ Mitu Georgescu, “Populația în viața economică a României,” in Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 3, 57.

travelled 9-12 miles on foot to get to work, and that they preferred to do this rather than sleep in the miserable conditions available near the factory.⁶

8.1 THE GREAT DEPRESSION

As it did elsewhere in Europe, the hardships of the depression mobilized people behind political causes as never before. Harvests had failed in the two years before the depression hit, raising the price of agricultural goods to unaffordable levels for most workers.⁷ Peasant unrest was quickly put down with force.⁸ A number of Romanian banks crashed in the wake of the 1929 stock market crash, and the oil industry suffered because international demand dropped significantly.⁹ Peasants with small lots found themselves in a particularly precarious situation as the value of agricultural exports plummeted and the interest rates they had to pay on bank loans soared.¹⁰ Unemployment skyrocketed. As the economic situation in Bukovina worsened, Legionaries there began provoking peasants to attack houses known to be owned by Jews. They threw rocks and sticks of dynamite through windows, and priests sympathetic to the Legion incited peasants to carry out pogroms against local Jews.¹¹ Street demonstrations increased in the major cities, including not just factory workers but students, teachers, pensioners, civil servants, and a range of other occupations.¹²

⁶ Institutul de Studii Istorice și Social-Politice de pe lângă C.C. al P.C.R., *1933: Luptele revoluționare ale muncitorilor ceferiști și petroliști* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1971) 27-31.

⁷ Pearton, *Oil and the Romanian State*, 131.

⁸ Institutul de Studii Istorice, *1933*, 39.

⁹ Constantin C. Giurescu, *History of Bucharest* (Bucharest: The Publishing House for Sports and Tourism, 1976) 86; Pearton, *Oil and the Romanian State*, 158.

¹⁰ Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 138-145.

¹¹ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #138, Dosar 4/1930, f. 14-16, 28-29, 132-134; “Cazul Borșa,” *Biruința*, 1/1 (17 Oct 1930): 2.

¹² Institutul de Studii Istorice, *1933*, 51.

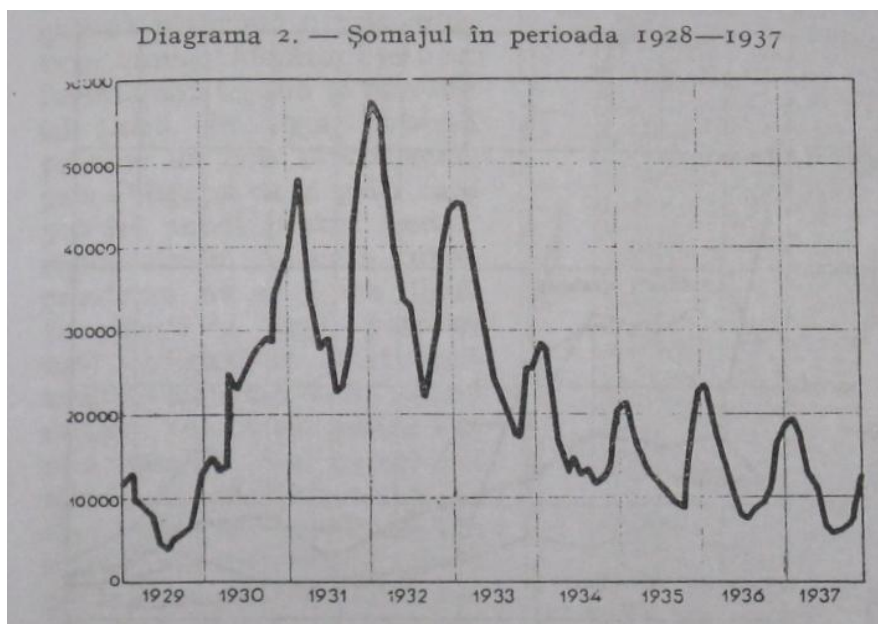


Figure 20: Unemployment figures, 1928-1937¹³

The ultra-nationalist press initially blamed foreign banks for the financial crisis, complaining that they were taking Romanian money down with them. Right-wing journalists were outraged when the Romanian government gave bailouts to banks and industrialists, and they called for prison terms for bank managers.¹⁴ In their view, the economic crisis had clearly been caused by the “parasites” and yet it was hurting the “producers.” They responded by calling on people to “buy Romanian,” and demanding that business owners employ Romanian labor.¹⁵ When the “Skoda” scandal broke out in 1933, revealing the corruption of senior politicians – including Iuliu Maniu, a member of the ruling National Peasants Party – fascist journalists launched a frenzied print campaign to discredit anyone and everyone involved. The “Skoda Affair” involved corruption at a Czech armaments company that was contracted to produce

¹³ Constantin Ștefănescu, “Munca în viața economică,” in Dimitru Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 3, 77.

¹⁴ N. Mucichescu-Tunari, “Falimentul Bancii Blank,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 6/3 (20 Nov 1931): 3; Dragoș Protopopescu, “Malaxismul,” *Calendarul*, 487 (2 Oct 1933): 1.

¹⁵ “Nici un ac de la jidani,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 7/2 (1 Feb 1932): 5; “Pâine, pentru muncitorul român,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 8/4 (16-30 Apr 1933): 5.

weapons for the Romanian army. Fiscal irregularities were discovered, the weapons were found to be overpriced and of poor quality, and Romanian military secrets were discovered in the hands of Czech businessmen.¹⁶ The investigation was closely followed and editorialized in most Romanian newspapers, and it helped to discredit the country's political elite, fueling ultra-nationalist claims that no politician could be trusted.

Legionary journalists noticed that workers had become major supporters of fascist parties in Germany, Italy and Britain during the depression.¹⁷ Romanian parties soon followed suit. *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC) began first, calling for the creation of a “new working class” in an article defending the rights of bus drivers in May 1931.¹⁸ Articles in ultra-nationalist student newspapers encouraged students to join together with workers in the struggle for justice in early 1932, and the fascist mobilization of workers was underway in earnest by the beginning of 1933.¹⁹ One article in *Pământul strămoșesc* from November 1932 mentions that thanks to particularly intense propaganda by a handful of workers in Bucharest's Blue III district, there were “strong nests in the Lemaitre, Wolf, Büniger, and Grivița factories, the National Culture factory, the match factory, and others.”²⁰

During 1933 gangs of 20-30 uniformed Legionaries visited restaurants and coffee shops demanding that the owners employ people they recommended. They then organized boycotts of businesses that employed minority workers.²¹ Recognizing the danger that organized ultra-nationalism posed, one Jewish-owned factory in Brăila instituted a policy of firing anyone who joined a right-wing movement.²² In March 1933 LANC members formed their own union for

¹⁶ Chioveanu, “Afacerea Skoda,” 16-20.

¹⁷ Virgil Radulescu, “Actuala situație politică a proletariatului,” *Axa*, 1/20 (15 Oct 1933): 5.

¹⁸ “Muncitorimea nouă,” *Apărarea națională*, 9/18 (17 May 1931): 3.

¹⁹ Șt. Iacobescu, “Studenti, apropiați-vă la muncitori,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 7/3 (15 Feb 1932): 1.

²⁰ “Sectorul III Albastru, Seful Corpului Legionar: Dorul Belimace,” *Pământul strămoșesc*, 4/1 (1 Nov 1932): 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Reel #97, Dosar 566, f. 22, 56.

²² “Muncitorești,” *Axa*, 1/5 (Jan 1933): 3.

fascist *muncitori ospătari* (waiters).²³ Legionaries began to form workers' unions in April as part of a new plan to focus heavily on recruiting amongst workers.²⁴ According to an oral history interview with the Legionary Dumitru Groza conducted in 1994, Groza had lost his job at a factory in Cugir in 1932, he travelled to Bucharest where he heard Aurel Serafim speak. Serafim was a Chemical Engineer who had joined the Legion in 1932 and within two years was put in charge of organizing the movement in Bucharest and Ilfov county.²⁵ Groza liked Serafim's message and enjoyed the Legionaries' singing, so he too joined the Legion. He says that Serafim helped him find work by directing him to the Legionary brickworks and building site, where Legionaries were erecting a new headquarters.²⁶

Both Legionary and LANC recruiters emphasized the inability of left-wing groups to resolve the problems faced by workers, and both framed the problem in ethnic terms. More than the Cuzists, the Legionaries heralded Mussolini as an example of what Fascism could do for workers, exalting in the fact that Italians suffered much less than their neighbors during the Great Depression. The depression catalyzed fascist recruitment amongst urban workers and made this group more sympathetic to extremist solutions as it became more and more obvious that the existing political elite were unable to solve problems thrown up by the financial crisis. By the end of 1933, the political opportunities afforded by the economic crisis, the rise of fascist parties elsewhere in Europe, and the Legion's new emphasis on recruiting peasants and workers, had transformed the anti-Semitic student movement into a multi-class, self-consciously fascist movement.

²³ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #1, Dosar 25.023M, f. unnumbered.

²⁴ R. Pavel, "Spre o nouă orientare a muncitorimei," *Axa*, 1/11 (30 Apr 1933): 1-2; USHM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #97, Dosar 566, f. 393.

²⁵ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #68, Dosar 23333, f. 7.

²⁶ Interview with Dumitru Groza (24 May 1994), in Mariana Conovici, Silvia Iliescu, and Octavian Silvestru eds. *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul: Mișcarea Legionară în documente de istorie orală* (București: Humanitas, 2008) 38-39.

8.2 RACISM AND THE VALUE OF LABOR

Deliberate attempts to recruit either peasants or workers were a relatively new phenomenon for Romanian ultra-nationalists. Except for Constantin Pancu's Guard of the National Conscience (1919-1920) in Iași, ultra-nationalists had previously focused on educated, urban elites with the time and inclination to devote themselves to abstract causes like the Romanian nation.

Incorporating peasants and workers occurred as Legionaries and Cuzists began orienting themselves towards European fascism, and it caused Legionaries to focus more heavily on anti-politicianism instead of continuing to rely on a vague pro-nation and anti-Semitic platform.

During the 1920s A. C. Cuza had called for "the harmonizing of the interests of capitalists and workers," with the final goal of overcoming the exploitation of *all* Romanians.²⁷ Early LANC propaganda distinguished between two types of industrialists: good ones, like Henry Ford, who made money through innovation and creativity, and Jewish ones, who did no work, lived only to make more money, and did so primarily through speculation. According to Cuza, the entire capitalist system of exploitation, with its periodic crises and shortages was a product of Jewish greed. One finds in Cuzist economic theory a hearty admiration for production and a sympathy for producers, whether they be industrialists, factory workers, or peasants. Rather than arguing that exploitation was intrinsic to the organization of production itself, ultra-nationalists accounted for economic inequalities by portraying unpopular industrialists as Jewish parasites living off Romanian workers.²⁸

Fascist activists could convincingly frame labor conflicts in ethnic terms because the vast majority of factories operated under foreign ownership and management in the early 1920s.²⁹

²⁷ A. C. Cuza, *Programul LANC*, quoted and trans. in Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel*, 169.

²⁸ A.C. Cuza, "Henry Ford," *Apărarea națională*, 1/7 (1 July 1922): 2-4; "Metodele jidovești," *Apărarea națională*, 1/9 (1 Aug 1922): 9-12; "Jidani capitaliști," *Apărarea națională*, 1/14 (15 Oct 1922): 17-18.

²⁹ Madgearu, *Evoluția economiei românești*, 96; Ivănuș, *Istoria petrolului*, 568-569.

The textile industry, for example, was run and managed entirely by Englishmen.³⁰ Romanian industry was badly underdeveloped prior to 1920 and relied heavily on foreign imports for manufactured products even when Romanian factories were working at full capacity.³¹

Successive Romanian governments reacted to this situation by attempting to nationalize foreign-owned industry.³² The mining law of 1924 stipulated that 75 percent of all categories of employees should be Romanian nationals.³³ This was sometimes a difficult quota to fill because foreign specialists were often the only people with the skills necessary to run certain plants. As factories failed to comply with these quotas, ultra-nationalist journalists complained constantly about the inability of successive governments to enforce this law.³⁴

Was ethnicity a live issue for most workers in Romania? A cursory examination of archival records pertaining to Transylvanian factories suggests that ethnic tensions may have played a role in some places but not others. The annual reports of local trade organizations in Transylvania, for example, were usually published in Romanian, Hungarian, and German, and gave statistics about the multi-ethnic nature of their membership with no hints of tensions between members.³⁵ Records of labor disputes from the region rarely mention ethnic tensions either among the workers or between workers and management, but cases do exist.³⁶ A petrol

³⁰ Ralph M. Odell, *Cotton Goods in the Balkan States* (Washington: Department of Commerce and Labor, 1912) 12-13. For a description of life in the textile factories and the importance of foreign equipment, see Chris Ward, *Russia's Cotton Workers and the New Economic Policy: Shop-Floor Culture and State Policy, 1921-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Walter English, *The Textile Industry: An Account of the Early Inventions of Spinning, Weaving, and Knitting Machines* (Harlow: Longmans, 1969).

³¹ Odell, *Cotton Goods*, 5-6; Zeletin, *Burghezia română*, 130.

³² Pearton, *Oil and the Romanian State*, 109.

³³ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁴ Ștefănescu, "Munca în viața economică," in Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 3, 78-79; A.C. Cusin, "Dl. Al. Vaida Voevod și numerus clausus în industria națională: o nouă farsă a primului-minister," *Calendarul*, 441 (10 Aug 1933): 1; Gh. Ascenti-Justus, "Tragedia muncii românești," *Buna Vestire*, 1/59 (1 May 1937): 13

³⁵ "Raportul Comitetului Corporatiei Meseriasiilor Municipal," Brașov. I have examined years 1927-1935, as well as a report from the successor organization in 1940. AN – Brașov, Fond Federația Meseriașilor, Dosar 42.

³⁶ AN – Brașov, Fond Prefectura Brasov, Dosar Coleția de Documente privind Mișcarea Muncitorească; Fond Inspectoratul Muncii, Dosar 133. For a different local study, this time from the Banat, see Constantin Brătescu, Ion

refinery in Târgu-Mureș was run by Jewish managers from Maramureș who threatened to import Jewish workers from Maramureș in 1932 if their own workers did not give up their right to collective contracts. Another dispute, this time at the Holy Cross Factory in Vlahuța in 1930, involved a Czech manager who could speak neither Romanian nor Hungarian and refused to pay workers for long periods of time in addition to charging exorbitant prices at the canteen from which workers were obliged to buy their food.³⁷ Both of these cases revolved around economic issues, but the fact that striking workers repeatedly mentioned the ethnicity of their managers suggests they were quite capable of framing their problems in ethnic terms when it suited them.

Ethnic hatred was what distinguished ultra-nationalists from other workers' groups on both the left and the right. Romanian communists identified fascists with the capitalist class, and argued that fascist regimes took away workers rights, using Mussolini's Labor Code of 1927 as an example.³⁸ Further to the right, Major Ștefănescu-Drăgănești's Labor League (*Liga Munciei*, 1926-1930) introduced rhetoric about the intrinsic value of labor that later became central to the Legion's own position. Ștefănescu-Drăgănești formed the Labor League in 1926 on a platform of economic justice, women's rights, and anti-corruption. He was a lawyer, not a worker, but he publicized the fact that he had been arrested because he had agitated for more rights for officers in the army reserves as if this made him a labor activist.³⁹ The League's propaganda spoke about "creative labor," and the need to "honor labor and praise the sweat of the brow that ungrudgingly gives light and provides order!"⁴⁰ Its goal was to "develop a spirit of morality and labor amongst the population in order to raise the cultural and economic level of the country."⁴¹ In February

Popa, Margareta Poterașu and Vasile Zaberca eds., *Pagini de istorie revoluționară Caraș-Severineană 1920 - 1944: (contribuții documentare)* (Reșița: Cabinetul Județean pentru Activitate Ideologică și Politico-Educativă, 1981).

³⁷ AN – Brașov, Fond Prefectura Brașov, Dosar Colectia de Documente privind Mișcarea Muncitorească, f. 3-73.

³⁸ "Codul munci mussolinian," *Metalurgistul*, (1 June 1927).

³⁹ Ștefănescu-Drăgănești, *Săptămâna patimilor mele...* (Bucharest: Tip. Romania Mare, 1926).

⁴⁰ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 36/1926, f. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Dosar 36/1926, f. 15, 48-52.

1930, Ștefănescu-Drăgănești and thirty sympathizers re-launched the League as the Romanian National Workers' Party (*Partidul Muncitoresc Național Român*). The new party demanded restrictions on foreign imports, a higher minimum wage, and protection for the unemployed.⁴² Neither of Ștefănescu-Drăgănești's initiatives was particularly successful but it shows how center-right intellectuals thought about Romania's nascent working class in the same patronizing terms they used to speak about the peasantry.

Legionary propaganda combined Cuza's insistence that economic injustice was an ethnic problem with Ștefănescu-Drăgănești's anti-politicianism and celebration of labor. One Legionary poster from January 1933 addressed "the thousands, the tens of thousands of unemployed who have neither work nor bread and who, sadly, are all ROMANIAN. Our brothers in blood and law: FOREIGNERS ARE PRIVILEGED IN OUR COUNTRY. State-run institutions groan, they are crammed WITH FOREIGN TRADESMEN AND WORKERS. Not to mention private enterprise, which IS ENTIRELY IN FOREIGN HANDS."⁴³ Legionaries dismissed socialist and communist organizers as self-interested and impotent, and declared that only a fascist approach that united workers and industrialists could guarantee rights for workers.⁴⁴ As one Legionary book addressed specifically to workers made clear, "when Legionaries fight against Communism, they are not also fighting against the workers. ... Communism is not a workers movement, but a Jewish doctrine that exists only to serve a people without a fatherland."⁴⁵ Like Ștefănescu-Drăgănești, Codreanu argued that work had value in itself, and claimed that the brickworks at Ungheni had "generated a revolution in the thinking of the day" because it was the end of the idea that "it is shameful for an intellectual to work with his hands, particularly heavy

⁴² Ibid., Dosar 36/1926, f. 19, 27, 33, 40-43.

⁴³ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #97, Dosar 566, f. 21.

⁴⁴ Mihail Stelescu, "Cine apară pe muncitori?" *Axa*, 1/8, (5 Mar 1933): 1-2; R. Pavel, "Spre o nouă orientare a muncitorimei," *Axa*, 1/11 (30 Apr 1933): 1-2.

⁴⁵ Traian Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară și muncitorimea* (Bucharest, 1937) 6-7.

labor, which in the past had been reserved for slaves or the lower classes.”⁴⁶ As I discuss in chapter eleven, the voluntary work camps that the Legionaries ran between 1933 and 1936 frequently emphasized the nobility of manual work. Dragoș Protopopescu wrote that these camps made labor into “a truly religious exercise,” elevating it from the mundane world of material existence.⁴⁷

The Legionaries adopted an economic philosophy known as corporatism, as did most other fascist parties in interwar Europe.⁴⁸ The foremost Romanian theorist of corporatism was the renowned economist Mihail Manoilescu (1891-1950) who led his own National Corporatist League (*Liga Național Corporatistă*, 1932-1938) but still maintained close ties to the Legion throughout the 1930s and transformed his family’s coal mine at Șorecani into a Legionary enterprise in 1936.⁴⁹ According to Manoilescu, corporatism is neither capitalist nor communist, and promotes state direction of the economy through central planning and mediation between employers unions and workers unions. Under a corporatist system, workers would be the equals of intellectuals and professionals because rights were distributed collectively based on each social group’s contribution towards the proper functioning of the economy.⁵⁰ For Manoilescu, corporatism was a vision of industrialization based on a sophisticated analysis of international and urban-rural trade relations, in which Romania as an agricultural country was consistently cheated by the industrialized West.⁵¹ Legionary journalists writing about corporatism looked

⁴⁶ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 157.

⁴⁷ Dragoș Protopopescu, “O nouă etica a muncii,” *Calendarul*, 459 (31 Aug 1933): 1.

⁴⁸ For example, Tim Kirk, *Nazism and the Working Class in Austria: Industrial Unrest and Political Dissent in the “National Community”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Gary Love, “What’s the Big Idea?”: Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and Generic Fascism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 42/3 (2007): 447-468.

⁴⁹ Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 265-285.

⁵⁰ Mihail Manoilescu, *Le siècle du corporatisme* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1934).

⁵¹ Love, *Făurirea lumii a treia*, 115-140.

more often to Mussolini than to Manoilescu, however, and promoted corporatism mostly as a way to reduce industrial conflict through dictatorial means.⁵²

8.3 LEGIONARY DEMOGRAPHICS

In some places factory workers provided the key to Legionary mobilization in areas that activists had previously been unable to penetrate. The Legionary presence in Buhuși increased rapidly in 1929, for example, when workers at the city's large textile factory joined the Legion *en masse*.⁵³ Similarly, the city of Piatra Neamț was first organized in 1931 by a student, two carpenters, a factory worker, and a shoemaker, all of whom conducted propaganda both in the city and the surrounding villages.⁵⁴ Two lists of Legionaries assembled in 1930 by police in Galați suggest that factory workers and tradesmen were well represented in the Legion even before the major attempts to recruit them during the depression. Galați is a port city that was home to 100,600 people, of whom 68.2 percent were ethnic Romanians and 19.1 percent were Jewish.⁵⁵ It industrialized rapidly in the late nineteenth century, while maintaining its reputation as a center for maritime construction and trade. By 1936 the city could boast 56 large industrial enterprises. Factories here were hit hard by the depression and there were large strikes among dock-workers in 1930 and 1931.⁵⁶ One of the lists from Galați records 30 Legionaries who were part of "Battalion I" of the Iron Guard, the Legion's newly formed paramilitary wing. Most were workers, although business owners and individuals "without profession" also appear in significant numbers alongside one lawyer and one high school student.

⁵² Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 276-280; Constantin Săndulescu-Godeni, "Corporație și fascism," *Calendarul*, 488 (4 Oct 1933): 1.

⁵³ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 23, f. 189.

⁵⁴ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 23, f.169-170.

⁵⁵ Manuila, *Recensământul general din decembrie 1930*, vol. 2, 150.

⁵⁶ Ioan Brezeanu, *Galați: monografie* (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1980) 49-50, 56; Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia româna*, vol. 2, 625-628.

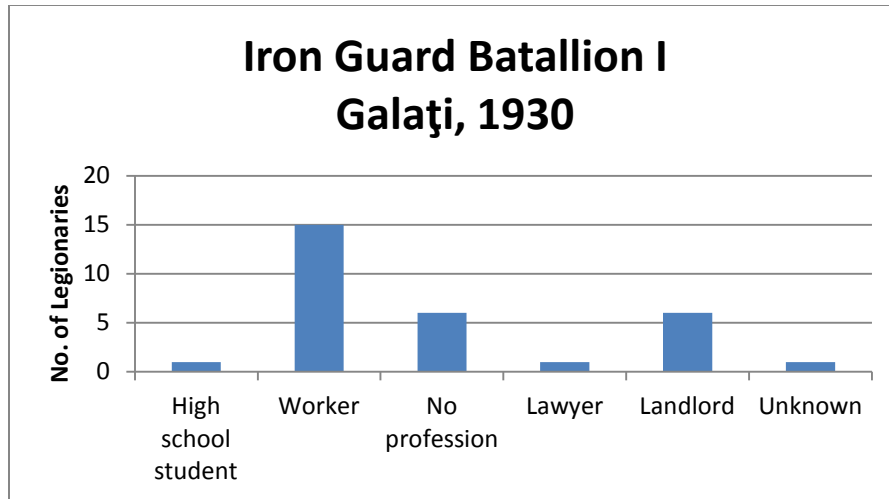


Figure 21: Occupations of Iron Guard Battalion I, Galați, 1930.⁵⁷

The “Preda Buzescu” Nest in Galați was made up of 58 Legionaries, most of whom were either factory workers or tradesmen such as bricklayers, electricians, carpenters, locksmiths, and mechanics.

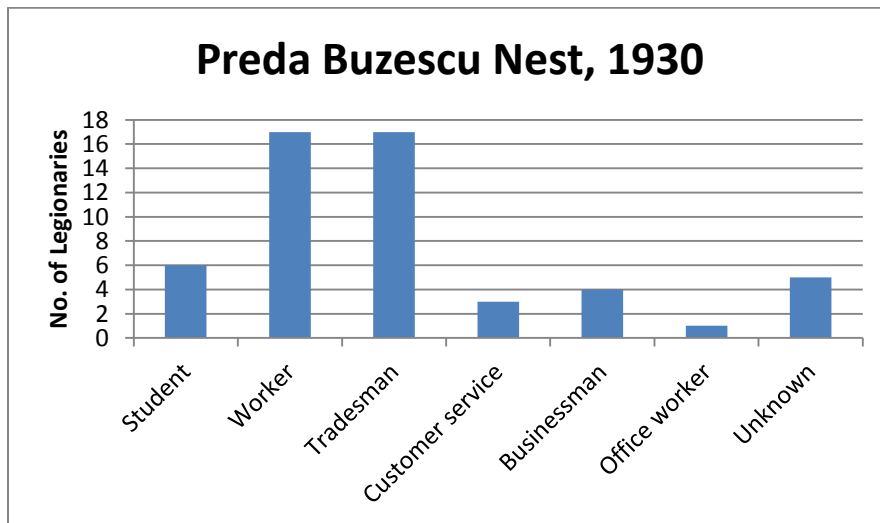


Figure 22: Occupations of “Preda Buzescu” Nest, Galați, 1930.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., Reel #140, Dosar 9/1930, f. 33-34.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Reel #139, Dosar 6/1930, f. 74-76.

Although these Legionaries came from a variety of different workplaces, the nest was relatively homogeneous in terms of age. All of the members were under 30 years old, and the vast majority were aged between 18 and 19.

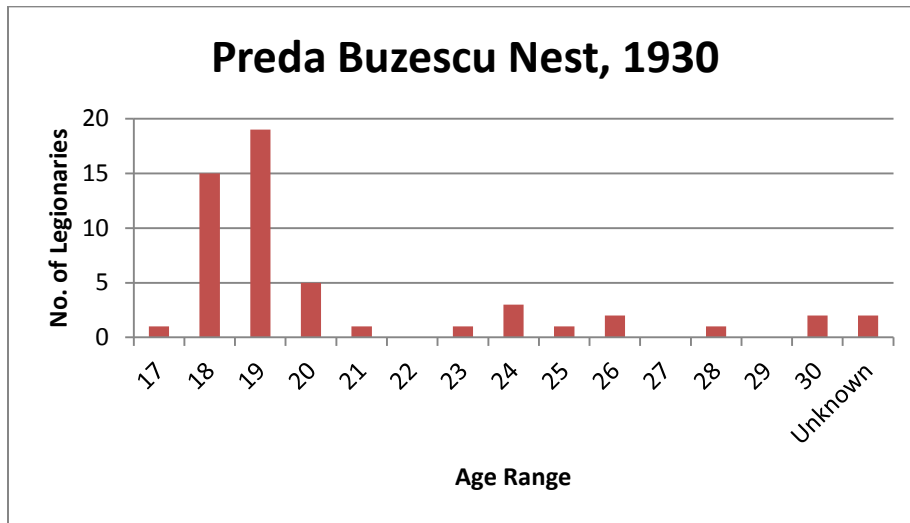


Figure 23: Age range of “Preda Buzescu” Nest, Galați, 1930.

The lawyer Mille Lefter had led the LANC in Galați before joining the Legion in 1927, and if other Cuzists joined the Legion together with him then this might explain why there were already so many Legionary workers here in 1930. Gheorghe Mardare, who worked as an electrician in one of the larger factories in Galați, joined a nest in 1928 led by Mille’s younger brother, Simion Lefter. Simion had just graduated from the University of Iași and had been very active in the student movement. Mardare told *Securitate* officers in 1954 that the Legion ran an office in Galați from 1928 onwards, and that in 1929 they held a large gathering on a field on the edge of town, where priests sanctified their flags and promoted new Legionaries.⁵⁹ Mardare’s account confirms that students were still the leaders of mixed Legionary groups in the cities at this time,

⁵⁹ CNSAS, Fond Lefter Simion, I.259143, vol. 1, f. 121-122.

but it shows that Legionaries were attracting working people well before they began targeting their propaganda specifically at workers in 1932.

Other small convenience samples paint a similar picture. A police report from 1937 in Târgu Ocna, a city in Bacău county of 12,500 people, listed 34 Legionaries organized into five nests. Age and occupation graphs based on this report show a young membership that included students, tradesmen, and farmers, but – despite the fact that the town’s primary industries were salt mining, oil extraction, and tourism – no miners or oil workers, and few people with customer service jobs.⁶⁰

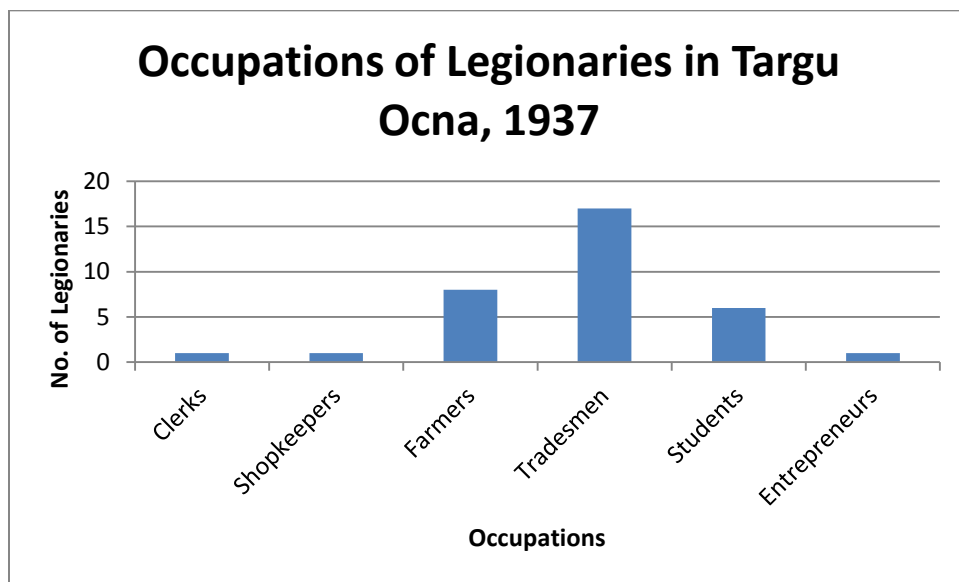


Figure 24: Occupations of Legionaries in Târgu Ocna in 1937.⁶¹

⁶⁰ On Târgu Ocna, see Gusti, *Enciclopedia*, vol. 2, 42-47.

⁶¹ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 3, f. 501.

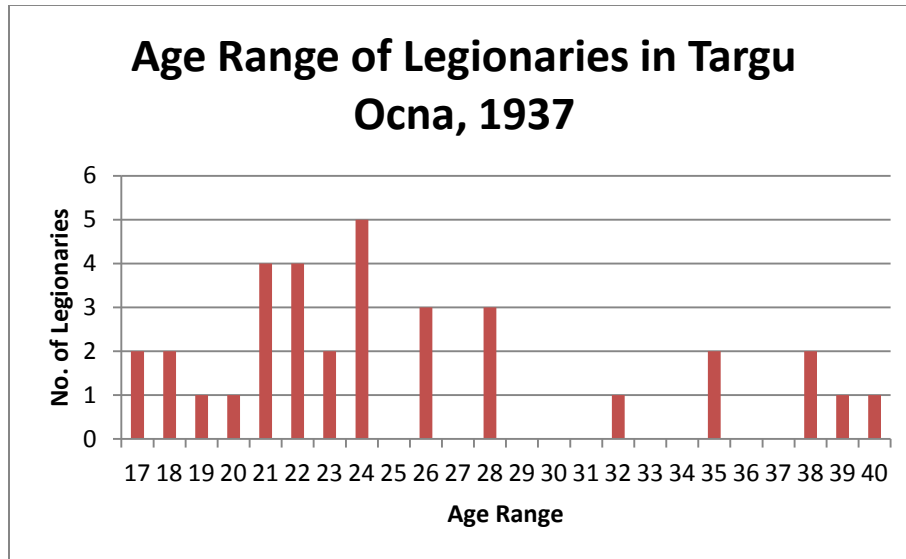


Figure 25: Age Range of Legionaries in Târgu Ocna, 1937.

A similar report from another mining town in Bacău county, Comănești, from 1937 listed twenty Legionaries organized into three nests. All of them worked for the same mining company, but not all were miners – some were engineers, accountants, clerks, or workers.⁶²

A much larger sample comes from another 1937 report, which listed all known Legionaries, Cuzists, Communists, and Socialists in every county in Romania. The report categorized all activists as either intellectuals, priests, teachers, or workers, and it is difficult to know how the various policemen who compiled this data understood those categories, or even if they all understood them in the same way. It also only mentions 16,499 Legionaries, whereas more recent estimates suggest that the Legion was actually sixteen times larger.⁶³ Nonetheless, this report is useful in that it confirms a trend seen in the smaller samples that suggests that workers were extremely important for Romanian fascism during the late 1930s.

⁶² CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 2, f. 328.

⁶³ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 357.

	Legionaries	Cuzists	Communists	Socialists
Intellectuals	2,440	1,165	993	185
Priests	195	143	9	0
Teachers	343	213	43	5
Workers	13,521	22,866	8,148	6,798
Total	16,499	24,397	9,193	6,988

Table 4: Social groups in extremist politics in 1937.

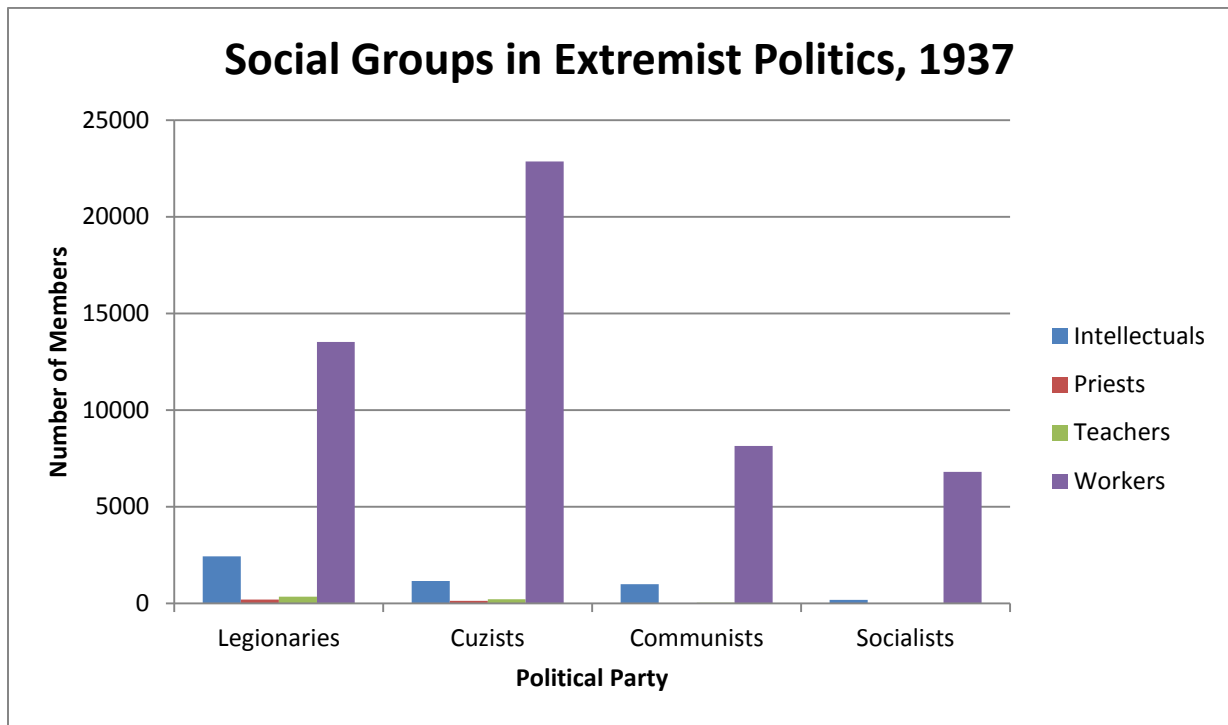


Figure 26: Social groups in extremist politics in 1937.⁶⁴

It is impossible to say exactly *which* occupations were best represented in any of these samples because these categories were so arbitrary and were probably understood differently by each person who contributed data about their region. These samples also ignored Legionaries

⁶⁴ ANIC, Fond Inspectoratul General de Jandarmerie, Dosar 41/1937, f. 1-4. I would like to thank Traian Sandu for pointing me towards this table.

who were housewives, and possibly women's groups altogether, because policemen did not generally consider female ultra-nationalists as potential criminals. Finally, none of these samples mention how Legionaries identified themselves ethnically or religiously. There are rare instances of Neo-Protestants, Greek Catholics or Roman Catholics joining the Legion, and archival sources occasionally mention Jewish, Ukrainian, Russian, or Serbian Legionaries. What these samples do indicate is that the Legion included a variety of social classes, and that most of its members were relatively young.

8.4 TRADESMEN AND WORKERS IN THE MID-1930s

Workers joined the Legion in especially large numbers after 1935, and by 1936 Legionaries had begun attracting sailors to their movement as well.⁶⁵ Internal Legionary documents from 1937 report that in June there were 150 nests entirely made up of workers in Bucharest alone. In comparison, Bucharest's "Răzleți" corps had 112 Legionary nests that August, made up of mostly intellectuals and middle-class professionals.⁶⁶ Tradesmen (*meseriași*) are rarely mentioned in the secondary literature on the Legion, yet they figure prominently in the convenience samples from Galați, the Duca trial, Carmen Sylva, and Târgu Ocna. One police circular from November 1937 also mentions specific instructions being given to "Legionary clerks" and "Legionary tradesmen" as if these were organized groups within the movement.⁶⁷ Trades were an important part of Romanian industry in the interwar period, but tradesmen had less and less collective representation. Manufacturing had been organized through guilds from the eleventh century onwards, and they continued in Romania until 1945. Guilds emphasized the

⁶⁵ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 46/1936, f. 106; AN – Cluj, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție, Dosar 381/1937, f. 109.

⁶⁶ CNSAS, Fond Voien Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160181, f. 424; Dosar I.160182, vol. 1, f. 169.

⁶⁷ AN – Cluj, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție, Dosar 381/1937, f. 115.

cooperation between masters and journeymen in the production of manufactured goods, and promoted vertical, regional and trade-based ties rather than class-based ones.⁶⁸ The rise of factories and mechanized equipment reduced the need for some trades, and in 1873 anti-guild legislation diminished the regulatory power that such organizations had.⁶⁹ Many tradesmen ran their own businesses and dealt with government agencies on a one-on-one basis, which further limited the ability of guilds to organize collective actions on their behalf.⁷⁰ Others oscillated between registering their businesses as individual tradesmen or as industrial enterprises, attempting to make the most of changing taxation laws governing the two types of businesses.⁷¹

Legionaries did explicitly target tradesmen in their propaganda, and Legionary posters claimed to represent the needs of Romanian tradesmen alongside those of factory workers.⁷² Ultra-nationalist newspapers complained that trained young people could not get jobs even though it was increasingly difficult to earn a trades qualification.⁷³ Toma Vlădescu wrote in *Buna vestire* that tradesmen “make up the largest part of our urban proletariat. The tradesman is the poor man from the city – he is the sad city, the city of the worker and the needy.”⁷⁴ The poor suburbs where tradesmen lived were perfect recruiting grounds for communists, Vlădescu warned, and he said that the government needed to protect Romanian tradesmen to prevent a left-wing revolution. Tradesmen experienced poverty just as factory workers did, but unlike factory workers they could not hope that strikes or unions would better their situation. Each trade had its

⁶⁸ Although see William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980, for an excellent discussion of how class-based solidarities evolved out of the guild system in eighteenth and nineteenth century France.

⁶⁹ George Strat, “Organizația social a muncitorilor,” in Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1, 586-587.

⁷⁰ “Raportul Comitetului Corporației Meseriașilor Municipal pe anul 1935,” in AN – Brașov, Fond Federația Meseriașilor, Dosar 93, f. 2.

⁷¹ “Raportul Comitetului Corporației Meseriașilor Municipal” for 1927 and 1929, in AN – Brașov, Fond Federația Meseriașilor, Dosar 42, f. 7-10, and Dosar 53, f. 3.

⁷² USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #97, Dosar 566, f. 21.

⁷³ Toma Vlădescu, “Revendicările meseriașilor și Asigurările Sociale,” *Buna vestire*, 1/2 (24 Feb 1937): 5. V. Atanasiu, “Uneltirile oculței iudeo-comunist,” *Buna vestire*, 1/6 (28 Feb 1937): 5.

⁷⁴ Toma Vlădescu, “Drama meseriașul român,” *Buna vestire*, 1/19 (14 Mar 1937): 1.

own problems, and no single strike could address the grievances of both shoemiths and bricklayers. Tradesmen were thus a natural constituency for the Legion because their problems stemmed from corruption and nepotism at all levels of Romanian society.

Once they joined, Legionary workers were expected to put the Legion before class interests. *Corpul Muncitoresc Legionar* (the Legionary Workers Corps, CML) is a good example of this. Codreanu formed the CML on 26 October 1936, which he placed under the leadership of Gheorghe Clime (1889-1939), a forestry engineer who had been a Legionary since 1927.⁷⁵ Clime's first political involvement was in Nicolae Iorga's Nationalist Democratic Party, followed by A. C. Cuza's LANC and then Codreanu's Legion.⁷⁶ He had organized Muscel county in 1932, and reorganized the Legion in Bessarabia in 1934. He went to Spain with Moța and Marin later in 1936, and became president of *Partidul Totul pentru Țara* (the Everything for the Fatherland Party, TPT) after General Cantacuzino died.⁷⁷ Placing Clime at the head of the CML acknowledged the importance of workers to the Legion, but it also ensured that Legionary workers did not organize around workers' issues. In Cluj the regional branch of the CML was led by the student activists Roman Buzoianu and Gheorghe Vereș, once again keeping control of the organization out of the hands of workers.⁷⁸ Members of the CML had their own special insignias, and workers figured prominent at legionary gatherings from that point on.⁷⁹ Codreanu offered a prize of 2,000 lei to the person who could write the best lyrics to a "March of the Legionary Workers," and another 2,000 lei for the best melody.⁸⁰ In December 1936 the CML launched a new bi-monthly newspaper called *Muncitorul legionar* (*The Legionary Worker*, 1936), the first

⁷⁵ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 97-99.

⁷⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 5, f. 56.

⁷⁷ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #68, Dosar 23333, f. 10; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 181.

⁷⁸ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 255-256.

⁷⁹ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 260-262; "O frumoasă manifestățile a muncitorilor legionari," *Cuvântul* (24 Oct 1940); Vasile Posteuca, "Căpitanul și muncitorii," *Cuvântul* (28 Oct 1940).

⁸⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 291.

issue of which was dedicated mostly to explaining how the CML would be organized.⁸¹ The organization grew rapidly.⁸² Ion Victor Vojen (1906-) took control of CML in August 1937, and at a meeting in Băcau he boasted:

There were need for another Legionary corps which could work alongside the students to bring us victory. This second corps could not come from the peasantry, a class with strictly limited interests and horizons, nor from the bourgeoisie, a cowardly class interested in its wallet and its stomach. It had to be the workers, a chosen class, for it has been tested many times, counting 300 dead in a single day at Grivița [during the 1933 strikes.] It has been on the barricades for a long time and has broad horizons, living next to one another in factories. ... In Bucharest the Legionary workers movement began with 47 nests, limping along so as to reach 300 nests today, while there are up to 1,200 nests throughout the country. A good number of the factories in Bucharest are in Legionary hands. If we want to stop the trams, we stop them. If we want to blow up the Fireworks factory, we blow it up. If we want to stop the Malaxa or Bragadiru factories, we stop them.⁸³

Vojen assumed that workers who had died fighting under left-wing banners during the 1933 strikes at Grivița would be just as eager to die for the Legion, and his confidence that Legionaries could paralyze the economy if they wanted to was probably overstated, but his speech demonstrates how important workers were for the movement. By 1937, the CML was both the largest and the most active of the Legion's divisions. Codreanu relied more and more heavily on

⁸¹ *Muncitorul legionar*, 1/1 (1 Dec 1936): 1-6.

⁸² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 221; CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160181, f. 424.

⁸³ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160182, vol. 1, f. 162-164.

them as time went on, but he never gave them the same leadership responsibilities as students or intellectuals.

Legionaries expected total obedience from their working-class colleagues. In another speech from July 1937 in Bucharest, Vojen told his audience that “wherever he might be, the Legionary worker must spread the ideas of the Iron Guard and work for the Legion and for Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.”⁸⁴ Few if any of the tasks that Legionary workers did had anything to do with specifically working-class grievances. In spring 1937, tramway workers planted a new garden in front of the offices of the Everything for the Fatherland Party.⁸⁵ Similarly, members of the CML were expected to stand guard outside the Legion’s headquarters in Bucharest, and they were punished with extra duties if they failed to attend.⁸⁶ Large numbers of workers attended most Legionary rallies in 1937, providing ready-made crowds that stood in formation for hours on end singing Legionary songs.⁸⁷ Workers played a crucial role in the electoral campaign that year, doing propaganda on their worksites as well as throughout the country on motorbikes that the Legion had purchased specifically for this purpose.⁸⁸ In September 1937 Codreanu had a large placard printed up with a picture of a Legionary worker doing the fascist salute while holding a hammer in his right hand, and with his left hand grasping a cross to his chest. The placard was to be placed near major factories and worksites in Bucharest as the day of the elections approached.⁸⁹ Police reports from 1937 observed that Legionaries in Cernăuți were heavily recruiting workers through friendship networks in factories, including workers with socialist and

⁸⁴ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160181, f. 218.

⁸⁵ Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 283.

⁸⁶ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Dosar P.007215, vol. 2, f. 85; Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 214.

⁸⁷ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 127; CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 10, f. 137.

⁸⁸ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 112; CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Dosar P.007215, vol. 2, f. 84, 87, 90-91; USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 861, f. 17.

⁸⁹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 86.

communist backgrounds. They put these ex-communists into special indoctrination groups before letting them join ordinary nests.⁹⁰

Legionary pamphlets circulated at Grivița railway factory in Bucharest during July 1937 spoke about the need for wage increases, and declared that “Legionaries are prepared to make any sacrifice in the fight against the exploitation of man by man.”⁹¹ In 1938 Legionary meetings sometimes involved discussion of workers’ issues and the singing of workers songs.⁹² Pro-Legionary newspapers from the period carried frequent articles about the economic plight of workers, and Codreanu spoke on behalf of workers’ rights in parliament.⁹³ But despite such rhetoric, the CML rarely did anything that might help the working conditions of tradesmen or factory workers. In December 1937, Teodor Ioraș lost his job as a tramway worker because he had been trying to convince his colleagues to join the Legion. Vojen suggested approaching the tramway company to get Ioraș his job back. Legionaries had applied such pressure to businesses in 1933, but this time Codreanu vetoed Vojen’s idea, declaring that “it is not now practical for us to focus on threats and persuasion. ... We are in the midst of the decisive battle that we must win. And when we have won we will no longer make threats, but will put all those who have hurt us in various ways where they belong.”⁹⁴ Instead, Codreanu suggested hiring Ioraș to work in the Legionary cooperative.

⁹⁰ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 863, f. 160; AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f. 305.

⁹¹ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 861, f. 1.

⁹² “Sedințe legionare la Ploiesti,” *Cuvântul* (7 Feb 1938).

⁹³ Anton Davidescu, “Gânduri pentru muncitori,” *Buna vestire*, 1/3 (24 Feb 1937): 5; P.T. “Ieftinarea vieții: Înțelegeri economice private și monopoluri private,” *Cuvântul* (25 Mar 1938): 8-9; Teban, “Corneliu Codreanu și muncitorii,” in Stanescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 260, 263.

⁹⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 12, f. 215.

8.4 SOLDIERS AND GENDARMES

Soldiers and gendarmes posed a problem for Legionary recruiters because they were not legally allowed to join any political parties or to support extremist movements.⁹⁵ Codreanu nonetheless encouraged his followers to do their obligatory military service and to participate in pre-military training so that they could learn discipline and how to use guns.⁹⁶ In 1935 the government introduced compulsory *Pregătirea Premilitară* (pre-military training) for all high-school aged males. The goal was to “develop moral and national sentiments, to cultivate the spirit of order and discipline among the citizenry. Developing physical aptitude. ... Acquiring elementary military knowledge so as to assimilate military instruction more quickly and easily once [boys] are called up.”⁹⁷ Pre-military training took place on weekends, was very unpopular, and there were high levels of absenteeism.⁹⁸ Parents preferred to send their children to work in the fields, and complained bitterly when the government fined them for not attending pre-military training.⁹⁹ Boys had to listen to speeches about patriotism, religion, hygiene, or war, do physical exercises, and were put through drills using wooden sticks resembling guns.¹⁰⁰ From 1937 onwards, boys had to wear their pre-military uniforms to school, and were conscripted to do voluntary labor as part of their pre-military training.¹⁰¹ In response to Codreanu’s orders, Legionaries did attempt to become instructors of pre-military units, and the Blood Brotherhoods

⁹⁵ Beldiman, *Armata și mișcarea legionară*, 54.

⁹⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 9, f. 55.

⁹⁷ M. Paraschivescu-Cervenția, “Pregătirea Premilitară,” *Acțiunea Teleromanului*, 1/3-4 (24 Jan 1937): 3.

⁹⁸ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f. 197; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 44/1938, f. 19.

⁹⁹ AN – Brașov, Fond Prefectura Brașov – Subinspectoratul Pregătirea Premilitară, Dosar 14/1937, f. 33, 63, 101.

¹⁰⁰ “Pregătirea premilitară,” *Dimineața*, (10 Nov 1935). AN – Cluj, Fond Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Drept, Dosar 467/1937-38, f. 5-6; AN – Brașov, Fond Prefectura Brașov – Subinspectoratul Pregătirea Premilitară, Dosar 3/1936, f. 6, 12, 28. cf. A colorful description of pre-military training in Marin Preda, *Moromeții*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1970) 89-96.

¹⁰¹ “Munca de folos obstesc,” *Realitatea ilustrată*, 11/537 (5 May 1937): 2; Paraschivescu-Cervenția, “Pregătirea Premilitară,” 3; “Uniformele premilitare,” *Ardealul*, (12 Sept 1937).

used pre-military training as opportunities for recruiting new members.¹⁰² Legionaries even praised the pre-military work camps in their publications.¹⁰³

All Romanian males were also expected to complete military service on reaching 21 years of age.¹⁰⁴ Military service taught them weapons training as well as discipline and patriotism. Contemporaries recognized the difference that military service made on young boys. Peasants from the village of Belinți told sociologists in 1936 that “they come back from the army more relaxed, bolder, more disciplined, politer, and more orderly. They speak Romanian better, almost as a literary language. They work harder than before and they sing patriotic songs learned in the barracks.”¹⁰⁵ Legionaries consistently told *Siguranța* interrogators that they stopped doing Legionary activities while doing military service, but this does not mean that they also abandoned their allegiance to the movement. During interrogations, several people told police that they had met other Legionaries also doing military service, and had discussed the movement with them.¹⁰⁶ Individuals retained the ranks they had earned while doing military service, and some Legionaries kept wearing their military uniforms even though this was illegal if one was not engaged in military business.¹⁰⁷ Vasile Coman, a Legionary activist from Luduș in Transylvania, was conscripted and sent to Galați to do compulsory military service in April 1934. In his memoirs, Coman says that he was persecuted by his commanding officers because he was a Legionary, but that he did not react because he did not want to damage the “prestige” of

¹⁰² AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 12/1938, f. 27; Dosar 91/1938, f. 232; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 218-237.

¹⁰³ “Douăzeci de zile de “tabără,”” *Însemnări sociologice*, 3/5 (1937): 7-10.

¹⁰⁴ Gheorghe Zaharia and Constantin Botoran, *Politica de apărare națională a României în contextul european interbelic, 1919-1939* (Bucharest: Editura Militara, 1981) 124.

¹⁰⁵ Adrian C. Brudariu, “Monografia Comunei Belinți,” *Sociologie românească*, 1/7-9 (July-Sept 1936): 43.

¹⁰⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 252/1939, f. 215-217; CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 11, f. 39-45.

¹⁰⁷ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 8/1938, f. 479; CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160182, vol. 1, f. 168.

the Legion. Coman kept in touch with changes in the movement by visiting Legionaries whenever he had leave, and met other Legionaries who were also doing military service.¹⁰⁸

It is not clear how many regular soldiers were involved in the Legion, and most estimates are based on rumors or misinformation, claiming either that only a handful of soldiers were Legionaries or that the entire army had been compromised politically. An investigation into suspected Legionaries in the 36th Infantry Regiment in February 1934 identified only two Legionaries, and another from December 1935 found only six Legionaries in the 34th Infantry Regiment. A large-scale investigation began in April 1934, when police interviewed a schoolboy named Ștefan Oprea from Iași, who claimed to know about a plot by a Lt. Colonel Precup to assassinate King Carol II. Oprea also implicated Tiberiu Rebreanu, a law student from Cluj who led an ultra-nationalist party known as *Noi* (We), and mentioned scores of other officers who were also apparently involved.¹⁰⁹ Only Precup was convicted, but Oprea's revelations and the subsequent trial caused the authorities to worry about fascist plots within the military.¹¹⁰ One police report mentioned "long conversations" between Codreanu and one army officer in 1936, and another claimed that large numbers of officers in civilian clothes were present at the Carmen Sylva work camp that year.¹¹¹ Nothing came of either report. Another plot was discovered in 1938, involving the Legionary Ion Roth (1913-1985), a law student in Cluj, and a large number of army officers. *Siguranța* officers interrogated Roth several times over the affair. They only managed to convict three people of complicity, but in his memoirs Roth claims that many more

¹⁰⁸ Vasile Coman, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 2; AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 2/1980, f. 1-56.

¹⁰⁹ AN – Iași, Fond Inspectoratul Regional de Poliție, Dosar 5/1934, f. 191.

¹¹⁰ AN – Iași, Chestura de Poliție, Fond 1678, Dosar 93/1936, f.122, f. 122.

¹¹¹ CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 206, 210.

people were involved.¹¹² One police report from December 1938 warned that “apparently most of the army, including young officers who command troops, are Legionaries.”¹¹³

According to most accounts, there was a great deal of dissatisfaction within the military because the Romanian army was as poorly equipped in peace time as it had been during the First World War. Both officers and soldiers complained about lack of food and clothing. During the 1920s, some soldiers were forced to wear clothes they had brought from home because there were not enough uniforms to go around.¹¹⁴ In April 1936 Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and General Cantacuzino talked about making it Legionary policy to introduce a single uniform into the military when they took power, doing away with unnecessary regalia and ranks. They also proposed capping salaries of generals and engineers so as to have enough money to fund the rest of the army.¹¹⁵ Poor working conditions intensified the Legionary message, and a number of army officers joined the movement as soon as they retired. Senior reserve officers including Colonel Ștefan Zavoianu and Colonel Lupașcu were active in the Legion, and a series of retirements in 1937 caused Legionaries to intensify their propaganda among retired military personnel.¹¹⁶ That December, Colonel Bolintineanu, Colonel Paul Cambureanu, General M. Ignat, Lieutenant Colonel M. Mamaliga, Colonel V. Pipescu, and General M. Racovița all ran as candidates for the Everything for the Fatherland Party.¹¹⁷ In 1938, rumors circulated amongst the

¹¹² Ion Roth Jelescu, *Și cerul plângea: amintiri din prigoana cea mare* (Madrid: Dacia, 1974) 9-114, 160.

¹¹³ AN – Cluj, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție, Dosar 697/1939, f.4

¹¹⁴ Constantin Olteanu, *Activitatea Partidului Comunist Român în armată, 1921-1944* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1974) 16-17; Zaharia and Botoran, *Politica de apărare*, 130-139, 145-149; Ion Călvărășan, “Omul nou,” in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 37.

¹¹⁵ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 331.

¹¹⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 163.

¹¹⁷ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 859, f. 189-204.

police that General Ion Antonescu had begun to sympathize with the Legion, marking him as a potential rival of King Carol's regime.¹¹⁸

I found little archival evidence of Legionaries in either the police or the *Siguranța*, but members of *Serviciul de Documentare și Informațiuni Legionar* (the Legionary secret police) had almost certainly infiltrated both organizations.¹¹⁹ Legionaries were also active in the gendarmerie, which was governed by the Defense Ministry. Gendarmes kept the peace in rural areas by investigating crimes, arresting suspects, and preventing disturbances.¹²⁰ In 1936 a Colonel Ciurea was discovered doing Legionary propaganda courses, which he taught at the School for Gendarme Officers in Bucharest.¹²¹ Two years later Captain Venat of the gendarmerie was arrested for sheltering three wanted Legionaries.¹²² Like soldiers, gendarmes discovered to have Legionary connections faced serious disciplinary action, so most were much more circumspect about their allegiances. Legionaries certainly did seek to recruit such people, but the archival evidence is unfortunately slim. It is likely that many sympathized with the Legion, but we still do not know how many or what their actual motives were.

Struck by the fact that many different social groups were involved in the Legion, Constantin Iordachi characterized the Legion as “a hierarchical organization made up of competing interest groups.”¹²³ If one thinks only of the years 1927 to 1932, then this conclusion is certainly valid. Legionaries recruited amongst students because their primary social relationships were with other students. Students were already connected to the ultra-nationalist

¹¹⁸ Gheorghe Buzatu and Corneliu Bichieț eds., *Arhive secrete, secretele arhivelor*, vol 1 (Bucharest: Editura Mica Valahie, 2005) 52.

¹¹⁹ Note that both the police and the *Siguranța* fell under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior, which collected most of my archival sources. Little is known about the Legionary secret police, which was well established by the beginning of 1936. CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 351-352; vol. 9, f. 155, 198.

¹²⁰ Alin Spânu, *Istoria serviciilor de informații/contrainformații românești în perioadă 1919-1945* (Iași: Demiurg, 2010) 17-18.

¹²¹ Beldiman, *Armata și mișcarea legionară*, 59-60.

¹²² Roth Jelescu, *Și cerul plângea*, 75.

¹²³ Iordachi, *Charisma*, 92.

movement, were used to communal singing and listening to lectures, and had been exposed to anti-Semitic arguments before coming into contact with the Legion. When Legionaries began reaching out to peasants, workers, tradesmen, and soldiers, they said that they could resolve the specific problems that these groups faced. Land redistribution, alcoholism, salaries, working conditions, corporatism, and the ethnic composition of businesses all entered the Legionary agenda for the first time. But from 1933 onwards, the Legion became a goal in itself and everything else took second place. Although Legionaries spoke about poor wages, unemployment, and working conditions when they encouraged such people to join, they consistently postponed addressing any of these issues “until the Legion is victorious.”

9.0 PRINTED PROPAGANDA

In his book *Pentru legionari (For my Legionaries, 1935)*, Codreanu described the establishment of the newspaper *Pământul strămoșesc* in 1927 as the Legion's "first battle."¹ Whereas only those in Iași could hear lectures and participate in rituals at the *Cămin Cultural Creștin*, newspapers connected Legionaries with a diffuse network of supporters around the country. They publicized Legionary activities and promoted the movement's symbols and slogans. As Legionaries began producing posters, pamphlets, postcards, and books, the writing process forced them to articulate their positions on a wide variety of issues. From 1932 onwards, Legionaries gave increasing importance to intellectuals and journalists who could write clearly about economics, art, literature, politics, violence, and European fascism. This meant not only the ascendancy of intellectuals within the Legion, but a blurring of boundaries between Legionary writers and ultra-nationalist publicists who were sympathetic to the Legionary cause. Printing and distributing propaganda materials were also specialist occupations. In the early 1930s Legionaries learned how to run printing presses, sell newspapers on the streets, and organized their own distribution networks using their own couriers and the Romanian postal service. Printed propaganda helped express what Legionarism meant on an intellectual level, but it also made printing and distribution a common part of Legionary every life.

9.1 POLITICAL BROADSHEETS

Despite the poverty of their movement's early years, Legionaries made newspapers and propaganda pamphlets a priority. When a new law against political agitation landed fourteen Legionaries, seven Aromanians, and scores of sympathetic peasants in prison in Autumn 1930, the Legion's first action was to launch *Garda de Fer (The Iron Guard, Bucharest, 1930)*, an

¹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 253.

intermittent, single-sheet newspaper aimed at a Bucharest audience. It attacked the government and portrayed the Legion as a persecuted group of patriots.² At the same time Legionaries in Galați began another newspaper entitled *Biruința* (Victory, 1930-1933). The editors of *Biruința* also said that they began their newspaper in reaction to the persecution of Legionaries. When the second issue appeared during the Neamț by-elections, *Biruința*'s tone became more militant, bitterly attacking Jews just as publications of *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC) had during the 1920s.³ Elections were another reason to establish new newspapers. Just before the general elections of June 1931 Ion Moța used his father's press to print a single issue of another newspaper also called *Garda de Fier* (*The Iron Guard*, Oraștie, 1931). This was a broadsheet dedicated entirely to introducing potential voters to the "Corneliu Z. Codreanu Group."⁴

As soon as they were able, the Legionaries acquired their own press, which they operated from the basement of their *Cămin* in Iași. Dumitru Banea writes that in 1931, "we bought ourselves, on credit, a small hand-operated printing press, [and] we all set about learning the art of printing. We made ourselves business cards, but not knowing what titles to give ourselves we wrote things like "Mitu Banea, musketeer (*mușchetar*)."⁵ The Legionaries found the press through their connections in Focșani, where support for the Legion was relatively strong.⁶ Most Legionary pamphlets were printed here for the next few years, as were *Pământul strămoșesc* and *Garda Moldovei* (*The Guard of Moldavia*, 1930-1933), the latter a newspaper aimed at peasants and workers living in and around Iași.⁷ Perhaps because of the Legionaries' printing press, the

² *Garda de Fer* (Bucharest), 1/1 (1 Sept 1930).

³ "Români!" *Biruința*, 1/1 (17 Oct 1930): 1; "Două note," *Biruința*, 2/2 (19 July 1931): 1.

⁴ *Garda de Fier* (Oraștie), 1/1 (20 May 1931).

⁵ Banea, *Acuzat*, 10.

⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 2, f. 99.

⁷ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 52/1933, f. 50; CNSAS, Fond Gârneata Ilie, I.211932, vol. 2, f. 22; CNSAS, Fond Lefter Simion, I.259143, vol. 1, f. 119..

Cuzist Teodor Mociulski, who was president of *Asociației Studenților Creștin* (the Christian Students' Association, ASC) in Iași, spent an enormous 300,000 lei of student contributions that year to buy his organization its own press.⁸ The Legionaries were proud of their press. When the ultra-nationalist publicist Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972) visited Iași in March 1932, they surrounded him after his lecture at the university and led him down the hill so that they could show it to him. Crainic gave another speech when they reached the *Cămin*, praising the Legion and promising to support it through his Bucharest daily *Calendarul* (*The Calendar*, 1932-1933). But the Iron Guard was declared illegal on 26 March 1932 and a police raid forced *Calendarul* to temporarily cease publication.⁹ The Legion was still allowed to function even if its paramilitary battalions had been outlawed, and Legionaries staged public rallies in support of *Calendarul* that month. In June it became a Legionary newspaper, employing Legionaries as editors at Codreanu's request.¹⁰

Crainic was a well-known poet and a theologian, and *Calendarul* presented itself as a Christian newspaper that many priests subscribed to and supported.¹¹ The first issue from 25 January 1932 addressed itself to a broad ultra-nationalist audience, announcing that the newspaper would be dedicated to exposing political and economic corruption.¹² Financed by Zamfir Christodorescu, an engineer whose money had also sustained Nicolae Iorga's *Neamul românesc* during the war, *Calendarul* was modeled on two of the most successful Bucharest dailies with center-right leanings – Nae Ionescu's *Cuvântul* (*The Word*, 1924-1938) and Pamfil

⁸ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 66.

⁹ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 199; Nichifor Crainic, "Reîncepem!" *Calendarul* (9 June 1932): 1.

¹⁰ CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 2, f. 346, 362, 364.

¹¹ "Căminul Soc. Preotesc 'Renaștera' din Oltenia," *Calendarul*, (20 Aug 1933): 1; "Manifestație religioasă dela Carpineni-Bucovina," *Calendarul*, (2 Sept 1933): 3.

¹² Nichifor Crainic, "Începem," *Calendarul*, (25 Jan 1932): 1.

Șeicaru's *Curentul* (*The Current*, 1928-1944). Crainic had worked at both of these newspapers in the past, and *Calendarul* was a deliberate attempt to outdo his former colleagues.¹³

Pământul strămoșesc was out of print at the time that Crainic transformed *Calendarul* into a Legionary newspaper, although the press at the *Cămin* continued to produce *Garda Moldovei*. In Galați *Biruința* appeared only intermittently, and in Brăila another newspaper called *Garda de Fer* (*The Iron Guard*, 1932) appears to have died a quick death.¹⁴ *Calendarul* was thus a major coup for the Legion. Legionaries received much-needed press coverage, and *Calendarul* carried cultural elements that the Legion's political broadsheets had lacked, such as book and film reviews, women's columns, and celebrity gossip. Accurate circulation figures are not available, but it is clear that even while *Calendarul* never became one of the country's largest newspapers, it was certainly read by many people who were not members of Codreanu's Legion.¹⁵ This was not a one-way partnership, and Crainic needed the Legionaries just as much as they needed him. *Calendarul* had had difficulties from the outset. Crainic priced it at 2 lei in order to undercut his rivals, who then banded together and convinced newspaper stands to refuse to sell it.¹⁶ Crainic therefore needed Legionaries to sell his newspaper on the streets of Bucharest, and he also sought help from LANC students in Iași.¹⁷

¹³ Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 244.

¹⁴ *Garda de Fer*, 1/1 (1 Jan 1932). Only one issue of the newspaper exists in the Biblioteca Centrală Universitară in Cluj-Napoca.

¹⁵ Crainic claims that "in only several months *Calendarul* had left *Cuvântul* and *Curentul* far behind, becoming the newspaper with the third largest print run in the country." Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe- zile negre: memorii (I)* (Bucharest: Casa Editurală "Gândirea", 1991) 232. Zigu Ornea disputes this, writing that *Calendarul* "could not go beyond 10,000 copies ... [and] could not equal the performances of Șeicaru (*Curentul*) and Nae Ionescu (*Cuvântul*)." Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 244. Neither man cites his sources. *Calendarul*'s balance sheet from 12 Feb 1934 may give some clue as to the reality. It records 492,510 lei in sales from Bucharest and 1,671,553.75 lei in sales from the provinces. The time period is unclear, but presumably refers to the financial year 1933. Assuming that *Calendarul* received 1.25 lei for every newspaper sold (the stand price was 2 lei), this adds up to 1,732,251 copies – an average of 4,949 copies for each of the 350 days it was printed that year. "Raport de expertiză" 12 Feb 1934. CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 1, f. 34.

¹⁶ Nichifor Crainic, "Coaliția zialelor împotriva ieftenirii vieții," *Calendarul*, (31 Jan 1932): 1.

¹⁷ CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 2, f. 343.

As of the early 1930s, Romanians increasingly used the term “fascist” to refer to the wave of ultra-nationalist political parties emerging in most European countries, and *Calendarul* reported sympathetically on British, Irish, and Japanese fascisms.¹⁸ Nichifor Crainic travelled to Italy twice in 1933 and 1934, where he met Mussolini, Eugenio Coselschi, and other senior Italian officials to discuss the Legion, anti-Semitism, and Italy’s geopolitical aspirations in the Balkans.¹⁹ Soon after Crainic’s first trip to Italy, the Italian politician Eugenio Coselschi (1888-1969) visited the worksite of House for Wounded Legionaries.²⁰ Coselschi is best known for his leadership of the *Comitati d’azione per l’universalità di Roma* (The Action Committee for Roman Universality, CAUR). CAUR was Mussolini’s attempts to create a “Fascist International” that would unite fascist parties abroad into one umbrella organization.²¹ Italian chauvinism and the failure to invite the German Nazi Party to participate ultimately sabotaged CAUR, but Codreanu spoke highly of Mussolini when Coselschi visited. The Italians sent a CAUR representative named Guido Ferruccio Cabalzar to follow up on Coselschi’s visit, and he reported that the Italian government needed to take urgent measures to ensure that the Legion did not move into the Nazi sphere of influence.²² Legionaries were also eager to deepen their ties

¹⁸ Dragoș Protopopescu, “Fascismul englez,” *Calendarul*, 1/441 (10 Aug 1933): 1; “Extremismul de dreaptă în Japonia,” *Calendarul*, 1/448 (18 Aug 1933): 1-2; “Șeful fasciștilor Irlandez a dispărut,” *Calendarul*, 2/538 (15 Dec 1933): 3.

¹⁹ Crainic, *Zile albe*, 240-242; Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 224, 231; CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 3, f. 50.

²⁰ “Patronul Gărzii de Fier,” *Calendarul*, 1/520 (10 Nov 1933).

²¹ Michael Arthur Ledeen, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972) 108-129; Francesco Guida, “La droite radicale roumaine et l’Italie dans le années 1930,” in Catherine Horel, Traian Sandu, and Fritz Taubert eds., *La périphérie du fascisme: spécification d’un modèle fasciste au sein de sociétés agraires: le cas de l’Europe centrale entre les deux guerres* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006) 81-82.

²² Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 300.

with Italy, and *Calendarul* printed a number of articles in the months that followed, praising Italy and suggesting closer cooperation between Mussolini and the Legion.²³

Anti-Semitism was a core element of Legionary ideology during the early 1930s, which strained relations between Codreanu and Mussolini. In 1933, both Italians and Germans expressed concerns that the Legionaries were exclusively obsessed with anti-Semitism and could not be counted on to support Italian or German interests in Romania.²⁴ Italian Fascism was not an anti-Semitic movement during the 1920s, and although Jews were occasionally persecuted during the 1930s, these were usually explained as purges of “bourgeois” anti-Fascists. Italian Fascists did not become openly anti-Semitic until 1938, when many Jews lost their jobs and new laws limited their civil rights.²⁵ In 1934 Ion Moța began his correspondence with the magazine *Welt-Dienst* (*World-Service*, 1933-1944) run by the German anti-Semite Ulrich Fleischhauer (1876-1960) by speaking of their “common enemy” who wants “to bring in an era of Bolshevik terror hidden behind a democratic mask.”²⁶ Financial restraints prevented Legionaries from attending a meeting organized by Fleischhauer’s *World-Service* in August 1934, but that December Ion Moța did attend a congress in Montreaux, Switzerland, of the Italian CAUR.²⁷ According to *Cuvântul studențesc*, delegates heard about fascist movements in Sweden, Norway, Holland, and Switzerland that faced the same problems that the Romanians were fighting against, and the whole congress held a moment’s silence when Moța toasted those who had died for the fascist cause.²⁸ But Moța’s anti-Semitism alienated him from many of the other delegates.

²³ Nichifor Crainic, “Democrație și dictatură,” *Calendarul*, 489 (5 Oct 1933): 1; Nichifor Crainic, “Interviewul acordat de directorul nostru unui ziarist italian,” *Calendarul*, 2/494 (11 Oct 1933): 2; Nichifor Crainic, “Presă fascistă,” *Calendarul*, 2/510, (29 Oct 1933): 3; “Italia sportivă,” *Calendarul*, 2/540 (17 Dec 1933): 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 82-83; Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 226.

²⁵ Franklin Hugh Adler, “Jew as Bourgeois, Jew as Enemy, Jew as Victim of Fascism,” *Modern Judaism*, 28/3 (2008): 306-326.

²⁶ Moța, *Corespondența*, 29.

²⁷ Moța, *Corespondența*, 32, 34.

²⁸ “Congresul dela Montreaux,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 10/2 (20 Jan 1935).

They rejected his suggestion that the congress issue a declaration against “the international Jew” in both his liberal-capitalist and communist forms, and were offended when he demanded that the German National Socialists should be invited to join CAUR.²⁹ The relationship between the German Nazis and the Italian Fascists was particularly brittle at this time, and Moța did little to endear himself to the Italians through his support for the Germans or his hostility towards Jews.³⁰

Crainic spent months convincing some of the younger editors and contributors at *Calendarul* to join the Legion, and several of them became the Legion’s most prominent ideologues.³¹ The importance of Crainic’s patronage for young journalists can be seen in a letter written by Nicolae V. Iliescu to his parents on 1 Dec 1933. Iliescu apologized that he had not followed his uncle’s wishes and joined the LANC, but he explained that,

In Bucharest I was able to set my business in order: I have been entrusted with running the newspaper *Calendarul* in Ardeal, and especially in Cluj. For this I will be paid a fixed salary every month from the central office in Bucharest. ... But luck has been even kinder to me: after I did a job for Dr. Zaharia Boilă on behalf of my boss from *Calendarul*, Mr. Nichifor Crainic,... this Mr. Boilă offered me a job in his newspaper [*România nouă*] as press secretary (this means a big responsibility – the second most important man after the director), which I accepted.”³²

²⁹ Moța, *Corespondența*, 34-39; Guida, “La droit radicale roumaine,” 83; Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 301.

³⁰ On German-Italian relationships in 1934, see Jerzy W. Borejsza, “Die Rivalität zwischen Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus in Ostmitteleuropa,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 29/4 (1981): 579-578, 594-600.

³¹ *Calendarul* writers who became Legionaries in 1932-33 thanks to Crainic’s influence include Mihail Polihroniade, Dragoș Protopopescu, Ioan Victor Vojen, Nicolae V. Iliescu and Nicolae Crevedia. Others, such as Toma Vlădescu, Al. Gregorian, Alexandru Cusin, and Gib. Mihaescu remained convinced ultra-nationalists but avoided aligning themselves with the Legion. Crainic, *Zile albe*, 237; Heinen 169.

³² CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 3, f. 17-18.

Iliescu went on to explain that he owed his job with Zaharia Boilă (1892-1976) – one of Transylvania’s most important publicists and a prominent member of Iuliu Maniu’s National Peasants’ Party – to Crainic’s recommendation, and that now he could not abandon his Legionary politics because his livelihood was irrevocably bound up with the Legion’s success.

Calendarul intensified the Legion’s anti-corruption message and added frequent attacks on freemasons, particularly against members of Nicolae Iorga’s government, which ruled from April 1931 to June 1932. Though Iorga himself was not a Freemason, his cabinet contained many prominent Masons. The ultra-nationalist press protested loudly, charging that only Masonic connections could explain how so many incompetent men could be assembled into one cabinet.³³ Iorga’s government was the first to ban the Legion, and police began arresting Legionaries involved in propaganda or anti-Semitic violence.³⁴ The Legionaries did not take kindly to this, and blamed freemasons whenever they were censored or arrested by the authorities.³⁵ Anti-Masonry became an important part of ultra-nationalist rhetoric towards the end of the Depression years. Speakers at Depression-era “anti-communist” rallies often talked more about Freemasons than they did about communists, because they believed that the two groups were working together. The anti-communist speaker Victor E. Bilciurescu from the center-right newspaper *Universul* was booed off stage at one rally because the crowd thought that he was a freemason.³⁶ By mid-1932 *Societatea Anti-Masonică* (the Anti-Freemasonry

³³ Nichifor Crainic, “Falimentul venerabililor,” *Calendarul*, 1/22 (15 Feb 1932): 1.

³⁴ Titu Georgescu, *Nicolae Iorga împotriva hitlerismului* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1966) 78; Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 200.

³⁵ Nicolae Andrieș, “Un triumf al masoneriei,” *Calendarul*, 1/246 (14 Dec 1932): 5; “Prigoana democrației împotriva naționalismului,” *Calendarul*, 2/501 (19 Oct 1933): 2; Vasile Christescu, “Autoritatea și mișcarea naționalistă,” *Axa*, 1/13 (31 May 1933): 1; Bartolomeu Livezeanu, “Se bucură masonii,” *Garda Jiului*, 2/5 (25 Mar 1933): 3.

³⁶ B. Florinescu, “Campania anti-comunistă a studențimii bucureștene,” *Cuvântul studențesc*, 7/3 (15 Feb 1932): 3. On the politics of *Universul*, see Popescu, *Memorii*, 87.

Society) had established branches in most provincial capitals, though due to its clandestine, secretive nature, the police were unable to discover who its leaders were.³⁷

When Marin Ștefănescu's *Cultul Patriei* (Cult of the Fatherland, 1926-1939) held an anti-communist protest in 1930 but refused to allow anti-Semitic speeches, LANC journalists accused it of being run by Freemasons.³⁸ Marin Ștefănescu (1880-1945) was a professor of philosophy at the University of Cluj, and a prominent ultra-nationalist who had been a secretary and then President of the Cultural League during the First World War. He was so well connected within Romanian elite circles that when he was accused of raping four twelve year old girls in 1924, a number of well-known individuals spoke out affirming his "moral" character. When it was founded in 1926, the Cult of the Fatherland included mostly former generals and retired officers, but during the 1930s it also attracted a large number of ultra-nationalist students from the University of Cluj.³⁹ Ștefănescu soon added an anti-Masonic article to the association's constitution and purged any members who were thought to be Freemasons.⁴⁰

Almost all political parties in the 1930s distributed their own political broadsheets in the capital and most also had regional publications in their strongest counties. These newspapers carried speeches by party leaders, policy statements and manifestos, and slanderous attacks on political opponents. In 1934 – the only year for which reliable statistics exist – the print runs of regional newspapers representing the major parties such as the National Liberal Party or the National Peasant Party ranged from 1,000 to 5,000 copies an issue, whereas smaller parties like

³⁷ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 29/1927, f. 5.

³⁸ Daniel Cristescu, "Afara cu banda de Franc-Masoni din 'Cultul Patriei!'" *Buletinul Anti-Iudeo-Masonic*, 1/5 (May 1930): 180-181.

³⁹ Constantin Schifirneț, "Scandalul 'Marin Ștefănescu'," *Historia*, 7/66 (2007): 65-68; CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, P. 000324, vol. 13, f. 239.

⁴⁰ BAIM, "Francmasonii au fost alungați din Cultul Patriei," *Buletinul Anti-Iudeo-Masonic*, 1/6 (June 1930): 222-223.

the LANC only managed between 500 and 1,500 copies, depending on the county.⁴¹ The Legion launched a regional press of its own in Autumn 1932, including such original titles as *Garda* (Brăila, 1932), *Garda* (Muscel, 1932-1933), *Garda Bucovinei* (Rădăuți, 1932-1933), *Garda Jiului* (Dolj, 1932-1933), *Garda Prahovei* (Ploiești, 1932-1933), and *Garda Râmnicului* (Râmnicul Sarat, 1932-1933). By February 1933 it could boast seventeen regional broadsheets.⁴² Usually selling for only one leu, regional Legionary broadsheets of the early 1930s reported on local gendarmes who were facing disciplinary action for assaulting Legionaries during election campaigns, speeches made by local Legionary leaders, new nests established, and rallies held in the vicinity. They also contained articles on Legionary doctrine, photos of Codreanu, lyrics to Legionary songs, and advertisements for *Calendarul*.

9.2 BUCHAREST INTELLECTUALS

Alongside *Pământul Strămoșec* and *Calendarul*, the other major Legionary periodical of 1932-1933 was known as *Axa* (*The Axis*, 1932-1933, 1940-1941), which came out in print runs of between 1,000 and 2,000 copies.⁴³ *Axa* was launched in October 1932 by Mihail Polihroniade (1907-1939) and Ioan Victor Vojen, two journalists who had worked on *Calendarul* for most of that year. A student named Nicoleta Nicolescu (1911-1939) was responsible for distribution. Legionary couriers sent it to each of Bucharest's six districts and Nicolescu either mailed it to Legionaries in the provinces or else transported it together with copies of the center-right newspaper *Universul*.⁴⁴ *Axa* was not originally a Legionary newspaper, and even had collaborators with left-wing and moderate sympathies –Eugen Ionescu (a playwright) and Octav

⁴¹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Nationale, vol. 1, Presa internă, Dosare 251/1934 – 280/1934, 295/1934 – 308/1934, 316/1934 – 318/1934.

⁴² Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 203.

⁴³ Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 159.

⁴⁴ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160182, vol. 1, f. 426.

Șuluțiu (a writer) wrote the newspaper's first literary columns. The decisive issue driving *Axa*, Nichifor Crainic explained in the opening editorial, was the desire for an "anti-democratic revolution." This revolution might be corporatist or communist, he said, but it should be corporatist because only the former "completely corresponds with the spirit of this people."⁴⁵ *Axa* grew out of the cultural circles of the "Criterionists" and the "Young Generation" – students and young intellectuals based in Bucharest who held lectures on controversial topics and saw themselves as the unaligned yet revolutionary vanguard of the Romanian intelligentsia.⁴⁶

Valentin Săndulescu notes that whereas the contributors to *Axa* were originally most impressed with the idea of a stable, authoritarian state such as Fascist Italy, by March 1933, when *Axa* had fallen firmly under the influence of the Legion and included regular contributions from longstanding activists such as Ion Moța and Mihail Stelescu, the emphasis shifted to celebrating revolutionary movements such as Hitler's newly ascendant Nazi Party in Germany.⁴⁷ As a Legionary newspaper with a literary focus, *Axa* published work by intellectuals such as the poet Radu Gyr, the painter George Zlotescu, the historian Vasile Cristescu, and the economist Alexandru Constant. In addition to being committed Legionaries, all of these men were accomplished in their respective fields and used *Axa* to speak about issues such as economics, politics, and literature, on which no official Legionary policies existed. As Constantin Iordachi notes, *Axa* "systematized the Legion's ideas into a comprehensive ideology" for the first time, taking the hooliganism and hatreds of the 1920s and transforming them into an intellectually respectable world view.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Nichifor Crainic, "Spre stângă sau spre dreaptă," *Axa*, 1/1 (20 Oct 1932): 1.

⁴⁶ Săndulescu, "Revolutionizing Romania," 105-128; Vanhaelemeersch, *A Generation "Without Beliefs"*, 252-274; Cristina Adriana Bejan, "The Criterion Association: Friendship, Culture and Fascism in Interwar Bucharest" (PhD Dissertation, University of Oxford, Oxford, 2009).

⁴⁷ Săndulescu, "Revolutionizing Romania," 127-128.

⁴⁸ Iordachi, *Charisma*, 63.

Polihroniade and Vojen had both studied together at the prestigious Spiru Haret High School in Bucharest together with Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), the acknowledged leader of the “Young Generation,” and under Crainic’s influence first Polihroniade and then Vojen joined the Legion in December 1932.⁴⁹ In a confession from January 1934 Vojen told the police that he became interested in Legionary politics after he returned from studying theater abroad and discovered that he could not work in the Romanian theater world because it was corrupted by political interest groups. “I realized,” he said, “that a reform of the theater and of national art was impossible without a total reform of politics. Then I became involved in politics myself.”⁵⁰ The intellectual circles that Polihroniade and Vojen belonged to embraced intellectuals with both left- and right-wing leanings, and once they joined the Legion these two men immediately began recruiting others for their cause. Intellectuals associated with the “Young Generation” often spoke of themselves as “spiritual youth” who were breathing new life into Romanian culture, and this rhetoric blended easily with the Legion’s self-image as a youth movement with spiritual values.⁵¹ Polihroniade and his wife held gatherings of intellectuals sympathetic to the Legion in their home, and within a couple of years they were joined by Mircea Eliade and his wife Nina, the writer Haig Acterian and his wife Marieta Sadova, the sociologist Mircea Vulcănescu, Petrișor Viforeanu, the philosophers Constantin Noica and Emil Cioran, and a veteran Legionary named Ion Belgea who worked at the library of the Romanian Academy.⁵² Eliade and Vulcănescu were both protégés of the philosopher Nae Ionescu (1890-1940). After several months of negotiations he too became a supporter of Codreanu in late 1933 and influenced many

⁴⁹ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160181, f. 414-415.

⁵⁰ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160182, vol. 1, f. 426.

⁵¹ Mircea Eliade, “Linii de orientare,” *Cuvântul*, 3/857 (6 Sept 1927): 1; Pavel, Sorin, Ion Nestor, and Petre Marcu-Balș, “Manifestul ‘Crinului Alb,’” *Gândirea*, 8/8-9 (1928): 311-317; Mircea Vulcănescu, “*Tânără generație*”: *crize vechi în haine noi*. (Bucharest: Editura Compania, 2004). Cf. Bejan, “The Criterion Association,” 34-54.

⁵² CNSAS, Fond Sadova Marieta, I.209489, vol. 2, f. 2-6.

of his students to get involved in right-wing politics. Ionescu preached a variation of existentialism he called *trăirism*, a philosophy of experience (understood as *Erlebnis*) or of “living in the moment.” His lectures and his personality fascinated his students, who formed a cult-like following around him.⁵³ Some of these rising stars of Bucharest’s intellectual and literary elite formally joined the Legion, while others contributed to Legionary publications and praised the movement in the press.

The world of theater, art, and literature was not one which the Legion’s early leaders were all familiar with. In the words of Francisco Veiga, these intellectuals had “an unequalled glamour, refinement, and chic. They brought the leadership of the Legion an intellectual sophistication and a big-city style, which contrasted with the provincial and sometimes coarse image that the movement had had up until 1931.”⁵⁴ A case in point is that when Marieta Sadova (1897-1981) – a famous actress – met Codreanu for the first time she was shocked to discover that he had never heard of her.⁵⁵ The participation of the “Young Generation” in the gatherings at the Polihroniade home and their published writings opened up a new social group to Legionary politics, one which would prove to be particularly fruitful in terms of its contribution to written propaganda.

It also created tensions within the movement. One police report from 1934 stated that many of the Legion’s early leaders resented the influence that the *Axa* journalists had on Codreanu. They thought of the newcomers as “opportunistic intruders” and worried that this small group from Bucharest was taking control of the Legion.⁵⁶ Indeed, the ability of this literate

⁵³ Mircea Eliade, “Un cuvânt al editorului,” in Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor* (Bucharest: Editura Roza Vânturilor, 1990) 421-444; Mihail Sebastian, *Cum am devenit hooligan* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006) 48-55, Laignel-Lavastine, *Filozofie și naționalism*, 231-245; Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 221-241.

⁵⁴ Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 160.

⁵⁵ Mihail Sebastian, *Jurnal, 1935-1944* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005) 90.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Săndulescu, “Revolutionizing Romania,” 135.

elite to produce high-quality journalism and propaganda texts promoted them ahead of activists who had been members of the Legion for much longer, and gave them a disproportionate influence over the Bucharest-based leadership. Legionary intellectuals proved ambivalent towards the notion of “intellectuals” as a social group, and condemned philosophizing that was not accompanied by immediate political action.⁵⁷ When Emil Cioran (1911-1995) sent a copy of his book on *Schimbarea la fața a României* (*The Transfiguration of Romania*, 1936) to Codreanu, the latter responded ambivalently by contrasting his own actions as a “fighter” with Cioran’s efforts as a mere “writer.”⁵⁸

9.3 NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES, AND JOURNALS

The government closed most of the Legion’s periodicals and arrested many of its leaders after three Legionaries assassinated the Prime Minister Ion G. Duca on 29 December 1933. Although the three assassins received life sentences, the other fifty arrested Legionaries were released in April 1934. After prison, the Legionaries quickly set about reviving their press and within a short time had established more newspapers than ever before.⁵⁹ Legionaries were sometimes forced to look beyond their own membership for money to finance these publications, and in November 1934 the President of *Uniunea Națională a Studenților Creștini din România* (the National Union of Christian Students in Romania, UNSCR), a Legionary named Traian Cotiga (1910-1939), began negotiations with both Stelian Popescu and Mihail Manoilescu for money to run *Cuvântul studențesc*. Neither Popescu nor Manoilescu were Legionaries, and although both men were sympathetic each had his own, non-Legionary, conditions for any money that might be

⁵⁷ Nicolae Roșu, “Situția intelectualilor,” *Axa*, 2/5 (Jan 1933): 1-2; Ioan Victor Vojen, “Parazitismul intelectualilor,” *Axa*, 2/9 (19 Mar 1933): 2; Bernea, *Tineretul*, 26.

⁵⁸ Joanne Roberts, “The City of Bucharest, 1918-1940” (PhD Dissertation, University College London, London, 2009) 73.

⁵⁹ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 263.

forthcoming.⁶⁰ A police report from 1935 described the most important of the Legion's new publications:

România creștină [*Christian Romania*], in Chișinău, is the organization's propaganda organ for Bessarabia and has a print-run of 10,000 copies; *Brațul de fier* [*The Arm of Iron*, 1935-1937] in Focșani, is an unflinching defender of the Legionary spirit; *Glasul strămoșesc* [*The Ancestral Voice*, 1934-1935] appears in Iași [*sic*] and is the oldest phalanx carrying the Legionary creed; *Biruința legionară* [*The Legionary Victory*] appears in Brăila as the propaganda organ for that region and is funded from contributions and donations of local Legionaries; *Românul de mâine* [*The Romanian of Tomorrow*], a magazine of Christian nationalist propaganda appearing in Bălți, in Bessarabia, since fall 1935.⁶¹

The variety and number of Legionary newspapers is one indication of just how many people were writing Legionary news and ideology by the mid-1930s. Far from being the exclusive domain of a handful of leaders, the Legion's written corpus was produced by a individuals with diverse perspectives and interests. Each publication catered specifically to the needs of its readers. *Glasul strămoșesc*, for example, spoke to an urban audience in Cluj, where it was printed, and carried a regular women's column as well as news about student politics within the university. *Brațul de Fier*, on the other hand, was a more general publication suitable to a middle-class audience in Focșani who could read about Legionary ideology and national politics in its pages. Smaller local newspapers, such as *Buletinul legionar* (*The Legionary Bulletin*, 1937-1938) in Buzău printed mostly circulars from Codreanu and reprints of articles from more

⁶⁰ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 60.

⁶¹ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 151.

important newspapers, as well as announcements about local meetings and activities.⁶² Finally, Legionary magazines such as *Orientări* (*Orientations*, 1931-1938), which was published in Moinești in Bacău county, carried almost exclusively long ideological articles and short reviews of books and magazines. Most Legionary periodicals were subject to censorship. Every issue of *Glasul strămoșesc* had blank spaces where articles had been censored, and *Brațul de fier* wrote in 1935 that “the pages of *Cuvântul studentesc* appear empty, empty – and as clean as our hearts, purified this like country will soon be.”⁶³ The police soon became so accustomed to confiscating prohibited Legionary newspapers that occasionally they even confiscated publications from vendors that had been approved by the censors.⁶⁴ Not all of these newspapers were officially Legionary publications. When a group of Legionaries in Brăila asked permission to launch a newspaper in January 1935, Codreanu gave his permission on the conditions that they did not use “the name of the Archangel,” and that they immediately resign from the Legion. He had ordered a temporary pause in publishing, and thought that the Brăila initiative ignored these orders.⁶⁵

As they appeared less frequently, carried longer articles, and were written by more prestigious figures, magazines were a popular medium for printing ideological articles. *Însemnări sociologice* (*Sociological Notes*, 1935-1941), for example, blended sociological writings with Legionary propaganda. It was run by a professor of Ethics, Sociology, and Political Science at the University of Cernăuți, Traian Brăileanu (1882-1947), who had been involved in the LANC in the early 1920s before joining the Legion in 1930.⁶⁶ Brăileanu’s pre-Legionary writings called the nation a “moral community,” by which he meant that the political organization of a state must flow out of family organization and local circumstances. Brăileanu

⁶² Ion Costea, *Presa legionară a Buzăului* (Buzău: Editura Vega, 2007) 26-38.

⁶³ “Polemici, știri, și poșta noastră,” *Brațul de fier*, 1/2 (1 July 1935): 4.

⁶⁴ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 8/1938, f. 312

⁶⁵ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 33-34.

⁶⁶ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 116, 168.

argued in favor of a strong leader who could shape and defend the nation because of his absolute hold on power.⁶⁷ During the 1930s he created a circle of young Bucovinian intellectuals around *Însemnări sociologice* and promoted the Legion through lectures, dances, and cultural evenings.⁶⁸

Brăilescu was not the only sociologist who contributed significantly to printed Legionary propaganda. Several Legionaries took part in the famous monographic teams organized by Dimitrie Gusti (1880-1955), who sent out small groups of students to survey village life and to compile detailed reports on peasant customs and lifestyles in specific areas.⁶⁹ One of Gusti's students, the Legionary Dimitrie Bejan (1909-1995), spent five years in Bessarabia after which he wrote a detailed account of his research experiences hoping to demonstrate that Bessarabia was culturally and socially a Romanian territory.⁷⁰ Another of Gusti's protégées, Traian Herseni (1907-1980), also became a Legionary in 1936. Like Haig Acterian and Ion Victor Vojen, Herseni had embraced left-wing politics during the early 1930s and quarreled with other Legionary sociologists over methodological approaches in their discipline.⁷¹ A prominent sociologist in his own right, he decided to join the Legion after being refused a job at the University of Cluj because – he believed – he did not have the proper political connections and had declined to join the National Liberal Party. According to a declaration he wrote in July 1944, Herseni chose the Legion because “it seemed to be the most revolutionary political group at the

⁶⁷ Traian Brăileanu, *Politica* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 2003).

⁶⁸ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 165; Interview with Lauric Filon (29 June 1995) in Mariana Conovici, Silvia Iliescu, and Octavian Silvestru eds. *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul : Mișcarea Legionară în documente de istorie orală* (București: Humanitas, 2008) 37-38. On Gusti, see Mircea Vulcănescu, *Scoala sociologică a lui Dimitrie Gusti* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1998); Antonio Momoc, *Capcanele politice ale sociologiei interbelice* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2012).

⁶⁹ Many of these studies were published in *Sociologie românească (Romanian Sociology, 1936-1942)*.

⁷⁰ Dimitrie Bejan, *Hotarul cu cetății* (Bucharest: Editura Tehnica, 1995).

⁷¹ Momoc, *Capcanele politice*, 270-275.

time,” and he wanted to “protest against the political parties, the state authorities, and the Romanian university.”⁷²

Herseni’s key Legionary works were *Mișcarea legionară și muncitorimea* (*The Legionary Movement and the Workers*, 1937) and *Mișcarea legionară și țărănimea* (*The Legionary Movement and the Peasantry*, 1937). These were the most developed attempts to adapt Legionary doctrine to the needs of these particular social groups. The first of these booklets emphasized that Legionaries understood the problems faced by workers and were committed to fighting for workers’ rights. Herseni argued that Legionaries themselves valued manual labor and dismissed Communism as a Jewish conspiracy against workers.⁷³ Herseni’s booklet to peasants was printed in 30,000 copies in its first edition. Its message to peasants drew on studies on peasant politics carried out by Gusti’s teams, which concluded that peasants were disenchanted with partisan politics and distrusted city politicians and their electoral promises.⁷⁴ Herseni claimed that peasant intuition would enable his readers to distinguish between virtuous Legionaries and “clever” or “cunning” politicians who only wanted “to con the ‘gullible’ in elections.”⁷⁵

Ion I. Ionică (1907-1944), Dumitru Cristian Amzăr (1906-1999), Ernest Bernea (1905-1990), and Ion Samarineanu were all active Legionaries during the 1930s. During this decade they also set out to create their own current within Romanian sociology through the journal *Rânduiala* (*Order*, 1935, 1937-1938).⁷⁶ Influenced by both Marcel Mauss and Dimitrie Gusti but coming increasingly to see the ultra-nationalist philosopher Nae Ionescu as their intellectual

⁷² CNSAS, Fond Herseni Traian, Dosar I.163318, vol.2, f. 99-105.

⁷³ Traian Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară și muncitorimea* (Bucharest, 1937).

⁷⁴ Constantin V. Micu, “Viața politică a unui sat din Năsăud,” *Sociologie românească*, 2/9-10 (Sept-Oct 1937): 459-465.

⁷⁵ Traian Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară și țărănimea*, (Bucharest, 1937) 3.

⁷⁶ The other members of the “Rânduiala circle” were Nicolae Brânzău, Ion Conea, Mac Constantinescu, Ion Creangă, Nicolae Crișan, Constantin Floru, Eugen I. Ionică, Mihail Orleanu, Valeriu Papahagi, Victor I. Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, Emil Turdeanu, and Haralambie Ungureanu.

mentor, these graduate students examined regional trends rather than doing village-level studies.⁷⁷ Probably feeling stifled by their elders, they distanced themselves from Gusti's Romanian Sociological Institute but had few strong criticisms to make of its approach.⁷⁸ Their research focused heavily on peasant ritual, folklore, art, and religion, which they argued was intimately related to how peasants worked the land and organized their lives.⁷⁹ Early editions of *Rânduiala* chronicled and discussed Romanian peasant culture. Describing the magazine as an "archive," the editors printed "research on Romanian life and thought of the past and the present; ... [and] reflections on people and places where our the spirit of our lives is embodied in images and icons as an enduring recognition and guide for future generations."⁸⁰ The content of the magazine changed when it began printing explicit Legionary articles in 1937, but it still maintained a mostly academic tone and discussed issues of general interest to sociologists as well as to Legionaries.

According to Dan Dungaciu, Ionică joined the Legion out of a sense of obligation after his brother – also a Legionary – was shot.⁸¹ Perhaps because the Legion was not their primary commitment, Ionică and Samarineanu wrote little Legionary propaganda. Amzăr produced only one short booklet and several articles supporting Romanian ultra-nationalism, but their colleague Ernest Bernea was a prolific Legionary publicist.⁸² Bernea worked with both Dimitrie Gusti and

⁷⁷ Calin Cotoi, "The Imagining of National Spaces in Interwar Romania: Nationalist Regionalism and Ethnology," in Vlad Russo ed., *New Europe College Yearbook 2006-2007* (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2008) 129-156.

⁷⁸ Ernest Bernea's critique of Gusti, Stahl, and Herseni failed to identify any strong methodological disagreements with the Gustian school and focused instead on "emphases." Ernest Bernea, "Monografia sociologică," *Rânduiala*, 1/1 (Jan-Mar 1935): 60-71. Cf. Momoc, *Capcanele politice*, 216-220.

⁷⁹ Ion I. Ionică, *Dealul Mohului: cermonia agrară în cununia în țară Oltului* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1996) 6. Cf. Ion I. Ionică, *Manifestările spirituale în cercetarea sociologică* (Bucharest, 1940); Dumitru Cristian Amzăr, *Rânduiala* (Bucharest: Editura România Press, 2006); Ernest Bernea, *Sociologie și etnografie românească: ordinea spirituală* (Bucharest: Editura Vreamea, 2009).

⁸⁰ "O arhivă de gând și faptă românească," *Rânduiala*, 1/1 (Jan-Mar 1935): 3-4.

⁸¹ Dan Dungaciu, *Elita interbelică: sociologie românească în context European* (Bucharest: Editura Mica Valahie, 2003) 40.

⁸² Dumitru Cristian Amzăr, *Naționalismul tineretului* (Bucharest: Rânduiala, 1936). For an analysis of Amzăr's Legionary writings, see Momoc, *Capcanele politice*, 249-261.

Nae Ionescu before joining the Legion and establishing *Rânduiala* in 1935.⁸³ His Legionary writings located Codreanu within a long tradition of brave Romanian leaders, emphasized the importance of young people for effective social change, and claimed that the Legion was an organic product of Romanian history and culture.⁸⁴ Using their journals as a pretext for running printing presses, Ionică, Brăileanu, and the others published and distributed numerous Legionary pamphlets and booklets through *Rânduiala* and *Însemnări sociologice*. In doing so they spread Legionary culture within their own academic circles as well as producing printed materials that were used by Legionary propagandists throughout the country.

Although academics did join the Legion, they rarely created a “Legionary” approach to their subjects in the way that Marxist or Neo-Liberal scholars have. One example of how far Legionary scholars were from pioneering a “Legionary history” is the historian Petre P. Panaitescu (1900-1967), who contributed to *Rânduiala* and *Însemnări sociologice* and was a regular speaker at Legionary events. Panaitescu had joined the PNT in 1926, the National Liberal Party in 1930, and – depending on which police report one reads – became a legionary sympathizer at some stage between 1933 and 1936. He was part of a circle of young historians grouped around *Revista istorică română* (*Journal of Romanian History*, 1931-1947) who, rejecting the Romanian historiography dominated by Nicolae Iorga, hoped to bring a new level of professionalism to Romanian history writing, exploring social, economic, and cultural aspects of the past instead of writing straight-forward nationalist narratives as earlier Romanian historians had done.⁸⁵ Panaitescu officially joined the Legion in November 1937, and

⁸³ CNSAS, Fond Bernea Ernest, Dosar I.15702, vol. 1, f. 1-2, 11, 101; Manuela Gheorghe, “Bernea, Ernest,” in Ilie Bădescu and Ozana Cucu-Oancea eds., *Dicționar de sociologie rurală* (Bucharest: Editura Mica Valahie, 2004) 50-54.

⁸⁴ Ernest Bernea, *Cartea Căpitanilor* (Bucharest: Serviciul Propagandei Scrise, 1940); Bernea, *Tineretul și politică*; Ernest Bernea, *Stil legionar*, (Bucharest: Serviciul Propagandei Legionare, 1940).

⁸⁵ Zub, *Istorie și istorici*, 222-230.

immediately attached himself to a nest of intellectuals, publishing in legionary newspapers, and working together with Nae Ionescu and others to promote the Legion within academic circles. His true reasons for joining will probably never be known, but several police informers suggested that Panaitescu joined on the urging of his wife Silvia, a painter, who pointed out that all of the bright young historians of his generation had begun promising political careers and told him to join the Legion so that he could “do something important as well.”⁸⁶

During the mid-1930s the contributions of the former “Axa” group were represented by *Ideea românească* (*The Romanian Idea*, 1935-1936). This magazine was edited by Pavel Costin Deleanu, who had worked under Nae Ionescu at *Cuvântul* and was one of the directors of *Axa* in 1933.⁸⁷ Deleanu presented ultra-nationalism as the logical conclusion of the “Young Generation’s” evolution, which he said had passed through a spiritual, Orthodox phase in 1922-23, followed by the discovery of “experientialism” (*trăirism*) under Nae Ionescu from 1926 to 1930, before embracing ultra-nationalism from 1930 onwards.⁸⁸ *Ideea românească* explored questions that the “Young Generation” were interested in – such as Orthodoxy, mysticism, art, literature, philosophy, and culture – but presented them in a light that resonated with the Legionary worldview. Although left-wing writers such as Eugen Ionescu (1909-1994) also contributed to the magazine, it was a far cry from the broad cosmopolitanism that had characterized this group in 1932.⁸⁹

In Cluj, Legionary literature and culture was represented in *Revista mea* (*My Magazine*, 1935-1937), edited by Marta Rădulescu (1912-1959), who was a writer of short stories and comic novels and the daughter of Dan Rădulescu (1884-1969), a professor of Chemistry at the

⁸⁶ CNSAS, Fond Panaitescu Petre, Dosar I.234303, vol. 1, f. 2, 74, vol. 2, f. 164-165.

⁸⁷ Fond Panaitescu Petre, Dosar I.234303, vol. 2, f. 328.

⁸⁸ Pavel Costin Deleanu, “Clipă de față a tineretului românesc,” *Ideea românească*, 1/2-4 (June-Aug 1935): 92-94.

⁸⁹ On The Criterion symposium, which was the clearest expression of this generation’s early cosmopolitanism, see Bejan, “The Criterion Association,” 67-160.

University of Cluj.⁹⁰ Rădulescu advertised her magazine as being full of “the clearest and most readable literature, honest reviews, [and] social and literary journalism, ... [as well as essays on] sociology, economics, psychology, science, etc.”⁹¹ But she made her Legionary sympathies clear from the opening article, which blamed a Jewish conspiracy for the fact that her most recent novels had been rejected by the “Adevărul” publishing house – according to Rădulescu, because of her father’s support for the Legion.⁹² *Revista mea* maintained its literary focus, including frequent contributions from Legionary intellectuals such as Ion Banea, Ion Moța, and Emil Cioran. The magazine also printed frequent reflections on the relationship between ultra-nationalism and culture, asserting that good art “must be nationalist art.”⁹³

With encouragement from Traian Brăileanu, a group of young writers and poets from Cernăuți led by Mircea Streinul (1910-1945) and Iulian Vesper (1908-1986) decided “to imprint an accelerated rhythm onto the literary movement of the young generation,” through the literary magazine *Iconar* (*Iconographer*, 1935-1938).⁹⁴ They also shared Legionary sympathies and in the words of the National Liberal politician Ion Nistor (1876-1962), they used the magazine “to develop a lively national[ist] propaganda clothed in literary form.”⁹⁵ In an interview for *Iconar* in 1936 the Legionary poet Radu Gyr answered the question “can poetry serve a political idea?” by declaring: “Serve an idea, no! Politicianism is synonymous with a quagmire, vermin, putrefaction. ... [But] in the service of the national idea, in the service of a new, productive ethnic soul, *yes!* In the service of Legionarism, which is itself as pure as a ballad that melts into

⁹⁰ Mariana Vartic, “Rădulescu Marta D.,” in Mircea Zăciu, Marian Papahagi and Aurel Sasu eds., *Dicționarul scriitorilor români: R-Z* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 2002) 32-33.

⁹¹ “De vorbă cu d-ra Marta Rădulescu,” *Glasul strămoșesc*, 2/3 (20 Jan 1935): 3.

⁹² Săndulescu, “Revolutionizing Romania,” 178.

⁹³ Traian Brăileanu, “Arta pentru artă,” *Revista mea* 1/7-8 (1936); quoted in Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 423-424.

⁹⁴ Mircea A. Diaconu, *Mișcarea “Iconar”: literatură și politică în Bucovina anilor ’30* (Iași: Editura Timpul, 1999) 44.

⁹⁵ Ion Nistor, quoted in *ibid.*, 71.

our historic national destiny.”⁹⁶ *Iconar* published Legionary poetry, recollections, and ideology, and its reviews or books, music and magazines celebrated ultra-nationalist themes. Speaking about “national rebirth” and the seeking to introduce fresh ideas into Romanian culture, the editors of *Iconar* established a Legionary publication at the forefront of the Bucovinian literary scene.

9.4 BOOKS, PAMPHLETS, POSTERS, AND POSTCARDS

Together with newspapers and magazines, Legionaries issued circulars, books, pamphlets, calendars, photographs, and posters, a number of which made it into public libraries.⁹⁷ In his memoirs, the Legionary Ion Bozoșan (1905-1991) says that he first became convinced of “how much spirituality, purity and healthy teachings the Captain [Codreanu] was giving to youth and to our whole people,” after reading Codreanu’s *Pentru legionari* in 1936.⁹⁸ According to a eulogy from November 1940, the peasant Ilie Giulan “was not very educated,” but he too joined after reading Legionary literature.⁹⁹ Legionaries were supposed to read and discuss books when they met together in their nests, and books were some of the most commonly confiscated items when police raided Legionaries’ homes.

The Legion’s most widely distributed works were those written by Codreanu. His shortest writings were circulars of one or two paragraphs addressing urgent issues. They were sent to Legionaries throughout the country, and Codreanu expected each person who received one to send one leu to Bucharest to pay for printing costs.¹⁰⁰ In July 1933 he collected some of his earlier writings into *Cărticica șefului de cuib* (*The Little Handbook of the Nest Leader*),

⁹⁶ Radu Gyr in *Iconar*, 1/7 (1936): 4; quoted in Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 425.

⁹⁷ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 115/1939, f. 116.

⁹⁸ Ion Bozoșan, “Căpitanul,” in Stănescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 18-20.

⁹⁹ Petru Galiș, “Ilie Giulan,” *Cuvântul*, (22Nov 1940).

¹⁰⁰ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 43-44.

which was reissued several times during the 1930s.¹⁰¹ It outlined basic Legionary doctrine and explained the regulations for establishing and running a nest.¹⁰² His next attempt at writing was *Însemnări* (*Daily Reflections*), a diary which he kept in prison during February and March 1934. It contained fragments of the Legion's history as well as reflections on political alliances, international fascism, lucky and unlucky days or weeks, and the value of ascetic practices such as fasting.¹⁰³ This diary was never published, but Codreanu included fragments of it in the first volume of his memoirs, *Pentru legionari* (*For my Legionaries*, 1936). This was a history of his political activities from 1919 until 1933, interspersed with newspaper clippings and discussions of the Jewish peril.¹⁰⁴ The first edition of *Pentru legionari* came out in 10,000 copies, of which 2,500 were distributed for free to members who did not have the financial resources to buy it themselves. It sold out within a week, and in September 1936 Codreanu turned to Stelian Popescu (1874-1954), the editor of *Universul*, in the hope that Popescu would print the book on credit.¹⁰⁵ Popescu eventually gave him a discount of 100,000 lei for printing another 10,000 copies, including a "luxury edition" that sold for 180 lei.¹⁰⁶ *Pentru legionari* was translated into Italian in 1938 and into German in 1939.¹⁰⁷

Codreanu began work on a second volume in 1936, which among other things included his thoughts on King Carol's return in 1930 and the assassination of Ion G. Duca.¹⁰⁸ According to some reports, Codreanu finished it in May 1937 and then began exploring ways to publish it

¹⁰¹ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 211.

¹⁰² Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib*; CNSAS, Fond Bazavan Gheorghe, Dosar I.184933, vol. 3, f. 70.

¹⁰³ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Însemnări*, MS, 1934.

¹⁰⁴ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*.

¹⁰⁵ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 200-201, 220; Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 263.

¹⁰⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 9, f. 65, vol. 11, f. 182-183.

¹⁰⁷ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Guardia di ferro* (Roma-Torino: SA Casa Editrice nazionale, 1938); Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Eiserne Garde* (Berlin: Brunnen, Willi Bischoff, 1939).

¹⁰⁸ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, I.234980, f. 2.

while avoiding the censors.¹⁰⁹ He was still editing the manuscript when he was arrested in April 1938, and it was never published.¹¹⁰ His circulars were collected and published in 1940 while the Legionary regime was in power, and the diary that he kept while in prison was first published in Germany during the Second World War.¹¹¹ Codreanu's works were extremely popular amongst Legionaries, and in 1936 the leader Vasile Iașinski (1892-1978) issued a circular requiring all Legionaries to carry a copy of *Cărticica șefului de cuib* with them whenever they were doing propaganda.¹¹²

Codreanu's were not the only writings that came to define the Legion. In a meeting in March 1937, he explained what his priorities were in terms of printed materials. In addition to *Pentru legionari* and *Cărticica șefului de cuib*, he instructed his followers to distribute two books by Ion Moța, photographs of Legionaries, an album with photographs of Legionary work camps, the magazines *Însemnări sociologice*, *Rânduiala*, and *Ideea românească*, and the newspapers *Libertatea* and *Cuvântul Argeșului*.¹¹³ Codreanu wanted propagandists to take these publications to Legionaries in isolated areas, who were supposed to buy them at full price.

Ion Moța and Vasile Marin died fighting in the Spanish Civil War in January 1937, and their works immediately became best-sellers amongst Legionaries. Moța's major journalistic works since 1922 were collected into a volume entitled *Cranii de lemn* (*Wooden Skulls*, 1937). Taken from an article Moța had written in 1933 to commemorate the death of Virgil Teodorescu at the hands of the police, the title referred to the way in which bureaucrats hid the tragedy of legionary deaths by burying broken skulls under piles of paperwork written in "wooden" language (*un limbaj de lemn*). This volume pontificated on issues from the League of Nations to

¹⁰⁹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 11, f. 84.

¹¹⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 13, f. 215.

¹¹¹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste (1927-1938)* (Bucharest: Editura Blassco, 2010);

¹¹² ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 87.

¹¹³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 9, f. 332-333.

the *numerus clausus* to Orthodox Christianity, effectively creating a handbook of Legionary ideology.¹¹⁴ Moța's letters and articles written from the front were also collected and published as quickly as possible.¹¹⁵ Vasile Marin (1904-1937) had been involved in the student movement while a law student in Bucharest during the early 1920s. He studied under Ion Lugoșianu (1890-1957), a lawyer and politician who encouraged him to join the Iuliu Maniu's National Peasant Party. Marin wrote his doctoral thesis on Italian Fascism in 1932, which portrayed Mussolini's party as a revolutionary force establishing a new social order to replace the anarchism and individualism that he said had resulted from the style of democracy instituted by the French revolution.¹¹⁶ Maniu suggested sending him to Rome as a cultural attaché, but Marin turned down the offer in order to join the Legion and become a journalist.¹¹⁷ Marin had first encountered Legionaries during the election campaign in Neamț county in 1931, and he joined them in 1933, working first at Nae Ionescu's *Cuvântul* and then at *Axa* before starting his own newspaper, *Vestitorul* (*The Herald*, 1934). Marin was well respected inside the Legion, and Codreanu made him a commander (*comandant*) in July 1935.¹¹⁸ His collected works were published as *Crez de generație* (*Creed of a Generation*, 1937). Whereas Moța's writings focused on Legionary mysticism and nationalism as a cultural phenomenon, Marin discussed economics, democracy, and revolution from the perspective of a political scientist.¹¹⁹ Between them, these

¹¹⁴ Ion Moța, *Cranii de lemn*, 4th Ed. (Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 1940).

¹¹⁵ Ion Moța *Prezent* (Bucharest: Tipografia "Bucovina" I.E. Torouțiu, 1937); Ion Moța, *Testamentul lui Ion I. Moța* (Bucharest: Editura Sânziana, 2007).

¹¹⁶ Vasile Marin, *Fascismul: organizarea constituțională a statului corporativ Italian* (Bucharest: Serviciul și Editura Colportajului Legionar, n.d.) 8-9.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Ana Maria Marin (17 July 1998), in Mariana Conovici, Silvia Iliescu, and Octavian Silvestru eds. *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul: Mișcarea Legionară în documente de istorie orală* (București: Humanitas, 2008) 39-40, 82.

¹¹⁸ Ana Maria Marin, *Poveste de dincolo* (Madrid: Editura Autorului, 1979) 106-123; Mihail Polihroniade, "Vasile Marin, biografie," *Cuvântul studențesc*, 12/1-4 (Jan-Feb 1937): 28-34.

¹¹⁹ Vasile Marin, *Crez de generație* (Bucharest: Tipografia "Bucovina" I. E. Torouțiu, 1937).

two men expressed the Legion's "official" positions on most issues of interest to ultra-nationalists.

The Spanish expedition in which Moța and Marin took part spawned several other books and pamphlets. All written by Legionaries who had fought in Spain, they retold the story of Legionary involvement in the Spanish Civil War as an exemplary case of manhood and sacrifice. Written by the lawyer and aristocrat Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Pentru Christos* (*For Christ*, 1937) reported the whole saga as if the war had taken place only as a means by which Moța and Marin could lay down their lives for Christ.¹²⁰ Father Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa emphasized the piety of the team members.¹²¹ When Nicolae Totu's letters from Spain were published in 1937 they gave a much more lively chronicle of the expedition designed to remind his readers of how crucial this war was to the battle between fascism and communism.¹²² Similarly, Bănică Dobre's account, *Crucificații* (*The Crucified*, 1937), presented the experience in Spain as an adventure that was tempered by the hardships of war and then by awe in the face of Moța and Marin's sacrifice.¹²³ Such works helped make the Spanish Civil War one of the defining moments of the Legionary movement from 1937 onwards.

Photographs were another particularly important form of propaganda. Mihail Polihroniade's *Tabăra de Muncă* (*Work Camp*, 1936) was the most elaborate of the Legionary photo albums, and sold for 120 lei. It contained pictures and short commentaries on 43 of the Legion's major building projects to emphasize what Polihroniade called "a great Romanian and

¹²⁰ Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Opere complete* (Filipeștii de Târg, Prahova: Editura Antet XX, n.d.) 76-86.

¹²¹ Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă legionară* (Sibiu: Editura "Totul pentru Țara," 1937).

¹²² Nicolae Totu, *Însemnări de pe front: note din expediția legionară în Spania* (Sibiu: Editura Curierul, 1937).

¹²³ Bănică Dobre, *Crucificații: zile trăite pe frontul spaniol* (Bucharest: Tipografia I.N. Copuzeanu, 1937).

Legionary achievement”¹²⁴ Its cover featured an engraving of the Archangel Michael by the talented young artist Alexandru Basarab (1907-1941).

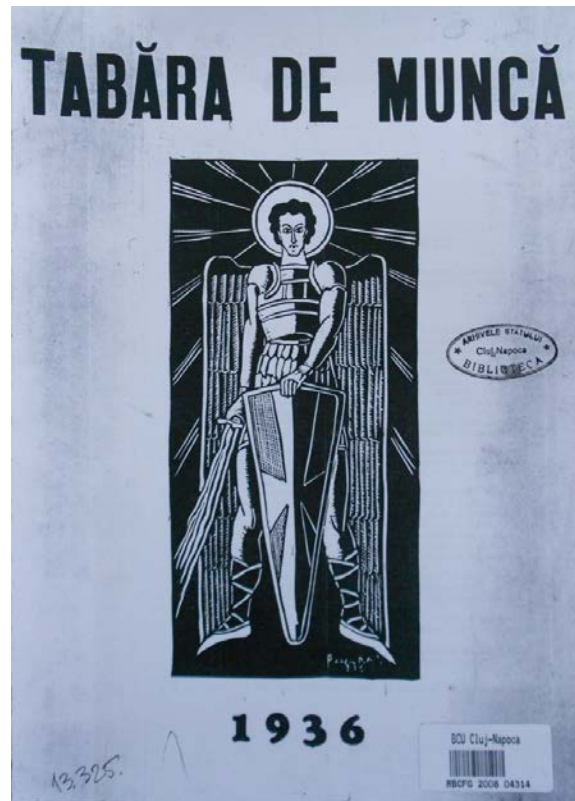


Figure 27: Book cover. Mihail Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 1936.

More often, photographs or postcards were sold separately as a way of raising money for the Legion. In 1934 Legionaries sold photographs of Duca’s assassins for 20 lei each, and in 1936 they circulated a postcard featuring Codreanu, General Cantacuzino, and George Clime alongside King Carol II to show their loyalty to the monarch.¹²⁵ Students hung photos of Legionaries on the walls in their dormitories and it was not uncommon for the police to find

¹²⁴ Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 1. On other Legionary photo albums, see AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 93/1936, f.200

¹²⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 99/1935, f. 37; Dosar 93/1936, f. 14.

photographs when they raided the homes of Legionaries.¹²⁶ The postcard below features (1) Codreanu, (2) Nicolae Constantinescu, (3) Nicolae Caranica, (4) Doru Belimace, (5) Pr. Dumitrescu-Borșa, and (6) Victor Silaghi. Here prominent Legionary leaders are shown alongside Duca's three assassins, all dressed in Iron Guard uniforms.



*Figure 28: Postcard of Legionaries in 1933.*¹²⁷

Other propaganda material included flyers with the lyrics to Legionary songs, anti-Semitic cartoons, or lists of Jewish businesses. As did most political parties, Legionaries produced their own wall calendars listing religious holidays, saints days, and picturing Legionary symbols. One calendar for the year 1937 included pictures of the Legionaries who had gone to Spain and an image of communists shooting bullets into a statue of Christ. It was not submitted to the censors. This particular calendar sold for 3 lei and was printed in 50,000 copies.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 12, f. 22; CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor si altii, P. 000324, vol. 11, f. 243.

¹²⁷ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală de Poliție, Dosar 103/1933, f. 135.

Electoral posters were less heavily illustrated, and usually contained Legionary symbols, a photograph of Codreanu or of the local candidate, and text announcing a meeting or explaining the Legion's views on a specific issue. Posters and flyers were often designed for specific regions. One letter from Alexandru Hogoș to Nicolae Totu written during the election campaign of November 1933 asks for another 1,000 flyers "similar to those already printed for Ismail county," but with several more position statements added from a pamphlet that had been prepared for Brăila county, including "support for the death penalty, the inspection of politicians, ministerial responsibility, and the destruction of Freemasonry." Hogoș needed these urgently, and he promised to support the costs himself.¹²⁹

Legionary books, photographs, and flyers were distributed by Legionaries themselves while on propaganda trips, as well as being posted on fences and walls by local activists.¹³⁰ In August 1937 Alexandra Russo and Fr. Gheorghe Tudorache were caught distributing two short booklets – Traian Herseni's *Mișcarea legionară și muncitorimea* and Alexandru Cantacuzino's *Pentru Christos* – in the small Bessarabian city of Orhei.¹³¹ Russo was a wealthy landowner who spearheaded the Legion's recruitment of university students in Chișinău, and Fr. Tudorache had become a Legionary while training to be a priest there in 1934.¹³² Neither of the booklets had been censored, and Russo and Tudorache were giving them out for free in an attempt to spread the Legion's influence beyond Chișinău and into other Bessarabian cities.

¹²⁸ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 382.

¹²⁹ CNSAS, Fond Totu Nicolae, P.015671, vol. 1, f. 27.

¹³⁰ CNSAS, Fond Tâmbăluță Ion, I.257541, vol. 1, f. 18-20.

¹³¹ CNSAS, Fond Herseni Traian, Dosar P.014083, vol. 2, f. 14.

¹³² On Alexandra Russo, see Iurie Colesnic, *Basarabia necunoscută*, vol. 4 (Chișinău: Museum, 2002) 196-209. Gheorghe Tudorache's involvement in the Legion as a theology student in Chișinău is described in CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 3, f. 36.



Cuvânt către tineret. COPII,

Prezentul dureros apleacă ume-
rii voștri tot mai jos.
Părinții vă privesc neputin-
cioși cu inima sfâșiată de jale.
Viitorul vă stă în față întunecat
ca o noapte fără lună.
Și sute de mii vă așteaptă răstirați
pretutindeni de la un capăt la
altul al Țării

Frați de sânge și frați de cruce

Mobilizarea voastră a tuturor, și asal-
tul vostru vitejesc pot întoarce roata sorții
neamului românesc.

Pumnul voștru va strânge mâne cu hotărâre arma scum-
bă, pentru Țară și pentru tron

Pentru ce să rămâneți nepăsători? Pentru ce să nu eșiți
în luptă? Pentru ce să nu faceți ca vitejescul voștru sânge să
fiarbă? Pentru ce dorul de luptă să fi murit în inimile voastre,
când pasul hotărât al tinerimii italiene a salvat Italia de la moarte.
România, Țara voastră face apel la voi.

Voi puteți să-i dați viață, voi puteți să-i dați glorie, voi puteți
să-i dați nemurire.

Copii săraci cu brațe de oțel și inimă de aur,
La 17 Iulie se dă o bătălie de la care voi nu veți lipsi nici unul.
Purtați-vă ca niște viteji.
Țara își întinde bine cuvântarea Ei peste capetele voastre.

Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu



Figure 29: Legionary Poster from 1933.¹³³

Neamț county provides a particularly clear example of how Legionary flyers were printed and distributed in rural areas. According to a history of Legionary activism in the region written by *Siguranța* in 1942, police identified 896 members scattered across fourteen different villages after the by-elections of 1931. In July 1932 Legionaries in Iași began posting copies of *Pământul strămoșesc* and flyers specifically addressing Neamț county to activists living in the region.

¹³³ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #102, Dosar 700, f. 29.

Enthusiasm for the Legion waned after the bi-election, and there were only 702 members left by 1933. Legionary propaganda in the area was more subdued during 1934, being coordinated by a student from the county capital of Piatra Neamț named Ion Herghelegiu, and another from the nearby town of Roznov named Ion Gaucan. Herghelegiu was the region's most active propagandist between 1931 and 1935, organizing workers, peasants, and high school students in Piatra Neamț and its hinterland. Herghelegiu had formed Blood Brotherhoods in town in 1931, but did not manage to establish any in rural areas until 1935. He and a handful of other Legionaries faced court in 1936 for holding meetings illegally, but were acquitted. Later that year a team of sixty Legionaries led by Codreanu visited the region to erect crosses in a cemetery in the village of Vânători, a stone cross in Slobozia, and to finish building a student dormitory at Rarău Hermitage near the village of Crucea. Ion Herghelegiu and Gheorghe Clime organized a propaganda march through Neamț county in October 1937, but in April 1938 Herghelegiu was arrested for illegally distributing Legionary flyers. He spent the next seventeen months in prison before he was killed by police on 22 September 1939.¹³⁴

A law student in Iași named Constantin Fulger (1911-1941) took over responsibility for Neamț county after Herghelegiu's arrest. He had been a Legionary since 1932 and made use of his connections in Iași to guide the movement from Piatra Neamț, where he grew up.¹³⁵ Without work, Fulger relied on another student, Moldoveanu, to support him while in Iași on the understanding that he would become financially independent "when the Legion came to power."¹³⁶ Moldoveanu organized flyers and circulars for Neamț county, and he would write to Fulger whenever it was time for him to go to Iași to pick them up. Fulger's travel expenses came by money order or directly from two high school students, who collected it from supporters in

¹³⁴ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 23, f. 161-165, 169-170, 191-194.

¹³⁵ CNSAS, Fond Fulger Constantin, I.047321, vol. 2, f. 2; CNSAS, Fond Lefter Simion, I.259143, vol. 1, f. 191.

¹³⁶ CNSAS, Fond Fulger Constantin, I.262481, f. 6

the nearby town of Târgu Buhuși. He was assisted by the son of his landlady, Gheorghe Crețu, who had graduated from an industrial high school in Bucharest. Crețu brought a hectograph to Piatra Neamț when he came back from school and they used it to copy flyers for distribution. Fulger and Crețu gave some of these to the students in Târgu Buhuși, some Fulger posted directly to Legionaries in the surrounding towns, and others they threw into the front yards of specific individuals or on the busiest streets of Piatra Neamț.¹³⁷

As with publishing a newspaper or a magazine, distributing posters or flyers required the cooperation of a whole team of people. Leaders like Herghelegiu and Fulger depended on their contacts in Iași to produce flyers, they needed their own equipment to reproduce them, money from local Legionaries to pay for them, and key people who could distribute them in the right places. Distributing Legionary propaganda was not a safe operation, and every step of the process had to be kept secret, even when Legionaries relied on the postal system to transmit their materials.

9.5 SYMPATHETIC NEWSPAPERS

Alongside newspapers such as *Pământul Strămoșesc* and *Axa*, Legionaries read some of the successful ultra-nationalist dailies including *Calendarul*, *Buna Vestire*, *Porunca Vremii* and *Cuvântul*. None of these were official Legionary organs, but all carried Legionary news, were edited and written by Legionaries, and in several cases they were also distributed by the Legion. Jewish vendors were sometimes reluctant to sell ultra-nationalist newspapers, which often had to establish their own distribution networks through smaller vendors who specialized in ultra-

¹³⁷ Ibid., f. 6; CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 23, f. 293-294.

nationalist publications.¹³⁸ Unlike the Legionary press discussed above, these newspapers carried articles and advertisements about issues that had no obvious political ramifications. They show that Legionaries did not completely reject the urban culture of Bucharest even if they claimed that only peasant culture was truly Romanian. The Legionary Arșavir Acterian (1907-1997), for example, wrote in *Ideea româneasca* that “the city does not characterize Romania. There has never been an urban style that was quintessentially Romanian. The city represents our efforts at civilizing, Westernizing, modernizing. The city is borrowed, influenced, compromised.”¹³⁹ But Acterian lived in Bucharest and actively participated in the city’s cultural life, apparently not feeling obligated to become a peasant in order to embrace Romanian culture more fully.¹⁴⁰

The women’s column in *Calendarul* shows how comfortable ultra-nationalists were with the attitudes about women that were popular in 1930s Bucharest, even if these did not accurately reflect Legionary ideals. When *Calendarul* began in 1932, its women’s column was written by Apriliana Medianu, who had also contributed to Eugen Lovinescu’s modernist literary journal *Sburătorul* (*Incubus*, 1919-1927) during the 1920s.¹⁴¹ In *Calendarul*, Medianu wrote positively about the feminist movement both in Romania and abroad, about famous, adventurous, or professional women, women’s art and literature, child-rearing, and women in ancient history. Her approach to women’s issues contrasted sharply with the official Legionary position on women, but at the same time she did not present anything that Legionaries would have found offensive. Describing the perfect Legionary woman, the Legionary Constantin Papanace (1904-

¹³⁸ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 23, f. 53; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală de Poliție, Dosar 252/1939, f. 215-217; Costea, *Presa legionară*, 30-31.

¹³⁹ Arșavir Acterian, “Gânduri în ‘luna Bucureștilor’ și despre urbanistică românească,” *Ideea româneasca*, 1/2-4 (June-Aug 1935): 136.

¹⁴⁰ Jeni Acterian, *Jurnalul unei ființe greu de mulțumit* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991).

¹⁴¹ Bianca Burța-Cernat, “Sburătorul: fotografie de grup cu scriitoare uitate,” *Luceașărul de dimineață*, 3/19 (2011).

1985) wrote that, “She venerates the household as a shrine and detests frivolity. She admits the primacy of the man in the family as the order of things settled by God.”¹⁴² Legionary writers commonly argued that women would be happier at home than working in an office, and that women were too easily swayed by sweets and bright lights to be allowed the responsibility of voting in national elections.¹⁴³ Most of the women Medianu discussed were married, many were mothers, and frivolous beauty treatments or “Jewish” fashions were never mentioned. *Calendarul* also ran a regular rubric entitled “The Cinema,” which discussed Hollywood celebrity gossip and celebrated the life-styles and love affairs of film stars. This page was always kept separate from the women’s column, and was far more risqué than the mostly conservative lifestyles Medianu recommended to her readers.

Similarly, when Nae Ionescu’s *Cuvântul* reappeared in January 1938 after having been out of print since Duca’s assassination in December 1933, it had a number of Legionaries on the editorial board and as contributors.¹⁴⁴ Codreanu visited the editorial offices as soon as the first issue came out, and Nae Ionescu’s editorials frequently defended the Legion on *Cuvântul*’s front page.¹⁴⁵ The women’s column was written by Ma Mia Lola, who had also written it in the early 1930s, before *Cuvântul* became an ultra-nationalist newspaper. Ma Mia Lola introduced women to recent European fashions and beauty treatments while maintaining a strict code of modesty in all she recommended.¹⁴⁶ Strictly Legionary publications were usually unanimous in rejecting make-up and fashion for women. Ion Banea wrote that the Legion does not want “made-up dolls; struggling uselessly for nonsensical rights; naked and polishing her nails for hours on end; eating

¹⁴² Constantin Papanace, “O mare mucenică legionară, Nicoleta Nicolescu,” 1952, quoted in Iordachi, *Charisma*, 88.

¹⁴³ Virginia Anghel, “Femeia de azi și femeia de mâine,” *Brațul de fier*, 3/21 (June 15 - July 15 1937): 2.

¹⁴⁴ Including Petre P. Panaitescu, Pavel Costin Deleanu, Mircea Duțescu, Ioan T. Angelescu, and Ștefan Ionescu.

¹⁴⁵ Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 235-236.

¹⁴⁶ M. M. L., “Pălăriile de seară,” *Cuvântul* (Jan 23, 1938); M. M. L., “Moda: Efecte cromatice,” *Cuvântul* (Feb 2, 1938); M. M. L., “Tinerete fără băntrânețe,” *Cuvântul* (Mar 2, 1938).

lemons for her figure and taking away the élan of her brothers, husbands, parents and friends, becoming a sort of burden preventing action. No! She must become a fighter.”¹⁴⁷ In 1938 Ma Mi Lola was therefore careful to reaffirm women’s practical role in society even while recommending popular beauty treatments. Instead of manicuring one’s hands, which makes them useless for practical work, she instructed women to use polenta (a peasant staple) and lemon peels to produce healthy nails and skin, writing that “the foundation of beauty is health, good circulation and well functioning intestines.”¹⁴⁸ Like *Calendarul*, *Cuvântul* followed the fashions and love lives of Hollywood actresses, but usually portrayed them as exotic and not as something to be imitated.¹⁴⁹

One assumption that underlay many of *Cuvântul*’s articles targeted at women was that its readers did not know how to behave properly in cultured society. Given the high rate of migration to Bucharest from rural areas, it is not surprising to see an urban newspaper explaining “civilized” norms. Articles on topics such as “politeness and civility” instructed young women on how to hold dinner parties and how to behave on social occasions. “A youth must always be presented to an older person,” women were taught, “an inferior to a superior, a man to a woman, and never a woman to a man.”¹⁵⁰ Recipes were also especially designed for a Bucharest audience. Those in magazines written for peasant women, such as *Femeia satelor* (*The Village Woman*, 1935), included traditional peasant dishes such as dill soup (*ciorbă de mărar*), lamb *borș* and custard (*lapte de pasăre*).¹⁵¹ The recipes in *Cuvântul* used less common ingredients and reflected French cuisine more than traditional Romanian cooking. Recipes included orange jelly

¹⁴⁷ Ion Banea, “Vrem femeia romana: luptatoare,” *Glasul stramosesc*, 2/2 (13 Jan 1935): 1.

¹⁴⁸ M. M. L., “Cum să ne îngrijim mâinile?” *Cuvântul* (Jan 29, 1938).

¹⁴⁹ “Mae West,” *Cuvântul* (Feb 16, 1938).

¹⁵⁰ M. L. M., “Despre politeța și buna cuviință,” *Cuvântul* (Jan 1, 1938).

¹⁵¹ *Femeia satelor* (1935), issues 1/2, 1/3-4, and 1/5.

(*gelatin de portocale*), fried brains with dressing, and goose liver in aspic.¹⁵² Cooking was presented as a “living art, which evolves, transforms and adapts,” and which must be learnt anew when new ideas appear.¹⁵³ The urban, Western flavor of these columns shows that however strongly Legionary rhetoric focused on the folk, and however many Legionaries wore peasant costumes when doing propaganda, activists were willing to accept Western customs in their reading material.

Legionaries were pragmatic about how to best make use of their resources. They maintained connections with less extremist newspapers and sometimes cooperated with other ultra-nationalists. The Mirescu brothers worked at Stelian Popescu’s *Universul*, where they acted as intermediaries between Popescu and the Legion.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, the Legionary Cezar Giugiovanu worked at *Tempo* (*Tempo*, 1933-1941), a daily newspaper that specialized in exotic and sensationalist reporting, giving equal space to parties from across the political spectrum. *Tempo*’s director Vasile Canarache (1896-1969) had reported for the center-left dailies *Adevărul* and *Dimineața* before starting out on his own. Giugiovanu also worked for *Monitorul Oficial* (*The Official Monitor*, 1832-present), a government publication that reported new legislation and reprinted parliamentary speeches. Whereas his job at *Tempo* had been as an intermediary between the newspaper and the Legion, at *Monitorul Oficial* he limited himself to passing on news of interest to the movement’s leadership.¹⁵⁵ Despite ongoing conflict between the Legion and the LANC, in March 1935 the “Eminescu” printing press owned by the Legionary leader Bartolomeu Livezeanu agreed to print a newspaper for the Cuzist Alexandru Gregorian (1909-1987) entitled *Studentul naționalist* (*The Nationalist Student*). Gregorian printed anti-Legionary

¹⁵² M. M. L., “Poftiți la masă!” in various issues of *Cuvântul* (1938).

¹⁵³ M. M. L., “Feluri noi,” *Cuvântul* (Feb 3, 1938).

¹⁵⁴ CNSAS, Fond Panaitescu Petre, Dosar I.234303, vol. 2, f. 330.

¹⁵⁵ CNSAS, Fond Panaitescu Petre, Dosar I.234303, vol. 2, f. 333.

articles in his newspaper, but Livezeanu's press was probably happier to do business with another ultra-nationalist – even a rival – than with other types of newspapers.¹⁵⁶

Ultra-nationalists who were not Legionaries were generally sympathetic to the movement even when they were not willing to join it themselves. The daily newspaper *Porunca vremii* (*The Dictate of the Times*, 1932-1943) had supported ultra-nationalist movements in general since it appeared in 1932, and in 1935 the director, Ilie Rădulescu, established an “Association of Christian Journalists in Romania” (*Asociația Ziaristilor Creștini din România*) based at *Porunca vremii*'s editorial offices. The Association included members of the LANC and the PNȚ alongside other ultra-nationalists, but Rădulescu named the Legionary Dragoș Protopopescu as one of the organization's vice presidents, and other Legionaries were on the leadership committee.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Codreanu distanced himself from the newspaper in November 1935, sending out a circular that explained that although “*Porunca vremii* is a good anti-Semitic newspaper,” its journalists were recent converts to the ultra-nationalist cause. “Therefore,” Codreanu wrote, “be cautious of every article and every word, for it is not ours. ... You should all read *Porunca vremii*, but do not believe everything that is written in it.”¹⁵⁸ When circulation figures for *Porunca vremii* dropped and police began harassing children selling the newspaper in September 1936, Rădulescu turned to the Legion for help.¹⁵⁹ He offered to supply a dormitory with thirty beds, lighting, and heating for Legionaries if they helped with distribution and sales. Codreanu agreed, forming two teams of fifteen Legionaries each, one of which would be responsible for the newspaper stands and the other for protecting children selling the newspaper

¹⁵⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 107/1935, f. 39; CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008909, vol. 4, f. 89-92; “Barbăriile gardiste,” *Studentul naționalist*, 1/1 (15 Mar 1935): 3.

¹⁵⁷ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 66/1935, f. 9-10.

¹⁵⁸ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “Circulară nr. 10, 26 Nov 1935,” in Codreanu, *Circulări*, 73-74.

¹⁵⁹ V. Lovinaru, “Teroarea poliției contra ziarului nostru,” *Porunca vremii*, 5/521 (24 Sept 1936).

on the streets.¹⁶⁰ The newspaper hired more Legionary journalists at this point, and consistently published pro-Legionary news and editorials throughout 1937.¹⁶¹

Similarly, nine days after *Buna vestire* (*The Annunciation*, 1937-1938, 1940-1941) was established on 23 February 1937, Codreanu issued another circular explaining that “this newspaper is not Legionary. We are friends and we support it. But I would not want Legionaries to confuse the point of view of this newspaper with that of the Legionary Movement.”¹⁶² He needed to clarify this because *Buna vestire* presented itself as pro-Legionary. Its opening editorial was a eulogy to “the Legionary sacrifice” of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin, and the front page of the second issue featured a large photograph of Legionaries saluting at the funeral.¹⁶³



Figure 30: “We pledge!”¹⁶⁴

The newspaper was funded by the economist Mihail Manoilescu, who was sympathetic to the Legion but ran the National Corporatist League, which was not subject to Codreanu’s

¹⁶⁰ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 150.

¹⁶¹ Legionaries who worked at *Porunca vremii* include Ilie Ciutescu, Ion Diaconescu, and Ștefan Ionescu.

¹⁶² Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “Circulară nr. 62, 4 Mar 1937,” in Codreanu, *Circulări*, 128-129.

¹⁶³ Dragoș Protopopescu, “Contemporanii lui Isus...” *Buna vestire*, 1/1 (23 Feb 1937): 1.

¹⁶⁴ “Juram!” *Buna vestire*, 1/2 (24 Feb 1937): 1.

leadership.¹⁶⁵ Codreanu and Manoilescu had cooperated since 1934, but the Legion had always resisted Manoilescu's requests for a merger.¹⁶⁶ Legionaries nonetheless embraced *Buna vestire* and used its pages to promote a number of Legionary causes. Among other things, in December 1937 the newspaper published a series of thirteen responses by colonels and generals, academics, public intellectuals and political activists to the question "Why do I believe in the victory of the Legionary movement?" Mircea Eliade wrote that he believed in a Legionary victory "Because I believe in the destiny of the Romanian people. ... because I believe in the victory of the Christian spirit. ... Because I believe in love."¹⁶⁷ Each individual enumerated what he saw as the Legion's best characteristics, which consistently reflected the public persona of the interviewee. Colonel Cristodulo believed in Legionaries because they had discipline and will.¹⁶⁸ Father Grigore Cristescu believed that the Legion was sent by God to save Romania from darkness.¹⁶⁹ Professor Dan Rădulescu prefaced his thoughts by distinguishing between rationalist convictions and Legionary convictions, and then celebrated the latter because they were based on authentic instinctual belief.¹⁷⁰ Professor Vasile Bănică summarized his own recently published theory of ethical justice and then claimed that the Legionaries put it into practice.¹⁷¹ Many of those interviewed were Legionaries, but all were celebrities who were much more likely to give such interviews to a successful Bucharest daily such as *Buna vestire* than they would have to the small regional newspapers that the Legion officially produced.

Buna vestire was directed by Dragoș Protopopescu (1892-1948) and Toma Vlădescu (1903-). As well as being a novelist and a Professor of English Literature, Protopopescu had

¹⁶⁵ Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 275.

¹⁶⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 11, f. 265-266.

¹⁶⁷ Mircea Eliade, "De ce cred în biruința mișcării legionare?" *Bună Vestire*, (18 Dec 1937).

¹⁶⁸ Colonel Em. Cristodulo, "De ce cred în biruința mișcării legionare?" *Bună Vestire*, (11 Dec 1937).

¹⁶⁹ Pr. Prof. Grigore Cristescu, "De ce cred în biruința mișcării legionare?" *Bună Vestire*, (13 Dec 1937).

¹⁷⁰ Prof. Dan Rădulescu, "De ce cred în biruința mișcării legionare?" *Bună Vestire*, (22 Dec 1937).

¹⁷¹ Prof. Vasile Bănică, "De ce cred în biruința mișcării legionare?" *Bună Vestire*, (17 Dec 1937).

been one of the Legion's staunchest supporters at *Calendarul* and a frequent contributor to *Axa*. He was arrested together with other Legionaries in the wake of Duca's assassination in 1933, and afterwards wrote a novel based on his prison experiences called *Fortul 13 (Fort No. 13)*.¹⁷² Vlădescu had also worked at *Calendarul*, but afterwards he contributed to Crainic's next project, *Sfarmă piatra (The Rock Crusher, 1936-1941)*, which initially supported the National Christian Party of A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga, and then became a means for Crainic to promote a new party he was trying to form called *Partidul Muncitoresc Creștin (the Christian Workers' Party)*.¹⁷³ Vlădescu left *Sfarmă piatra* after fighting with Crainic over money, but Codreanu still considered his past affiliations suspect.¹⁷⁴ Popescu and Vlădescu quarreled in December 1937 as a result of the latter's sympathies for Istrate Micescu (1881-1951), who had been subsidizing the newspaper through Vlădescu. It is likely that Micescu withdrew his financial support for *Buna vestire* at this time because soon after Vlădescu resigned as director the newspaper published a plea to any of its readers who were willing to lend it 500,000 lei for a year.¹⁷⁵ Codreanu had little sympathy for Micescu at this time. Micescu had turned his back on Codreanu after Legionary students helped him gain control of the Ilfov Bar Association in 1935, he had made denigrating remarks about Codreanu's electoral alliances earlier in 1937, and in December 1937 Codreanu had just lost a libel suit that he had launched against Micescu.¹⁷⁶

Once Protopopescu was firmly in control of *Buna vestire*, the newspaper took on an even firmer Legionary tone. Virgil Gheorghiu (1916-1992) writes in his memoirs of visiting *Buna vestire's* editorial offices when he was a young journalist in early 1938. "All newspaper offices

¹⁷² Valeriu Anania, *Memorii* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2008) 63.

¹⁷³ CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 3, f. 255-258, 275.

¹⁷⁴ Horia Roman, "Reflecții în jurul unei... polemici" *Adevarul*, (29 May 1937)

¹⁷⁵ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008909, vol. 5, f. 1.

¹⁷⁶ Istrate N. Micescu, "Pactul de neagreiune Maniu-Codreanu și procesul de calomnie Codreanu-Micescu," *Țara noastră*, (2 Mar 1937); "D. Istrate Micescu ia act de procesul pe care i l-a intentat d. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," *Curentul*, (2 Dec 1937).

have the same smell of paper, printers ink, and melted lead that the linotype machine turns into letters,” Gheorghiu recalls. “The offices of *Buna vestire* had none of these smells. Instead, there was a very strong smell of leather. Everyone was dressed in leather. They had overcoats, boots, belts, and shoulder straps of leather. It is the Legionary uniform.”¹⁷⁷ Legionaries not only dominated the content of the newspaper, they transformed its culture into one that demanded conformity with Legionary ways of dressing and behaving.

The ways in which Legionaries infiltrated the ultra-nationalist press suggests that the boundaries between Legionary and not-Legionary publications were sometimes vague. In the case of political broadsheets, the newspaper’s affiliation was clearly printed on the front page. But this was not the case with other periodicals. *Calendarul* was a Legionary newspaper, and yet its director never joined a Legionary nest. Codreanu emphasized that *Buna vestire* was not a Legionary newspaper, yet its orientation was entirely pro-Legionary. Journals and magazines such as *Însemnări sociologice* or *Ideea românească* were ostensibly sociological or literary publications, yet they were run by Legionaries and were distributed as examples of Legionary propaganda material. Codreanu struggled to define which publications were Legionary and which were not, and yet he had to approach the non-Legionary publicist Stelian Popescu for help publishing a second edition of *Pentru legionari*. The complex relationships formed between Legionaries and other ultra-nationalists helped situate the Legion firmly within a context of local ultra-nationalist activism even as it drew closer in style and substance to fascist parties and regimes elsewhere in Europe.

¹⁷⁷ Virgil Gheorghiu, *Memorii: martorul Orei 25* (Bucharest: Editura 1001 Gramar, 1999) 389.

10.0 ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

I.C. Ghyka, the president of the LANC in Valsca county, produced a particularly colorful account of electoral propaganda during the mid-1930s. His party did not contest the local elections in the southern city of Giurgiu in 1934, leaving him free to write sarcastically about the behavior of the other parties as they competed for power.

The most vulgar type of propaganda possible. An activist shouts as loud as his lungs can handle that whoever votes for this or that candidate, may his hands crack and his eyes fall out, or other things of that nature. In the town center the candidates from one list measure how high the tower is and how long and wide the footpaths are as if they were going to build some sort of Western boulevard, while at the same time on the edge of town you break your limbs navigating the holes in the road, which turn into lakes when it rains. In the midst of this electoral campaign, which reaches its noisy peak at 3-4 am when drunk activists stagger out of the pubs waking you up with renditions of “Wake-Up Romanian” ending in “long live so-and-so,” as if Andrei Mureșeanu had written the song especially for the future mayor of Giurgiu, – in the midst of this absurd campaign water does not run and you encounter filth at every turn. Accusations of stealing public money flow from both sides but the water does not flow at all.¹

Such propaganda was effectively a continuation of the political culture of the nineteenth century, and interwar political commentators noted that the majority of voters viewed elections with disinterest.² Violence continued to be a common element of electoral campaigns. In a cartoon from the center-left newspaper *Dimineața* (*Morning*, 1904-1938) in 1937 one man mentions that

¹ I. C. Gr. Ghyka, “Liga Apărării Naționale Creștină și alegerile comunale din Giurgiu,” *Svastica* 3/5 (15 Aug 1934): 2

² Radu, *Electoralul din România*, 92-111.

the young people from the village had been fighting the night before. His interlocutor replies: “Huh, maybe the elections have begun and we don’t know about it...”



Figure 31: Cartoon from “Dimineața,” 18 February 1937.³

Especially before the national elections of December 1933 and December 1937, carrying out electoral propaganda was one of the key activities that Legionaries were involved in. Codreanu wrote in 1932 that the Legion’s goal was not win to elections – especially in an environment where votes were bought “with silver, with drink, with food,” – but rather to ensure that Romania should “be led according to the will of the Legionaries.” Nonetheless, on the same page he conceded that “an electoral campaign is extremely important, because it is the only way that the law leaves open for us to impose any changes that we want in this country.”⁴ This was not an easy thing to do. On the extreme right of the political spectrum alone, Legionaries had to

³ *Dimineața*, 33/10833 (18 Feb 1937): 1.

⁴ Codreanu, *Cărticica*, 45, 47.

compete with A. C. Cuza's LANC (1923-1935), *Blocul Cetățenesc* (the Citizens Block, 1933-37) and *Frăția Româna* (the Romanian Brotherhood, 1935-1937) – both led by Grigore Forțu – Mihail Manoilescu's *Liga Național Corporatistă* (National Corporatist League, 1932-1938), Octavian Goga's *Partidul Național Agrar* (National Agrarian Party, 1932-1935), Marin Ștefănescu's *Cultul Pașriei* (Cult of the Fatherland, 1926-1938), Grigore Filipescu's *Liga Vlad Țepeș* (Vlad Țepeș League, 1932) and *Partidul Național Socialist din Romania* (the Romanian National Socialist Party, 1932-1934). Many of these groups were just expressions of their leaders' patronage networks but they nonetheless commanded respect amongst ultra-nationalists. Like the Legion, most embraced anti-Semitism and adopted fascist-style organization, symbols, and jargon, taking advantage of the widespread disillusionment with democracy after the depression and of the enthusiasm for fascism that accompanied Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

If Legionaries hoped for electoral victories against the mainstream political parties while winning the support of unaligned ultra-nationalists, then they had to extend their organization's reach beyond the university centers of Iași, Bucharest, and Cluj, and out of Moldova, Bessarabia, and Bukovina into the country's west and south. Carrying out electoral propaganda was especially difficult for small parties like the Legion because every Romanian election since the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1918 had been characterized by corruption and violence. *Porunca vremii* reported that everyone who attended a National Liberal rally in a village in Oltenia during November 1936 received a quart of wine, a loaf of bread, half a pound of cheese, and 30 lei, all paid for with public money.⁵ County prefects used the gendarmerie to intimidate opposition parties and to ensure that government candidates gained the maximum number of votes. Either because of intimidation, or thanks to a widespread conviction that a ruling party was more likely to be able to carry out its promises, the National Liberal Party won

⁵ C. N. Olteanu, "Cum se face la noi propaganda politică," *Porunca vremii*, 5/559 (1 Nov 1936).

overwhelming majorities in elections when they were the incumbents in 1922 and 1927, but received only a handful of seats when they found themselves in opposition before the 1926 elections.⁶ *Apărarea Națională* reported that in Moldova and Bessarabia, peasants sympathetic to *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC) were systematically beaten and arrested during the elections of 1927.⁷

The millions of new voters did change the electoral balance in two important ways. First, a massive swing towards *Partidul Național Român din Transilvania* (the Romanian National Party of Transylvania) and *Partidul Poporului* (the People's Party) in the elections of 1919 demonstrated that dominating only part of the country – the National Liberal Party was strong in Wallachia and Moldova but not in the new provinces – was not enough to secure victory at the polls. Second, anti-corruption, pro-peasant rhetoric now had genuine political appeal. The Romanian National Party of Transylvania and *Partidul Țărănesc* (the Peasant Party) merged in 1926 to form *Partidul Național Țărănesc* (the National Peasant Party, PNT) under the leadership of Iuliu Maniu (1873-1953) and Ion Mihalache (1882-1963). The new party held massive rallies in provincial capitals all over the country early in 1928, and it formed “civilian guards” to carry out propaganda trips prior to the elections that November.⁸ Overseen by Maniu's interim government, these elections took place with minimal police interference, voter attendance was the highest of the interwar period, and the PNT won 77.76% of the vote. The National Liberal Party's era of unquestioned dominance was over.⁹

Iuliu Maniu's time in power came to an abrupt end when Prince Carol (1893-1953) unexpectedly returned to Romania in June 1930. Disagreements over whether to accept Prince

⁶ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 380-381; Radu, *Electoratul din România*, 125-134.

⁷ “Alegerile dela Roman” *Apărarea Națională*, 5/10 (27 June 1927): 2; “În jurul alegerile din Ismail,” *Apărarea Națională*, 5/10 (27 June 1927): 3.

⁸ Vanhaelemeersch, *A Generation “Without Beliefs”*, 22.

⁹ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 406-407, 414.

Carol as king split the PNȚ in two, and Maniu resigned as Prime Minister twice because he could not work with the newly crowned monarch. In April 1931 the PNȚ was replaced by a government of technocrats from minor parties led by Nicolae Iorga, who now had the backing of the king.¹⁰ Iorga's government was confirmed in the elections of June 1931, in which Legionaries won 29,900 votes (1.05%).¹¹ When Codreanu saw the list of Legionary students who were to carry out propaganda in the provinces that year, he commented: "They are few, but they are fanatical."¹² Having few propagandists made contesting national elections difficult, but Legionaries used small, roving electoral teams to great advantage during the by-elections in Neamț and Tutova counties in August 1931 and April 1932. Children in the Blood Brotherhoods acted as couriers between these teams and the central leadership.¹³ Whereas the PNȚ still used cars, celebrity speakers, and urban bands when they carried out propaganda in rural areas, the Legion's lack of resources forced its young propagandists to go on foot and to rely on local hospitality.

National elections were held again in July 1932, and once again involved violence and intimidation. Two people died in Buzău, one a Liberal and the other a Peasantist, and in Bacău the car of a Peasantist candidate exploded, killing his child and wounding three others.¹⁴ Legionaries in Cluj were assaulted by groups of communists, those in Focșani were attacked by "thugs" allegedly working for the PNȚ, and LANC propagandists in Roman were arrested by the gendarmerie.¹⁵ In Bârlad the head of the local branch of the PNȚ had one Legionary candidate

¹⁰ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 416-417.

¹¹ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 201, 464.

¹² ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 37/1931, f. 22.

¹³ Gheorghe Gh. Istrate, *Frăția de cruce* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale "Buna Vestire," 2005) 21.

¹⁴ Nicolae Iorga, *Memorii: sinuciderea partidelor (1932-8)*, vol. 7 (Bucharest: Tiparul Așezământului Tipografic "Datina Românească," 1939) 10, 12.

¹⁵ "Poliția alegerilor la Cluj," *Calendarul*, 1/84 (2 July 1932): 5; "Terorarea electorală la Roman," *Calendarul*, 1/88 (6 July 1932): 5; "În jurul incidentelor electorale din Putna," *Calendarul*, 1/96 (14 July 1932): 5.

arrested and disputed the candidacy of another on the grounds that he was too young.¹⁶ Despite only being able to contest 40 counties because of lack of finances, the Legionaries managed an impressive 68,700 votes (2.37%), which earned them five places in Parliament that year.¹⁷

10.1 FIGHTING THE AUTHORITIES

Three short-lived National Peasant governments succeeded Iorga in June 1932. Each of them proved incapable of working with the king and of overcoming the problems caused by the Depression. The king appointed an interim National Liberal government on November 1933, led by Ion G. Duca (1879-1933), who was determined to take a firm stance against the Legion.¹⁸ But by 1933 the Legion was in a much stronger position than it had ever been before. In May, 50 counties had organized Legionary cells, growing to 60 in July, and 68 by the time of the general elections in December 1933. One police estimate put the number of Legionaries at the end of 1933 as high as 28,000.¹⁹ Aware of the threat posed by the Legion, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod's National Peasant government banned the Iron Guard in April 1933. The government explained,

These formations, based on principles of military discipline, dress people in uniforms, subject them to commands and to battle training, with the declared purpose of provoking violence and overturning the current legal political order. Links have often been demonstrated between these organizations and similar ones abroad, from whom they receive their programs, they instructions, and material assistance. They have recently gone beyond simple organizational activities so as to begin violent protests, disturbing the peace, and brutalizing peaceful citizens. In

¹⁶ "Prigoana electorală la Bârlad," *Calendarul*, 1/91 (9 July 1932): 5.

¹⁷ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 202, 465; "Candidaturile Gărzii de fer," *Calendarul*, 1/93 (11 July 1932): 5.

¹⁸ Hitchins, *Rumania* 417-418.

¹⁹ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 203.

such conditions, all of these formations, some independent and others operating under the auspices of the “Iron Guard,” the “Hitlerists,” or the “LANC,” have become a danger to the public.²⁰

Official concerns that the Legion was sponsored from “abroad” became acute once Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933. Legionary publications rejoiced in Hitler’s success and held up his regime as an example worth following.²¹ But though they expressed solidarity with German Nazis, Legionaries protested strongly that they were first and foremost *Romanian* ultra-nationalists who had no connections to foreign regimes.²² Armin Heinen’s examination of German archives has now shown conclusively that Nazi diplomats did not finance the Legion, and were actually much more interested in supporting A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga.²³

When they began their electoral campaign, Legionaries relied primarily on the formula that had worked well for them in the past. Uniformed groups marched into villages singing nationalist songs and making short speeches to crowds attracted by the spectacle.²⁴ But this time they faced much more concerted opposition. For the Legionaries, it was clear that the authorities were using violence to ensure a National Liberal victory.²⁵ In the *Calendarul* cartoon below, bayonets guard the way to every ballot box except the Liberal one.

²⁰ Ministry of the Interior, Order 27.845/29, quoted in Beldiman, *Armata și mișcarea Legionară*, 56.

²¹ “Adolf Hitler,” *Axa*, 1/6, (2 Feb 1933); Virgil Ionescu, “Autarhia,” *Axa*, 1/14 (15 June 1933); V. Tepordei, “Germania hitleristă,” *Calendarul*, 2/463 (4 Sept 1933): 4.

²² AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de poliție, Dosar 11/1933, vol. 1, f. 180; CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 147-148; Amzăr, *Naționalismul tinereții*, 8-11.

²³ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 222-229, 300-318. On a slightly later period, cf. Rebecca Haynes, “Germany and the Establishment of the Romanian National Legionary State, September 1940,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 77/4 (1999): 700-725.

²⁴ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 232-233; Iancu, *Sub steagul*, 54-56.

²⁵ Iancu, *Sub steagul*, 56.

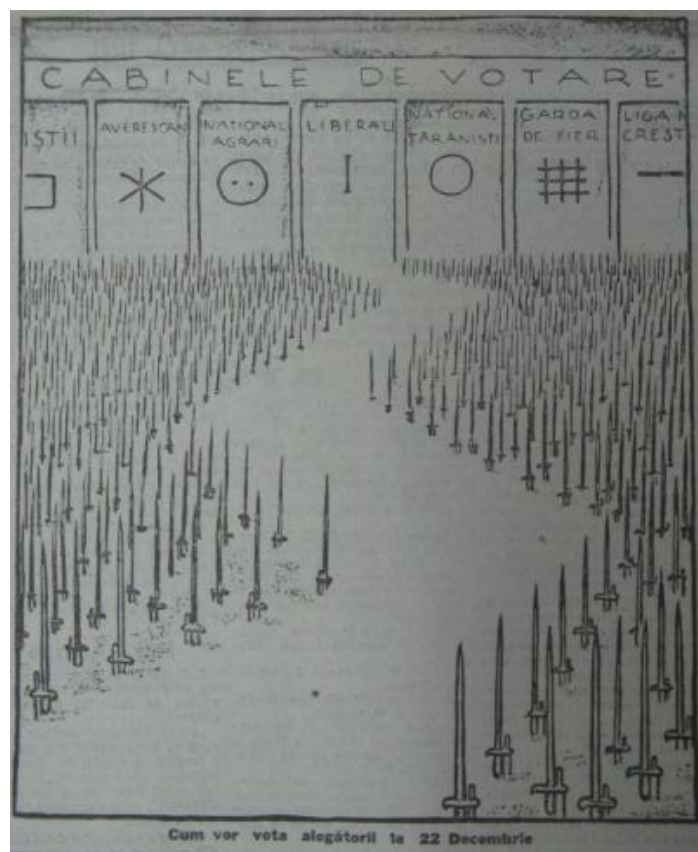


Figure 32: How the electorate will vote on 22 December [1933].²⁶

Aware that contesting the 1933 elections would not be an easy proposition, Codreanu formed disciplined *echipe morții* (death teams) who would use violence to ensure that their message was heard. Members of these teams told stories about prisons, high speed police chases, and armed standoffs with gendarmes in front of crowds of peasants.²⁷ Ștefan Ionescu, an ultra-nationalist journalist who worked on a variety of right-wing periodicals during the 1930s, described election campaigns as “war in peacetime. War through discipline and through the style of fighting.”²⁸ Ioan Victor Vojen argued in the pages of *Axa* that because the authorities had broken the law by introducing electoral violence, the only law that remained was that “of the fist, of the strongest.”

²⁶ “Actualitatea,” *Calendarul*, 535, (Dec 11, 1933): 1.

²⁷ N. Constantinescu, “Din carnetul unui Legionar,” *Axa*, 1/16 (1 Aug 1933): 4.

²⁸ Ștefan C. Ionescu, “Momentul electoral în luptă politică,” *Axa*, 1/13 (31 May, 1933): 3. On Ionescu’s background, see CNSAS, Fond Panaitescu Petre, Dosar I.234303, vol. 2, f. 327.

Given that the social contract forbidding violence had been broken, Vojen explained, “when Legionaries are struck, they strike back.”²⁹ A policeman tried to stop Legionaries from vandalizing the offices of a Jewish organization in Tighina in February 1933, and the Legionaries turned on him before breaking the windows of other buildings in town.³⁰ Three months later local authorities attempted to close down the Legion’s office in Cluj. Once they had broken in and confiscated important papers, the policemen were surprised by six Legionaries who threatened them with knives and sang Legionary hymns. Intimidated, they returned the Legion’s confiscated papers and retreated from the scene.³¹ In Alba county groups of Legionaries supported by sympathetic peasants fought military units in a battle that lasted two hours.³²

Vojen spoke about Legionary propaganda from experience. He had joined the Legion in December 1932, and in early 1933 he began travelling through towns in Teleroman county dressed in traditional folk costume and speaking on behalf of the Legion. A failed actor, he and his comrades performed plays mocking the nepotism practiced by county prefects. In Alexandria they were heckled by local LANC representatives, and in Turnu-Măgurele they were interrogated by the police. When Vojen tried organizing Dâmbovița county that spring he encountered widespread skepticism from the locals, but eventually managed to gather supporters once workers in the petroleum industry began joining in large numbers, disaffected with the foreign management of their plants.³³ According to Vojen, harassment from the authorities greatly helped the propagandists because it generated sympathy for them amongst the local population.

²⁹ Ioan Victor Vojen, “Cine îndeamnă la violența?” *Axa*, 1/14 (15 June 1933): 4.

³⁰ “Scandal provocat de “Garda de Fier” la Tighina,” *Dimineața* (11 Feb 1933).

³¹ “Dizolvare a organizației “Garda de Fier” din Cluj,” *Dimineața* (8 May 1933).

³² Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 191.

³³ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160182, vol. 1, f. 425-427; N. Vlast, “Laudabilă încercări,” *Axa*, 1/5 (30 Jan 1933); Victor Ioan Vojen, “Axa, Cuzismul și Administrație,” *Axa*, 1/5 (30 Jan 1933).

Two incidents in particular enhanced the Legion's reputation during 1933. The first involved an attempt by Legionaries led by Mihail Stelescu (1906-1936) to erect a cross on the grave of the unknown soldier. This monument had been erected in Carol Park amidst much fanfare in May 1923 to commemorate Romanian soldiers who died during the First World War, and in 1933 both ultra-nationalists and communists used the site to claim national legitimacy for their causes.³⁴ A delegation of students led by the President of *Centrul Studențesc București* (the Bucharest Student Center, CSB), the Legionary Traian Cotiga, visited the Orthodox Patriarch and obtained his permission to erect the cross, and another delegation of Legionary priests visited the Prime Minister, Alexandru Vaida Voievod (1872-1950), to ask for his blessing.³⁵ The government explicitly warned the students that non-state organizations were not allowed to erect plaques on the monument, but the Legionaries raised money for the cross nonetheless. They had it blessed at the St. Anton Church, which was known as "the students' church" even though the official church of the university was now the New St. Spiridon Church. The priest at St. Anton's was Fr. Georgescu-Edineți (1891-), who was a long-time supporter of the ultra-nationalist student movement. Legionaries embraced him as "the spiritual guide of the students."³⁶ On 24 January 1933, 1,000 Legionaries and ultra-nationalist students congregated at Carol Park. Fr. Georgescu-Edineți and Fr. Dumitrescu-Borșa (1899-) led them in prayer as the commemoration ceremony began. Fr. Dumitrescu-Borșa was also an active Legionary, and had been involved in stirring up anti-Semitic violence in Transylvanian villages together with a Roman-Catholic priest in 1930.³⁷ Students threw rocks at the police and the police responded with bullets, wounding several students and Fr. Georgescu-Edineți. Nine policemen were also injured in the clashes that

³⁴ Valeria Balescu, *Eroul Necunoscut* (Bucharest: Editura Militara, 2005) 110, 164.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

³⁶ A. Vântu, "Duhovnicul studenților și Patriarhia," *Axa*, 2/7 (19 Feb 1933): 2.

³⁷ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #138, Dosar 4/1930, f. 3, 8-20, 54-55.

followed.³⁸ The Legionaries were quick to publicize official opposition to their plan as “the beginning of the battle of Christianity against the Antichrists and the ever more threatening atheism that grips our state under the influence of national and international masonry.”³⁹ Public opinion sided with the Legion, and between 7,000 and 8,000 people turned out the next time Legionaries tried to erect a cross at the monument.⁴⁰

The second incident took place that summer, when Codreanu organized for two groups of 500 Legionary volunteers to build a levee to prevent the Buzău river from flooding fields near the village of Vișani every year. Legionary engineers had planned the dig but the county prefect denied them permission on the grounds that the Ministry of Public Works would build the levee once proper preparations had been made. The police intervened to stop the project. Roughly 300 Legionaries were arrested, locked in the local school, and beaten by the authorities on charges of rebellion, assault, and illegal possession of firearms.⁴¹ For a student named Nicolae Constantinescu, this was the fourth time he had been injured in two months.⁴² The local Legionary newspaper from Buzău, *Vulturul* (*The Vulture*, 1933), dedicated a special issue to the conflict, emphasizing the noble goal of the Legionaries and describing the oppression carried out by soldiers and gendarmes in great detail.⁴³

Conflict between Legionaries and the authorities increased during the election campaign that fall. *Calendarul* continued publishing scandalous articles about senior government and

³⁸ “Creștinismul în conflict cu francmasoneria,” *Calendarul*, 280 (27 Jan 1933): 3; “Preotul Georgescu-Edinești,” *Axa*, 2/6 (5 Feb 1933): 2; Interview with Alexandru Serafim (21 April 1999), in Mariana Conovici, Silvia Iliescu, and Octavian Silvestru eds. *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul: Mișcarea Legionară în documente de istorie orală* (București: Humanitas, 2008) 86-87.

³⁹ Mihail Stelescu, “Lupta pentru cruce,” *Axa*, 2/6 (5 Feb 1933): 4.

⁴⁰ Săndulescu, “Revolutionizing Romania,” 104.

⁴¹ “Mișcările Legionarilor Gărzii de fier în județul R.-Sarat,” *Universul*, (13 July 1933); Polihroniade, *Tabără de muncă*, 7; CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 2, f. 19-20.

⁴² Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, 368.

⁴³ Costea, *Presa Legionară*, 12-18.

financial figures, and it was suspended again for fifteen days in November 1933.⁴⁴ On 17 November Codreanu issued a circular encouraging Legionaries faced with opposition during the elections to “defend yourselves whenever you think it necessary.”⁴⁵ Five days later a student named Virgil Teodorescu was shot by a gendarme while putting up propaganda posters in Constanța. Legionaries in Iași immediately gathered at the *Cămin* before moving to the city center to stage a protest together with other ultra-nationalist students from the university.⁴⁶ Further scuffles with police ensued and one of the Legionaries shot a gendarme. The police raided the *Cămin* in response to the shooting and the students held out for several days before they finally capitulated on 27 November. Their friends outside supported them during the siege and a young worker named Constantin Nița was shot by the police when he tried throwing bread up to them.⁴⁷ The *Cămin* was badly damaged during the siege, and the police sealed up the building after searching for weapons and evacuating the inhabitants.⁴⁸

10.2 ASSASSINATION AND PRISON

The government dissolved the Legion on 9 December, arresting thousands of Legionaries prior to the elections of 20 December and then releasing many of them within a couple of weeks.⁴⁹ Students in Bucharest staged massive street demonstrations in their support.⁵⁰ Legionaries protested against the conditions they were being kept in and hunger strikes began in prisons across the country. Nicolae Bălan (1882-1955), the Metropolitan of Ardeal, intervened on behalf

⁴⁴ Mihail Polihroniade, “Cuvântul Justiției,” *Calendarul*, 526 (1 Dec 1933): 1-2.

⁴⁵ ““Garda de Fier” și alegerile viitoare,” *Țara noastră*, (17 Nov 1933).

⁴⁶ AN – Iași, Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectoratul, Reel #266, Dosar 1480/1934, f. 358-359.

⁴⁷ Vera Totu, “Jilava,” *13 Jilava*, 7/1 (29 Nov 1940): 5; Banea, *Acuzat*, 35-36.

⁴⁸ CNSAS, Fond Totu Nicolae, P.015671, vol. 3, f. 176-177; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 375-377; AN-Iași, Fond Chestura de poliție, dosar 52/1933, f. 250.

⁴⁹ “După dizolvarea “Gărzii de fer,”” *Universul* (13 Dec 1933); Iancu, *Sub steagul*, 57-61.

⁵⁰ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 1, f. 10-12; “Sărbătoarea zilei 10 Decembrie,” *Calendarul*, 536 (13 Dec 1933): 3.

of arrested Legionaries in Sibiu.⁵¹ Only nine days after the elections, three Legionaries shot and killed the Prime Minister Ion G. Duca at the train station in Sinaia. By February 1934 Legionaries were selling photographs of the assassins for 20 lei each.⁵² The man who pulled the trigger was Nicolae Constantinescu, a student propagandist who had been injured several times in scuffles with the police during the previous months and who had been arrested then released during the government repression of the Legion earlier that month.⁵³ He was accompanied by two Aromanian students, Ion Caranica (1907-1938) and Dorul Belimace (1910-1938), one of whom had been arrested together with Codreanu in 1930.⁵⁴ Even more Legionaries were arrested in the wake of Duca's assassination, four Legionaries were killed during or after police interrogations, and *Calendarul* was shut down permanently on 1 January 1934.⁵⁵

Prison introduced many Legionaries to each other for the first time. Arriving at Jilava after weeks spent in prisons at Arad and Lugoj, Nicu Iancu (1910-1984) says that when he entered his cell, "I found myself surrounded by comrades; they all crowded around to shake my hand and welcome me, even hugging me despite the fact that I did not know most of them."⁵⁶ Prison also helped create a Legionary culture centered around discipline and poetic reflection on persecution. Crainic was imprisoned together with the Legionaries, and he writes in his memoirs that "the engineer [Gheorghe] Clime took command of the several hundred inmates, combining Legionary and military discipline. He formed teams for cooking and cleaning, and divided the

⁵¹ "Cei 43 Legionari arestați la Iași în greva foamei," *Calendarul*, 536 (13 Dec 1933): 3; "Studenti gardisti internați la Someseni au declarat greva foamei," *Calendarul*, 538 (15 Dec 1933): 3; "Legionari arestați la Chișinău în greva foamei," *Calendarul*, 538 (15 Dec 1933): 3; "Legionarii închiși la Jilava au declarat greva foamei," *Calendarul*, 546 (24 Dec 1933): 2; "Legionarii detinuți la Sibiu atacați cu gaze lacrimogene," *Calendarul*, 550 (31 Dec 1933): 2; Iancu, *Sub steagul*, 73-75.

⁵² AN – Iași, Chestura de poliție, Dosar 99/1935, f 37.

⁵³ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 235.

⁵⁴ "Înstruirea asasinatului dela Sinaia," *Dimineața* (9 Jan 1934).

⁵⁵ Nichifor Crainic, "Istoria "Calendarului"," *Sfarmă-Piatră* (24 Mar 1938): 2; CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 5, f. 221.

⁵⁶ Iancu, *Sub steagul*, 117.

day up into periods of instruction, singing, discussions and leisure.”⁵⁷ Legionaries sang to keep up their spirits.⁵⁸ Doru Belimache, one of the assassins who was in solitary confinement away from the others, wrote that when he heard his comrades singing “I press[ed] my ear to the door and listen[ed], forgetting my chains.”⁵⁹ The arrested Legionaries even produced their own newspaper called *13 Jilava*.⁶⁰ Radu Gyr (1905-1975), one of the Legion’s most celebrated poets, began writing verses about the harsh conditions at Jilava prison, where he was being held. One of his poems from this period, “The Legionary Prison” (“Ocnă Legionară”), affirms not only the suffering of the Legionaries but also their innocence and purity in the midst of persecution.

No one mourns the humid prison.	<i>Ocnă jilavă fără de jelanii.</i>
The mould on the walls turns sour.	<i>Acrește mucegaiul din pereți.</i>
Silence flows, black, with the rats,	<i>Tăcerea curge, neagră, cu guzganii,</i>
And spiders, climbing the walls and fungi.	<i>urcând păiingi, pe ziduri, și bureți.</i>
...	...
And over wounds of gold and frankincense	<i>Și peste răni de aur și tămâie,</i>
Through the bars of the dirty walls,	<i>prin gratiile zidului murdar,</i>
A blue sky floods into the prison	<i>un cer senin se varsă'n pușcărie</i>
Pure as a Legionary’s soul.	<i>pur ca un suflet de Legionar.</i> ⁶¹

As poems like Gyr’s circulated amongst the Legionaries, the families, and the friends of those arrested, the image of the Legionaries as persecuted heroes became more and more central to the movement’s mythology. Vasile Marin’s wife, Ana Maria, writes that visiting arrested

⁵⁷ Crainic, *Zile albe*, 257. This is confirmed by police reports from the period. CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 3, f. 8.

⁵⁸ Crainic, *Zile albe*, 257.

⁵⁹ Doru Belimache, “9 Mar 1934,” *13 Jilava*, 7/1 (29 Nov 1940): 3.

⁶⁰ “Poșta lui 13...” *13 Jilava*, 7/1 (29 Nov 1940): 12.

⁶¹ Radu Gyr, “Ocnă Legionară,” *Calendarul*, 547 (25 Dec 1933): 2.

Legionaries was difficult, but that nonetheless “families came with packets even if they did not have anyone locked up in the prison; they just hoped that their clothes and food would get to any of the Legionaries inside.”⁶²

The assassination boosted the Legion’s reputation, and a number of senior politicians came out in defense of the arrested Legionaries. Alexandru Averescu, Constantin Argetoianu, Iuliu Maniu, Ion Mihalache, Gheorghe Brătianu, and Alexandru Vaida-Voevod all spoke in favor of Legionaries at their trials. Intent on profiting from the Legionaries’ actions, King Carol II did not even go to Duca’s funeral or visit the Prime Minister’s widow.⁶³ Octavian Goga, a poet and anti-Semitic politician who led the National Agrarian Party, made a gift of boots to all of the prisoners in the hope of uniting the Legion with his own party.⁶⁴ As a reflection of the solidarity between the Legion and Mussolini’s Fascists, Italian lawyers came to Romania to help defend the imprisoned Legionaries.⁶⁵ There was clearly little stigma associated with Duca’s murder. Fr. Grigore Cristescu, a Legionary and Nichifor Crainic’s colleague at the University of Bucharest, taught Crainic’s courses while he was away. He used the opportunity to lecture on Legionary doctrine and to lead the students in singing Legionary hymns.⁶⁶ But the crackdown on the Legion took its toll on the organization. In a circular from 1 January 1935, Codreanu gave a “balance sheet” for the past twelve months, listing “18,000 arrests, with 18,000 houses invaded by barbarians and filled with innocent blood: 300 sick in prisons, 16 dead, and 3 buried alive underground.”⁶⁷ Sickness and death reduced the number of veteran Legionaries available for

⁶² Ana Maria Marin, *Poveste de dincolo* (Madrid: Editura Autorului, 1979) 117.

⁶³ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 237-240. For a description of the funeral, see Iorga, *Memorii*, vol. 7, 127-128.

⁶⁴ Crainic, *Zile albe*, 261, 280.

⁶⁵ Crainic, *Zile albe*, 259.

⁶⁶ Crainic, *Zile albe*, 283; CNSAS, Fond Cristescu Grigore, I.258626, f. 13.

⁶⁷ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 32.

future campaigns, but the “heroism” of prison inspired old and new recruits alike to be willing to make even greater sacrifices for the Legion.

10.3 PROMOTING THE LEGION IN DOBRUJA

Focusing specifically on the Aromanian communities in Dobruja provides some useful insights into what sort of propaganda rank and file Legionaries carried out after Duca’s assassination. By late 1933 Legionaries had firmly established their presence within Aromanian communities in Duroster and Caliacra counties, proselytizing at first through family networks or amongst students who came from the same regions of Greece or Yugoslavia.⁶⁸ The family of Virgil Teodorescu, who had been killed during the elections of 1933, was particularly active and helped raise support in the area.⁶⁹ Students in Bucharest protested when police assaulted Aromanian settlers, and hoped that the settlers would appreciate their support.⁷⁰ Most Aromanians were not Legionaries, however, and their political allegiances were ambiguous or opportunistic. In February 1935 a group of Aromanian students marched down the street in Duroster armed with clubs and sticks before entering the clubhouse of the National Liberal dissident Gheorghe Brătianu’s party. Here they sang Aromanian anthems and, according to some witnesses, Legionary hymns.⁷¹ Later, Legionaries began holding cultural evenings, poetry recitals, dances, Legionary weddings, and using high school students to perform suitably patriotic plays in Aromanian villages.⁷² Legionaries from outside the region were also sent in to help organize new nests and to encourage existing ones.⁷³

⁶⁸ CNSAS, Fond Papanace Constantin, I.210821, vol. 1, f. 35, 48-53, 241-248, vol. 2, f. 72.

⁶⁹ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 83.

⁷⁰ “Protestul studenților împotriva atacurilor din Cadriater,” *Calendarul*, 499, (16 Oct 1933): 4.

⁷¹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 168/1935, f. 15.

⁷² “Către tinerii intelectuali din Dobrogea nouă,” *Armatolii*, 1/4 (1 Dec 1933): 2; CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 12, f. 12-13, 19.

⁷³ Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 2, f. 111.

One Aromanian Legionary, Constantin Teja, said in an interview from 2000 that he and other Aromanians joined because they wanted “social justice” and did not get it from the major parites. When the interviewer asked him to clarify what he meant by this, Teja responded:

For us [social justice] means ... after we were exiled by the Turks and by the Greeks, we came to the motherland and who did we find in control of the land of our ancestors?! Whose hands was our country’s economy in?! Of the Yids, the Greeks, and the Armenians ... The Legionary movement says that: the worker, in the business where he works, should be paid properly and should be a shareholder. Then he will work happily because his share is growing too. And the peasant should be asked how much land he and his family can work without selling it. That much should be given to him!⁷⁴

Official Legionary documents never mentioned such a radical redistribution of private property, but the reference to the “Aromanian exile” as a justification for demanding Romanian control of the country was typical of Legionary propaganda in the Cadrilater. The Legionary newspaper *Armatolii* (*The Armatolians*, 1933) located the Legion within a long nineteenth century tradition of Aromanian battles for minority rights within the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁵ Turkish immigration was still a live issue for ultra-nationalist Aromanian students during the 1930s.⁷⁶ Legionary publicists writing to an Aromanian audience considered Phanariots, Greeks, and Bulgarians as part of the Jewish menace, and claimed that “foreigners” were still using the power of the Romanian state to persecute Aromanians.⁷⁷ This and other Legionary publications aimed at

⁷⁴ Interview with Constantin Teja (10 May 2000), in in Mariana Conovici, Silvia Iliescu, and Octavian Silvestru eds. *Tara, Legiunea, Căpitanul: Mișcarea Legionară în documente de istorie orală* (București: Humanitas, 2008) 43-45.

⁷⁵ B. Papanace, “Armatolii,” *Armatolii*, 1/1 (1 Nov 1933): 1.

⁷⁶ “Congresul studenților Dobrogeni: Ziua 3-a,” *Calendarul*, 1/442 (11 Aug 1933): 4.

⁷⁷ Nicolae Cuvendu, “Ce suntem și ce vrem noi,” *Armatolii*, 1/1 (1 Nov 1933): 1; I. Caranica, “Criptostrainii și organizațiile naționaliste,” *Armatolii*, 1/5 (10 Dec 1933): 1; Constantin Papanace, “Uneltiri Judeice,” *Legionarii*, 5/20 (1 Oct 1937): 1.

Aromanians, such as *Legionarii* (*The Legionaries*, 1932-1937), complained about what they described as irredentist and crypto-communist activities among the ethnic Bulgarians in Dobrogea, and protested bitterly about the poor housing conditions and inadequate land they had been offered by the government.⁷⁸ They catalogued discrimination against Aromanians in Greece, Yugoslavia, and Albania, and demanded that Romanian ultra-nationalists support ethnic Romanians living abroad.⁷⁹

Non-Aromanian Legionaries echoed these sentiments whenever they were in the region. When Fr. Grigore Cristescu visited Bazargic in September 1935 he spoke to an audience of roughly 300 Aromanian students, saying, “We are not colonists. We are people who are coming home. This land is not a colony that can be exploited like any other, but we are Legionaries, and this land is ours and we are the sentries guarding the front lines.”⁸⁰ Cristescu himself was not Aromanian, but by the mid-1930s Aromanian grievances had become Legionary ones.⁸¹ In contrast, Legionary propaganda aimed at Dobrujans living in Constanța, where there were few Aromanians, framed its appeal in much more general terms. Recommended reading materials for peasant Legionaries around Constanța in 1936 were the newspapers *Libertatea* and *Glusul strămoșesc* – both from Transylvania.⁸² Virgil Ionescu, one of the Legion’s major financiers and the head of the Legion in Dobruja county called on Dobrujans to join in a movement that was already much stronger in other parts of the country. “Join the fight alongside us,” he wrote on

⁷⁸ “Colonizarea Cadrilaterului: Agronomii,” *Armatolii*, 1/2 (10 Nov 1933): 4; “Colonizarea Cadrilaterului: Locuințele coloniștilor,” *Armatolii*, 1/3 (20 Nov 1933): 4; Ionel St. Nacu, “Minoritatea Bulgară,” *Armatolii*, 1/4 (1 Dec 1933): 1, 3; Cola G. Ciumetti, “Bulgarii din România și politicienii noștri,” *Legionarii*, 5/23 (15 Nov 1937): 1.

⁷⁹ Castru, “Scolile noastre de peste hotare,” *Armatolii*, 1/1 (1 Nov 1933): 1; “Tragedia unor români din Albania,” *Armatolii*, 1/1 (1 Nov 1933): 2; “Pensionarii români din Macedonia,” *Armatolii*, 1/2 (10 Nov 1933): 4; Diogene, “Sinceritatea prieteniei Sârbesti,” *Armatolii*, 1/6 (24 Dec 1933): 4.

⁸⁰ CNSAS, Fond Cristescu Grigore, I.258626, f. 91-99.

⁸¹ Ilie I Imbrescu, “Dreptatea oamenilor ... și dreptatea lui Dumnezeu,” *Legionarii*, 5/20 (1 Oct 1937): 1.

⁸² Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 231.

one poster, “for Romania will become great through the unity and sacrifice of all those amongst us who truly understand and love it.”⁸³

Legionary propaganda within such tightly-bound communities could be difficult when community elders were hostile to fascism and controlled resources that Legionaries relied upon. Legionaries had been actively recruiting amongst Aromanian students since 1930, and *Societatea Studenților Macedo-Români* (the Society of Aromanian Students) in Bucharest fell under Legionary control in December 1934.⁸⁴ The students cooperated with *Societatea de Cultura Macedo-Români* (the Aromanian Cultural Society) to protest against the repatriation of five Aromanian families to Bulgaria in January 1935, and the two groups initially appeared capable of cooperating even though the Cultural Society was not sympathetic to the Legionary cause.⁸⁵ Another Aromanian ultra-nationalist group, the Veria Society, approached Legionary students about collaboration, and the Legion ran several events with them. Together they promoted Aromanian culture alongside Romanian fascism.⁸⁶ A conflict developed during 1935 between the Legionary students and the Cultural Society, which owned and ran a dormitory in Bucharest in which roughly 60 Legionary students lived. The students protested vigorously when the Cultural Society’s president, a Mr. Topa, tore down pictures of Codreanu that were hanging in the dormitory, and they tried unsuccessfully to replace him as president. They needed the Cultural Society’s support, however, because many of them came from families living in Bulgaria or Greece, and had nowhere to live should they be thrown out of the dormitory.⁸⁷

⁸³ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 145-146.

⁸⁴ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 12, f. 2.

⁸⁵ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 168/1935, f. 1, 9.

⁸⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 168/1935, f. 5, 7, 11.

⁸⁷ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 12, f. 4-36, 57-58.

Aromanian Legionaries began fighting amongst themselves in January 1935, and tensions overflowed in the summer of 1936.⁸⁸ Codreanu divided the Aromanian Legionary students into two groups that summer – those from outside of Romania were to spend one month in Legionary work camps and the rest of the time doing propaganda throughout villages around the Cadrilater; those who came from Romania itself were not obliged to attend any work camps, but were to focus on organizing cultural celebrations in Dobruja.⁸⁹ By September the former group had split in two, according to which city Legionaries came from overseas. Those from Fârsoreti and Dobruja gathered around the veteran Legionary Grigore Pihu and those from Veria and Pind around the current vice-president of the Aromanian Students Society, Gheorghe Zima.⁹⁰

The Aromanian experience provides a microcosm of Legionary history during the mid-1930s. Propagandists benefited from the publicity surrounding Duca's assassination and the subsequent trial, and Legionaries who had become victims of police brutality during 1933 made good use of their sufferings in the years to come. They promoted their organization by doing charity work and holding community events, and did manage to attract large numbers of adherents, even if they were unable to sway the whole community. Legionaries continued to appeal directly to the grievances of specific social groups, but it was obvious that Legionaries put their own movement's interests before those of peasants, workers, or Aromanians. Opposition from those in positions of authority continued to plague young Legionaries, as did personal rivalries within the Legion. Factionalism divided the Legionaries, who struggled to assert the unity of their movement by subordinating themselves entirely to Codreanu's leadership.

⁸⁸ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 168/1935, f. 13.

⁸⁹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 19, 84.

⁹⁰ Ibid., Dosar 3/1936, f. 145-146; CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 12, f. 33-35, 45.

10.4 ULTRA-NATIONALIST FACTIONALISM

During the mid-1930s personal ambitions and ideological differences spawned several new parties on the far right. A law student named Tiberiu Rebreanu formed *Grupul "Noi"* (the "We" Group, 1935-1938) and enmities within the LANC caused the lawyer I. V. Emilian to break away and create *Svastică de Foc* (the Swastika of Fire, 1936-1937). Older ultra-nationalists organized *Blocului Generației Naționaliste dela 1922* (the Block of the Nationalist Generation of 1922, 1936-1938), and the LANC merged with Octavian Goga's National Agrarian Party to form *Partidul Național Creștin* (the National Christian Party, 1935-1938). At times these groups discussed working together for a common cause, but more often than not they disrupted each other's meetings, fought on the streets, and competed for members.⁹¹

Electoral failure convinced key supporters such as Nichifor Crainic that the Legion would not bring them to power in the near future. *Calendarul* was permanently shut down after Duca's murder, and later accounts show that prison had irreparably damaged Crainic's relationship with Codreanu. Legionaries held banquets in Crainic's honor in May 1924, after his release from prison.⁹² They were still attending his public lectures in January 1935, but a month later Crainic withdrew from the Legion altogether.⁹³ He was sworn into the LANC on 17 February 1935 together with two other prominent ultra-nationalist publicists, Alexandru Cusin and Toma Vladescu.⁹⁴ When Legionary students asked why he had left the movement, Crainic replied: "I have never been a member of the Iron Guard." Codreanu accused him of cowardice and Legionaries began disturbing his speeches by singing Legionary hymns and throwing notes on

⁹¹ CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 2, f. 64, 192, vol. 3, f. 108; AN – Cluj, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție, Dosar 681/1938, f.10; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 107/1935, f. 130; Ibid., Dosar 146/1937, f. 2.

⁹² CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 3, f. 23-40.

⁹³ Ibid., vol. 3, f. 61, 71, 73-75.

⁹⁴ "Dnii prof. Nichifor Crainic, A.C. Cusin și Toma Vladescu s'au înscris în LANC," *Apărarea Națională* (17 Mar 1935): 1, 3.

the stage with messages such as “Down with the traitor!”⁹⁵ This harassment stopped in June when Codreanu sent around a circular saying that they should not persecute Crainic because the fault was Codreanu’s alone – he should have recognized Crainic’s lack of character earlier and never let him associate with the Legion to begin with.⁹⁶

Crainic later claimed that he had joined the LANC because he needed an effective political party that could oppose Alexandru Vaida-Voevod’s newly formed “Romanian Front” (*Frontul Românesc*) that was gathering support from various marginalized ultra-nationalist groups.⁹⁷ Alexandru Vaida-Voevod (1872-1950) had already been Prime Minister three times before 1935, and now he adopted fascist slogans such as the *numerous Valahicus* – a quota on the number of members of an ethnic minority allowed in a given profession – as well as using mass rallies and uniformed paramilitary groups who clashed with Legionaries and cuzists on the streets.⁹⁸ As a frequently illegal, anti-establishment social movement, the Legion did not have the political flexibility that the LANC had. Whereas successive governments bullied Legionaries during election campaigns or else outlawed the movement entirely, Cuza’s party had almost complete freedom of movement. The LANC could challenge the Romanian Front at the polling booths and in parliament in a way that Legionaries never could.

While the events of 1933 convinced Crainic that his future did not lay with the Legion, the movement’s willingness to engage in political violence attracted the attention of a new “convert” to ultra-nationalism – Istrate Micescu (1881-1951). Micescu had served as a deputy for the Liberal Party three times, in 1920, 1927, and 1931. He formed his own Liberal faction in 1925 and then temporarily joined Gheorghe I. Brătianu’s dissident National Liberal Party

⁹⁵ Ibid., vol. 3, f. 83, 87, 91, 97-98.

⁹⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 19, f. 13.

⁹⁷ CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol.3, f. 136-138; Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 12, f. 10.

⁹⁸ Heinen 249; CNSAS, Fond Documentar, D.010866, f. 31-37.

(*Partidul Național Liberal-Brătianu*) after 1930.⁹⁹ Just when Crainic was separating himself from the Legionaries in February 1935, Micescu invited them to collaborate with his project to introduce a *numerus clausus* to the Bar Association of Ilfov county. His brother was a committed Legionary, and the movement's leaders hoped that he would follow his brother's example. The Legionaries vacillated at first, and Micescu and Codreanu did not agree on a firm alliance until November 1935.¹⁰⁰ By that time it had become clear that what Micescu really wanted was to use Legionary students to intimidate his political opponents in the Bar Association. Micescu called his group the Association of Romanian Christian Lawyers (*Asociația Avocaților Creștini Români*) and introduced a fascist-style oath that included the promise to boycott anyone who left the organization.¹⁰¹ Within a short time the Association had regional branches throughout the country.¹⁰² Micescu proposed "Romanianizing" the bar in Ilfov county by excluding Jewish lawyers from membership. The existing council of the Bar Association rejected the idea, so Micescu and Legionary lawyers introduced a vote of no confidence and successfully removed the council. They did so with the help of law students, who guarded the entrances to the building and ensured that no-one entered who might vote against the changes. Micescu's supporters telephoned potential opponents several days earlier threatening to kill them if they tried to come to the meeting.¹⁰³ Ultimately, the Legion's alliance with Micescu lasted only as long as the latter needed Legionaries as thugs to ensure his own electoral victories. The following year Micescu switched his allegiance to the newly-formed National Christian Party (*Partidul Național Creștin*, PNC) led by A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga.¹⁰⁴ He turned against the Legionary students as soon

⁹⁹ CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, Dosar P.000324, vol. 7, f. 383.

¹⁰⁰ CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, Dosar P.000324, vol. 9, f. 5, 6, 12, 14, 33; vol. 10, f. 9.

¹⁰¹ CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, Dosar P.000324, vol. 9, f. 2.

¹⁰² ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 107/1935, f. 115-116.

¹⁰³ CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, Dosar P.000324, vol. 9, f. 26; Vintilescu, "Biruința avocaților români creștini din baroul de Ilfov," *Porunca Vremii* (29 Oct 1935); Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 138-140.

¹⁰⁴ CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Robu, Dosar P.000324, vol. 7, f. 383, vol. 9, f. 1-33.

as his presidency of the Ilfov Bar Association was secure, leaving them bitter at having been manipulated by such an experienced politician.¹⁰⁵ Stung by Crainic and Micescu, Codreanu issued a circular in March 1937 that stated clearly that “people who have played an exceptional role in public life up until now can no longer join the Legionary Movement, even if they signify that they have understood this Movement, even if they are ready to take the oath, and even if they seem to provide enough guarantees of their devotion.”¹⁰⁶

10.5 DEATH THREATS AND INTIMIDATION

Legionaries came to rely increasingly on death threats and intimidation from 1936 onwards. This sometimes had substantial financial benefits. According to oral history interviews and memoir accounts, industrialists such as Nicolae Malaxa (1884-1969), Max Auschnit (1888-1959), Mr. Kaufmann, and Mr. Shapiro made large contributions to the Legion.¹⁰⁷ Malaxa was an anglophile, but he made donations to a vast number of causes, including nationalist ones.¹⁰⁸ His armaments business became deeply implicated in ultra-nationalist politics from 1938 onwards, and he allied himself successively with King Carol, the Legion, General Ion Antonescu, and then the Romanian Communist Party.¹⁰⁹ Ausnit, Kaufmann, and Shapiro were all Jewish, and it is likely that they contributed to the Legion to guarantee the safety of their businesses.

One suggestive but ultimately unreliable source on such donors comes from Petre Pandrea (1904-1968). During the 1930s, Pandrea was a lawyer and essayist whose left-wing, philo-Semitic views often put him at odds with the Legion. He drew closer to his former

¹⁰⁵ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 1/1938, f. 5-8.

¹⁰⁶ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “To Regional and County Leaders,” 9 Mar 1937; reprinted in Codreanu, *Circulări*, 129.

¹⁰⁷ Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 222.

¹⁰⁸ AN – Bucharest, Fond N. Malaxa, Dosar 5/1932, f. 1-252, Dosar 6/1936, f. 25.

¹⁰⁹ Ausnit-Berry Correspondence, Burton Yost Berry Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. I am grateful to Justin Classen for sharing these documents with me. Cf. Florentina Țone and Ciprian Stoleru, “Malaxa contra Auschnitt,” *Historia*, 12/121 (2012): 14-35.

opponents once the Romanian Communist Party gained power in 1946, and spent years together with Legionaries in various communist prisons. He wrote about the Legion while in Aiud prison in 1964, drawing on conversations he had with Legionaries there. Some of his information is certainly accurate, but – like many of the histories of the Legion that emerged from Aiud in the early 1960s – he shamelessly slandered Legionaries to please his communist jailers.¹¹⁰

According to Pandrea, most of the goods for Legionary businesses came from two businessmen in Craiova, Ion P. Gigurtu (1886-1959) and Ștefan Barbu Drugă (1881-1969). Neither man was a Legionary. Gigurtu was a member of A. C. Cuza's National Christian Party, and Barbu Drugă was a National Liberal. Pandrea claims that these men sent goods from their factories to Legionary shops and restaurants because they feared Legionary violence against their businesses. Pandrea did not know how these relationships were first established, and says that the managers of the Legionary businesses that received goods from Gigurtu and Barbu Drugă were baffled when they began receiving good from Craiova.¹¹¹

In April 1936, Legionaries publically stated that they would attack and kill prominent individuals who opposed them. Despite being warned not to by the government, *Uniunea Națională a Studenților Creștini din România* (the National Union of Christian Students in Romania, UNSCR) held its annual congress at Târgu Mureș that month. On the second day of the congress a law student named Alexandru Cantacuzino proposed that the students form “death teams” to avenge Legionary martyrs. He identified potential victims as the king's mistress, Elena Lupescu (1895-1977), Bucharest's police prefect, Colonel Gabriel Marinescu (1886-1940),

¹¹⁰ Similar histories include Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian întra muros: memorii Legionare* (Bucharest: Lucman, 2002); Nichifor Crainic, MS in CNSAS, Fond Crainic Nichifor, Microfilm 3722, vol. 4, f. 50-299; Ion Victor Vojen, “Frația de Cruce,” MS in CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Microfilm 5065, f. 218-226; and a collaborative project by 64 Legionaries entitled “Despre organizația Legionară,” in CNSAS, Fond documentar D.10160, 2 vols.

¹¹¹ Petre Pandrea, *Garda de Fier: jurnal de filosofie politică, memorii penitenciare* (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 2001) 117-120.

Mihail Stelescu, and a number of leading politicians. On the third day, the meeting vowed, while making the fascist salute, “that at the price of our blood we will ensure that the *Nicadorii* [i.e., Duca’s assassins] no longer have to suffer.” Gheorghe Furdui (1910-1939), the UNSCR’s president and a theology student in Bucharest explained that these teams were actually “punishment teams” or “honor teams,” that would regain the Legion’s honor by demonstrating that it could take revenge on its enemies.¹¹²

In June 1936 Simion Toma (1913-) formed a team to kill Grigore Graur (1884-1969), a left-wing journalist working for *Adevărul* and *Dimineața*. Toma was a student at the Commercial Academy in Târgoviște who he had become interested in the Legion after joining a student society, where some of his colleagues introduced him to Legionary activism. He joined the Legion in March 1933, worked on the construction site at the Green House in Bucharest, took part in the 1933 electoral campaign in Târgoviște, and was arrested following Duca’s murder. Toma failed most of his exams in 1933/1934 because he had been in prison, but he met Gheorghe Clime there, who he says became a significant mentor. The UNSCR Congress at Târgu Mureș in 1936 was the first he had ever attended. *Adevărul* and *Dimineața* wrote very negative articles about the Târgu Mureș congress, and the chemistry student Victor Dragomirescu (1912-1939) created several teams to “punish” the offending journalists. Toma’s team was made up entirely of students, most of whom came from Târgoviște. They received their orders by telephone, and none of them knew what Graur looked like. They waited outside his house, but mistakenly attacked another man who lived in the same building, Iosif Störfer. The students struck Störfer with iron rods and Toma shot him three times in the abdomen. Toma was promoted for his actions, helping Ion Victor Vojen and Victor Dragomirescu organize the new

¹¹² ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 46/1936, f. 4-21.

Legionary Workers Corps (*Corpul Legionar Muncitoresc*) in 1937.¹¹³ Death threats continued despite such blunders, and the police immediately began looking to arrest Mihai Ianitschi after he threatened a number of influential people in his city of Storojineț in October 1936.¹¹⁴

The only successful assassination of this period was of Mihail Stelescu, a prominent Legionary who had formed his own organization. The historian Constantin Iordachi writes that “in 1934, four main factions were disputing prominence: one led by Moța, another led by Mihail Stelescu, a third led by [Fr.] Ion Dumitrescu[-Borșa], and a fourth one made up by the intellectuals grouped around the journal *Axa*.”¹¹⁵ Upset at the sudden importance that Codreanu gave to the intellectuals, Stelescu tried to transform the Aromanians into his own personal faction.¹¹⁶ Codreanu expelled Stelescu from the organization in September 1934. It is unclear precisely what caused Codreanu to turn against Stelescu while remaining close to the other three factions, but both ideological differences and a personal rivalry between Codreanu and Stelescu were probably involved.¹¹⁷ Stelescu had written several of the Legion’s most popular songs, he led some of the most belligerent electoral teams during 1933, was a frequent contributor to *Axa*, had been a deputy for the Legion, and represented the Legion in negotiations with other ultra-nationalist groups. Stelescu then formed his own organization called *Cruciada Românilor* (the Crusade for Romanianism, 1935-1937). The Crusaders denied that theirs was a new movement, claiming that “we are continuing, with the same creed, the same enthusiasm,” the fight for *Românism* that had been going on for decades.¹¹⁸ The Crusade enjoyed generous funding from official circles hoping to undermine the Legion, and it managed to attract the

¹¹³ CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 4, f. 83-86, 102-120; vol. 5, f. 191-192; vol. 9, f. 96.

¹¹⁴ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f. 11.

¹¹⁵ Iordachi, *Charisma*, 99-100.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 100. The story that Stelescu cultivated the Aromanians in particular is also found in Tudor V. Cucu, *Totul pentru țară, nimic pentru noi* (Brașov: Editura Transilvania Expres, 1999) 172-175.

¹¹⁷ Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 241; Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 300.

¹¹⁸ Mihail Stelescu, “Prefața,” *Cruciada românilor*, 1/1 (22 Nov 1934): 1.

formerly communist writer Panait Istrati (1884-1935) to its cause.¹¹⁹ Stelescu publically claimed that Codreanu's image as a virtuous and decisive leader was dishonest, and questioned his suitability as a nationalist leader on the grounds that he had non-Romanian ancestors.¹²⁰

In September 1934, after being informed by one of the conspirators that Stelescu was plotting to assassinate Codreanu, a group of Legionaries that included Codreanu, General Cantacuzino, Nichifor Crainic, Virgil Ionescu, Gheorghe Clime, and Gheorghe Beza broke into the house of Luca Gheorghide. Here they discovered two revolvers and a bottle of potassium cyanide, but a servant girl alerted Gheorghide to their presence and a gun battle ensued. Codreanu took Gheorghide and other Stelescu supporters to court, accusing them of plotting to kill him.¹²¹ In a pamphlet entitled *Demascarea tradării (Unmasking Treason, 1936)*, the Legionaries claimed that Gheorghide had obtained the poison from a chemical factory and was supposed to use it to kill Codreanu on Stelescu's behalf.¹²²

Two months after the Târgu Mureș conference, ten Legionaries approached Stelescu in a Bucharest hospital where he was recovering from an appendectomy. They shot roughly 120 bullets into his body and struck him repeatedly in the head with an axe. They sang Legionary hymns while committing the murder, and then turned themselves into the police.¹²³ Rumors soon emerged that some of Stelescu's supporters were planning to get revenge on Codreanu. Hostility continued between the two camps; one of Stelescu's supporters was killed, others were assaulted, and the following year Legionaries cut the nose off another when they found him alone one

¹¹⁹ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 250; Mircea Iorgulescu, "Panait Istrati și Cruciada Românilor," *România literară*, 24/45 (7 Nov 1991): 4-5.

¹²⁰ Săndulescu, "Revolutionizing Romania," 139-141; "Polemica Mihail Stelescu – Corneliu Codreanu," *Lupta* (29 Mar 1935); reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 92-93.

¹²¹ "Membrii fostei grupări "Garda de Fier" s-au despărțit în două tabere," *Dimineața* (9 Sept 1934); reprinted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 61-62.

¹²² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 4, f. 168; cf. *ibid.*, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 348-349.

¹²³ Săndulescu, "Revolutionizing Romania," 141.

night.¹²⁴ Unsurprisingly, Codreanu instituted a personal bodyguard for himself in October 1936.¹²⁵ Though it was never again practiced, the killing of Legionaries who left the organization became official Legionary policy in September 1936, when Codreanu himself created “punishment teams.” He sent around a confidential circular ordering that “as soon as a comrade abandons the movement and begins to work together with our enemies, this team will present itself at his door and warn him that if he continues to work against the Legion he will have the same fate as Stelescu.”¹²⁶

After almost a year of frequent Legionary threats against public figures, the chancellor of the University of Iași, Traian Bratu (1875-1940), fell victim to an assassin’s blade on 1 March 1937. According to Armand Călinescu (1893-1939), “Professor Traian Bratu was followed by several young students while he walked home from the university. They stopped him on a dark street, stabbed him in the back, and left him in a pile of blood.”¹²⁷ Bratu did not recognize his assailants, but Călinescu blamed the Legion for the assassination attempt. Codreanu replied that “the Legionary Movement has no connection to the terrible incident,” but also reminded the authorities that university professors such as Bratu had acted unjustly towards their students and that “every political movement ... has its share of unbalanced people, who do not understand philosophy and who react in whatever way they like.”¹²⁸ Bratu had opposed anti-Semitic students in Iași since the early 1920s, and this was not the first time he had been threatened by students.¹²⁹ An article censored out of *Buna vestire* from 3 March claimed that the assailants had been former

¹²⁴ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 290; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 249, vol. 13, f. 69; AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 119/1937, f. 43

¹²⁵ AN – Iași, Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 93/1936, f. 237; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 199.

¹²⁶ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 164.

¹²⁷ Parliamentary debates, 2 March 1937; in Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 293.

¹²⁸ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 125-126.

¹²⁹ AN – Iași Fond Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectorat, Reel #121, Dosar 1024/1923, f. 116-122; AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 95/1935, f. 11.

servants of Bratu's who were upset about unpaid wages.¹³⁰ Several Legionaries were charged with attacking Bratu, but were acquitted for lack of evidence.¹³¹ The day before the attempted assassination of Bratu, General Gavrilă Marinescu, whom Legionaries had targeted for assassination at the Târgu Mureș Congress, and whom King Carol had just appointed Minister of Public Order, drew up a list of thirty Legionaries, including Codreanu, who he wanted assassinated.¹³² The government evacuated and reorganized all student dormitories in the country after the attack on Bratu – a move that they had already discussed a week before Bratu was stabbed, – warned priests to stay out of politics, banned political uniforms, and closed down masonic lodges.¹³³ Roughly four hundred policemen and gendarmes surrounded the Legionary *Cămin* in Iași, making 46 arrests as they evacuated and sealed up the building.¹³⁴ Regardless of whether the Legion had actually orchestrated the attack on Bratu, its reputation for assassination and violence made it the ideal scapegoat. The government made very effective use of this attack to curtail Legionary influence in university dormitories and to demand that the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church prevent its clergy from participating in ultra-nationalist politics.

Violence characterized all of the Legion's electoral endeavors. During the 1920s, anti-Semitic students had made rioting and gang violence into a normal part of ultra-nationalist politics. With this legacy, and with their xenophobic, anti-democratic rhetoric, the Legionaries found it impossible to convince Romanian authorities that they wanted a peaceful campaign. When Legionaries tried to challenge the major political parties legally, gendarmes and policemen impeded their attempts to do electoral propaganda. When they broke the law by shooting Duca or

¹³⁰ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 1, f. 88.

¹³¹ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 91/1938, f. 234.

¹³² Rebecca Haynes, "Reluctant Allies? Iuliu Maniu and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu Against King Carol II of Romania," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 85/1 (2007): 113.

¹³³ "Desființarea caminurilor studențești," *Adevărul*, (26 Feb 1937); Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 290-293.

¹³⁴ "După monstruosul atentat din Iași," *Lupta*, (3 Mar 1937).

attacking journalists, the authorities responded with mass arrests, closing the Legionary *Cămin* in Iași, and introducing new prohibitions. Just as the election campaigns of 1937 were beginning, the attempted assassination of Traian Bratu gave the government an excuse to take away more democratic freedoms. Even though Legionaries were quick to engage in political violence and acts of terrorism, the extent of the violence used against them by the authorities fueled their belief that they were being persecuted unjustly. Elections meant prison and violence for Legionaries, but they were a necessary hurdle to overcome if Legionaries hoped to abolish the democratic system entirely and introduce a dictatorship of their own.

11.0 PEACEFUL PROPAGANDA

Even while some Legionaries continued to use gang violence, intimidation, and assassination to promote the movement, Codreanu increasingly preferred peaceful methods that gave the Legion the high moral ground in its contest with Romania's major political parties. In stark contrast to the violence of the student movement and the 1933 elections, between 1934 and 1938 Legionaries spoke constantly about cultivating themselves, educating their fellow Romanians, and creating a new moral elite. Legionary education, they argued, was the key element that attracted "many young Christians" to the movement.¹ Whereas anti-Semitism had been the central focus of the student movement and of A. C. Cuza's *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC); Legionary propaganda emphasized workers' rights, anti-masonry, and anti-politicianism during the Great Depression. In the years that followed, the idea emerged that Legionaries had to be honest, selfless, and hardworking if they were to replace Romania's corrupt leaders. Legionaries had used rhetoric about honor and purity since 1927, when they contrasted their youthful innocence with A. C. Cuza's political cynicism. But the idea of creating "new men" (*oameni noi*) came to structure Legionary activities between 1933 and 1938.² Codreanu wrote in 1936, that "This country is dying because it lacks *men*, not because it lacks [political] programs. That is our belief. Therefore we do not need to build programs, but *men, new men*. Because people as they are today – *raised on politicianism and infected* by the Jewish influence – will compromise even the best programs." He concluded that "the Legion of the Archangel Michael will be ... more a school and an army than a political party. ... Everything that our minds can imagine that is nobler in the soul, everything that can make our race prouder,

¹ Barbu Slușanschi, "Școala tineretului de azi și țelurile ei," *Însemnări sociologice*, 1/8 (1935): 20.

² I translate the Romanian *omul nou* as "new man" to emphasize that this is the same phrase used by fascist groups all over Europe, but it should be noted that the Romanian noun is neutral, not masculine. Literally, *omul nou* means "new person."

higher, more righteous, stronger, wiser, purer, harder working, and more courageous – that is what the Legionary school must produce!”³

Thanks to peaceful propaganda through community events, marches, work camps, and businesses, the period from 1935 to 1937 was one of unparalleled growth for the Legion. Much of this growth took place during 1937 itself. In Tighina county, for example, the Legion had 17 nests and a total of 230 Legionaries in Tighina in July 1937. After three months of an intensive propaganda campaign through villages in the area, there were 60 nests and roughly 600 Legionaries. Legionaries also formed roughly 30 “sympathizers’ nests” during this campaign, with a total of 340 members.⁴ The following data compiled by Armin Heinen shows how rapidly the Legion expanded in only a short period of time.

Date	Nests	Members
December 1933	3,495	28,000
May 1935	4,200	24,000
August 1936		70,000*
January 1937	12,000	96,000
December 1937	34,000	272,000

*Table 5: Legionary Growth 1933-1937.*⁵

³ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 238-239.

⁴ Roth Jelescu, *Și cerul plângea*, 260.

⁵ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 357. These numbers are estimates based on various sources. The starred estimate from August 1936 was not given by Heinen, but comes from a speech by General Cantacuzino in August 1936. ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 81. Recent research by Traian Sandu using more reliable archival documents suggests that Heinen’s numbers were largely accurate. Traian Sandu, “Militant Rentability and Regional Penetration of the Iron Guard: Electoral Behaviour and Theoretical Consequences,” in *“Vergessene Gewalt”: Der “Legion Erzengel Michael” im Rumanien der Jahre 1918/27-1938*, eds. Armin Heinen and Oliver Schmitt (Regensburg: Südost Institut, Forthcoming).

The Everything for the Fatherland Party won 478,378 (15.58%) votes in the elections of 20 December 1937, making it the third largest party in the country after the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the National Peasant Party (PNȚ).⁶ As Traian Sandu notes, these election results were still surprisingly low given the number of Legionary propagandists. Whereas the National Christian Party (PNC) won 12 votes for every party member, the Legion achieved only 1.75 votes per Legionary.⁷ Ordinary political parties could count on a large number of voters who were sympathetic but not enthusiastic enough to join the party. As a social movement, by 1937 the Legion had managed to transform most sympathizers into members, giving it a strong public presence but not guaranteeing electoral success.

One police report from October 1935 said that “in the towns [Legionaries conduct] propaganda through members of different sporting associations; in the countryside by erecting crosses (*troițe*), making roads, by putting up fences around cemeteries, ... Guardists help peasants harvest their fields, pick grapes, build houses, [and] even help them with money.”⁸ The following year Vasile Iașinschi (1892-1978) – a pharmacist from Rădăuți and an important leader – ordered that Legionaries also compile reports on the regions they visited while doing propaganda. They were to discover how many Jews lived in an area, whether non-Orthodox sects were active, what level of schooling was available, what occupations most people practiced, and what the material needs of the locals were. If there were Legionaries in the area then the propagandists were to compile a list of nest members and to help indoctrinate them. All of this was to be done in the most disciplined manner possible, with a copy of *Cărticică șefului de cuib* at hand.⁹

⁶ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 466.

⁷ Sandu, “Militant Rentability,” MS.

⁸ CNSAS, Fond Voien Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160181, f. 394.

⁹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 87-88.

11.1 WORK CAMPS

Legionaries affirmed the importance of self-improvement and contributing to social progress by instituting a vast system of work camps and rest camps during the mid-1930s. The scale of the Legionary camp system was unparalleled anywhere in Europe, but the idea was not new. The International Voluntary Service had organized similar camps throughout the continent during the early 1920s to help with reconstruction after the First World War.¹⁰ In Germany, Nazi adults and youth attended camps that helped the nation through physical labor.¹¹ In both France and Italy, fascists ran holiday camps for young people that taught leadership skills and emphasized the importance of practical work for the nation.¹² Across the English Channel, Sir Oswald Mosely's British Union of Fascists ran annual holiday camps where families relaxed together at the seaside.¹³ Inside Romania, the National Union of Christian Students in Romania (*Uniunea Națională a Studenților Creștini din România*, UNSCR), ethnic German groups, and Jewish youth groups ran voluntary labor camps during the summer.¹⁴ Once Legionary camps were well established, Cuzists, groups of apprentices, and state-run youth groups also began organizing their own work camps.¹⁵ Camping, charitable labor, and regimented activities were common in ultra-nationalist groups all over Europe, situating the Legion of the Archangel Michael within the mainstream of European fascism.

¹⁰ Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 219.

¹¹ Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) 13-69; Kiran Klaus Patel, *Soldiers of Labor: Labor Service in Nazi Germany and New Deal America, 1933-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹² Laura Downs, "Each and Every One of You Must Become a *Chef*: Toward a Social Politics of Working-Class Childhood on the Extreme Right in 1930s France," *The Journal of Modern History*, 81/1 (2009): 1-44; Tracy Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985) 101-102.

¹³ Michael Spurr, "'Living the Blackshirt Life': Culture, Community and the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940," *Contemporary European History*, 12/3 (2003): 316-317.

¹⁴ N.A., "O tabără studențească la mare," *Calendarul*, 439 (7 Aug 1933); Nicolae Bogdon, "Progresul taberelor de muncă în Ardeal," *Calendarul*, 453 (24 Aug 1933); CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 14, f. 221.

¹⁵ Petriceanu, "Tabăra de muncă a lăncierilor sătmăreni," *Porunca vremii*, 5/554 (27 Oct 1936); ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 254/1937, f. 16; ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 138; AN – Brașov, Fond Inspectoratul Muncii, Dosar 90/1935, f. 37.

Legionaries had helped with petty jobs in villages during the election campaigns of 1931 and 1932, they had attempted to build a levée on the banks of the Danube River at Vișan in 1933, and they ran their own farm in Giulești in Ilfov country, but the first organized work camps began during the summer of 1934.¹⁶ The work camps were based on the Legion's two major building projects to date – the *Cămin Cultural Creștin* in Iași and *Casa Verde* (the Green House) in Bucharest. Work first began on the Green House in August 1933, after police arrested beaten 300 Legionaries working on the levée in Vișani. The idea was to build *Casa Legionarilor Răniți* (the House for Wounded Legionaries), where Legionaries could stay who had been injured while doing Legionary business. Most of the money was raised through small donations, but the project did receive support from wealthy patrons. Mrs. Anghel donated the land, the law student



Figure 33: Legionaries at the Green House on 8 November 1933.¹⁷

¹⁶ On the farm at Giulești, see CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 5, f. 191-192 and CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 265-266.

¹⁷ Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 11.

Alexandru Cantacuzino gave 5,000 lei to help begin construction, and an architect named Mr. Ioțu drew up the plans.¹⁸ The engineer Virgil Ionescu donated all of the timber for one level of the building.¹⁹ Others gave their time and their energy. A team of 80 Legionaries led by the lawyer Victor Silaghi (-1941) – a Legionary since 1927 who had led small groups of activists in battles against the gendarmerie in the 1933 elections – worked for three months making bricks for the building.²⁰ Visitors arrived almost immediately, and the first contact many of the intellectuals from *Calendarul* and *Axa* had with Legionaries happened while they worked side by side at the construction site.²¹ Building continued sporadically for the next few years, and Legionaries continued to make financial contributions to a special fund for the Green House.²² Legionary women cooked and served lunch for the volunteer workers each day.²³ They planted a vegetable garden and added a roof in 1936, so that the “Legionary Palace” was eventually completed in September 1937.²⁴ Such projects provided opportunities for introducing sympathetic observers to the Legion, and in 1937 an Italian law student named Lorenzo Baracchi Tua travelled to Romania as a representative of the Anti-Bolshevik Front (UMON). Tua helped on a building site at the Legionary headquarters in Gutenberg Street, and then wrote a book praising Codreanu and the Legion.²⁵

Organized camps began in 1934. Codreanu led the largest work camp in the Rarău Mountains, and Mihail Stelescu organized a rest camp – also called a sporting camp – at the

¹⁸ Al. M. Savonarioia, “Casa Legionarilor răniți,” *Calendarul*, 1/480 (24 Sept 1933): 1; “Patronul Gărzii de Fier,” *Calendarul*, 1/520 (10 Nov 1933).

¹⁹ “Săptămâna contribuțiile legionare,” *Calendarul*, 2/512 (1 Nov 1933): 3.

²⁰ Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 7. On Victor Silaghi, see “La moartea lui Victor Silaghi,” *Axa*, 10/64 (23 Jan 1941): 7; Fănică Anastasescu, “Comandantul Legionar Victor Silaghi,” *Cuvântul*, 18/98 (23 Jan 1941).

²¹ “Casa Legionarilor răniți,” *Axa*, 1/19 (1 Oct 1933).

²² “Pentru Casa Verde,” *Porunca vremii*, 5/531 (4 Oct 1936).

²³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 291.

²⁴ Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 11.

²⁵ Lorenzo Baracchi Tua, *La Guardia di Ferro* (Firenze: Goliardia Fascista, 1938). Published in Romanian as Lorenzo Baracchi Tua, *Garda de Fier*, trans. Cesar Balaban (Bucharest: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 1940).

seaside.²⁶ The number of camps increased dramatically during 1935 and 1936, as Legionaries embarked on hundreds, if not thousands, of construction projects.²⁷ The difference between these and earlier building projects was that building was no longer the main reason Legionaries ran their camps from 1934 onwards. As an article from *Libertatea* in April 1936 explained, work camps were schools for molding Legionary character:

This Legionary host does not publicize itself loudly, it does not bluster in the alleyways, it does not promise the world, but it works silently to build a new life. This new life must be created and led by new men, who do not seek riches and gold squeezed out of the helpless worker, but who must be used to living only from hard and sober work. That is why the Captain of the Legionaries has filled the country with work camps where churches are built, houses are erected for the poor, things are built for the public good. Because by working arduously here, intellectuals and city folk – the future leaders of a Legionary country – will become used to another life, difficult and hard, and will no longer long for a life of luxury based on theft.²⁸

Building projects were a welcome by-product of the camps system, but the main goal of the work camps was to create the sorts of Legionary heroes depicted in the movement's songs and artworks. In contrast to their reputation for violence and terrorism in the early 1930s, Legionaries now used the camps to present themselves as a "constructive" movement contributing to national

²⁶ CNSAS, Fond Lupeş Ioan, P. 000160, vol. 9, f. 45-50.

²⁷ Based on a report in *Însemnări sociologice* from October 1936, Armin Heinen writes that "the number of work camps grew from 4 in 1934, to 50 in 1936, and there were another 500 smaller work-sites that year." Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 261. Rebecca Haynes draws on Horia Sima's history of the Legion – a much later and less reliable source – when she says that in 1936 "there were seventy one camps throughout the country, as well as thousands of smaller work sites throughout Romania." Rebecca Haynes, "Work Camps, Commerce, and the Education of the 'New Man' in the Romanian Legionary Movement," *Historical Journal*, 51/4 (2008): 947.

²⁸ "Tace și muncește la temelile unei vieți noi," *Libertatea*, 33/1 (5 Apr 1936): 4.

renewal.²⁹ As volunteers worked, propagandists would often speak to onlookers explaining how the project fit into Legionary ideology.³⁰ Whenever a work camp coincided with a national holiday, Legionaries used the opportunity to hold festive events for the locals.³¹ After they built a *Cămin Cultural* (Cultural Hearth) in the village of Lazu in Alba county, Legionaries held a dance and performed Corneliu Georgescu's play *Vremuri de restriște* (*Hard Times*) about official corruption, Jewish treason, and the heroism of the anti-Semitic movement.³² In other places Legionaries followed their building projects with choral performances for the local population.³³

In his close study of a work camp at Rarău Mountain in Bukovina – one of the four camps held in 1934 – Valentin Săndulescu shows how much effort Legionaries put into activities that were not directly related to the building process. The day started with tea at 6 am, followed by two hours of group exercises before work began on what was to be a summer house for Legionary students. Food was scarce, the daily program rigorous, and once a week Legionaries hiked up the mountain barefoot as a training exercise. In the evenings Codreanu spoke to the roughly one hundred students present, instructing them about Legionary politics, treason, and the differences between the Legion and other political parties.³⁴ During moments of relaxation, Legionaries made use of the nearby hermitage to pray and to mingle with the local population.³⁵ A similar schedule governed the largest of the work camps, which took place near the Carmen Sylva tourist resort on the Black Sea – today known as Eforie Sud. Here hundreds of Legionaries worked over two summers to build a large camping ground, including a number of stone

²⁹ Săndulescu, "Taming the Body," 87.

³⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 228.

³¹ Țurcan, "Tabere și șantiere," 16.

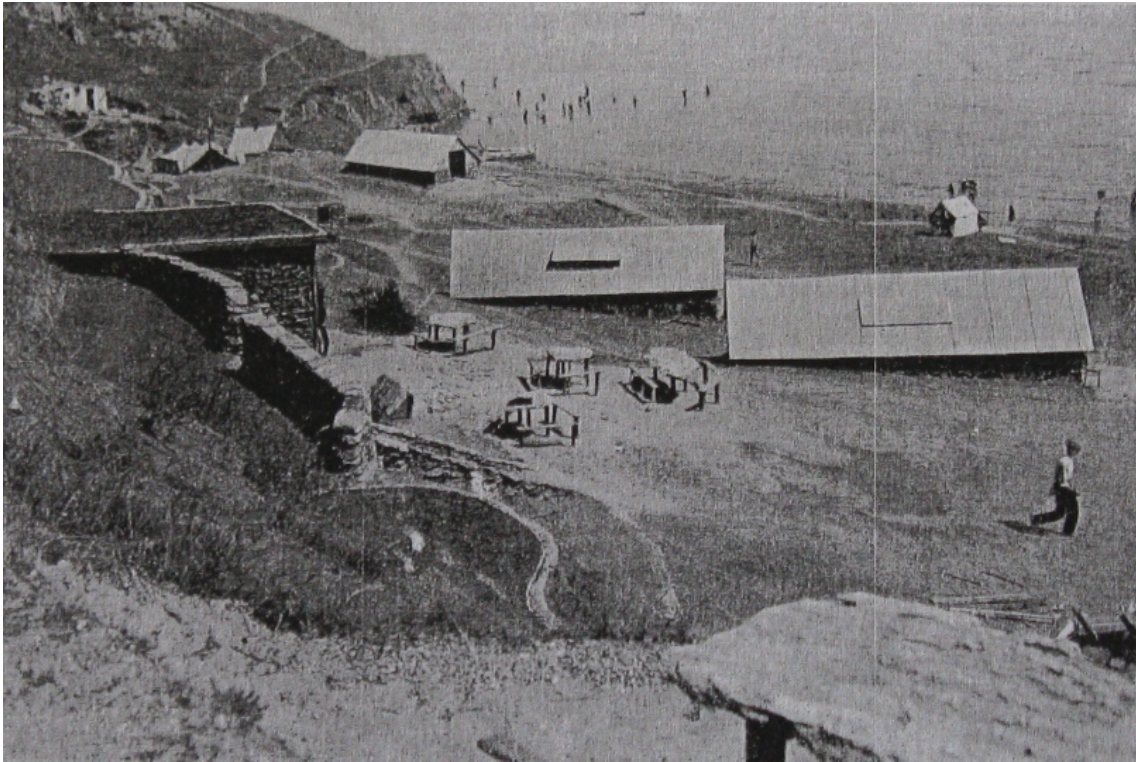
³² ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 111-112.

³³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 290.

³⁴ Săndulescu, "Revolutionizing Romania from the Right," 153-158.

³⁵ Păun, *Un soldat pe baricada*, 118.

buildings, kitchens, cellars, roads, wells, drainage canals, flower gardens, picnic tables, and a hen house.³⁶



*Figure 34: Buildings at the Carmen Sylva work camp.*³⁷

A policeman observing the camp in 1936 wrote:

The wake up call sounds at 6 am, after which Codreanu receives the [morning] report; orders are given to break ranks and Legionaries begin their activities. Some do manual labor, other military training, continuing until 11:30 when it is time for [another] report and for lunch. Military training takes place in the morning three times a week. ... Manual labor and other theoretical instruction continues on the other days, ending in the evening with a report in front of Zelea

³⁶ Haynes, "Work Camps," 959.

³⁷ Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 40.

in irreproachable dress and discipline. From time to time a national celebration is held, which is attended by crowds of tourists from the resort.³⁸

Military training appears to have been a common feature of work camps.³⁹ Legionaries building a road up to the Arnota Monastery in Vâlcea county in 1935 and 1936 deposited firearms at the Monastery and practiced target shooting during the camp.⁴⁰ At the Carmen Sylva work camp in 1936, one Legionary shot himself in the arm.⁴¹ Photographs from Carmen Sylva also show Legionaries doing morning exercises on the beach and shooting bows and arrows.



*Figures 35 and 36: Shooting arrows (left) and gymnastics (right) at the Carmen Sylva camp.*⁴²

Work camps provided opportunities for people living nearby to contribute to Legionary projects. Women cooked food for the camp, which at Carmen Sylva was supplied by Legionary groups from fourteen different cities.⁴³ Local peasants also provided food for the Legionaries.⁴⁴

³⁸ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 181-182. Cf. The more detailed programs given in George Macrin, "O nouă școală românească: taberele de muncă," *Însemnări sociologice*, 1/4 (1935): 19, and Ion Turcan, "Tabere și șantiere," *Însemnări sociologice*, 2/9 (1936): 12-13.

³⁹ Legionaries also practiced target shooting when they met on other occasions. I. C. Crișan, "Amintiri despre Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 59; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 13, f. 68.

⁴⁰ CNSAS, Fond Roth Ion, I.260639, vol. 1, f. 302.

⁴¹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 4-5.

⁴² Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 33.

⁴³ Marin, *Poveste de dincolo* 124; CNSAS, Fond Demestrescu Radu, Dosar I.184933, vol. 1, f. 189; Codreanu, *Circulări*, 44-45.

Some of the food at Carmen Sylva was sold to tourists at low prices, encouraging more people to visit the camp and see what the Legionaries had achieved.⁴⁵ Sales of food and donations from visitors to the Carmen Sylva camp totaled 73,000 lei in 1935 alone.⁴⁶ How much food was available at Legionary camps varied considerably, and sometimes having anything to eat at all seemed miraculous to those who were there. Writing about the work camp at Nicorești in Tecuci county during 1935, Vasile Popa claimed that “just when our provisions were running out, God did not abandon us, but someone with a good heart would come and place their gift and their soul on our poor camp table.”⁴⁷ According to Popa, peasants from nearby villages came during the night, when gendarmes would not see them, offering flour, chicken, beans, potatoes, cheese, and other food to the Legionaries so that they could keep working. Local peasants often helped with the construction work as well.⁴⁸ Occasionally unemployed tradesmen found paid employment on Legionary worksites, but this was rare.⁴⁹ In Bistrița, the local council was so supportive of the Legionaries that it donated land in a local park for them to raise a cross (*troița*).⁵⁰

Local residents were not always friendly to the Legionaries. In 1934 Codreanu had trouble buying land to build on because owners of a nearby tourist resort worried that the presence of too many Legionaries in the region would hurt tourism.⁵¹ Two years later, the newspaper *Libertatea* recounted two stories of local vandals cutting down wooden memorial crosses erected by Legionaries. The vandals were apprehended in one of these instances, and the

⁴⁴ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 4/1936, f. 105-107.

⁴⁵ Păun, *Un soldat pe baricada*, 138-139.

⁴⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 443-444.

⁴⁷ Vasile Popa, “Tabără din Nicorești,” *Brațul de fier*, 1/7 (Dec 1935): 3.

⁴⁸ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 151-152.

⁴⁹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 252/1939, f. 318-319; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 12, f. 215.

⁵⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 230.

⁵¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 2, f. 195.

criminal was identified as the son of the National Liberal mayor in the village.⁵² Most accounts of Legionary camps suggest that visitors and locals welcomed the work that the Legionaries were doing, however, and the outcry against the vandalism of Legionary memorials reported by *Libertatea* also suggests that the majority of people in the village liked having the crosses there.

Taking advantage of their nation-wide organization, Legionaries were able to implicate non-Legionaries from the other side of the country in their work camps. In 1936, Legionaries invited fifty children aged between 7 and 15 years old from mining families to the Carmen Sylva camp, where female students fed and cared for them all summer.⁵³ At the Green House in Bucharest, the Legionaries Nicoleta Nicolescu and Bartolomeu Livezeanu “adopted” seventy orphans. Nicolescu put them in a Legionary group home and told them that “from now on, I am your mother.”⁵⁴ When they were old enough, these children were given jobs in the Legionary restaurants and co-operatives.



*Figure 37: Children playing at the Carmen Sylva work camp.*⁵⁵

⁵² “Sfinte cruci batjocorite și tăiate cu șecura de către slujitorii Diavolului,” *Libertatea*, 33/3 (26 Apr 1936): 4.

⁵³ CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 251-252; ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 4-5.

⁵⁴ Tudor, *Un an lângă Căpitan*, 24, 45-47; Codreanu, *Circulări*, 141.

⁵⁵ “Goană voinicească pe malul mării,” *Libertatea*, 33/23 (13 Sept 1937): 1.

Legionaries also mixed with outsiders through baptisms and weddings at the summer camps. Codreanu acted as godfather for a child baptized at the Carmen Sylva work camp in August 1936. The child was named Mihai, presumably in honor of the Legion of the Archangel Michael [Romanian: *Arhanghelul Mihail*].⁵⁶ General Cantacuzino also acted as godfather for the children of poor peasants who were baptized at various Legionary camps in rural areas.⁵⁷ Weddings also took place at work camps, away from the couple's natal homes but with their Legionary friends in attendance.⁵⁸ Legionaries saw such occasions not only as a way to deepen ties within the community but also as opportunities for propaganda.⁵⁹ Historians of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy have often noted that fascism attempted to substitute the state for the family, demanding the primary loyalty of individuals, taking responsibility for education and nurture and becoming the basic unit to which women were subordinated.⁶⁰ It is tempting to read these weddings as an example of the party overwhelming family ties, but that would be to misunderstand the importance of nuclear families to the Legionary movement. Legionaries recruited heavily amongst their own family members, and they relied on their families for material support during difficult times. The Legion's success lay in its ability to gain access to pre-existing groups such as kinship networks, affirming them and inscribing them as apparently natural elements of the movement. Instead of replacing the family with the party, Legionaries made the family fascist.

⁵⁶ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 4-5.

⁵⁷ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 218-237.

⁵⁸ Polihroniade, *Tabară de muncă*, 51; Coman, *Amintiri Legionare*, vol. 4, in AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 4/1980, f. 100.

⁵⁹ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 12, f. 19.

⁶⁰ Richard Evans, "German Women and the Triumph of Hitler," *The Journal of Modern History*, 48/1 (1976): 148-150; Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi politics* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987) 175-220; Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women. Italy, 1922 – 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 77-115.

As the Legion grew, it generated its own social world; incorporating important ritual occasions such as weddings, providing leisure activities, and inventing its own songs and folklore. Codreanu issued circulars during 1936 dictating how his followers would spend their vacation time.⁶¹ Most were expected to attend work camps for substantial periods, and to spend the rest of their time doing propaganda for the Legion. One police report from August 1936 confirmed that “almost all of the Aromanian students in the capital are away at colonies and work camps in diverse locations.”⁶² The same could probably have been said for most Legionary students that summer. Work camps such as Carmen Sylva were carefully organized, requiring participants to register beforehand, while others were ad hoc projects organized by Legionaries in their local areas.⁶³ Some travelled for long distances to attend camps. In 1936 three Legionaries from Orhei county marched 300 miles over eight days in order to attend the camp at Carmen Sylva.⁶⁴

In addition to their own camps, Legionaries took part in ultra-nationalist camps in Poland during 1935 and 1936. Legionaries first formed ties with Polish ultra-nationalists in 1934, when the UNSCR’s president, Traian Cotigă, took advantage of a new wave of anti-Semitism in Polish universities to develop a closer relationship with right-wing student circles there, publishing a joint Polish-Romanian Bulletin with their Polish counterparts and encouraging student exchanges.⁶⁵ In 1935 Romanian students celebrated seventeen years of Polish independence with a meeting led by the Legionary Petre P. Panaitescu, who gave a history describing cordial

⁶¹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 68, 92.

⁶² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 252.

⁶³ On the organization of Carmen Sylva, see CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 276. For much smaller projects, see “O fântână legionară,” *Libertatea*, 33/2 (12 Apr 1936): 1; ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 92, 151.

⁶⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 65-67.

⁶⁵ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 61.

relationship between the two countries over several centuries.⁶⁶ Romanian students participating in summer camps in Poland in 1935 caused trouble and took part in ultra-nationalist rioting, but the Poles blamed Cuzist students and invited the Legionaries to return the following year. When Polish Scouts organized an international gathering known as a Jamboree several months later, they specifically invited Legionary youth as well as Romanian Scouts.⁶⁷ The Poles offered Romanian students 200 places in their physical education summer courses in 1936, and invited them on ski trips, both free of charge.⁶⁸ Some Legionary students took advantage of the Poles' hospitality, further cementing social relationships between young ultra-nationalists from both countries.⁶⁹

Although Legionaries often spoke about the charitable nature of their work camps, many building projects actually helped Legionaries more than anyone else. The house at Rarău, for example, was destined for the use of Legionaries alone; as was the Green House in Bucharest. Legionaries rebuilt the house of George Cosma in the village of Gura Humorului (Suceava county) after it had burnt down, but they did so because they used the house for Legionary meetings.⁷⁰ Similarly, many of the crosses or memorials raised during summer camps were to honor Legionary martyrs rather than to help the local population.⁷¹ Legionaries named many of the fountains that they erected after heroes of the movement.⁷² The photo below shows a fountain built by Legionaries at Ciclova (Caraș-Severin county) with an icon of the Archangel Michael

⁶⁶ CNSAS, Fond Panaitescu Petre, Dosar I.234303, vol. 2, f. 221.

⁶⁷ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 107/1935, f. 108,

⁶⁸ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 150-154.

⁶⁹ CNSAS, Fond Lupeș Ioan, P. 000160, vol. 3, f. 186-190; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 46/1936, f. 206-207, 226.

⁷⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, 290.

⁷¹ CNSAS, Fond Mille Lefter, I.257488, f. 32; CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, I.234687, vol. 3, f. 56-57; Polihroniade, *Tabară de muncă*, 47, 60.

⁷² Polihroniade, *Tabară de muncă*, 16, 53.

directly above the water source, so that everyone who drew water from it would remember that this was a *Legionary* fountain.



*Figure 38: Blessing the fountain at Ciclova.*⁷³

Legionaries considered these symbols an extremely important part of the building process. The Legionary Nicu Iancu tells an illuminating story in his memoirs about a fountain in the village of Sadu, in Sibiu county. He says that the Legionaries placed an icon of the Archangel Michael on the fountain once they had finished building it, but that gendarmes confiscated the icon because it was a political symbol. Miraculously, the fountain immediately dried up. The water did not begin to flow again until gendarmes replaced the icon at the insistent requests of the villagers.⁷⁴ Iancu's story suggests that the building project became worthless the moment an icon representing the Legion was removed. Legionary work camps made valuable contributions to

⁷³ Polihroniade, *Tabară de muncă*, 53.

⁷⁴ Iancu, *Sub steagul*, 131-133.

many villages, but their main purpose was to celebrate the Legion itself. From the ideological discussions of an evening to the symbols erected by Legionaries, the publicity and educational value of the camps far outweighed any charitable goals that might have been achieved.⁷⁵

11.2 LEGIONARY BUSINESSES

Alongside the work camps, Legionaries established restaurants, cooperatives, and specialty shops. The businessman Constantin Cristescu (1900-) joined the Legion because he was impressed by these businesses, which he says “aimed at the complete socialization [of Legionaries] so as to give the oppressed a better standard of living, and to create honest men.”⁷⁶

The most common of these businesses were cooperatives, where customers could buy a wide variety of goods at low prices. The first cooperative was established next to the Legionary headquarters on Gutenberg Street in Bucharest in September 1935.⁷⁷ Everything was as cheap as possible to attract customers and to suggest that prices at Jewish-owned shops were unfairly inflated.⁷⁸ When Legionaries held a special exhibition of their fruit in November 1937, they claimed that they paid higher prices for fruit to the producers and sold it for less than their competitors.⁷⁹ Codreanu explained, “Legionary commerce means a new phase in the history of commerce, which has been corrupted by the Jewish spirit of dishonesty: it is called Christian commerce and is based on love for our fellow human beings, not on stealing from them; a commerce based on honor.”⁸⁰ Codreanu encouraged Legionaries to donate money and to volunteer at Legionary businesses by speaking about self-improvement and making sacrifices for

⁷⁵ Legionaries themselves saw education as the primary goal of their work camps. Macrin, “O nouă școală,” 19; Turcan, “Tabere și șantiere,” 10, 17.

⁷⁶ CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 1, f. 207-208.

⁷⁷ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 54-57, 88.

⁷⁸ The prices of goods sold at one cooperative are listed in CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 242.

⁷⁹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 101.

⁸⁰ “Căpitanul despre economia legionară,” *Cuvântul*, 17/1 (14 Oct 1940).

the nation, but he used the language of economic anti-Semitism when promoting the importance of Legionary commerce. He said, “Victory Road and Lipsani Street, places of glory in the history of Romanian business, are today in the hands of Yids. There are probably only one or two Romanian shops left. ... The Legionary comes to the aid of Romanian business once again. The Legionary has everything necessary for victory, and he will defeat Yid business, crowning Romanian business in this country.”⁸¹ Legionaries expanded into the timber industry, establishing a lumber yard in Bucharest right next to two existing yards owned by Jews to drive them out of business. They also bought textiles from a factory in Sibiu and sold them in a quarter of Bucharest known for its Jewish-owned textile shops.⁸² Legionary kiosks sold newspapers, magazines, and cigarettes, making a quick profit for the movement while also helping distribute Legionary propaganda.⁸³ Some Legionaries leaders frowned on smoking as an immoral habit, but apparently this did not prevent them selling cigarettes.⁸⁴ Legionaries encouraged Romanians to buy from them as a patriotic duty, suggesting that “otherwise your money pays for the foreigner’s bread and for his fight against your nation.”⁸⁵

Alongside cooperatives, kiosks, and other businesses, Legionaries established their own restaurants. The canteen at the Carmen Sylva work camp provided a model for Legionary restaurants, which gradually spread throughout the country. The first was established next to the Legionary cooperative on Gutenberg Street in Bucharest.⁸⁶ The walls were covered with pictures of Codreanu, Ion Moța, and Vasile Marin, and food was served by female Legionary students.⁸⁷ Working at the restaurant took a lot of free time from volunteers. One Legionary, Maria Iordache

⁸¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 16.

⁸² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 187-188.

⁸³ Roth Jelescu, *Și cerul plângea*, 260; Costea, *Presă legionară*, 30-31.

⁸⁴ Valeriu Anania, *Memorii* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2008), 17; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 72-74.

⁸⁵ Codranu, *Circulări*, 88.

⁸⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 9; Codreanu, *Circulări*, 58-61.

⁸⁷ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 291.

(1914-1963), told Securitate interrogators in 1955 that when she volunteered at a Legionary restaurant during the mid-1930s, “I worked in the kitchen at night together with lots of other female students, and during the day I went to classes.”⁸⁸ Advertisements emphasized that different social groups mixed in the restaurants, and that all of the staff were unpaid volunteers.⁸⁹ Former Legionaries recalled the surprise on customers’ faces when they discovered that they were being served their soup by lawyers who refused to accept tips.⁹⁰ Serving lower class customers must have been equally uncomfortable for some of the lawyers, making this a powerful exercise for molding Legionary character.

In August 1937, Codreanu announced that “we will organize canteens (*cooperative de consum*) next to every county office of the Everything for the Fatherland Party; we will open a wine cellar in Bucharest on Griviței Road, and a Legionary restaurant in Sinaia.”⁹¹ When it opened two months later, the “wine cellar” included a restaurant, a shop selling tea, coffee, and spices, and a bar (*bodegă*).⁹² Some of these restaurants were deliberately located near factories in order to attract workers to the movement.⁹³ A restaurant next to the Grivița factory in Bucharest ran at a 50% loss because its propaganda value was more important than any profits it might make.⁹⁴ Legionaries did not receive special discounts, but the prices were already quite affordable.⁹⁵ However successful the Legion’s businesses and restaurants were, their overwhelming purposes were to serve as schools for creating “new men” and as propaganda

⁸⁸ CNSAS, Fond Lupeș Ioan, P.000160, vol. 3, f. 186-195, 244.

⁸⁹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 254/1937, f. 5.

⁹⁰ Tudor, *Un an lângă Căpitan*, 33-37.

⁹¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 209.

⁹² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 172.

⁹³ Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 225-226.

⁹⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 187-188.

⁹⁵ Interview with Dumitru Funda (1 Apr 1999), in Conovici, Iliescu, and Silivestru, *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 93-95. Restaurant prices can be found in ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 254/1937, f. 5.

tools celebrating Romanian aptitude while mocking the high prices charged by Jewish merchants.

11.3 ELECTORAL SUCCESS

The elections overshadowed Legionary activism for most of 1937. In March, the central leadership appealed to rural priests and schoolteachers in particular, asking them to organize marches, singing, and rallies in their villages.⁹⁶ The Legionary Mihail Sturdza (1886-1980) writes that Legionaries marched into villages during this campaign “in formation, with manly steps,” and then knelt down and prayed in front of the church before making speeches so that the peasants could see their love for God and country.⁹⁷ Electoral meetings in regional capitals involved speeches by local and national representatives, but also frequent singing of Legionary hymns that would unite the crowd around the Legion’s cause.⁹⁸ State functionaries and railways workers featured prominently as propagandists because their free rail passes allowed them to travel extensively.⁹⁹ Codreanu deliberately appointed Legionary candidates to counties where they had no friends or relatives. Ion Roth, for example, grew up in Horeza (Vâlcea county) and studied in Cluj, but he was put in charge of Tighina county, on the other side of the country.¹⁰⁰ Codreanu explained: “I want to destroy the mentality that a county is the political property of a county chief, in which he invests money so as to recuperate it at a later date through travel expenses, backroom deals, and business arrangements.”¹⁰¹ The government banned Legionary marches on 19 September 1937, and this time Codreanu ordered his followers to submit so that

⁹⁶ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f. 95.

⁹⁷ Mihail Sturdza, *România și sfârșitul Europei: amintiri din țara pierdută* (Paris: Fronde, 1994) 124.

⁹⁸ “Întâlnirea partidului ‘Totul pentru țara’ la Brașov,” *Ardealul*, (14 Dec 1937).

⁹⁹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 12, f. 162.

¹⁰⁰ CNSAS, Fond Roth Ion, I.260633, f. 1.

¹⁰¹ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 355.

the Romanian people could see “the spirit of legality and righteousness that animates them.”¹⁰²

Another of the Legion’s leaders, Gheorghe Clime, specified that instead of marching in formation, Legionaries should “crowd together” when entering a village so that no-one could start a fight with individuals on the peripheries of the group.¹⁰³ In place of marches, Ion Victor Vojen organized teams of Legionaries to ride through Alba, Argeş, and Maramureş counties on motorbikes spreading the Legion’s message.¹⁰⁴

A police report describing Legionary meetings in three counties on 26 September 1937 shows how careful Legionaries now were when doing propaganda. Bănică Dobre (1908-1939) was a candidate for the Everything for the Fatherland Party in Muscel county, but on 26 September he was in the neighboring county of Argeş, where all he did was attend a church service together with 100-120 Legionaries from the village of Valea Danului. Elsewhere in Argeş county a group of Legionaries that included twenty-one nest leaders followed the river north from Boreşti towards Valea Danului hoping to rendezvous with Dobre’s group. To the southeast, roughly 70-80 Legionaries met in the village of Teiu before spreading out in small groups to distribute flyers through neighboring communities. In the city of Sântana, in Arad county, over 3,000 Legionaries gathered for a rally that began with a service in an Orthodox Church. Alexandru Cantacuzino, a candidate in Arad county, arrived and speeches were planned but the authorities stepped in and prevented Legionary propagandists from speaking. Ion Zelea Codreanu ran in Covurlui county in 1937, and on 26 September he held a meeting in the garden of one of his supporters in the village of Găneşti.¹⁰⁵ None of these meetings involved violent clashes with police, no-one incited attacks on Jews, and none of the Legionaries dressed up as

¹⁰² Codreanu, *Circulări*, 175-178.

¹⁰³ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 3, f. 482.

¹⁰⁴ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Dosar P.007215, vol. 2, f. 90-91.

¹⁰⁵ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 863, f. 27-28. For a list of which Legionaries ran in which counties, see USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 859, f. 189-204.

haiduci. Isolated individuals were arrested for wearing Legionary uniforms during 1937, but Codreanu had forbidden Legionaries to wear them in public, and clothing was rarely an issue during this election campaign.¹⁰⁶

Legionaries exploited existing social networks during these elections. On 10 October 1937 they held a ball in Bucharest as a way to publicize the movement through a festive occasion.¹⁰⁷ That month student leaders also organized a propaganda campaign aimed at students from Ardeal who were living in Bucharest. Students generally identified strongly with the region that they had come from, and this campaign hoped to use their region-based relationships to promote the Legion.¹⁰⁸ Some propagandists focused specifically on factory workers, and the Legion produced flyers picturing workers carrying their tools while doing a Legionary salute.¹⁰⁹ Once the elections were over the movement's leadership praised Legionary workers for their contribution to the campaign, which was apparently the most significant of any section within the Legion.¹¹⁰

Individual testimonies suggest that sometimes the most effective propaganda took place not during large public rallies, but from person to person. Chirilă Ciuntu, for example, writes in his memoirs that he became a Legionary because of one-on-one testimony by a propagandist during 1933.¹¹¹ Similar accounts by former Legionaries mention that it was discussions with family and friends that convinced them to join the Legion.¹¹² For others, such as the veterinarian

¹⁰⁶ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 863, f. 95.

¹⁰⁷ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 863, f. 76.

¹⁰⁸ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 863, f. 50.

¹⁰⁹ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 863, f. 7.

¹¹⁰ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Dosar P.007215, vol. 2, f. 87, 90-91.

¹¹¹ Chirilă Ciuntu, *Din Bucovina pe Oder (amintirile unui legionar)* (Constanța: Metafora, 2004) 10.

¹¹² Ion Călvărășan, "Omul Nou," in Stănescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 36-48; Mircea Dumitriu, "Istorie comentată a mișcării legionare, 1927-1999," in Stănescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 62-82; N. S. Govora, "Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," in Stănescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 89-116; Ion Mânzatu, "Imnul tinereții legionare," in Stănescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 165-174; Păun, *Un soldat*; Sofia Cristescu Dinescu, "Cetățui sfărâmate," in Chioreanu

Tudor Cicală or the Cuzist medical student Șerban Milcoveanu (1911-2009), a personal meeting with Codreanu convinced them to join.¹¹³ A declaration given to the *Securitate* by the publican Dumitru Ionescu in 1948 said that he became a Legionary at the time of the 1937 elections when a lawyer named Vasile Teodorescu from the nearby village of Movilița came to Roșiori, a village in Ilfov county where Ionescu lived. A number of parties had held electoral rallies in Roșiori earlier in the year, but when the Legionaries arrived Ionescu recognized Teodorescu. Ionescu said that his late father had been a friend of the National Peasantist politician Dr. Nicolae Lupu and that he also voted PNT for the same reason. Teodorescu told him that the PNT had no chance of winning the upcoming elections, and pointed out that the Legion had prominent supporters in a number of villages in the area. Convinced, Ionescu joined a Legionary nest.¹¹⁴

Rules governing propaganda tightened as the day of the elections approached. No party was allowed to enlist minors or students in its campaign, marching in paramilitary formation was forbidden, political uniforms were banned, guns were not allowed near voting booths, and pubs were closed for several days before and after the elections.¹¹⁵ Several days before voting took place, police in Cluj county searched for hidden stockpiles of wine that they believed might be used to bribe voters.¹¹⁶ But these measures did not prevent electoral violence, which was subdued but not eradicated during these elections. A former LANC senator, Mr. Mumuianu, was attacked by peasants while campaigning. They broke his bones and left him unconscious in a ditch. A former PNT senator, the Mathematics professor Cezar Spineanu, was stabbed during a visit to another village. The Legion's office in Constanța was destroyed by vandals and the

ed., *Lacrima prigoanei*, 7-16; Horia Sima, "Cum am intrat în Legiune," in Faust Brădescu ed., *Mărturii despre legiune* Rio de Janeiro: Editura Dacia, 1967) 165-181.

¹¹³ Tudor Cicală, "Pe drumul tău, Căpitane!" in Stănescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 49-50; Șerban Milcoveanu, "Cum l-am cunoscut și ce-am înțeles de la Corneliu Z. Codreanu (1899-1938)," in Stănescu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, 179.

¹¹⁴ CNSAS, Fond Manu Gheorghe, Dosar I.160161, vol. 3, f. 64-76.

¹¹⁵ AN – Cluj, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție, Dosar 675/1937, f. 6, 21, 24, 78.

¹¹⁶ AN – Cluj, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție, Dosar 675/1937, f. 40.

building's owner, Mr. Slăvescu, was badly beaten. In Bucharest a group of Legionaries fought with council workers who were tearing down Legionary propaganda posters. One Legionary and four of the council workers were taken to hospital.¹¹⁷ By and large Legionaries followed Codreanu's orders to avoid conflict, but when the mayor of Moreni, in Prahova county, slapped the Legionary Traian Ioniță, Codreanu himself demanded that his followers "demand satisfaction and wash the offense away as quickly as possible," even if this meant losing the elections.¹¹⁸

One factor that significantly reduced the violence surrounding the Legion was an electoral pact signed by Codreanu and the National Peasantist politician Iuliu Maniu on 26 November 1937. Rebecca Haynes has shown that Codreanu had approached both Maniu and Gheorghe Brătianu, a leader of a dissident faction of the National Liberal Party, in April 1937 to discuss forming a united front against King Carol. Maniu's response was positive but noncommittal, while Brătianu strongly supported the idea. In November, Maniu publically offered to form an electoral alliance with Codreanu and Brătianu, and both accepted.¹¹⁹ The pact scandalized Legionaries, National Peasantists, and National Liberals alike, but their leaders remained firm.¹²⁰ All three parties ran independent candidates and did not endorse each other's policies, but they did commit to ensuring free elections with minimal fraud or violence. This pact significantly reduced the violence that Legionaries faced – or caused – during the election campaign, though Legionaries still clashed with Cuzist militants associated with the PNC.¹²¹ The pact did not erase the Legion's problems completely, however. On 11 December members of Gheorghe Tătărescu's National Liberal Party, supported by the PNC's Istrate Micescu,

¹¹⁷ "Incidente electorale," *Ardealul* (19 Dec 1937).

¹¹⁸ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 207.

¹¹⁹ Haynes, "Reluctant Allies?" 114-117.

¹²⁰ In the days which followed Codreanu repeatedly defended the pact in his circulars and press releases. Codreanu, *Circulări*, 208-216.

¹²¹ Paul A. Shapiro, "Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: The National Christian Party in Power, December 1937-February 1938," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 8/1 (1974): 56.

successfully contested the legality of any list that included Legionaries who had fought in the Spanish Civil War. They said that the Legionaries were no longer Romanian citizens because they had fought under a foreign flag. This last-minute challenge disqualified the Legion from contesting eighteen counties.¹²²

The elections of 1937 produced a hung parliament. For the first time in Romanian history, the incumbent party failed to win the election. Gheorghe Tătărescu's governing coalition, which included the National Liberal Party, the Romanian Front, Nicolae Iorga's party, the Germans, and the Ruthenians, won only 35.92 percent of the votes. Iuliu Maniu's National Peasant Party won 20.40 percent and Codreanu's Everything for the Fatherland Party won 15.58 percent.¹²³ The government had no clear majority, and even if Maniu and Codreanu had formed a coalition, together they did not outnumber the National Liberals. With Tătărescu's government obviously lacking public support, and disinclined to give power to either Maniu or Codreanu, the king asked the fourth largest party – the PNC led by A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga, which won 9.15 percent of the votes – to form a cabinet comprised of five PNC deputies, three members of the PNT, and two independents, including Istrate Micescu as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and a committed enemy of the Legion, Armand Călinescu (1893-1939), as the Minister of the Interior. This alliance was shaky from the beginning, and Cuzist supporters assaulted one of Călinescu's appointees in the courtyard of the Ministry of the Interior to stop him taking his oath of office.¹²⁴

¹²² Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 366-367; Codreanu, *Circulări*, 222.

¹²³ C. Enescu, "Semnificația alegerilor din Decembrie 1937 în evoluția politică a neamului românesc," *Sociologie românească*, 2/11-12 (1937): 521.

¹²⁴ Shapiro, "Prelude to Dictatorship," 66-72.

11.4 ROYAL DICTATORSHIP

The new Goga-Cuza government immediately began instituting anti-Semitic measures. It appointed commissars to oversee businesses owned by non-Romanians; revoked Jews' rights to sell alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes, matches, and other goods that fell under a state monopoly; banned Jewish newspapers; dictated that only ethnic Romanians were allowed to work as journalists; closed down Jewish publishing houses, cinemas, and theaters; and began the process of taking citizenship away from Jews. These steps paralyzed the economy, and boosted fears among Romania's mostly pro-French allies that Cuza and Goga were planning an alliance with Nazi Germany.¹²⁵ Codreanu was not impressed by such anti-Semitic legislation, and reminded the Legion of how Călinescu and the PNC had attacked them in the past.¹²⁶ The PNC needed a parliamentary majority to govern, so Goga announced a new round of elections that were scheduled for 3 March, 1938.

On 14 January 1938 Codreanu issued a circular ordering his Legionaries to abstain from slander or negative comments about their electoral opponents, and to "maintain an attitude of the greatest dignity."¹²⁷ At the same time, he arranged for Legionaries to draw up black lists of policemen and political opponents who tried to interfere with Legionary propaganda. County chiefs were then supposed to inform these individuals that they would "be sanctioned according to the gravity of their actions once the Legion is victorious."¹²⁸ Fighting between Legionaries, Cuzists, and the *Siguranța* – now under the control of Armand Călinescu, – began even before the election campaign opened on 6 February. Within five days two Legionaries had been killed,

¹²⁵ Ibid., 72-82; Ancel, *Economic Destruction*, 38-44.

¹²⁶ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 221-224.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 225-226.

¹²⁸ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f. 454.

52 injured, and 450 arrested.¹²⁹ With escalating violence, relations with Romania's allies at breaking point, and attempts at reconciliation amongst the major political parties meeting with repeated failure, King Carol II abolished the parliamentary system on 10 February 1938.¹³⁰

Carol abolished the constitution of 1923 and banned all political parties. He appointed the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Miron Cristea (1868-1939) as his Prime Minister with Armand Călinescu remaining as Minister of the Interior. Carol continued introducing new anti-Semitic legislation but reaffirmed his commitment to a pro-French orientation in foreign policy.¹³¹ Carol's move signaled the end of the Legion as an effective social movement. His government was carrying out the anti-Semitic measures that ultra-nationalists had demanded for decades, he had abolished Freemasonry at the beginning of 1937, and had ostensibly ended "politicianism" by dissolving parliament and prohibiting political parties. On 21 February 1938, Codreanu issued a circular disbanding the Legion on the grounds that it could no longer legally engage in politics and did not intend to stage a coup d'état: "We wait for our victory to come through the completion, in the nation's soul, of a process of human perfection," he said. "We will not use [violent] means [to gain power] because our historical mission and responsibility is too deeply rooted in the consciousness of today's youth to allow thoughtless actions that would transform Romania into a bloodied Spain."¹³²

Even though Codreanu was ultimately forced to dissolve the Legion in February 1938, the movement's growth during the mid-1930s was remarkable. Contemporaries consistently attributed this success to the publicity created by the Legion's work camps, businesses, and marches rather than to the assassination attempts and gang violence practiced by some members.

¹²⁹ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 250-251.

¹³⁰ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 335-339; Shapiro, "Prelude to Dictatorship," 82-85.

¹³¹ Ancel, *Economic Destruction*, 48-68.

¹³² Codreanu, *Circulări*, 254-257.

Codreanu's new commitment to peaceful propaganda translated the goal of creating "new men" into practical Legionary activities. Ideology and practice coincided in the work camps and businesses, presenting the Legion as a movement that did what it said that it would do and which had the country's best interests at heart.

According to a contemporary analysis of the election results of 1937, the Legion's strongest support came from regions where frustration with political corruption was high. In a 1937 article in the respected sociological journal *Sociologie românească* (*Romanian Sociology*, 1936-1942), Constantin Enescu noted that Codreanu's Everything for the Fatherland Party (*Partidul Totul pentru Țară*, 1934-1938) won the majority of votes in Arad, Neamț, and Covurlui counties during the December 1937 elections.¹³³ He commented,

The victories in these counties, which have few social or economic traits in common (Arad is industrial, Neamț is agricultural, and Covurlui is commercially oriented), show that something other than economic grievances attracted voters to this party. Even less anti-Semitism. The counties that have lots of Jews and where the Romanians are anti-Semites voted for the National Christian Party [led by A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga]. The Everything for the Fatherland Party was strong in ethnically Romanian counties where dissatisfaction is of a different sort: against the injustices, dishonest dealings, and nepotism that characterize our political life.¹³⁴

¹³³ Enescu was not a Legionary and he did not make his own politics clear in this article. He had been a regular speaker at the Criterion symposium during the early 1930s, and was critical of Fascism when the Criterionists discussed it in November 1932, arguing that the social goals of Italian Fascism did not justify Mussolini's dictatorial means. Bejan, "The Criterion Association," 124-125.

¹³⁴ C. Enescu, "Semnificația alegerilor din Decembrie 1937 în evoluția politică a neamului românesc," *Sociologie românească*, 2/11-12 (1937): 512-526.

It is impossible to measure popular dissatisfaction, and Enescu apparently appealed to common knowledge when he identified Arad, Neamț, and Covurlui as counties that were particularly upset about politicianism. But his conclusion is significant in that it shows that issues such as anti-Semitism, which had been a core Legionary platform in the late-1920s, no longer attracted votes for the Legion. Instead, work camps and businesses that proclaimed the Legion's commitment to replacing politicianism and corruption with honest labor became central to Legionary propaganda and rapidly increased the size of the movement.

PART III – IDEAL FASCISTS

12.0 ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING

In a report to Corneliu Zelea Codreanu dated 5 January 1935, an anonymous nest leader described the other inhabitants of his village. “Many defects,” he wrote. “Excitable, but without stamina. I have not tried to convince them even for a moment; to increase their knowledge, promoting our cult, because it is impossible (they are mediocre and do not know anything outside their limited circles). ... They do not know how to forgo poker or drunkenness for us. ... They have no schooling, nor cultivation; far from it (and here I am even talking about some of the thirteen).” Despite such poor potential recruits, the writer had managed to enlist thirteen Legionaries. He was equally negative about them, commenting that “we do not have enough forests around here to build stockyards to ‘socialize’ this agrammatical lot.” The report dedicated twenty eight pages to denigrating every social group in the village. The writer called working class women “degenerates of the WORST kind,” and complained that Jews were much better businesspeople than the local Romanians. High school boys took sport to “irrational” extremes, building their muscles for only one or two years before tuberculosis or broken bones stopped them. Roughly 90 percent of the high school girls “have a disputable morality.” His conclusion was that “ABSOLUTELY ALL OF THEM must be passed through a Legionary current – I will indicate the voltage myself, CAPTAIN, when the time comes. Essentially, the only way forward is a meaningful and relentless Legionary school.”¹

A wide variety of people joined the Legion. Rich and poor, educated and illiterate, industrialists and factory workers, city dwellers and peasants; all supported the movement in different ways and with varying amounts of commitment. As the number of Legionaries grew,

¹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 109/1934, f. 4-32.

Codreanu and other leaders became increasingly strict about what they expected of their followers. Whereas most activists during the late 1920s had chosen how much time and energy they wanted to give the Legion, in the mid-1930s Codreanu began setting minimum standards and punishing Legionaries who did not fulfill them. He introduced new membership requirements, distributed awards and honorary ranks, and regulated what happened during nest meetings. County leaders ranked their nests and fortresses according to how much they gave in donations, how far they marched, and how many new members they recruited. They expelled those who fell below a certain standard. Legionaries spoke about their movement as a school for creating “new men.” Work camps, businesses, and marches were all supposed to mould Legionaries into new men, but most Legionary education took place inside nests. Here members learned oaths, songs, ideology, and rituals that they repeated on a weekly basis. How useful such an education was for cultivating morals and building character is debatable, but it certainly helped transform Legionaries into committed members of a fascist social movement.

12.1 BLOOD BROTHERHOODS, NESTS, AND FORTRESSES

For young people, Legionary education began when they joined a *Mânunchiu de Prieteni* (Cluster of Friends – literally, a “*fasci* of friends”) at the age of fourteen, and then a *Frăție de Cruce* (Blood Brotherhood) at fifteen. Codreanu and Ion Moța formed the first Blood Brotherhoods when they brought high school students to work at the brickworks at Ungheni, and these groups continued intermittently until they were reorganized in May 1935.² According to a manual written by Gheorghe Istrate, who led the Blood Brotherhoods from 1935 to 1938, the name came from two sources. First, Orthodox children baptized in the same water were called

² Istrate, *Frăția de cruce*, 9-32. Istrate’s *Frăția de cruce* was published in its current form in 1937, but the first, shorter version from May 1935 can be found in USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 861, f. 92-120.

frați de cruce (literally “brothers of the cross”). Second, *haiduci* (outlaws) who swore an oath of loyalty to one another by carving a cross into the palms of their hands called themselves *frați de cruce* (hence: blood brothers). The Legion’s Blood Brotherhoods drew on both of these ideas. Istrate described them as “new schools of heroism,” based on “the power of sacrifice and friendship.”³

Once high school students reached the age of fourteen, older students began recruiting them to join a Cluster of Friends, which was a probationary organization that students joined before being allowed to join a Blood Brotherhood. Only the best students were supposed to be recruited, and oral histories affirm that members perceived themselves to be amongst the school’s elite.⁴ In his memoirs, Valeriu Anania (1921-2011), the future Orthodox Metropolitan of Cluj, Alba, Crișana and Maramureș, writes that when he was first recruited in 1936, “conversations happened almost daily, in the playground or the corridors of the dormitories. The more specific they became, the more discreet I was expected to be. I discovered that there was a secret, conspiratorial organization that had been active in the school for some time. Only those who are destined to become future Legionaries of the Captain are called and accepted into it.”⁵ Potential recruits were told to read Codreanu’s *Pentru legionari*, and were tested on sincerity, love, will, ability to sacrifice, listening, and their ability to make friends. During the testing phase, they were expected to give 2.5 percent of their time and money to the Legion, keeping a daily record of their good deeds in a notebook.⁶ According to the negative account of the Blood Brotherhoods written by Ion Victor Vojen in a communist prison many years later, “several initiates who hoped to trap [the new recruit] ‘helped’ the chosen one in every situation: they

³ Istrate, *Frăția de cruce*, 8.

⁴ Interview with Gheorghe Ungureanu (29 July 1998) in Conovici, Iliescu, and Silivestru, *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 36-37.

⁵ Anania, *Memorii*, 11.

⁶ Istrate, *Frăția de cruce*, 32-47.

brought him into their group when playing sports, they helped him with his homework, they permanently surrounded him with counterfeit warmth and calculated friendship. Older students from the same school gave him their attention, breaking the class barriers that are so rigid amongst school students.”⁷ Sometimes Brotherhoods operated quite openly and had the support of sympathetic teachers, which would have further increased the prestige associated with becoming a Blood Brother.⁸

The probationary period lasted forty to sixty days, after which students were initiated into a Cluster of Friends. Friends held their own meetings, which were a simplified version of those expected of Blood Brothers. Here they read Legionary literature, learned to salute, gave short speeches on pre-selected themes, and learned Legionary songs. Friends also kept a notebook of their good deeds, and now began making financial contributions to the Legion. Regular attendance was required, and four unexplained absences resulted in a Friend being excluded from his Cluster.⁹ Once a student had been a Friend for at least three months and had turned fifteen years old, he could take the oath to become a Blood Brother. Before taking the oath, Friends had to pass an exam on the Brotherhood’s handbook, and find some wormwood, preferably taken from a battlefield or from near the grave of a national hero. Initiates now received a symbol indicating their rank within the Brotherhood, a flag, and were allowed to wear a green shirt for the first time.¹⁰

Blood Brothers met once a week, following a ritualized procedure that imitated the nest meetings of adult Legionaries. They began by repeating the following formula after their leader:

⁷ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Microfilm 5065, f. 219.

⁸ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 5, f. 22.

⁹ Istrate, *Frăția de cruce*, 51-93.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 96-99.

Let us pray. Let us raise our thoughts to the souls of the martyrs Moța and Marin, Stere Ciumeti, and all our other comrades who have fallen for the Legion or who died in the Legionary faith. We believe in the resurrection of a Legionary Romania and in breaking down the wall of hate and cowardice that surrounds it. I swear that I will never betray the Legion, the Captain, or my Blood Brothers.¹¹

Everyone then saluted, and the “call of the dead” took place. This involved calling out the names of dead Legionaries and collectively answering “Present!” on their behalf. Then they opened the New Testament at random and read out a few verses before chanting the Lord’s Prayer or “God is with us.” Next came a minute of silence, during which Brothers handed over their financial contributions and meditated on the Legion’s martyrs. After the moment of silence, physical instruction began, when Brothers learned military positions such as “at attention,” “at ease,” and “break ranks.” Choir practice followed instruction, and then one of the Brothers gave a speech to his colleagues. The group read a page from Codreanu’s *Pentru legionari*, and then each Brother reported on his area of responsibility – leader, secretary, treasurer – or on the activities of another Brotherhood that he had visited. Then Brothers confessed their struggles to one another, someone summarized which of the group’s previous decisions had been carried out, new decisions were made, and the meeting closed by singing a Legionary song.¹²

It is impossible to know how strictly most Brotherhoods followed this program, but memoir and oral history accounts do include a number of the elements mentioned in Istrate’s handbook.¹³ Valeriu Anania writes that although he belonged to a Brotherhood, he never took its

¹¹ Prior to 1937, the formula read “Let us turn our thoughts to God! Let us think of our Legionary brothers! Let us think about raising our country up through work and sacrifice! I will never betray the Legion, the Captain, or my Blood Brothers. So help me God.” USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 861, f. 101-102.

¹² Istrate, *Frăția de cruce*, 109-113.

¹³ Interview with Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu (9 Mar 1994), in Conovici, Iliescu, and Silivestru, *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 58-63; Anania, *Memorii*, 11-13; Monahul Moise, *Sfântul închisorilor* (Alba Iulia: Asociația Synaxis, 2007); CNSAS, Fond Lupeș Ioan, P.000160, vol. 1, f. 8-9, vol. 2, f. 262-263.

activities very seriously. He preferred smoking, running away from the boarding school, alcohol, sex, and forbidden literature to the puritanism of the Legion. He confessed his misdemeanors to his Brothers and gave himself punishments that he did not carry out.¹⁴ Anania never became a Legionary, but many Brothers did, becoming some of Codreanu's most reliable and committed followers.

Legionary instruction should also have taken place in weekly nest (*cuib*) meetings. According to Codreanu's *Cărticica șefului de cuib* (*Little Handbook for Nest Leaders*), the meeting of an adult nest followed a similar program to that of the Blood Brotherhoods. Nests had between three and thirteen members, and were run by a single leader, who was usually the founder. The leader began by greeting the group with "Comrades!" (*Camarazi*), at which signal everyone stood up and saluted. Those assembled repeated an oath after the nest leader, after which the leader passed on news and gave new orders. They read the newspaper *Pământul strămoșesc* at length, and then held "educational" discussions on political and social themes. Nests of younger Legionaries could sing together, after which the group made decisions about future activities. At the end of the meeting everyone stood up and saluted, facing east, and repeated: "I swear that I will never betray the Legion."¹⁵ There are few detailed descriptions of actual nest meetings, but those which we have conform to the formula laid out by Codreanu.¹⁶

Discussions inside nests and Brotherhoods covered issues ranging from "the Legionary woman and the modern woman" to "political and financial reform" and "the affinities between the Legionary movement and fascism."¹⁷ But the overwhelming emphasis of meetings for both high school students and adults was on rituals such as oath-taking, saluting, reporting, and

¹⁴ Anania, *Memorii*, 13.

¹⁵ Codreanu, *Cărticica*, 12-24.

¹⁶ Jelescu, *Și cerul plângea*, 58, 260; Dobre, *Crucificății*, 56; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, I.234980, f. 73.

¹⁷ Codreanu, *Cărticica*, 16-17.

singing. Rituals might not make honest men out of the Legionaries, but they helped reinforce their commitment to the movement through constant affirmations of loyalty and love.

Small women's groups, known as fortresses (*cetățui*), followed a similar pattern. According to an article from April 1933 in the Bessarabian newspaper *Garda de Fier* (*The Iron Guard*, 1933), "the organization and function of a fortress is the same as that of a nest. The purpose of a fortress is:

- a) The self-improvement of fortress members everywhere;
- b) To support the Legion in every way possible;
- c) To create and promote the morale of women;
- d) To develop and maintain an active life, the Christian traditions of our ancestors, consciousness and national solidarity among all Romanian women;
- e) To give the new Romania a new woman, a seasoned and resolute warrior."¹⁸

At first glance, the ideology of the fortresses emphasized domestic skills. Codreanu's *Cărțicica șefului de cuib* suggested women discuss "how to serve a healthier meal to the family," "housework and care of children," and "how to sew entire sets of clothing at home."¹⁹ But rather than cooking and sewing at home, members of fortresses used their talents publically, in the service of the Legion. At times during the early 1930s, fortresses took part in sewing competitions to produce legionary insignias and collected dried flowers to sell for fundraising purposes.²⁰ Even if their Legionary work required many of the same skills that their domestic duties did, it was being used for political purposes.

¹⁸ "Cum se constituie o Cetățue," *Garda de Fier* (Bessarabia) 1/3 (1 Apr 1933): 3.

¹⁹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărțicica*, 16.

²⁰ Valentin Măcrineanu, "Femei și fete române," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 4/2 (1932): 14; "Ordin către suroriile legiuni, frațiile de cruce și tinerii legionari cari nu vor putea veni la dig," *Garda Râmnicului*, 2/6 (July 1, 1933): 3.

Committed to the same ideal of creating a “new man” (*omul nou*) as male nests, Legionary women also used oath-taking, financial contributions, and discussions about self-improvement to create committed Legionaries. In a circular from 1934, Nicoleta Nicolescu, who was responsible for re-organizing all fortresses at this time, said that in their fortresses Legionary women were to listen to Codreanu’s orders, attract new members, make financial donations and write reports on their activities.²¹ A sporting student named Maria Iordache joined Nicolescu’s fortress in 1934, and according to her, the women in the fortress met weekly, paid dues, provided aid to imprisoned Legionaries and their families, visited Legionary graves, went to church, and volunteered at the legionary canteen and restaurant on Gutenberg Street in the centre of Bucharest.²² Iordache was a particularly devoted Christian, and she entered a convent at the end of the Second World War. Her own piety might explain why she puts more emphasis on religious activities than most male accounts of nest meetings, but it is not unlikely that the members of her fortress did frequently go to church together.

Individual leaders almost certainly placed varying emphases on different aspects of nest meetings, but if their meetings resembled Codreanu’s formula at all, then they could not have avoided the extensive rituals involved. Although the activities within a nest were supposed to educate “new men,” the majority of each meeting was dedicated to ritualized activities and promises to be loyal to the Legion rather than to cultivating civic virtues.

12.2 HONORS AND LEGIONARY SCHOOLS

In recognition of service to the Legion, Codreanu instituted ranks and honors for Legionaries who distinguished themselves. He distributed the first awards on 10 December 1932, making ten

²¹ Săndulescu, “Revolutionizing Romania,” 173.

²² CNSAS, Fond Lupeş Ioan, P.000160, vol. 3, f. 199.

Legionaries Commanders (*comandanți legionari*).²³ This was an honorary position and did not give the holder authority over a particular number or group of Legionaries. Over the next two years, more and more Legionaries who had collected large numbers of donations, recruited new members, or distinguished themselves in battles with the police, became Assistant Commanders (*comandanți ajutori*), Instructors (*instructori legionari*) or Assistant Instructors (*instructori ajutori*).²⁴ He also introduced medals to be given for specific achievements, such as electoral campaigning or running a restaurant. The 114 people who swore an oath to the Legion in November 1927 wore sacks around their necks filled with soil from medieval battlefields. People who donated sums of money to the movement during its first few years received a Green Cross. In 1931, White Crosses were awarded to Legionaries who displayed “faith and courage” during the electoral campaign in Neamț county, and by 1938 roughly 3,000 Legionaries had earned this medal. As of 1933, Commanders and Legionaries who had already received a White Cross could be given a Rosetta White Cross, again for having undertaken risks on behalf of the Legion. Legionaries who fought in the Spanish Civil War were awarded an insignia engraved with the word “Majadahonda,” the name of the battlefield in Spain where two important Legionaries died in 1937. And seventeen Legionaries who helped establish the first Legionary restaurant at Carmen Sylva received the Order of Legionary Commerce for their efforts.²⁵ Medals and honorary ranks made serving the Legion similar to serving in the military, which also awarded ranks and medals. Moreover, it reinforced the importance of the movement as an organization that deserved one’s allegiance rather than being simply a means to an end.

²³ Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 11, f. 32.

²⁴ CNSAS, Fond Lupeș Ioan, P. 000160, vol. 9, f. 7-17; CNSAS, Fond Popescu Lascăr, I.262478, vol. 1, f. 234; CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 1, f. 85.

²⁵ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 97.

As the Legion's membership expanded rapidly, Codreanu began to differentiate between long-standing members and new adherents. In May 1935 he ordered that, "all those who enlisted after the persecution [of 1933-1934] are not Legionaries, but members. Someone can only become a Legionary after three years of probation."²⁶ In another circular issued on the same day, he said: "Everyone who attends a [work] camp earns the right to be a Legionary."²⁷ Later instructions showed that new members had to fulfill both requirements and be recommended by two Legionaries before the organization recognized them as "Legionaries."²⁸ Despite such qualifications, police circulars and reports from interrogations never mention "probationary members." The only categories policemen knew were "Legionary" and "sympathizer," and belonging to either category could get you into trouble.

In order to indoctrinate new members, in May 1935 Codreanu sent students into rural areas with instructions to teach anyone they found "less prepared" than they were. He told them to humbly hold "schools of Legionary education," on issues such as "dress, saluting, presentation, good manners, honesty, trust in victory, respect for those who sacrificed, misunderstandings between Legionaries, how the enemy fights: slander, lies, bribery, machinations, etc."²⁹ County leaders provided basic instruction for rural nest leaders under their command, and put them in touch with seasoned Legionaries in nearby villages who could continue their training.³⁰ Two years later, Ion Victor Vojen established the first "School for Cadres and Legionary Instruction" in Bucharest. Initially this school was for nest leaders, but it

²⁶ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 42.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁸ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 19, f. 6.

²⁹ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 46-47.

³⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 68-70; CNSAS, Fond Lefter Simion, P.014745, vol. 1, f. 22; Vasile Iovin, "Momente din viața leginoară," in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 140.

was quickly expanded to include all new recruits and assistant nest leaders.³¹ Legionaries learned about the purpose of nests, Legionary doctrine, and participated in common rituals such as collective singing and oath taking.³² Schools in Bucharest met once a week, while those in rural areas gathered for a single training session which lasted three or four days.³³ In January 1938, Codreanu launched a new school, this time for “County Prefects and Mayors” whom he trained personally so that they would be ready for promotions when the Legion came to power. When setting out the conditions for enrolling in this school, he specified that “a future prefect must be married, be moral, and be financially stable, so that he is not tempted to enrich himself.”³⁴

Just as Blood Brotherhoods, nests, and fortresses did, Legionary schools focused on teaching ritual behavior and explaining Legionary ideology rather than on building character. Similarly, Legionary medals and awards were given for service to the Legion as a movement. During the period 1933 to 1938, Legionaries came to view their organization more and more as an end in itself. Their behavior suggested that being a Legionary was a praiseworthy achievement in itself, and that the most important things they could do were to recruit new members, raise more money, and fight for Codreanu.

12.3 FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Writing to inactive nests in villages surrounding the Bessarabian city of Orhei in October 1936, Alexandra Russo (1892-1941), the head of the Legion in Orhei county, chastised her Legionaries for failing to send her regular reports and financial contributions (*cotizații*). “We need contributions so that we can have an office in Orhei with Legionary newspapers,” she wrote. “If

³¹ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160181, f. 277, 279; CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Dosar P.007215, vol. 2, f. 82; Codreanu, *Cărticica*, 26-27.

³² CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160181, f. 422.

³³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 65-67, vol. 10, f. 131-132.

³⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 12, f. 116.

we want to print materials, contributions are the first sacrifice.” Several lines later, Russo explained that “the Legion must create a new man, punctual, good, and ready to sacrifice for his people and for the Legion. How can one demonstrate punctuality and sacrifice? Through meetings and reports, through financial contributions and work.”³⁵

Running a large movement cost money, so Legionaries had to sacrifice both time and money. Some would work a week or ten days and then donate their wages to the Legion. Others held fundraising balls or went door to door collecting money.³⁶ When Legionaries needed large sums of money to buy Codreanu a car or to send a team to fight in the Spanish Civil War, they issued special appeals to their members.³⁷ At one stage during 1937, the Legion borrowed money from its members – at interest rates that favored the organization rather than the lenders.³⁸ Sympathizers who could not become Legionaries because they had public service jobs that prohibited them from joining political parties could take part in a “Committee of One Hundred,” the only requirement being that they donate 100 lei per month to the Legion.³⁹ One of the most ingenious means of raising revenue was the “Battle for Scrap Metal,” which Codreanu launched in September 1937. Legionaries opened a scrap metal depot next to their headquarters on Gutenberg Street in Bucharest, and Codreanu asked Legionaries throughout Romania to collect scrap metal.⁴⁰ His circulars gave detailed instructions about which sorts of metal were the most valuable and how it should be sorted.⁴¹ Codreanu turned to children aged between 5 and 17 in

³⁵ CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 74-75.

³⁶ Roth Jelescu, *Și cerul plângea*, 261; Nicolenco, *Extrema dreaptă în Basarabia*, 93-94; CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 1, f. 85-88.

³⁷ For an appeal for money to pay for Codreanu’s car, see “Pentru automobilul Capitănelui,” *Libertatea*, 33/27 (11 Oct 1936): 3. On the campaign to raise money for the Spanish expedition, see AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 93/1936, f. 311.

³⁸ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 861, f. 34; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 13, f. 103.

³⁹ Roth Jelescu, *Și cerul plângea*, 261.

⁴⁰ CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, I.234687, vol. 1, f. 6.

⁴¹ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 169-171.

particular, offering Legionary books, photographs, and songbooks as prizes to the children who collected the most.⁴² Scrap metal sold for 3 lei per kilogram at the time, and Codreanu even began buying some from factories so that the Legion could re-sell it for a profit.⁴³ By late January 1938, Legionaries had collected 100 truckloads, which they sold for roughly 500,000 lei.⁴⁴ Scrap metal proved to be a very successful fundraiser, and Legionaries continued collecting it throughout the first half of 1938.⁴⁵

Most often, individual Legionaries donated a portion of their income on a regular basis, which is what Russo meant when she spoke about financial contributions. Amounts given varied widely. One police report mentioned that the historian Petre P. Panaitescu (1900-1967) gave 500 lei every nest meeting, but most Legionaries did not achieve anything close to this.⁴⁶ Regional leaders ranked the nests under their command according to how many meetings they held, what projects they were involved in, and how much they gave in contributions. The reports used to rank nests provide particularly useful data on how much Legionaries sacrificed in their contributions. Over the space of a month, three fortresses in the city of Târgu Neamț met three times each during February 1937, and collected 1,017 lei from the 687 women who attended meetings – an average of 1.48 lei per person.⁴⁷ That month male Legionaries in the nearby village of Zănești gave an average of 1.35 lei per person.⁴⁸ Legionaries in the capital did much better, due to the fact that salaries and the cost of living in general were much higher in

⁴² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 113-114.

⁴³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 82, vol. 13, f. 95.

⁴⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 14, f. 149.

⁴⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 8/1938, f. 2, Dosar 91/1938, f. 154.

⁴⁶ CNSAS, Fond Panaitescu Petre, Dosar I.234303, vol. 1, f. 27.

⁴⁷ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 23, f. 268-277. Târgu Neamț was industrially and commercially underdeveloped during the 1930s. It had few factories or banks, and its major industries were timber, firewood, cereals, and livestock. Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 2, 312.

⁴⁸ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 23, f. 283-285.

Bucharest than anywhere else in the country.⁴⁹ According to reports on the “Central” region of Bucharest, Legionaries there gave an average of 24.60 lei per person in December 1935 and 18.49 lei per person in January 1936.⁵⁰ As Russo suggested, these contributions were proof of an individual’s commitment to the movement, teaching virtues such as sacrificial giving, but they were also the Legion’s major source of regular income.

In addition to members’ contributions, the Legion received significant sums of money from businessmen and aristocrats. Codreanu recognized some of these donors in November 1936 by calling them “honorary members” and “protectors of the Legion.” Some of the benefactors identified by Codreanu included the Bolintineanu brothers, wholesalers from Bucharest, an industrialist named Mr. Mociornița and his son, and the director of the center-right newspaper *Universul*, Stelian Popescu.⁵¹ Other wealthy contributors formed an organization called the “Friends of the Legion.” This group was first discussed in September 1936, when a banking official named Grigore T. Coandă donated a large sum of money to defray building costs at the Green House.⁵² It took on its final form in October 1937, with Corneliu Șumuleanu, the Princess Zoe Sturza, Maria Beiu Palade, and Father Duminica Ionescu on the organizing committee.⁵³ Șumuleanu and Fr. Ionescu had been involved with the Legion since the late 1920s, while the ladies were both prominent members of Romanian high society. Among the Legion’s major benefactors were a number of engineers or industrialists. Corneliu Cassasovici (1886-1961), a chemical engineer and former National Liberal politician who made his fortune developing the Romanian textile industry, became a “friend of the Legion” in 1937.⁵⁴ The engineer Virgil

⁴⁹ N. Georgescu-Roegen, “Veniturile individuale” and “Costul vieții,” in Dumitru Gusti ed., *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 4, 891-903, 935.

⁵⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 4, 152-156.

⁵¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 139.

⁵² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 141.

⁵³ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f. 362.

⁵⁴ CNSAS, Fond Cassasovici Coneliu si altii, Dosar I.160182, vol. 2, f. 1-5.

Ionescu (1892-1966) gave hundreds of thousands of lei to the Legion in 1933, and was quickly promoted to lead the movement first in Constanța and then throughout Dobrogea.⁵⁵

Legionaries argued that how much money someone gave to the movement was evidence of how dedicated they were to the cause. Of course, poor Legionaries were not expected to give as much as the rich, but when individuals like Virgil Ionescu gave large amounts of money they were handsomely rewarded. Financial contributions from members were the primary source of income for the movement, and the Legion could not have functioned without them. Fundraising activities took up a lot of time and energy, and the sacrifices involved reinforced the idea that the Legion was deserving of such efforts. Furthermore, the fact that giving was obligatory for all members meant that every Legionary effectively “owned” the movement –implying that they had all contributed to its success, not that they all had decision-making powers.

12.4 DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT

Beyond rituals and giving, Legionaries also had to obey rules and conform to a certain code of behavior. Writing in *Însemnări sociologice* in 1937, Ion Covrig Nonea saw discipline as “an effective means of self-improvement.” Legionary discipline taught you to structure your life and to orient yourself towards a goal, Nonea argued, allowing you to “live your ideals.”⁵⁶ Codreanu approached discipline more as a means for punishing mistakes than orienting lives, however, and his disciplinary actions fundamentally shaped the Legion’s practice of discipline. Codreanu established *Serviciul Legionar de Judecată* (a Legionary Court) in May 1935, explaining that “I want to use it to educate all Legionaries to know [how] ... to recognize their mistakes and pay for

⁵⁵ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #68, Dosar 23333, f. 6-7.

⁵⁶ Ion Covrig Nonea, “Sensul disciplinei legionare,” *Însemnări sociologice*, 3/8 (1937): 21-23.

them by being punished.”⁵⁷ Legionaries disciplined people for a wide range of offences, and in a number of ways. At the Carmen Sylva camp in 1936, some Legionaries were caught stealing clothing, money, and a bag. Codreanu ordered four other Legionaries to beat them as an example of what happens to thieves, and then had them thrown out of the camp. The Aromanian students there were not satisfied with the severity of the beating, and they followed them out of the camp to give them another beating.⁵⁸ On the other end of the spectrum, Legionaries who failed to turn up to meetings or were late for work projects were chastised publically or punished with extra work duties.⁵⁹ Some of Codreanu’s punishments appear to have been quite arbitrary, such as the three-month suspension of three Legionaries for failing to notice that Mihail Stelescu was going to betray Codreanu, or the two-year suspension of a Legionary who joined a committee that also had Jews on it.⁶⁰ “Discipline,” wrote Codreanu, “is our enclosure, helping us conform to ethical norms or to a leader’s will.”⁶¹

Legionaries could also be punished for lack of chivalry. Mr. Veselovschi and Eugenia Vișoianu married at the Carmen Sylva camp in 1935, with Codreanu as their godfather. With no explanation, Veselovschi abandoned his bride only a few days later. Codreanu was so upset at Vișoianu’s public humiliation that he made Veselovschi walk around the country – a circuit of roughly 1,860 miles – collecting signatures from Legionaries in every town he came to as punishment.⁶² A year later, a female volunteer at a Legionary cooperative named Mariana Kuntzl was insulted by another Legionary, Vasile Boștină. A third Legionary struck Boștina to defend Kuntzl’s honor. Boștină challenged the latter to a duel, which was approved and overseen by

⁵⁷ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 36.

⁵⁸ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 4-5.

⁵⁹ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 38; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu si alti, P. 011784, vol. 9, f. 247.

⁶⁰ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 27, 125.

⁶¹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 252.

⁶² Vasile Coman, *Amintiri legionare*, vol. 4 in AN – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 4/1980, f. 100-101.

General Cantacuzino. The General also excluded Boștină from the Legion for a month for insulting a woman because, he said, “a woman should not even be touched with a flower.”⁶³

Dueling became quite popular within the Legion after this incident, and General Cantacuzino had to issue another circular explaining the rules and limiting its use.⁶⁴

Codreanu set high standards for his followers, and frequently disciplined people who failed to live up to them. In September 1936, he ordered county leaders to do a thorough inspection of the Legionaries under their command, and to expel “weak” elements. “As few Legionaries and as many friends as possible,” Codreanu explained. His new goal was that “for every twenty requests to join, nineteen will be rejected and one accepted. The best one.”⁶⁵ In July 1937 Codreanu dissolved the Legion in Bălți county because the nests there were not of a high enough standard.⁶⁶ Legionaries who were not trustworthy with the organization’s money were swiftly dealt with. Ghenadie Bulat, who ran a Legionary kiosk in Tighina, was expelled from the Legion in July 1937 when his superiors discovered that he had been stealing from the cash register.⁶⁷ Codreanu was concerned not only with theft, but also with “insufficient care, order, scrupulousness, and strictness with money that is not theirs.”⁶⁸ By carelessness he meant ordering Legionary publications without paying for them, or taking pamphlets and failing to either sell or return them.

Insubordination was also a problem. Gheorghe Ratoi was expelled for having an “attitude that repeatedly fails to conform with the Legionary way of doing things,” and Gheorghe Ioniță was suspended for two months for being “insolent” towards one of his leaders who would not let

⁶³ CNSAS, Fond Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, P.011784, vol. 19, f. 73.

⁶⁴ CNSAS, Fond Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, P.011784, vol. 19, f. 74

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶⁶ CNSAS, Fond Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 193.

⁶⁷ Roth Jelescu, *Și cerul plângea*, 143.

⁶⁸ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 105.

him hit a Jew living near the Legionary work camp they were at.⁶⁹ Gheorghe Beza, who had risen to fame by trying to assassinate Constantin Angelescu in 1930, was expelled from the Legion in April 1936 because he refused to obey an order from General Cantacuzino and then published two articles defaming the General.⁷⁰ Failing to follow orders properly was another reason for discipline, as the Legionaries in the village of Cudalbi (Covorlui county) discovered when General Cantacuzino dissolved their nests after they held a march during a period when Codreanu had forbidden marching.⁷¹ Similarly, five Legionaries threatened the National Peasantist politician Virgil Madgearu (1887-1940) after he closed a work camp they were attending. Codreanu had ordered that Legionaries maintain peaceful relationships with the authorities that year, and he punished the camp leader, Ion Dobre (1906-1942), as well as the five guilty Legionaries.⁷² Disciplining leaders often had implications for their subordinates as well. In February 1936, Codreanu suspended Nicoleta Nicolescu for three months after she had had a fight with two other leaders over whether they should hold a church service in a cemetery during a Legionary funeral. Not only was Nicolescu punished, but all fortresses in the capital were dissolved for three months as well.⁷³

Discipline was an effective means of demonstrating Codreanu's control over his subordinates, and the more arbitrary the punishments seemed, the more complete Codreanu's authority was. The Legionary Grigore Manoilescu writes that Codreanu punished the editor of *Buna vestire*, Mihail Polihroniade, in 1937, by removing him from the newspaper and suspending him from his leadership position in the Legion. The next time that they saw each other, Codreanu asked Polihroniade, "do you know why I punished you?" Polihroniade said that

⁶⁹ CNSAS, Fond Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 193, vol. 18, f. 125.

⁷⁰ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 75-77.

⁷¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 12, f. 224-225.

⁷² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 159, 224-225, 227.

⁷³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 356.

he did not. “Neither do I,” replied Codreanu, “because you were not punished, just tested. I wanted to see how you would react to an injustice that came from the head of the Legion.”⁷⁴

This policy permeated the entire Legionary educational system – Legionaries were expected to do something because they were told to, not because it was the right thing to do. Climbing mountains barefoot, sending money to Bucharest even though the Legion in your village had none, meeting in a field in the middle of the night; such activities emphasized subordination to authority and taught Legionaries to follow orders without questioning them. Virtues such as honesty, chivalry, sacrifice, and service were commanded, not cultivated, inside Legionary schools, where subordination to Codreanu was paramount. Ion Moța wrote to a friend abroad who had heard about Mihail Stelescu’s expulsion that, “there is no intrigue inside our movement, we are all grouped in a single spiritual bloc around our Captain, ready to die for the Legion or to avenge it.”⁷⁵

Despite the rigors of Legionary “schooling,” examples such as Gheorghe Beza’s outright insubordination or Valeriu Anania’s passive non-compliance show that not all Legionaries completely internalized their Captain’s ideology. Legionaries in some areas did sacrifice a great deal of their money for the organization, but in September 1937 Cola Ciumetti had to close down the Legionary newspaper in Caliacra county because he did not receive enough financial support to keep printing it.⁷⁶ The very fact that formal Legionary schools had to be established in 1937 is evidence that informal instruction about dress and ritual behavior was not producing the qualities Codreanu had hoped for. Codreanu wrote in one of his circulars that he would begin to try taking

⁷⁴ Grigore Manoilescu, “Un om din altă plămadă: Corneliu Codreanu,” in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 161-162.

⁷⁵ Ion I. Moța, *Corespondența cu Welt-Dienst (1934-1936)* (Munich: Colecția Europa, 2000) 43.

⁷⁶ Cola G. Ciumetti, “Nu am bani,” *Legionarii*, 5/18 (1 Sept 1937): 1.

control of the country “once the leaders of regions and counties report that there are no longer any dishonest men in their organizations.”⁷⁷ At least in Codreanu’s lifetime, that day never came.

⁷⁷ Codreanu, *Circulări*, 105.

13.0 THE FASCIST IMAGE

At the Green House (*Casa Verde*) in the suburb of New Bucharest on 26 September 1937, Legionaries opened a week long exhibition celebrating their achievements over the past ten years.¹ They hung an enormous Romanian flag on the front of the building, with a picture of the Archangel Michael in front of it.² As did Legionary music from the mid-1930s, the artistic and literary works on view at the Green House portrayed Legionary heroes alongside examples of Legionary commerce and building projects. Legionary aesthetics included fewer folk themes between 1933 and 1938, and there was almost no mention of Jews, Communists, or Freemasons at the Green House this week. Rather, the focus was on “new men” who were building a new, rejuvenated Romania. Images of strong, handsome men and modest women embodying universal virtues replaced the Romanian peasantry as Legionary ideals.

According to a police report discussing activities at the Green House the week before the exhibition opened,

Numerous spectators watch daily as the building rises on the worksite; sympathizers bring their relatives, children, and friends to show them Legionary work, organization, and charity. These occasions boost the organization’s reputation. Afterwards people visit the cooperative, followed by the restaurant. Thus the turnover of both the restaurant and the cooperative increase daily. From here, visitors move to the Legionary store, where they can buy books, magazines, Legionary newspapers, etc., and get information about other produce of Legionary labor.³

¹ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 683, f. 18.

² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 56-58.

³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 56.

The building was designed to be functional, with the cooperative's office and a Legionary store carrying goods produced by Legionary businesses on the ground floor. The first floor had a large auditorium, and the second floor housed offices for the Everything for the Fatherland Party (*Partidul Total Pentru Țara*, TPT). Legionaries working in the cooperative and permanent staff at the Green House lived in the attic.⁴

The basement of the Green House served as a storeroom for the Legionary cooperative, but during the exhibition it became a temporary art gallery. Decorated with garlands, the display in the basement featured numerous oil paintings and ink and pencil drawings by Legionary artists such as Alexandru Basarab (1907-1941) and George Zlotescu (1906-1983). These and other artworks carried a price tag of between 2,000 and 3,000 lei each.⁵ The ground floor was filled with carpets, embroidery, and hand-made ornaments created by Legionaries.⁶ Legionary women had their own workshop in Bucharest, where they wove carpets on looms, sewed clothes on sewing machines and crocheted doilies and tablecloths or for sale.⁷ Overall, the exhibition was a commercial success. Sales from the restaurant, the cooperative, and the shop during the first six days totaled an impressive 300,000 lei.⁸

The first floor of the Green House was a large auditorium, where Legionaries made speeches, held meetings, and gathered for a ball and dancing. Legionaries regularly held dances and balls as fundraisers and as a way to attract young people to the movement.⁹ During the exhibition Legionaries placed a plaster statue of a Roman athlete throwing a discus in the middle of the room, together with special luxury editions of Legionary books. Large paintings of

⁴ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 50.

⁵ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 56-58, vol. 11, f. 50.

⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 56-58.

⁷ Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 30.

⁸ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #105, Dosar 683, f. 51.

⁹ USHMM, Fond SRI files, Reel #102, Dosar 722, f. 186; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 218-237.

Codreanu and other leaders hung on the walls alongside architectural drawings of the Green House and photographs from various Legionary worksites. In one corner stood a display by *Corpul Legionar Muncitoresc* (the Legionary Workers Corps, CML), with pictures of Legionary martyrs, diagrams about the movement's growth, and tables listing membership numbers and donations. Another two tables displayed Legionary articles and publications, as well as the letters, books, and photographs of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin. Finally, *Centrul Studențesc București* (the Bucharest Student Center, CSB) arranged a display in another corner with photographs from the student congress in Târgu Mureș in 1936 and a picture declaring that "students become brothers through struggle."¹⁰ All of the art, handicrafts, and displays at the Green House focused on the Legion as a movement of heroes and martyrs fighting valiantly for a nation they loved and whose virtues they embodied.

The new emphasis resonated with the rhetoric and imagery of most fascist movements in 1930s Europe. Avant-garde artists in Italy and France joined fascist parties from 1919 onwards, hoping that they would revolutionize their societies and create "new men."¹¹ In Italy, Mussolini became expert at using exhibitions, historical commemorations, and public spectacles to assert his regime's achievements.¹² Organizers of an international student exhibition in Naples, Italy, asked the Legionaries to participate in March 1937. Codreanu replied that government persecution made it impossible for them to attend, but he did send photographs of Legionary

¹⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 56-58.

¹¹ Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism* (Westport: Praeger, 2003); Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹² Claudio Fogu, "Fascism and Historic Representation: The 1932 Garibaldian Celebrations," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 31/2 (1996): 317-345; Paul Baxa, "Capturing the Fascist Moment: Hitler's Visit to Italy in 1938 and the Radicalization of Fascist Italy," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42/2 (2007): 227-242; Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

work camps and funerals for a Romanian display at the exhibition.¹³ British fascists used local theater to promote their organization, and Hitler's spectacular displays and rallies became synonymous with Nazism for many observers.¹⁴ Collective singing was a core Nazi activity both during the 1920s and after Hitler came to power in 1933.¹⁵ Fascist groups all over Europe adopted an ideology of national rebirth that was to be carried out by a vanguard of virile, healthy, and strong activists. They argued that by cultivating their own national virtues, individual fascist parties would contribute to a global revolution.¹⁶

13.1 FASCIST SPECTACLE

As well as being connected to fascist movements abroad, the first thing that contemporary observers noticed about Legionaries was that they *looked like fascists*. In an anti-fascist pamphlet from the mid-1930s, the budding young writer Maria Arsene (1907-1975) mocked the Legionaries:

Friend, when you passed by me today, towering, – with your head proudly erect, your chest stuck out to show off the swastika blatantly stuck on your buttonhole, – I trembled. ... I have seen you parading with [the swastika], friend dressed in the colored shirt, singing battle hymns. You march four abreast, one after another, joyful and full of life. You, the intellectual youth of the country, from whom we expect love and light. You preach hatred and darkness instead through your

¹³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 9, f. 341-343.

¹⁴ Helen Pussard, "The Black Shirts at Belle Vue: Fascist Theatre at a North West Pleasure Ground," in Julie V. Gottlieb and Thomas P. Lineham eds., *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004) 116-128; George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1975).

¹⁵ Vernon L. Lidtke, "Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany," in David King ed., *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany* (College Station, TX, 1982) 167-200; Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 197-210.

¹⁶ Dietrich Orlow, "Fascists Among Themselves: Some Observations on West European Politics in the 1930s," *European Review*, 11/3 (2003): 246-247.

gestures and your songs. Hatred towards your neighbor. Darkness, which covers the light of justice. But you have a firm step. You bravely strike your foot against the ground. A brusque command. You stop short, military-like. An about face before the commander then, all at once, two hundred arms raised in front. Palms down: the Roman salute.¹⁷

None of the elements that Arsene noted were peculiar to the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Erect posture, the swastika, the colored shirts, marching in formation, hatred, singing, the distinctive salute; all of these could be found in most fascist groups throughout Europe by the mid-1930s. The style became associated with extremist right-wing politics during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when it was used by ultra-nationalist politicians such as Karl Lueger (1844-1910) and Gabriel D'Annunzio (1863-1938).¹⁸ It is impossible to define any of these elements as distinctly fascist, however, because they had been used by revolutionaries, military commanders, and legitimate rulers for decades. The dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870-1930) accustomed Spaniards to mass rallies and political symbols a decade before his son José Antonio (1903-1936) made them a key feature of Falangist meetings.¹⁹ In Germany, some of the forms and symbols used in Nazi mass meetings dated back to the Napoleonic era.²⁰ But in the context of 1930s Europe, this combination of gestures and symbols had recognizably fascist connotations.²¹ Romanian ultra-nationalists admired the effect of Fascist uniforms, symbols, and rallies in Italy, and they spoke about wanting to re-create similar spectacles in their own country.²²

¹⁷ Maria Arsene, *Iuda...* (Bucharest: Atelierele "Adevărul," 1936) 22-23.

¹⁸ Schorske, Carl E., *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna*, 116-180; Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 72, 85, 110.

¹⁹ Alejandro Quiroga, *Making Spaniards: Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses, 1923-30* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Stanley Payne, *Falange*. (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1961) 55.

²⁰ Mosse, *Nationalization of the Masses*.

²¹ Stanley Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980) 11.

²² Ilie Rădulescu, "Doamne! Dă-ne și nouă doliul Italiei fasciste," *Porunca vremii*, 5/520 (25 Sept 1936).

One of the most obvious visual elements that Legionaries adapted from abroad were uniforms. Distinctive clothing made fascists stand out in a crowd, transforming individuals into walking advertisements for their parties.²³ The earliest Legionary uniforms were Romanian folk costumes, often adorned with a swastika lapel badge.²⁴ This was a tradition begun by Ion Zelea Codreanu before the First World War.²⁵ Mihail Stelescu introduced green shirts as part of the Legionary uniform in 1933, soon after Hitler's rise to power in Germany.²⁶ LANC Assault Battalions began wearing military-style uniforms at the same time.²⁷ Codreanu wrote in his *Cărticica șefului de cuib (Little Handbook for Nest Leaders)* that "there exists a current all over Europe in favor of introducing military virtues into public life." Legionaries should wear uniforms, he said, "because behind it lie all these great *military virtues*, which raise nations up and make them *victorious* over all difficulties."²⁸

At a minimum, the *Cărticica* defined the Legionary uniform as "a green shirt and a shoulder belt," but there were a number of variations on this theme.²⁹ During the winter of 1936, Legionaries introduced an overcoat (*suman*) resembling those worn by peasants in cold weather.³⁰ A police report from the following year noted that Legionaries in Chișinău usually added a black ribbon and a dagger or revolver to this costume.³¹ By 1938, Legionaries had begun exhibiting their rank within the organization through slight variations in their uniforms.³² When they were first introduced, some Legionaries made their own uniforms, while others organized

²³ Philip M. Coupland, "The Blackshirt in Britain: The Meanings and Function of Political Uniform," in *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain*, eds. Julie Gottlieb and Thomas P. Linehan (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) 100-115.

²⁴ CNSAS, Fond Gârmeata Ilie, I.211932, vol. 2, f. 12; Codreanu, *Însemnări*, MS (1934), 31-46.

²⁵ Banea, *Acuzat, martor*, 17.

²⁶ Crainic, *Zile albe*, 237.

²⁷ CNSAS, Fond Gârmeata Ilie, I.211932, vol. 2, f. 12.

²⁸ Codreanu, *Cărticica*, 40-41.

²⁹ Codreanu, *Cărticica*, 41.

³⁰ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 282.

³¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 10, f. 104.

³² CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 14, f. 207.

for everyone in their nest to buy their uniforms from the same supplier to ensure consistency.³³ Others had their mothers sew their uniforms for them.³⁴ One Legionary was arrested in 1938 after he had walked all over his village asking people if they would dye his shirt green for him. The police confiscated the shirt in question and were able to verify his guilt because the shirt was still white under the label.³⁵

When the National Liberal government abolished political uniforms in March 1937, the newspaper *Tempo* commented that nine different colored shirts were now illegal. Six of them belonged to ultra-nationalist parties. Law-abiding citizens were no longer allowed to wear black (Romanian Front), blue (National Christian Party), green (Legion of the Archangel Michael), white (Archers, Group H), yellow (People's Party), purple (Swastika of Fire), violet (National Guard), cherry (Crusade of Romanianism), or red (Communists).³⁶ This was not the first time that officials had attempted to curb the use of political uniforms. On 28 January 1936, the Ministry of the Interior introduced a law that prohibited “civilians from wearing any uniform in public. The elements of a uniform include: shirts, ties, belts, shoulder belts, epaulettes, insignias, armbands, distinctive symbols, etc., which can serve as propaganda for extremist activities.”³⁷ New regulations in October 1936 identified green and blue shirts in particular as illegal.³⁸ The swastika itself was allowed; some police circulars considered it to be a recognized electoral symbol, while others classified it as a religious symbol.³⁹

³³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 2, f. 139; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, I.234980, f. 73.

³⁴ USHMM, Fond Odessa Oblast Archives, Izmail Branch, RG-31.014M, Reel #2, 7525/1c/68, f. 305-306.

³⁵ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 14, f. 207. I do not understand how you can dye (*vopsi*) a shirt green while keeping the part under the label white, but this is what the police report said.

³⁶ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 1, f. 108.

³⁷ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 6.

³⁸ AN – Braşov, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Serviciul Exterioare, Dosar 216/1936, f. 14

³⁹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 6; AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f. 150.

Uniforms often caused the authorities to arrest Legionaries, so Codreanu was careful to limit their use. From 1936 onwards, Legionaries were only allowed to wear uniforms at home, or on special occasions indicated by Codreanu.⁴⁰ He forbade Legionaries to wear uniforms at the official opening of the Green House on 8 November 1936 – a day celebrating the archangels Michael and Gabriel in the Romanian Orthodox calendar – “in order to avoid incidents with the [Cuzist] National Christians or the authorities.”⁴¹ But Legionaries who attended the funeral of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin in February 1937 were under strict orders to arrive in full Legionary dress.⁴² So long as Legionaries wore their uniforms under conditions approved by Codreanu, the movement had a number of lawyers available who would defend them if they were arrested.⁴³

Legionaries also displayed their political affiliations through insignias and jewelry. In 1936 they made crucifixes from enamel or mother-of-pearl shells that they attached to their clothing with green string. The words “By sacrificing our lives we will escape from thieves,” were written below the crosses, which were sold for 200 lei each.⁴⁴ A year later they began selling white crosses with a swastika in the middle and small icons showing the Archangel Michael with a Jew in chains.⁴⁵ Some of the most popular objects sold by Legionaries were *mărțișoare*, decorative white and red amulets given to women on March 1 to celebrate the beginning of spring. Legionary *mărțișoare* included pictures of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin and used green and gold coloring, adding politics to their usual meaning of friendship or love.⁴⁶ Women could apparently wear these without being Legionaries. Several girls who were interrogated by the police for Legionary involvement claimed that they had no interest in politics

⁴⁰ CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 171; Codreanu, *Cărticica*, 27.

⁴¹ CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 132-133.

⁴² CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 9, 38.

⁴³ Costea, *Presa legionară*, 30.

⁴⁴ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 10, Dosar 10/1936, f. 46.

⁴⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f. 125.

⁴⁶ SJAN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 7/1937, f 107; Valeriu Olaniu, “Mărțișoare,” *Buna vestire* 1/7 (28 Feb 1937): 1.

but had taken part in Legionary activities only because their boyfriends were Legionaries.⁴⁷ Police confiscated 4,900 Legionary *mărțișoare* when they arrested the engraver Georgescu in February 1938. This was a substantial loss for the Legionaries, who had been planning to sell them for 20 lei each.⁴⁸



Figure 39: Legionary mărțișor from 1938. The inscription reads: "Captain, build a blessed country like the sun in the sky."⁴⁹

Legionaries displayed their distinctive image during long marches that they made through cities or from village to village. The goal of marching was both to attract new members and as a form of physical exercise.⁵⁰ Legionaries marched very long distances during election campaigns,

⁴⁷ USHMM, SRI Files, Reel #102, Dosar 723, f. 276-284; ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 252/1939, f. 119-121.

⁴⁸ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 12, f. 17-18, 22.

⁴⁹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 12, f. 24.

⁵⁰ USHMM, Fond SRI Files, Reel #97, Dosar 566, f. 321.

sometimes lasting one or two weeks.⁵¹ These could be physically demanding ventures, and Legionaries were expected to come prepared with boots, loose trousers, long socks, shirts, and tuques.⁵² Ion Victor Vojen led a typical propaganda march on 6 February 1938, from the Legionary headquarters in Bucharest to the village of Budești, where they held a meeting for Legionaries and sympathizers, speaking about the Legion and the virtues of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and singing Legionary hymns. They returned to Bucharest via the village of Brănești, where gendarmes stopped them to check their identity cards. At 4:30pm in the afternoon the team held an electoral meeting at the house of Father Popescu in Brănești before marching back to their headquarters in Bucharest. In total, Vojen's team walked roughly 60 miles.⁵³

More often, Legionaries marched in large groups through the middle of cities. The march in Târgu Neamț on 15 September 1936 is quite normal in this regard. General Cantacuzino and Nicolae Totu arrived in town at 12 noon, and they immediately made their way to St. George's Church, where they were met by Father Ionescu and a crowd of roughly 500 people. The crowd marched out of the city singing Legionary hymns until it reached Neamț citadel, situated on a hill outside of town. The whole distance was little over a mile, but it took them straight through the city center. When they arrived at the citadel, Fr. Ionescu blessed a cross that had been erected by a local pensioner named Tudoraș in memory of Legionaries fallen in the line of duty. Several people gave speeches after the ceremony had ended, and then the crowd dispersed quietly.⁵⁴

Marching allowed Legionaries to travel cheaply to less accessible areas such as Budești, or to announce their presence in a locality by marching through the center of a city like Târgu

⁵¹ CNSAS, Fond Lefter Simion, I.259143, vol. 1, f. 222.

⁵² CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008912, vol. 3, f. 492.

⁵³ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Dosar P.007215, vol. 2, f. 95. The police report suggests that the Legionaries completed this entire journey in one day. If so, Vojen's team must have walked very quickly to cover such long distances in a short period of time.

⁵⁴ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 76.

Neamț. These were opportunities to practice singing, to ensure that Legionaries were physically fit, and to develop a sense of solidarity through time spent together in difficult circumstances. They were also propaganda events, whether this meant blessing a cross or giving electoral speeches. Going on foot allowed Legionaries to gather a crowd of interested bystanders more easily because people saw them passing by their houses on the way to the church or square where meetings were held.

Legionaries often combined meetings with marches, in that once a rally finished it was not unusual for some of the participants to continue the gathering outside. After Father Grigore Cristescu gave a speech about the Legion to a crowd of 400 students in the auditorium of the University of Cernăuți in May 1935, the audience left the building and danced a *hora* in front of the university, singing Legionary songs.⁵⁵ Fr. Cristescu used his position as an academic to arrange public lectures that he turned into political rallies. When he gave a lecture on “Christianity and social problems” in a theater in Bazargic, in Caliacra county, Fr. Cristescu was introduced by a student wearing a Legionary uniform. The crowd sang Legionary hymns before he began speaking, and most of his lecture was about why Aromanians should join the Legion. After his talk, part of the audience marched three abreast to the local park, where they had lunch with Fr. Cristescu. They were joined by Father Dobrescu, the county protopope for the Orthodox Church, and afterwards they marched to the cathedral in the center of town before dispersing.⁵⁶

Other Legionary rallies were much larger affairs. When all of the Legionaries from Caliacra and Constanța counties gathered on the football field in front of the town hall in Bazargic on 24 Oct 1937, Codreanu, Fr. Cristescu and other prominent Legionaries spoke to a crowd of between 1,500 and 2,000 people. Those present assembled in a military formation,

⁵⁵ CNSAS, Fond Cristescu Grigore, I.258626, f. 109.

⁵⁶ CNSAS, Fond Cristescu Grigore, I.258626, f. 91-92.

saluted their leaders, and then local leaders stepped forward to report that “Captain, the Legionaries from the village of are ready and await your command.” These reports were noted down by a scribe, and the crowd sang “*Imnul Legiunii*” (“The Hymn of the Legion”). Next Father Ilie Imbrescu (1909-1949) led the crowd in taking the Legionary oath, and the leader of the Legion in Dobruja, Nicolae Bujin, called out the names of the dead Legionaries as the crowd stood to attention, saluting, and answered “Present!” More speeches and singing followed, and the rally ended a little under two hours after it had begun.⁵⁷

Military-style marches and parades, fascist salutes, uniforms, oath taking, calling out the names of the dead, and singing were trademarks of most self-styled fascist groups in interwar Europe. They alerted onlookers that there was something distinctive about the Legion, showing that Legionaries valued hierarchy, order, discipline, and physical fitness. The speeches and songs communicated Legionary ideology, and the size of the crowds gave the impression that this was indeed a mass movement. Such behavior gave Legionaries a distinctively fascist image, demonstrating that a gathering in small regional cities like Târgu Neamț or Bazargic were not only local affairs; they were part of a political trend that was sweeping across all of Europe.

11.2 LEGIONARY MUSIC

Collective singing played a significant role in almost all Legionary gatherings during the mid-1930s. A steady shift took place during this period from anti-Semitic marches whose lyrics were written by students and into ballads about Legionary heroism written by accomplished musicians and celebrated poets. The Legion’s official song in 1935 was “*Imnul Legiunii*” (“The Hymn of the Legion”) by the poet Iustin Ilieșiu (1900-1976), who had been active in the student movement of the 1920s. Ilieșiu’s poetry glorified peasants as the embodiment of the Romanian

⁵⁷ CNSAS, Fond Herseni Traian, Dosar P.014083, vol. 2, f. 44.

nation.⁵⁸ This hymn, like much of his poetry, called on the Romanian people to rise up and defend themselves against foreign invaders:

It is time to claim today justice,	<i>E timpul să pretindem azi, dreptate,</i>
For the poor, orphans, the oppressed	<i>Pentru saraci, orfani, și-obișduiți</i>
Enemies have defeated us for centuries	<i>Căci veacuri lungi ne-au copleșit dușmanii</i>
And criminal Pagans challenged us in their arrogance. ⁵⁹	<i>Și ne-au sfruntat păgâni neleguiți.</i>

Even more popular than Ilieșiu was Radu Gyr (1905-1975), a poet-laureate and professor of literature at the University of Bucharest who wrote roughly twenty of the Legion's most popular hymns. He first identified himself with the Legion when he ran as a candidate for the Corneliu Zelea Codreanu Group in the 1933 elections, and then officially joined in 1935.⁶⁰ He himself rarely wrote the music to his songs although he did play a number of instruments and was a capable musician.⁶¹ Gyr's poetry drew on nineteenth century romanticism and eulogized the beauty of the Romanian countryside. Most of his poetry was not explicitly fascist and was even included in school textbooks.⁶²

Legionary music became increasingly sophisticated once Ion Mântzatu (1902-) joined the movement in the summer of 1936. In his own words, Mântzatu was "one of the most popular composers in the country," blending classical and popular, especially romantic, musical styles. Mântzatu says that he wrote his first Legionary song almost immediately after attending his first meeting: "I thought to try and compose a march in a more modern and simplified spirit; a eulogy

⁵⁸ Iustin Ilieșiu, *Sângerări ardelene: poezii* (Bucharest: Editura Cioflec, 1945).

⁵⁹ Iustin Ilieșiu, "Imnul Legiunii Arhanghelul Mihail," in *Cântece legionare* (Bucarest: I. E. Torouțiu, 1940) 7.

⁶⁰ CNSAS, Fond Demestrescu Radu-Gyr, Dosar I.184933, vol. 5, f. 1-5, 13.

⁶¹ Dumitru Micu, "*Gândirea*" și *gândirismul* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva 1975) 571.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 570-595; Ilie Tudor, *Un an lângă Căpitan* (Bucharest: Editura Sânziana, 2007) 80.

to Legionary youth.”⁶³ His friends were so impressed that they convinced Radu Gyr to write some lyrics to it, and “*Imnul tinereții Legionare*” (“The Hymn of the Legionary Youth”) was the result.⁶⁴ Mânzatu later speculated that “this may have been the first time a Legionary song was presented with [instrumental] accompaniment.”⁶⁵ “*Imnul tinereții Legionare*” is livelier than the earlier marches. It also contains none of the anti-Semitism that was characteristic of LANC and early Legionary music. Instead, the song emphasizes heroism, strength, and martyrdom – virtues that were supposed to define the ideal Legionary.

Holy Legionary youth,	<i>Sfântă tinerețe legionară,</i>
With chests of iron and lily-white souls,	<i>Cu piept călit de fier și sufletul de crin,</i>
Unbroken outpouring of springtime,	<i>Iureș ne'nfrânat de primăvară</i>
With a brow like a Carpathian mountain lake!	<i>Cu fruntea ca un iezăr carpatin!</i>
Our arms raise in the sunlight	<i>Cu brațele suim în soare</i>
Iconostases for our times.	<i>Catapetezme pentru veac.</i>
We build from stone, fire, and the sea,	<i>Le zidim din stânci, din foc, din mare,</i>
Courageously plastering the icons with Dacian blood...	<i>Și dârz le tencuim cu sânge dac...</i>

By the mid-1930s, music had become a way to cultivate unity and to express a common fascist image. According to a Legionary songbook from 1938, “the song, more than anything, is able to create a common feeling of the eternity and greatness of works achieved through collective effort

⁶³ Ion Mânzatu, “Imnul tinereții Legionare,” in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 165-168.

⁶⁴ Tudor V. Cucu, *Totul pentru țară, neam și Dumnezeu* (Brașov: Editura Transilvania Expres, 1998) 256-257.

⁶⁵ Mânzatu, “Imnul tinereții Legionare,” 167.

and sacrifice.”⁶⁶ Songs continued to be sung at marches and rallies, but the other contexts in which Legionaries sang show how important singing was for creating a sense of Legionary fraternity and conviviality. Balls with music and dancing were held together with political meetings.⁶⁷ The team of Legionaries sent to fight in the Spanish Civil War sang on trains and boats during their journey, and when they arrived they taught their songs to fascists in Spain.⁶⁸ Even non-Legionary football teams began singing Legionary songs on their way to games.⁶⁹ Ilie Tudor remembers singing as a child in an impromptu choir to impress Codreanu, and later of singing the folk romance “*Vânt de seara*” (“Evening Breeze”) together with Legionary leaders as a way to relax after dinner.⁷⁰ This particular song became so popular amongst Legionaries that outsiders began to view it as a Legionary song and restricted its use in public.⁷¹ Singing was part of weekly nest meetings for younger Legionaries.⁷² Mânzatu later reminisced that communal singing, in a small room of a family home, was for him the most memorable part of his first Legionary gathering.⁷³

One of Gyr’s and Mânzatu’s most successful pieces was “*Imnul Biruniții Legionare*,” (“The Hymn of the Legionary Victory”). The pamphlet overleaf reveals a number of significant differences between earlier Legionary music and that of the late 1930s. This pamphlet is printed with attractive artwork and comes with a price tag of 10 lei, compared with 1 lei that was charged for a 1926 version of ‘*Imnul Studentesc*’ (‘The Student Hymn’). It also contains piano accompaniment, and both tenor and bass vocal lines. The incorporation of a piano means that Legionary music had now also entered the salons of the bourgeoisie. Pianos were expensive

⁶⁶ CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 5, f. 221.

⁶⁷ N.A., “O tabara studenteasca la mare,” *Calendarul* (7 Aug 1933).

⁶⁸ Bănică Dobre, *Crucificații: Zile trăite pe frontul spaniol* (Bucharest: I. N. Copuzeanu, 1937) 15, 35.

⁶⁹ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.008909, vol. 1, f. 320.

⁷⁰ Tudor, *Un an lângă Căpitan*, 29-30, 56-57.

⁷¹ CNSAS, Fond Demestrescu Radu, Dosar I.184933, vol. 1, f. 40-42.

⁷² Codreanu, *Cărticica*, 18.

⁷³ Mânzatu, “Imnul tinereții Legionare,” 166.

instruments, and are not particularly well suited for marching. The expenses associated both with the instrument and with the pamphlet itself show that by the mid-1930s Legionaries could number a significant group of financially comfortable people among their supporters. This song is also written to be played by a man. The size of the intervals between the notes would be difficult for smaller hands to play and, more importantly, the superfluous runs in the piano score were symptomatic of a masculine culture of virtuosity that contrasted itself with the female use of chords for vocal accompaniment.⁷⁵ Now not only the lyrics but also the music itself had begun to celebrate male virility and urban sophistication.

Legionaries began theorizing the role of music in their movement during the mid-1930s. Codreanu wrote in 1935 that singing was “the only way of expressing our inner state,” because Legionary doctrine was not rational, but mystical.⁷⁶ Philosophical discussions or written programs could not convey Legionarism, which he says was more of feeling than an argument. Singing was also a “guide” (*îndreptar*), which directs Legionaries back to the true path should they ever become discouraged or disoriented.⁷⁷ Legionaries who were too “simple” to understand politics should not try, he said. Rather, they should content themselves with singing, because whereas words penetrate the mind, a song penetrates the soul.⁷⁸ According to Codreanu, singing is such a profound expression of the soul that a faithless person is unable to sing.⁷⁹

Other Legionaries built on Codreanu’s philosophy of song. In 1937, Ion Băleanu wrote of song as a “divine dimension of the soul,” and said that singing rises “like smoke from a sacrifice,

⁷⁵ I am grateful to Adriana Helbig for this observation. On gender typing in musical styles, see John Shepherd, “Music and Male Hegemony,” in Richard Leppert ed., *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 151-172.

⁷⁶ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 235.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁷⁸ P. P. Panaitescu, “Sufletul românesc și cântecul Legionar,” *Cuvântul* (8 Nov 1940): 1.

⁷⁹ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 236.

to kiss the base of heaven.”⁸⁰ This same point was made by Ernest Bernea, who described singing as:

A connection with the other world, with God and with other men, with your people. Through song man becomes one with the cosmic rhythm, penetrates the world’s mysteries and takes part in the unknown.... To sing means to live together. It is the lyrical expression of solitude but it can also be an epic expression of man’s integration in the collective. Singing, man feels part of a community, his soul bends towards that of another, melting in a unity of feeling. Man loves his neighbor more through song, each feeling more tightly bound to the other.⁸¹

Legionaries described singing as an expression of the movement, seeing it as a communal endeavor through which individuals subordinated their own interests to a greater good. The lyrics to songs from this period expressed total commitment to the movement and promised that it would respond in kind. By making the Legion itself the focus of their songs, Legionaries emphasized that the movement transcended more specific goals such as anti-Semitism or anti-politicianism, and that creating fascist “new men” had become an end in itself.

11.3 FASCIST MEN

One striking element of writings about the Legion after 1938 is how often they describe Legionaries as handsome and manly. Dumitru Leontieș writes that he immediately recognized Codreanu when he saw him for the first time in 1929, because “he was the most imposing and

⁸⁰ Ion Băleanu, “Țara nouă de muncă și cântec,” *Buna Vestire* (27 June 1937): 2.

⁸¹ Ernest Bernea, *Stil legionar* (Bucharest: Serviciul Propagandei Legionare, 1940) 8-9.

handsomest of all the young men.”⁸² Nicolae Teban remembers seeing Corneliu Georgescu and Ion Moța drinking beer with some friends in 1927, and says, “I suddenly felt my heart beat faster. In their national costumes, they looked like heroes out of a children’s story (*păreau niște Feți-Frumoși din poveste*).”⁸³ Nicolae Păun describes another Legionary, Sebastian Erhan, as “a man built like an athlete; one would think he was one of the archers of Ștefan Vodă.”⁸⁴ Pavel Onciu says that what attracted him to Legionaries was that “they were honorable, committed to raising the nation up to its proper place despite the risks to their personal safety. They believed in the movement, listened to Corneliu Codreanu’s orders, helped each other, respected each other...”⁸⁵ Eleven of the twenty eight biographies of dead Legionaries published in *Cuvântul* in October and November 1940 talk about how strong, healthy and handsome they were. Twenty describe the departed as having had a noble and hard working character. Five mention an extraordinary capacity for suffering. Almost all mention dedication to the cause.⁸⁶ In addition to their uniforms, their marches, and their songs, these characteristics contributed to an image of Legionaries as handsome, strong, and decisive men.

Nationalists all over interwar Europe celebrated the same masculine ideal cherished by the Legionaries. Nazi groups in Germany drew on Greek models of manly beauty as ideals for young boys to aspire to.⁸⁷ Zionists encouraged gymnastics and body-building for Jewish men who would become warriors and colonists in a future Zionist state.⁸⁸ Austrians, Czechs, and other ethnic groups saw cultivating the male body through gymnastics as part of perfecting their

⁸² Dumitru Leontieș, “Cum l-am cunoscut pe Căpitan,” in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 145.

⁸³ Nicolae Teban, “Coneliu Codreanu și muncitorii,” in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 261.

⁸⁴ Păun, *Un soldat pe baricada*, 117.

⁸⁵ Pavel Onciu, “Întâlnirea cu Căpitanul și legiunea lui,” Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 210.

⁸⁶ *Cuvântul* (Nov-Dec 1940).

⁸⁷ George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: H. Fertig, 1985).

⁸⁸ Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2007).

nations.⁸⁹ Members of the *Faisceau* trained boys physically so that they could be the future leaders of the French nation.⁹⁰ Interwar Europeans generally associated muscular masculinity with patriotism and virtue, and this image was not exclusively fascist.⁹¹ The “new fascist man,” Mosse argued, “was not so new after all. Most of his basic traits were shared with normative masculinity, but he extended them, giving them an aggressive and uncompromising cast as an essential tool in the struggle for dominance.”⁹² Tangentially related to physical and moral perfection was the notion of virility, which Barbara Spackman notes is not necessarily “equivalent to ‘phallic’ or to ‘masculine’,” or contrary to “effeminate,” though it is usually associated with men and with manly vigor.⁹³

Ultra-nationalist newspapers in Romania printed pictures of German Nazis or Italian Fascists that emphasized how closely they resembled the image of an ideal man. These same qualities were also prominent when they published photographs of Legionary work camps. Photographs from work camps frequently showed half-naked young men working in the sun. Pictures of overweight or undernourished Legionaries were only ever distributed if the people involved were important Legionary heroes.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Claire Nolte, “‘Every Czech a Sokol!’: Feminism and Nationalism in the Czech Sokol,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, 24 (1993): 79-100; Wolfgang Weber and Paula Black, “Muscular *Anschluss*: German Bodies and Austrian Imitators,” in *Superman Supreme: Fascist Body as Political Icon*, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 2000) 62-81.

⁹⁰ Samuel Kalman, “Faisceau Visions of Physical and Moral Transformation and the Cult of Youth in Inter-War France,” *European History Quarterly*, 33/3 (2003): 343-366.

⁹¹ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, “Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 41/4 (2006): 595-610.

⁹² George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996)180.

⁹³ Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 2.

⁹⁴ For example, the stoutly Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, whose role as a priest perhaps allowed him to embody virtue in other ways.



Figure 41: Legionaries at Carmen Sylva work camp.⁹⁵

Several Legionaries established sporting societies as part of their contribution to the movement. Ion Găvănescu, a professor of pedagogy at the University of Iași, founded the Legion's first sporting society in 1929, focusing especially on boxing, fencing, and target shooting "to teach the use of arms and to cultivate feelings of honor."⁹⁶ *Legiunea sportivă* (the Sporting Legion) was established in 1932, and Legionaries held a sporting competition to celebrate the work done on the Green House that year.⁹⁷ Later, individual Legionaries joined sporting societies as a way

⁹⁵ Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă*, 34.

⁹⁶ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel #137, Dosar 4/1929, f. 33.

⁹⁷ Săndulescu, "Taming the Body," 85; "Serbarea înalțării zidelor a Gărzei de Fier," *Calendarul*, 483 (28 Sept 1933): 2.

to carry out propaganda amongst potential recruits.⁹⁸ Sport helped transform male bodies into the ideal cherished by Legionaries, but it was primarily an activity for students. The Legionary Alexandru Băncescu observed in an oral history interview from 1998 that although he did do military training exercises in the Legion, he and his colleagues ignored strength training because “we were all farm boys and harvested with our parents at home, which is the most complex sport possible and trains all your muscles.”⁹⁹

The centrality of the male figure in Legionary iconography can be seen most clearly in Legionary artworks. The anonymous poster below depicts a uniformed Legionary holding a guard – the symbol of the Legionary movement and a play on words likening the Iron Guard (*Garda de Fier*) to an iron fence (*un gard de fier*). His bulging muscles and defiant glare protect Romania against demonic enemies, including communists, apocalyptic horsemen and a winged angel of death. Sheltering behind the Legionary guard are peasants sowing seeds, weaving cloth, attending church, plowing fields, and dancing a *hora* in front of a factory. The church and the plowman are overshadowed – but not overwhelmed – by the towering industrial complex in the background. Both the Legionary and those he protects are colored green, in contrast to their black enemies. The poster follows a pattern typical of apocalyptic paintings on the walls of Romanian churches, where demons drag people down into hell and angels raise pious Christians to heaven. The difference is that here Romanians build their nation up through their own strength, and that – thanks to the Legionary – demons cannot approach vulnerable people. The poster relies on a strong contrast of dark and light, and masculine strength and power dominate the image.

⁹⁸ CNSAS, Fond Vojen Ioan Victor, Dosar I.160181, f. 394; AN – Cluj, Universitatea Ferdinand I, Facultatea de Științe, Dosar 308/1937, f. 1-7.

⁹⁹ Interview with Alexandru Băncescu (30 July 1998), in Conovici, Iliescu and Silvestru eds., *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 76.



Figure 42: Legionary propaganda poster.¹⁰⁰

The Legion had a number of talented artists, including Simion Lefter (1909-1993), a lawyer and activist who also wrote many of the Legion's early songs. Lefter painted portraits of noble-looking Legionary leaders, sometimes surrounded by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ I would like to thank Oliver Jens Schmitt for providing me with this image.

¹⁰¹ CNSAS, Fond Lefter Simion, I.259143, vol. 1, f. 119, 198.

Andrei Cantacuzino Andronic, who had studied at the Parisian *École Nationale des Beaux Arts*, and Vasile Chipariș (1911-1942) were also active Legionary painters.¹⁰² A graduate of the Chișinău School of Painting and a teacher with his own workshop, Chipariș painted mostly on a commission basis for local buyers. He joined the Legion in 1933, serving several prison sentences and doing propaganda tours through Bessarabian villages until he was executed by the NKVD in 1941.¹⁰³ The Legionary N. S. Govora mentions another anonymous painter in 1933 who presented Codreanu with a collection of drawings depicting the suffering of Romanians during the First World War.¹⁰⁴ All of these men were committed Legionaries, and are known today more for their Legionary activism than for any artistic talents they may have possessed.

The Legion's two most accomplished painters were Alexandru Basarab (1907-1941) and George Zlotescu (1906-1983). Basarab joined the Legion in 1932, and most of his best-known woodcuts depicted Legionary themes.¹⁰⁵ He had studied under Ion Teodorescu-Sion (1882-1939) at Bucharest's Academy of Fine Arts and then perfected his skills through private lessons from Constantin Vlădescu (1890-1951). Zlotescu also studied under Ion Teodorescu-Sion, whose work other Legionary art critics wrote positively about.¹⁰⁶ He then moved to Paris to learn from André Lhote (1885-1962) and Othon Friesz (1879-1949), both of whom achieved fame as Fauvists – a painting style characterized by its vivid, arbitrary, and emotional use of color.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² On Andrei Cantacuzino Andronic, see Gheorghe Buzatu, Corneliu Ciucanu, and Cristian Sandache, *Radiografia dreptei românești 1927-1941* (Bucharest: FF Press, 1996) 78.

¹⁰³ Iurie Colesnic, *Basarabia necunoscută*, vol. 1 (Chișinău: Museum, 2000) 136-139.

¹⁰⁴ N. S. Govora, "Corneliu Zelea Codreanu," in Stănescu ed., *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu și epoca sa*, 106.

¹⁰⁵ CNSAS, Fond Basarab Alexandru, I.260632, f. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Dinu Buzdugan, "Însemnări," *Rânduiala*, 1/1 (Jan-Mar 1935): 106-107.

¹⁰⁷ On these two artists, see Maximilien Gauthier, "Friesz," and Germain Viatte, "Lhote," in Michel Laclotte ed., *Petit Larousse de la Peinture*, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1979) 665, 1024.

Neither Ion Teodorescu-Sion nor Constantin Vlădescu were Legionaries, but both were well-known in Romania as Traditionalist artists.¹⁰⁸ Seeking to create a specifically Romanian art form, Traditionalists painted Romanian peasants and scenes from rural life. Inspired by Sămănătorism and later by Nichifor Crainic's writings about literary Traditionalism as an expression of the "national soul," Traditionalist artists used the peasantry to embody all that they loved about the Romanian nation.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the realist, passive peasants of nineteenth century artists such as Nicolae Grigorescu (1835-1907), Traditionalists portrayed peasants as active, heroic figures who embodied Romanian strength and virility.¹¹⁰ In a seminal article from 1924, the Traditionalist painter Francisc Șirato (1877-1953) wrote that "Romanian personality is revealed not through a servile copy of nature, but by emphasizing its physical, general character to reflect the mysteries of the Romanian soil and its people. Free and unconditional Romanian nature and being is shown by reducing [the artist's subject] to its essence, by spiritualizing its formal elements."¹¹¹ George Zlotescu was an art critic as well as an artist, and he wrote very positive reviews of established Traditionalist artists including Francisc Șirato, Ion Theodorescu-Sion and Dumitru Ghița (1888-1972).¹¹² Other Legionaries affirmed the importance of the rural elements in Traditionalist art, adding that Orthodoxy was just as important as the peasantry for bringing a "spiritual" dimension to a work of art.¹¹³ Echoing this school of thought, the ultra-nationalist newspaper *Calea nouă* (*The New Way*, 1936-1937) described Alexandru Basarab's

¹⁰⁸ On Ion Theodorescu-Sion and Constantin Vlădescu, see Mircea Deac and Tudor Octavian, *300 de pictori români: dicționar de pictură românească modernă* (Bucharest: Noi Media Print, 2007) 66, 72.

¹⁰⁹ On Crainic's traditionalism, see Klaus Heitmann, "Das 'rumänische Phänomen': Die Frage des nationalen Spezifikums in der Selbstbesinnung in der rumänischen Kultur seit 1900," *Südost-Forschungen*, 24 (1970): 171-236; Papahagi, "The 'National Essence'," 157-180.

¹¹⁰ Erwin Kessler, "Retro-garde," in Erwin Kessler ed., *Culorile avangardei: arta în România 1910-1950* (Bucharest and Sibiu: Institutul Cultural Român and Muzeul Național Brukenthal, 2007) 15.

¹¹¹ Francisc Șirato, "Artă plastică românească," *Gândirea*, 4/1 (1924): 4.

¹¹² Petre Oprea, *Critici de artă în presa bucureșteană a anilor 1931 - 1937* (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică Agricolă, 1997) 84-87.

¹¹³ Haig Acterian, "Arta și națiunea," *Rânduiala*, 2/2 (1937): 75-80.

work as a “guide” for the next generation and as expressing “a Christian and purely Romanian structure.”¹¹⁴

Even though they obviously appreciated the Traditionalist fascination with rural themes, the Legionary works of Basarab and Zlotescu focus almost entirely on heroic images of Legionary men. Zlotescu’s political cartoons for *Axa* starkly portrayed communism as an anti-Christian force opposed by strong, valiant warriors.¹¹⁵ Among those artworks on display at the Green House in September 1937 were Zlotescu’s drawing of Ion G. Duca’s three assassins – the *Nicadorii* – and Basarab’s woodcut of Codreanu called “The Captain,” which were typical of their Legionary artworks in terms of style and subject matter. Both artists used prominent contours and evocative contrasts between light and darkness to portray their subjects as dynamic, virile, and decisive.



Figure 43: George Zlotescu, “Nicadorii”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ I. A. V., “Expoziția pictorului Basarab,” *Calea nouă*, 1/5 (10 Feb 1936): 7. *Calea nouă* was the organ of Grigore Forțu’s Romanian Brotherhood (*Frația Română*).

¹¹⁵ George Zlotescu, “Paradisul roșu,” *Axa*, 1/5 (Jan 1933); George Zlotescu, “A două răstignire,” *Axa*, 1/9 (19 Mar 1933).

¹¹⁶ George Zlotescu, “Nicadorii.” From *Clipă la clipă*, <http://www.miscarea.net/momente.html> Accessed: 22 Nov 2011.

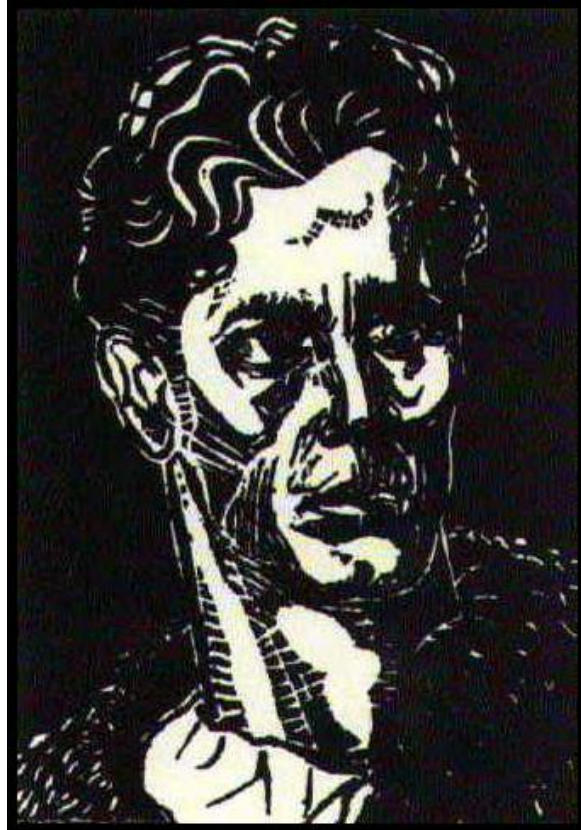


Figure 44: Alexandru Basarab, “The Captain”¹¹⁷

Contemporaries did not speak about “Legionary art” as a recognized category, but the exhibit at the Green House collected Legionary artists together in a way that brought out their common values. Most art critics ignored the exhibition, but the Legionary magazine *Iconar* held it up as evidence that themes of victory and heroism – flowing out of the country’s mountains and plains – had finally returned to Romanian literature and art.¹¹⁸ Groupings of artists in interwar Romania were small and generally lasted only a short time. Moreover, the high cost of putting together an exhibition usually prevented more than five artists – at the most – from displaying their works.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Alexandru Basarab, “Capitanul.” From “Alexandru Basarab,” <http://sfarmapiatra.wordpress.com/2009/12/13/alexandru-bassarab/> Accessed: 22 Nov 2011.

¹¹⁸ Gabriel Bălănescu, “Literatură și revoluție,” *Iconar*, 3/3 (1937): 6.

¹¹⁹ Amelia Pavel, *Pictura românească interbelică: un capitol de artă europeană* (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1996) 59.

The artists who contributed to this exhibit all had their own unique styles, but the works on display here used portraits of Legionary heroes and key moments in the Legion's history to create a clearly recognizable set of images that represented the Legion.

Basarab produced a number of woodcuts on Legionary themes. The popularity of woodcuts increased significantly in the first half of the twentieth century because they were cheap and easy to reproduce, features that made them particularly suitable for use in magazines or for political purposes.¹²⁰ Almost all of Basarab's woodcuts portrayed male Legionaries in stalwart, uncompromising poses, often carrying weapons or accompanied by archangels. The sharp, decisive lines of his woodcuts project steadfastness and intransigence. In contrast, Zlotescu's drawings in *Axa* relied on blurry outlines and obscure images. The Legionaries in Zlotescu's works were usually anonymous figures whose qualities were conveyed by their activities in the picture, or – as in the case of the *Nicadorii* – in their defiant gazes. Images depicting women are almost completely missing from Legionary artworks, and photographs of women far outnumber those of men. As I discuss in the following chapter, Legionaries did acknowledge female heroism, but they spoke about men far more often. Male portraits appear so often in Legionary iconography because heroic, “new men” epitomized the movement's ideal; women, machines, nature, or peasants received a distant second place.

Iconar defined Legionary literature and art by contrasting it with that of another small group on the periphery of the Romanian art scene – the Avantgarde. In interwar Europe, the term Avantgarde was used to describe a number of movements by artists or writers who wanted to experiment with ideas and techniques that had not been attempted in their fields before.

¹²⁰ Christine Javid ed., *Color Woodcut International: Japan, Britain and America in the Early Twentieth Century* (Madison, WI: Chazen Museum of Art, 2006); Joachim Homann ed., *Woodcuts in Modern China, 1937-2008: Towards a Universal Pictorial Language* (Hamilton, NY: Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University, 2009). I would like to thank Cristina Albu for bringing this to my attention.

Futurism, Expressionism, Constructivism, Surrealism, Cubism, and Dada were all expressions of the Avantgarde. Even though they embraced different artistic currents, Avantgardists in Romania formed a tightly knit and clearly distinguishable group that issued its own periodicals and held its own art exhibitions. Unlike Italian or French fascisms, which embraced Avantgarde artists, Legionaries described the Dadaist poet Tristan Țara (1896-1963) as a “joker” whose creations flowed out of his “barren” existence.¹²¹ Similarly, Zlotescu described the works of the artist and architect Marcel Iancu (1895-1984) as portraying “a vision of a world with mechanical idols, which is to say, something dynamic, demonic, chaotic,” and he rejoiced whenever major exhibitions ignored them.¹²² Both Legionaries and Avantgardists painted dynamic images, and both emphasized the need for revolutionary change in their work.¹²³ Whereas those Avantgardists who were influenced by Italian Futurism celebrated technology in their paintings and drawings, Legionary iconography preferred men to machines. Like Țara and Iancu, many of Romania’s Avantgarde artists were Jewish and many were members or sympathizers of the communist party.¹²⁴ Avantgarde periodicals usually did not discriminate according to an artist’s political views, however, and only *Unu (One, 1928-1932)* was explicitly anti-fascist.¹²⁵ In contrast, Legionaries rejected art for art’s sake. They said either that art had to be a revelation of divine beauty, or that it must be politically engaged and reflect the resolve of a living community to bring about social change.¹²⁶

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²² Oprea, *Critici de artă*, 87; George Zlotescu, “Salonul oficial,” *Axa*, 1/11 (30 Apr 1933): 5.

¹²³ Ioana Vlasiu, “The Modernities of the Interwar Romanian Painting,” in Erwin Kessler ed., *Culorile avantgardei: arta în România 1910-1950* (Bucharest and Sibiu: Institutul Cultural Român and Muzeul Național Brukenthal, 2007) 38.

¹²⁴ Irina Livezeanu, “From Dada to Gaga’: The Peripatetic Romanian Avant-Garde Confronts Communism,” in Miah Dinu Gheorghiu ed., *Littératures et pouvoir symbolique* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2005) 239-253.

¹²⁵ Paul Cernat, *Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2007) 229-244.

¹²⁶ On art as divine revelation, see Nichifor Crainic, *Nostalgia paradisului* (Iași: Editura Moldova, 1994), whose ideas were preached by Legionaries including Fr. Ilie Imbrescu. For Fr. Imbrescu’s synthesis of Crainic’s aesthetic theology, see CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, P.000324, vol. 12, f. 224-233. On the political value of art, see

Paintings and drawings of Legionary men depicted the same virtues described in Legionary songs or celebrated in marches and rallies. These were the cardinal virtues of interwar European fascism: strength, virility, courage, manly beauty, and decisiveness. Legionaries cultivated these virtues in their schools – work camps, restaurants, businesses, and nest meetings – and claimed that assassinations and electoral violence were expressions of these same ideals. All of these virtues were intrinsically linked to the Legion itself. The heroes described in songs and paintings were leaders of the movement, and they were praiseworthy precisely because they were Legionaries. Legionary images promoted the movement as a place where “new men” proved themselves; and their primary focus was on the Legion, not on the virtues that it was supposed to produce.

Constantin Săndulescu-Gojeni, “Concepția fascistă a culturii,” *Calendarul*, 474 (17 Sept 1933): 1-2; Ioan Victor Vojen, “Artă în statul de mâine,” *Axa*, 1/12 (14 May 1933); Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 421-425.

14.0 HEROISM AND DEATH

One of the most famous Romanian folk ballads, the *Miorița* (*The Little Ewe*), is a story about a shepherd who is killed by other shepherds, who then steal his sheep. Warned by a lamb of his impending death, the shepherd accepts his fate, and says to tell people that he has “gone to marry a princess,” by which he means that he has wedded himself to nature.¹ Interwar nationalist poets frequently used this story as an expression of how Romanians made suffering into a virtue. The Legionary poet and song writer Radu Gyr used this motif to explain why Legionary death has no sting. One of his most popular hymns intoned:

Death, only Legionary death,	<i>Moartea, numai moartea Legionară,</i>
For us, the dearest wedding of all,	<i>Ne este cea mai scumpă nunta dintre nunți,</i>
For the holy cross, for the country,	<i>Pentru sfânta cruce, pentru țară,</i>
We cover forests and subdue mountains.	<i>Înfrângem codri și supunem munți.</i>
No prison frightens us,	<i>Nu-i temnita să ne'nspaimânte,</i>
Nor torture, nor the enemy's storm,	<i>Nici chin, nici vișorul dușman,</i>
We fall together from blows to the head,	<i>De cădem cu toți izbiat în frunte,</i>
Death for the Captain is dear to us.	<i>Ni dragă moartea pentru Căpitan.</i> ²

When Codreanu established *echipe morții* (death teams) in May 1933, he explained that these propaganda teams must be ready to suffer violence at the hands of the police. In Codreanu's words, they were “*to receive death*. They decided to move forward, passing through death,” in

¹ *Miorița*, in the version collected by Vasile Alecsandri. From <http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Miori%C5%A3a>. Accessed: 13 Dec 2011.

² Radu Gyr, “Imnul tinereții Legionare.” <http://pages.prodigy.net/nnita/cantece-Legionare-cuvantari.htm> Accessed: 3/17/2008.

the spirit of the shepherd from the *Miroiță*.³ Legionaries equated heroism with suffering. Imprisonment, torture, or death were things that made someone into a Legionary hero.⁴ At every nest meeting they spent time remembering those who had died, and their oaths and songs were filled with promises to lay down their lives for the movement. In 1937, when talk about heroic suffering and death had reached its peak, the Legionary sociologist Dumitru C. Amzăr wrote: “the first Legionaries started out from in front of the icon, under the sign of the cross – the sign of victory through sacrifice. They understood that suffering is the road to glory. ... They sought it in work, fasting and prayer, in solitary thought, in respectfulness and in obedience. They did not avoid it in times of persecution; they sought it out in battle.”⁵ Legionaries could accept that they needed to suffer because they heard talk about sacrifice and heroism so often within Legionary circles. Moments of reflection during nest meetings, difficult conditions at work camps, and frequent commemorations of the dead helped reinforce this idea.

14.1 COMMEMORATIONS

Honoring the courage and sacrifice of people who had died for their country was an important Legionary practice. Writing about the soldiers who died during the First World War, Fr. Grigore Cristescu said, “We are called to interpret the profound meaning of the sacrifices of yesterday in order to make ourselves worthy of carrying out all the sacrifices that are required of us today.”⁶ One of the Legion’s defining moments in 1933 was an attempt to erect a cross at the grave of the

³ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “Echipa morții,” May 1933; reprinted in Scurtu et. al., *Ideologie*, Vol. III, 185. His italics.

⁴ “Legionari dela Chișinău suferinzi,” *Calendarul*, 539 (16 Dec 1933): 4; Vasile Marin, “Răboj,” *Axa*, 1/18 (19 Sept 1933); Ștefan Ion Gheorghe, “Modul eroic al istoriei,” *Buna vestire*, 1/17 (12 Mar 1937): 1.

⁵ Dumitru C. Amzăr, “Destin legionar,” *Rânduială*, 2/2 (1937): 51.

⁶ Grigore Cristescu, *Jertfe, datorii și răspunderi de ieri, de azi și de mâine* (Sibiu: Tiparul Institutului de Arte Grafice “Dacia Traiana,” 1929) 9.

unknown soldier, and Legionaries continued to erect similar monuments for the next few years.⁷ They also remembered the war dead by celebrating 15 August – the date when Romania entered the First World War – through religious commemorations, dances, and rallies.⁸ Legionaries insisted that they were part of a struggle that had been carried on by Romanian patriots for centuries. “The fight of the youth,” Ernest Bernea said in 1937, “is nothing other than continuing the good traditions and all the virtues of our people in conformity with the current historical moment.”⁹ Legionaries drew on nationalist and Orthodox ideas about the nation and the church as eternal communities that were quite normal in this era. Just as mainstream Orthodox theologians did, Legionaries conflated the national community with the Christian community, honoring national heroes as champions of the faith and religious figures as if they had been fighting for the nation.¹⁰ What was remarkable about Legionary attitudes to the past was not the content of their beliefs, but the lengths they took them to.

Modern nationalists frequently assume that the dead and the living are bound together in an organic community. Ancestors are important for imagining national communities first because they affirm the supposed continuity of the nation from time immemorial, and second, because important individuals can stand as surrogates for the nation as a whole.¹¹ Monarchs or heroes can be said to embody all the virtues of a people, and so the funerals of prominent or symbolically

⁷ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 119.

⁸ CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 237-238.

⁹ Bernea, *Stil Legionar*, 9.

¹⁰ Romanian Orthodox theologians and historians who honored religious heroes as national heroes and vice versa include Dumitru Stănescu, *Din trecutul nostru politic și bisericesc* (Bucharest: Tipografia Curții Regale F. Göbl Fii, 1921); Dumitru Stăniloae, *Viața și activitatea patriarhului Dosoftei al Ierusalimului și legăturile lui cu țările românești* (Cernăuți: Editura Autorului, 1929); Alexandru Lapedatu, “Statul și Biserica ortodoxă,” *Biserica și școala* 59/ 44 (1935): 2-3.

¹¹ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 37, 87, 92. An excellent history of the organicist metaphor upon which modern nationalism is based can be found in Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literature of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 17-234.

important individuals can be used to celebrate the nation as a whole.¹² Many of the people who Legionaries honored were also remembered in state-sponsored commemorations.¹³ Claiming national heroes as *Legionary* heroes let Legionaries equate their movement with the nation itself, something that other nationalists occasionally objected to. When Cuzists and Legionaries turned a commemoration of the poet Mihail Eminescu into fascist rally in June 1934, the writer Mihail Sadoveanu (1880-1961) very noticeably stood up, pushed his hat onto his head, and stormed out.¹⁴

Individuals who Legionaries honored included Petru Mușat (-1391), Stephen the Great (1433-1504), and Ion Vodă the Terrible (1521-1574).¹⁵ These were all medieval rulers who nineteenth century historians had portrayed as Romanian heroes. Legionaries revered them as saints. When the monks at Putna Monastery refused to bless their flag in 1929, Legionaries left it on Stephen the Great's tomb for three days believing that this would sanctify it.¹⁶ Codreanu tried to buy the house of the country's first ruler, Alexandru Ion Cuza, when it came up for sale in 1936, because this was effectively a sacred site for Romanian nationalists.¹⁷

In *Pentru legionari (For the Legionaries)*, Codreanu defined the nation as "(1) All Romanians found, at present, alive; (2) All the souls of the dead and the graves of the ancestors; (3) All those who will be born Romanian."¹⁸ In the same way, Orthodox theologians argue that the church unites all believers, both living and dead, into one living, organic community – the

¹² Laszlo Kurti, "People vs the State: Political Rituals in Contemporary Hungary," *Anthropology Today*, 6/2 (1990): 5-8; Judith Tydor Baumel, "Founding Myths and Heroic Icons: Reflections on the Funerals of Theodor Herzl and Hannah Szenes," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 25/6 (2002): 679-695; Jessica Greenberg, "'Goodbye Serbian Kennedy': Zoran Đinđić and the New Democratic Masculinity in Serbia," *East European Politics and Societies*, 20/1 (2006): 126-151.

¹³ Bucur, *Heroes and Victims*, 98-143.

¹⁴ AN – Iași, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Iasi, Dosar 14/1934, f. 157.

¹⁵ "Sfințirea crucii în amintirea lui Ion Vodă cel Cumplit la Roșcani-Corvului," *Calendarul*, 454 (25 Aug 1933); ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală de Poliție, Dosar 104/1928, f. 11; Dosar 109/1934, f. 33-34; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 230.

¹⁶ Codreanu, *Însemnări*, MS, 23.

¹⁷ "La 29 septembrie se vinde la licitație casa lui Cuza Vodă," *Porunca vremii*, 5/521 (24 Sept 1936).

¹⁸ Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, 334.

body of Christ. Church rituals reinforce this community through prayers to the saints, holy days remembering spiritual heroes, and icons that allow believers to venerate the saints by reflecting on their images.¹⁹ Orthodox Christians remember the dead in two ways. Most often, the souls of the dead are prayed for or commemorated during a part of the weekly liturgy known as the *Proskomide*. The officiating priest performs the *Proskomide* behind the iconostasis, where he reads out the names of those to be prayed for and prepares the bread and wine for the Eucharist.²⁰ Special services known as *parastase* can also be held especially for commemorating the dead.²¹ These are a way of showing that the living stand alongside the dead, praying that God would forgive their sins. A *parastas* is usually held after forty days, after one year, and then again after seven years, whereas praying for the dead during the *Proskomide* takes place whenever it seems appropriate.

Legionaries used both forms of Orthodox commemoration, holding *parastase* for medieval heroes and nineteenth century nationalists as well as for fallen Legionaries. They held *parastase* for their colleagues who had died, either as Legionary martyrs or from natural causes.²² They did so both in order to show their solidarity with the dead and their families, and because this was one common Legionary gathering that the authorities were unlikely or unable to prevent. Legionaries used such events as excuses to hold meetings or to communicate important

¹⁹ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987) 221-222; Georgij Fedotov, *The Russian Religion Mind: Kievan Christianity From the Tenth to the Thirteenth Centuries* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) 16-17; John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004) III.16, p. 95, III.37, p. 109.

²⁰ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) 296.

²¹ For a description of *parastase*, see Gheorghe Enache, *Călătoria cu roua-n picioare, cu ceața-n spinare: studiu asupra ceremonialului de cult funebru la români* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006) 274-284.

²² ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Dosar 10/1935, f. 143; AN – Iași, Fond Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectoratul, Reel #226, Dosar 1480/1934, f. 358-359; CNSAS, Fond Mille Lefter, I.257488, f. 32; Fond Vojen Ion Victor, Dosar P.007215, vol. 2, f. 92.

information to one another.²³ At other times they held “days of prayer and mourning,” during which Codreanu forbade public gatherings and even *parastase*.²⁴ Erecting crosses was another common way Legionaries honored their dead, but this was one custom that the authorities sometimes restricted.²⁵ Unlike the students of the 1920s, Legionaries refrained from holding public celebrations on 10 December from 1935 onwards, hoping to avoid further conflicts with the authorities. Instead, several hundred students would gather in a church for a *parastas* in honor of “students who died for the national ideal.”²⁶ In this way, Legionaries used religious services to commemorate nationalist heroes, honoring them as martyrs.

When Legionaries died, they were buried using words and symbols that showed that they were a part of the Legionary movement. In May 1935 the body of Ioan Ilinoi, Codreanu’s brother in law, was transported using a cart covered in pine branches and swastikas, and pulled along by oxen. A crowd of Legionaries followed the coffin, transforming the funeral into a distinctively Legionary spectacle.²⁷ When the theology student Gheorghe Grigor died in August 1936, over 8,000 people – most of them Legionaries – came to the funeral in Cernăuți.²⁸ At the funeral of Iarca Davidescu in April 1937, Father T. Bratu said in his eulogy that “Iarca served God (he was a theology student) and the Nation (he was a Legionary) because ‘it is only possible to fulfill the call of our times and our lives through the Legion.’” Father Bratu was the leader of the Legion in Buzău county, and the dead student’s father, Father Ioan Davidescu, was also a well-known Legionary.²⁹ Funerals and commemorations made death a regular part of Legionary life. They

²³ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 11, f. 52; Fond Constantin Papanace, I.210821, vol. 1, f. 49.

²⁴ “Ziua de doliu a Garzii de Fier,” *Calendarul*, 534 (8 Dec 1933): 2.

²⁵ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne - Diverse, Inv. 2247, Dosar 10/1935, f. 143.

²⁶ CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 138, 290; AN – Iași, Universitatea A. I. Cuza, Rectoratul, Dosar Reel #335, Dosar 1722/1937, f. 12.

²⁷ CNSAS, Fond Nichifor Crainic, Dosar P.013206, vol. 3, f. 141-143.

²⁸ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală de Poliție, Dosar 4/1936, f. 56.

²⁹ Costea, *Presa Legionară*, 32.

helped confuse the family, the nation, and the church with the Legion, and they provided numerous examples of heroism that Legionaries could aspire to.

Legionaries claimed that they fought on behalf of their dead compatriots, who aided them in their struggle. A front page article in the first issue of *Pământul strămoșesc* (*The Ancestral Land*) from 1927 suggested that the dead made demands upon the living:

No-one hears [the testimony of the soil] on this troubled and enslaved earth, neither in the melancholy folk song (*doina*) about the eternal sufferings of the ancestors, nor in the powerful battle melody, nor in the song warning of glory, which is hummed by the depths of the earth: the archers with Stephen [the Great] in front, Michael [the Brave] in the field of Turda, and Tudor and Horia and Iancu. O, soil of our ancestors! We cry in pity for you. Speak! We listened to you once and we swore faith to you: either we will rescue you from slavery or we shall die in the fight....³⁰

According to this article, Romanians have a moral responsibility to rule the territories where their ancestors were buried. If that land was under foreign occupation or exploited by foreigners such as Jews it would dishonor the sacrifices of those buried there. Later Legionary writers argued that the spirits of the dead could continue to aid the living. Codreanu's *Cărticică șefului de cuib* (*Little Book for Nest Leaders*) said that "the battle will be won by those who know how to attract through the spirit, from the heavens, the mysterious forces of the invisible world and assure themselves support from them. These mysterious forces are the spirits of the dead, the spirits of our ancestors..."³¹ In 1936, Vasile Marin glorified "the spirits of our dead, which are

³⁰ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ilie Gâneală, Ion Moța and Corneliu Georgescu, "Pământul strămoșesc," *Pământul strămoșesc*, 1/1 (1 Aug 1927): 1.

³¹ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, "Cărticica șefului de cuib: Manual al Gărzii de Fier," *Obiectiv Legionar: Revista mișcării Legionare*, 1/4 (2003): 23.

one with the soil, who have overcome matter (*materia*) once again and brought victory to us, trampling down death by death... (*cu moartea pre moarte călcând...*).³² Marin took this last phrase from the “Paschal Troparion,” a hymn sung by Orthodox Christians during the Easter service to remember how Jesus Christ overcame death by dying on the cross.³³ He implied that Romanian heroes also defeated death because they were buried in soil that sustained future generations of Romanians.

14.2 HEROISM AND MOTHERHOOD

When Legionaries spoke about heroic suffering, they were usually talking about men. As far as Legionary ideologists were concerned, women were supposed to express their heroism through motherhood. Legionary writers argued that women would be happier at home than working in an office, and were too easily swayed by sweets and bright lights to be allowed the responsibility of even voting in national elections.³⁴ In 1935 one Legionary writer held up three famous women as examples to be imitated: the mother of Stephan the Great, who loved her country so much that she was willing that her son die for it; Pelaghia Roșu, who led the women from her village in battle against Hungarian forces during the 1848 revolution; and Ecaterina Teodoriu, who disguised herself as a man and fought as a soldier during the First World War.³⁵ Legionaries promised women that even if they were “timid and doubting at first, among us you will become fearless and enthusiastic.”³⁶ “A Legionary sister must be a fearless warrior and a new ideal,” one article said in 1933. “Her home must be an altar and her soul a ray of pure sunlight. Her soul, her

³² Vasile Marin, “Morții noștri,” *Cuvântul Argeșului* (20 Mar 1936).

³³ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973) 104-106.

³⁴ Virginia Anghel, “Femeia de azi și femeia de mâine,” *Brațul de Fier*, 3/21 (15 June – 15 July 1937): 2.

³⁵ F.C.D., “Femeia în episoadele noastră eroice,” *Glasul stramoșesc*, 2/1 (1 Jan 1935): 3.

³⁶ “Pentru tineretul feminin,” *Garda Jiului*, 2/5 (25 Mar 1933): 3.

mind and her hands are for serving the Legion.”³⁷ Legionary ideologues asked for total commitment from female Legionaries. A circular by Nicoleta Nicolescu from 1934 explained: “We have to wish, comrades, to give to this Romania a great woman who understands its aspirations, a great woman that does not hesitate for one moment but, renouncing herself, gives everything: mind, heart, will, to her people, risks everything for it and dies on the barricades always thinking forward.”³⁸

Unlike the female warriors Pelaghia Roșu and Eugenia Teodoriu, the “bravery” these writers expected of women happened inside the home. A 1932 article in *Pământul strămoșesc* defined the “new Romanian woman” entirely through what she could encourage her children and husband to do for the Legion.³⁹ Nicoleta Nicolescu wrote that motherhood “is the most sacred of roles, because from it come the future defenders of the country.”⁴⁰ Radu Gyr taught that “through her mission as a mother, wife, companion, and Christian, moral, and social educator, - and as a dynamic element in stimulating spiritual-national élan – a woman synthesizes Christianity, devotion, faith, abnegation, heroism, and sacrifice.”⁴¹ He used examples of famous literary and historical women including the virgin Mary and Sophocles’ Antigone as examples of the heroic devotion that women showed to their children, brothers, and husbands.

Among all the voices of Legionary mothers that have survived, not one speaks about the experience in positive terms. As the mother of three Legionary sons, Ecaterina Lefter wrote to the Minister of the Interior of how hard it was when her husband was on his death bed and two of her boys could not care for him because they were in prison.⁴² Some became sick themselves

³⁷ “Cum se constituie o cetățuie,” *Garda de Fier* (Basarabia) 1/3 (1 Apr 1933): 3.

³⁸ Nicoleta Nicolescu, quoted in Săndulescu, “Revolutionizing Romania from the Right,” 175.

³⁹ Măgură, “Românca cea nouă,” *Pământul strămoșesc* 4/2 (1932): 13.

⁴⁰ Nicoleta Nicolescu, quoted in Ioana Nastase, “Pentru noi, noile Legionare,” *Cuvântul* (25 Oct 1940).

⁴¹ Radu Gyr, *Femeia în eroismul spiritual, moral, și național* (Bucharest: Editura “Cetățuia Legionară,” 1937) 39.

⁴² CNSAS, Fond Mille Lefter, I.257488, f. 3.

from worry.⁴³ Others were inconsolable. After her husband died fighting in the Spanish Civil War, Ana Maria Marin was so angry with Codreanu that she temporarily turned her back on the Legion.⁴⁴ Wives of Legionary husbands faced many of the same challenges that mothers did. Some were left home to raise children and rarely saw husbands who spent their time travelling the country, in prison, or becoming martyrs. The wife of a priest living under house arrest, Elena Imbrescu claimed that she had been left without food now that her husband could not support her.⁴⁵ Writing letters to request the release of loved ones was a common occupation for Legionary wives, as was organizing food and clothing parcels for men in prison or passing on news about their wellbeing.⁴⁶

Legionaries expected women to make numerous sacrifices for the Legion. Police surveillance reveals that while a man was in hiding, the women around him carried messages, supplied him with food, and looked after his loved ones.⁴⁷ Even when police agents were searching for male Legionaries it was often women who they followed, because information about men's whereabouts was generally carried through women, whose residences were more stable.⁴⁸ Despite the risks that women took, Legionary writers usually only mentioned female heroism when they were trying to convince women to make even more sacrifices. Legionaries spoke of men's sacrifices in terms of heroism, while they accepted women's work as unremarkable. When describing the women's sections of the Falange he had seen in Spain, the Legionary Father Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa commented that the Spanish also educated women to be good mothers and housewives as well as allowing the women to collect money and look after the

⁴³ Jeni Aterian, *Jurnalul unei ființe greu de mulțumit* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991) 352.

⁴⁴ Interview with Ana Maria Marin (17 July 1998) in Conovici, Iliescu and Silvescu eds., *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 92-93.

⁴⁵ CNSAS, Fond Robu Nichifor, P.000324, vol. 11, f. 24.

⁴⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 252/1939, f. 268

⁴⁷ USHMM, Fond Ministry of the Interior – Diverse, Reel #139, Dosar 7/1930, f. 85-88.

⁴⁸ USHMM, Fond Ministry of the Interior – Diverse, Reel #139, Dosar 6/1930, f. 129.

wounded. “The understood their role well,” he wrote, “That should never be forgotten lest people try to do more than they are able to. Women’s groups should stick to their specific roles.”⁴⁹

14.3 THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War on 17 July 1936 gave a small group of Legionaries the opportunity to become fascist heroes by fighting communism in a modern war. Throughout of the conflict, ultra-nationalist newspapers were full of stories about atrocities committed by left-wing forces against priests, women, and children.⁵⁰ As did the Nazis, Legionaries used stories about attacks on churches and clergymen and women to recruit priests to their cause.⁵¹ In 1936 a team of eight Legionaries travelled to Spain to present a sword to General José Moscardo (1878-1956), the military governor of the province of Toledo and a leader of the nationalist forces in Spain. Legionaries were asked to donate 20 lei each to fund the expedition, and Nae Ionescu alone contributed 50,000 lei.⁵² Several of the team members sent regular letters back to Romania to be published in sympathetic newspapers. Both these letters and the books written by survivors afterwards presented the Spanish expedition as an example of Legionary heroism. In his book *Crucificații* (*The Crucified*, 1937), one of the Legionaries who went to Spain, Baniță Dobre (1908-1939), showed how between them, the team combined all of the Legionary virtues:

⁴⁹ Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 78.

⁵⁰ A. de Grijalba, “Sunt un evadat!” *Sfarmă piatră*, 2/40 (27 Aug 1936): 4; Paul Mihail, “Mersul războiului Spaniol,” *Buna vestire*, 1/17 (28 Feb 1937): 6; Ion Victor Vojen, “Politică Vaticanului,” *Buna vestire*, 1/116 (17 July 1937). Cf. Fascist speeches about the Spanish Civil War in ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 45/1937, f. 20-21, 57-58.

⁵¹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Dosar 3/1936, f. 160. On the German case, see Beth A. Griech-Polelle, “The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Roman Catholic Clergy in Nazi Germany,” in Kevin P. Spicer ed., *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007) 121-135. Romanian theologians also argued that priests should be ready to face death in the battle against anti-Christian forces in Spain and Russia. Dumitru Stăniloae, “Eroismul preotesc,” *Telegraful român*, 85/4 (24 Jan 1937): 1-2.

⁵² CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 50-53; AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de poliție, Dosar 93/1936, f. 311; Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 13.

General [Cantacuzino] is honorable, aristocratic in his gestures, pure in his thoughts, and sublime in his actions. [Ion] Moța is idealistic, seemingly detached from worldly things, overflowing with goodness, and sometimes as rigid and calm as an Englishman. Vasile Marin is spiritual; scornful and impatient to taste battle. The prince [Alexandru Cantacuzino] is isolated and proud. [Nicolae] Totu is sometimes childish, at other times paternally serious, and always looking for souvenirs to bring back home. ... Mr. [Gheorghe] Clime ... never worries about what could happen. He looks for maps, makes plans, teaches himself Spanish, and is always busy thinking about those at home. The priest [Ion Borșa-]Dumitrescu seems to me a true stoic martyr, separate from all that is of the flesh. It is like he would be disappointed if fate brought him back home. For him the Cross and Christ are the only reasons to be alive.⁵³

These men all came from diverse backgrounds, but each was deeply committed to the Legion. The fact that the team included both Romanian aristocrats and distinguished Legionaries, Traian Brăileanu argued, proved that the Legion was overthrowing the old social order to create a genuine “aristocracy of merit.”⁵⁴ According to the propagandistic accounts written by the participants, the first thing any of them did before leaving the country was to go to confession and to say goodbye to their families as dutiful sons.⁵⁵ Their friends gave them small icons, prayer books, and lucky amulets to carry with them on the journey.⁵⁶ Recording such incidents reinforced the idea that these Legionary heroes were pious and obedient as well as courageous. They travelled through Poland and Germany by train, stopping at Berlin to do some sightseeing

⁵³ Dobre, *Crucificații*, 9-10.

⁵⁴ Traian Brăileanu, “Desăvârșirea structurii elitei legionare,” *Însemnări sociologice*, 2/9 (1936): 1.

⁵⁵ Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 20-21, 25; Moța, *Testamentul*, 19-22.

⁵⁶ Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 26.

on the way. They were disgusted with the number of Jews they saw in Poland, but awed by German efficiency, cleanliness, and prosperity.⁵⁷ In Hamburg they boarded a boat named “*Monte Olivio*” that took them to Lisbon in Portugal, from where they caught more trains to Toledo via Salamanca . On the boat the Legionaries said that they kept themselves separate from other tourists, displaying Legionary discipline by not dancing, laughing, or joking in public.⁵⁸

As they travelled, the Legionaries reflected on how closely they identified with fascists abroad. Ion Țurcan, the leader of the Legion in Suceava, wrote that for these men “the Yid problem was global. Not only the Romanian nation is in danger, but all of Christianity. Judaism is an international force – the most powerful that has ever existed – which seeks to dominate through two means: Freemasonry and Communism.”⁵⁹ As far as they were concerned, the fight in Spain was the same battle that they had been fighting for yours in Romania. Legionary accounts frequently mention coming into contact with other European fascist groups. They saw “a team of young nationalists” in Lwów who gave them the fascist salute.⁶⁰ When they arrived in Lisbon, Marin discovered that the Carlists and the Falangists were “perfectly informed” about the Legion. He felt a deep solidarity with them based on “the common battle we are fighting against diabolic masonic-Marxism.”⁶¹ They were impressed by the number of flags with swastikas they saw, representing both German Nazis and Portuguese nationalists.⁶² Nicolae Totu taught young Spanish nationalists to salute like Legionaries and to shout “Long live the Legion!” in Romanian.⁶³ For his part, Moța taught the Spaniards Legionary hymns.⁶⁴ The Legionaries

⁵⁷ Dobre, *Crucificații*, 7-8; Marin, *Crez de generație*, 19-22.

⁵⁸ Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 34, 38.

⁵⁹ Ion Țurcan, *Ion I. Moța și Vasile Marin în lumina scrisului și faptei lor* (Cernăuți: Insemnări Sociologice, 1937) 32.

⁶⁰ Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 29.

⁶¹ Marin, *Crez de generație*, 26.

⁶² Ion Moța, “Cei din urma articli,” *Libertatea*, 34/15 (8 Apr 1937): 1.

⁶³ Marin, *Crez de generație*, 24.

⁶⁴ Dobre, *Crucificații*, 15; Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 78.

apparently got along well with the other foreign volunteers – “though they were foreigners, Turks, Germans, Italians, Portugese, Romanians, etc., it seemed like Spain united us all and made us part of the same people (*neam*).”⁶⁵

Several accounts mentioned favorable omens, such as finding the symbol of the Iron Guard embroidered on a tablecloth in Lisbon or noticing a pictures and statues of the Archangel Michael on public buildings.⁶⁶ The Legionaries took this to mean that God was on their side and was guiding them forward. They report holding frequent church services and prayer meetings while on the trip.⁶⁷ Moța tried divining their fortunes through cards, which showed that they would have success.⁶⁸ Fortune telling proved to be an ambiguous lacuna in the Legion’s moral teaching. Clime frowned on Moța’s card tricks because he felt that they were un-Christian. But as Vasile Marin pointed out, their heroism outweighed any wrongdoing involved. He commented that “if Nicoleta [Nicolescu] saw us with cards like this, with ugly and almost naked women on them, she would throw them in the fire and turn her back on us. But if I (who made them) or Ionel [Moța] (who told our fortunes with them) were to die in Spain and someone were to show these cards to Nicoleta, she would put them in a museum.”⁶⁹

When they arrived in Salamanca, General Cantacuzino presented General Moscardo with a sword engraved with a picture of the Archangel Michael. The official part of their mission completed, Ion Moța convinced the others to enlist to fight in the war. They joined as foreign volunteers, although General Cantacuzino returned to Romania because the Spanish would not let him fight due to his advanced age. Some of the Legionaries apparently found military drills

⁶⁵ Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 100.

⁶⁶ Marin, *Crez de generație*, 25, 27; Moța, “Cei din urma articli;” Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 31, 49-50, 74-75, 96

⁶⁷ Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 20, 53-54, 66, 95-96, 112, 122

⁶⁸ Cantacuzino, *Pentru Christos*, 6-7.

⁶⁹ Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 142.

difficult despite all of the marching they had done in Romania, and it took a while for them to learn how to use their weapons and to get into shape.⁷⁰ They complained bitterly about the cold, and three of them fell ill with the flu.⁷¹ Accounts of their first days on the front expressed horror at the desolated churches and villages that they passed through, but also jubilation over their initial victories.⁷² In crisp, short sentences that retold the story like an action movie, Totu described how “We advanced rapidly. Our speed overwhelmed them. We caught several communists who did not have time to retreat. They were killed immediately. That is the law.”⁷³ Baniță Dobre was shot in the shoulder soon after the fighting began, and he was taken to a field hospital behind the lines. Ion Moța and Vasile Marin died on 13 January 1937, killed by the same grenade. Alexandru Cantacuzino covered Moța with a flag bearing the image of the Archangel Michael, and the Romanians slowly retreated.⁷⁴ They left the front as soon as they were able, and accompanied Moța’s and Marin’s bodies back to Romania.

All of those who wrote about Moța and Marin’s deaths discussed them in terms of sacrifice. Before he left Romania, Ion Moța had written to his parents that “*this is how I have understood my life’s duty. I have loved Christ and gone happily to die for Him! Why worry yourselves too much, when my soul is saved, [and] in the Kingdom of God?*”⁷⁵ After their deaths, Nae Ionescu said that “Ion Moța went to die. He believed deeply that the salvation of our people needed the sacrifice of his physical body. ... He did not go to fight, but so that he might overcome death for us. ... But Vasile Marin did not have to die. He went to face the enemy of his

⁷⁰ Dobre, *Crucificații*, 35. For a more positive account of how the Legionaries survived military training, see Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă*, 106, 108-109.

⁷¹ Marin, *Crez de generație*, 38.

⁷² Dobre, *Crucificații*, 41-66; cf. Nicolae Totu, “Însemnări de pe front,” serialized in *Buna vestire* during February and March 1937.

⁷³ Nicolae Totu, “Însemnări de pe front,” *Buna vestire*, 1/3 (24 Feb 1937) 1-2.

⁷⁴ Dobre, *Crucificații*, 94-95.

⁷⁵ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 225. His italics.

faith and to battle him.”⁷⁶ Nicolae Totu wrote of his awe at having had the privilege to live together with these “great saints” despite his own shortcomings.⁷⁷ Hagiographic writings about the pair appeared in a number of fascist periodicals in the following months.⁷⁸

The deaths had a great impact on observers, and the journalist Mircea Eliade wrote that he became involved in Legion as a result of what he saw as their “sacrifice for Christianity.”⁷⁹ Spanish Catholics also defined death in the Civil War as a form of martyrdom.⁸⁰ Deliberately confusing dying for the nation with dying for the Church proved very effective in both countries. In Romania, a number of church magazines and newspapers praised Moța and Marin, “whose fight for the victory of the Cross over God’s enemies was holy and glorious.”⁸¹ They affirmed that the deaths of these “martyrs” would produce much spiritual fruit in Romania. *Predania* (*Tradition*, 1937), a theological magazine edited by the Legionary George Racoveanu (1900-1967), wrote that “from now on we believe – all our intuition tells us – that churches will not be blown up in our country, the bones of the saints will not be profaned, and the unanimous conscience of an entire people will not allow the chaos of communism to enter the spiritual and physical borders of Romania. ... Men fell, but the archangels in them triumphed over Lucifer.”⁸²

⁷⁶ Nae Ionescu, “Prefața,” in Marin, *Crez de generație*, xii.

⁷⁷ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 258-259.

⁷⁸ See especially the special edition of *Cuvântul studențesc*, 12/1-4 (1937): passim.

⁷⁹ Mircea Eliade, “Ion Moța și Vasile Marin,” *Vremea*, 10/472 (1937): 3. Much of Eliade’s scholarly work between 1938 and 1943 dwelt on the notion of sacrificial death as a creative action. Eugen Ciurtin, “Raffaele Pettazonni et Mircea Eliade: historiens des religions généralistes devant les fascismes (1933-1945),” in Horst Junginger ed., *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 356; Mircea Eliade, “Master Manole and the Monastery of Argeș,” in Alan Dundes ed., *The Walled-Up Wife: A Casebook* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996) 71-94.

⁸⁰ Brian D. Bunk, *Ghosts of Passion: Martyrdom, Gender, and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007) 36, 40.

⁸¹ “Cronica internă,” *Luminătorul*, 70/2 (Feb 1937): 126. Cf. “Crucea Martirilor,” *Lumina tineretului*, 4/24 (1 Feb 1937): 3; “Cronica internă,” *Păstorul ortodox*, 18/1 (Jan 1937): 33; Pr. Coriolan Dragan, “Lacrimi în amintirea eroului Ionel Moța,” *Telegraful român*, 85/5 (31 Jan 1937): 1; and several articles in *Lumina satelor* from 24 Jan to 28 Feb 1937.

⁸² “Ion Moța și Vasile Marin,” *Predania*, 1/1 (15 Feb 1937): 8.

14.4 THE FUNERAL OF ION MOȚA AND VASILE MARIN

Using the bodies of the two dead men, the assembled mourners, the Romanian rail system and the streets of Bucharest, Legionaries transformed their mourning rituals into an enormous propaganda exercise. Funerary rites began almost as soon as news of Moța and Marin's deaths reached Romania.⁸³ On January 17, the Legion held a commemoration service at a "student church" in Bucharest.⁸⁴ The police reported 1500 to 2000 participants in all. The religious service was carried out by a group of priests (a *sobor*) led by the Vicar of Bucharest, Veniamin Pocitan (1870-1955). Afterwards the priests, together with Codreanu, led a parade of mourners into the public square, where they held another religious service. Two priests gave short speeches at the end of the service, stressing the need for sacrifices such as Moța's and Marin's, and explaining that these men had died "for the cross of Christ." Then the crowd sang "*Imnul legionarilor căzuți*" (the "Hymn of the Fallen Legionaries").⁸⁵ The centrality of the Orthodox priests and liturgy in this spectacle, together with the solemn singing and disciplined organization, emphasized how important both political power and religious ritual were to the Legionaries.

Representatives of every student organizations were in attendance at the initial commemoration, as were members of the LANC and Spanish and German diplomats. Community groups that were not able to attend quickly sent telegrams expressing sympathy and support.⁸⁶ Student leaders and representatives of *Corpul Muncitoresc Legionar* (the Legionary Workers Corps, CML) were in the forefront of these groups, highlighting those sections of the

⁸³ Codreanu announced the deaths in a circular on 15 January 1937. Codreanu, *Circulări*, 119.

⁸⁴ The *pomenirea* was initially meant to be held at Sf. Gorgani-Ilie Church, but it was moved to Sf. Anton at the last minute. Legionaries regularly used both churches to hold services in. CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 54.

⁸⁵ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 261-262; Codreanu, *Circulări*, 119-120.

⁸⁶ CNSAS, Fond Zelea Codreanu Corneliu, P. 011784, vol. 8, f. 15, 18; Zinaida Vintan, "La moartea unui erou," *Telegraful român*, 85/5 (31 Jan 1937): 3.

population that the Legion was targeting in 1937. Flags emphasized that this was a *Legionary* event, and the presence of specially-invited foreign diplomats showed that even if the Romanian government did not care about these two young men, the Legion was recognized as a political force by foreign powers. A number of Romanian public figures associated with the Legion also took part, although no prominent members of the government appeared. Having LANC members in attendance demonstrated first that the two competing fascist groups could cooperate on matters of importance, and second, that in becoming martyrs, the Legionaries had outdone the *Lancieri* (LANC members) in their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the nation. No members of either of the dead men's families were mentioned amongst the multitude of names contained in the police report.⁸⁷ Other services were held throughout the country in late January, often run by organizations not officially associated with the Legion.⁸⁸

When it came to the preparations for the actual funeral, the Romanian government was consistently on the back foot. Rather than taking the bodies of Moța and Marin across the country, where thousands of people could see them, the government had requested that the bodies be brought directly to Bucharest. This suggestion was overruled by the Legion's supporters in Parliament.⁸⁹ The bodies were brought back to Romania via Germany and Poland, a journey that took twenty-six days. When they reached Berlin, the coffins of Moța and Marin were greeted with a military parade that included SS and SA members, Hitler's personal bodyguard, and diplomatic representatives from Germany, Spain, and Italy.⁹⁰ When the bodies entered Romania, Codreanu and the families of the dead met the train at the Polish border. The

⁸⁷ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 261-262.

⁸⁸ "Legionarii Moța și Marin," *Ardealul*, (24 Jan 1937); AN – Iași, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție, Dosar 7/1938, f. 91.

⁸⁹ Ion Modreanu, G. Urziceanu, and Adam Ionescu all spoke in favor of allowing the mortuary train its choice of route. Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 264.

⁹⁰ "Salutul dat la Berlin," *Curentul*, 10/3241 (9 Feb 1937).

train then took seven more days to transport Moța and Marin to Bucharest. It stopped at major cities as well as at places where Ion Moța had spent time during his childhood.⁹¹ The train bypassed cities such as Iași and Galați, where the Legion was particularly strong, but zigzagged through Transylvania, where Legionaries needed to gain more supporters. The cathedral at Cernăuți – the city closest to the border – overflowed with mourners when the train stopped there for an entire day. According to Banică Dobre, “the main road looked like a black snake, undulating and climbing [towards the Cathedral.] Everyone was in national costume or green shirts; women, children, and old men came together to weep and to hope.”⁹² Religious activities accompanied the train wherever it went.⁹³ A crowd of over 5,000 peasants fell to its knees when the bodies arrived in Pașcani. The train station at Băcau smelt of incense and myrrh thanks to the religious service carried out on the platform in front of the train. High officials from both the Orthodox and Uniate Churches made speeches in front of the coffins in Cluj.⁹⁴ The Legionary Olimpiu Borzea, who was a high school student in 1937, said that his entire class except for two students went to see the train when it passed through Sibiu, where a *sobor* of 32 priests carried out commemorative services at the train station.⁹⁵

Using a train to allow as many people as possible to see the bodies imitated the funeral of the Swiss Nazi leader Wilhelm Gustloff (1895-1936) in northern Germany in 1936. Constantin Iordachi writes that “the journey of Gustloff’s coffin had taken fifteen hours, with the train

⁹¹ Horia Sima, *Histoire du mouvement légionnaire* (Rio de Janeiro: Editôra Dacia, 1972) 305-313.

⁹² Dobre, *Crucificații*, 109.

⁹³ “Trenul cu rămășițele lui Moța și Marin, spre Capitală,” *Curentul*, 10/3245 (13 Feb 1937): 9.

⁹⁴ Valentin Săndulescu, “Sacralised Politics in Action: The February 1937 Burial of the Romanian Legionary Leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2 (2007) 264.

⁹⁵ Interview with Olimpiu Borzea (3 July 2001), in in Conovici, Iliescu and Silvestru eds., *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 55-57.

Students demanded that their classes be cancelled to allow them to mourn properly, and the university authorities were too intimidated to refuse. The government was also outmaneuvered when Codreanu invited diplomatic representatives from Spain, Italy, Germany and Poland to attend the funeral. This made it look like this was a state funeral, but the government allowed the foreigners to come anyway, using the excuse that they did not wish to offend the foreign governments involved.¹⁰⁰ Rejecting the foreign ambassadors would have been a particularly charged move considering that the bodies had already received a warm welcome from German, Spanish and Italian officials when they arrived in Berlin on the way to Romania.¹⁰¹

The funeral procession filled the main streets of Bucharest, with Legionaries marching in formation, demonstrating their discipline and their numbers. The pall-bearers marched in the shape of a cross. Such “living crosses” became a regular feature of Legionary funerals under the National Legionary State in 1940-41.¹⁰² Nicolae Iorga complained that “Codreanu followed the funeral car like a sovereign, with everyone falling to their knees and bowing before him.”¹⁰³ Codreanu’s behavior belied the purely memorial nature of the occasion, demonstrating that the purpose of this funeral was to assert Codreanu’s importance and his power vis-à-vis the government. The Romanian Orthodox Church was also well represented by two Metropolitans, a Bishop, and between 200 and 400 priests in full robes.¹⁰⁴

After the funeral ceremony, those present took an oath, saying “I swear before God, and before your holy sacrifice for Christ and for the Legion, to separate myself from all worldly

¹⁰⁰ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 270-274. Cf. CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 8, f. 44-45; Pamfil Șeicaru, “În greu impas,” *Curentul*, 10/3251 (19 feb 1937): 12.

¹⁰¹ “Salutul dat la Berlin,” *Curentul*, 10/3241 (9 Feb 1937): 1.

¹⁰² “Înmormântarea Legionare Dr. Elena Petela,” *Cuvântul*, Oct 14, 1940.

¹⁰³ Iorga, *Memorii*, vol. 7, 398.

¹⁰⁴ Mirel Bănică, *Biserica ortodoxă română: stat și societate în anii '30* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2007) 150.

pleasures, to renounce worldly love, and to be always ready to die for the resurrection of my people.”¹⁰⁵ Mircea Eliade reflected upon the uniqueness of this oath, writing that “Christianity has never appeared so robust in the history of modern Romania as it does in these days, when tens of thousands of people swore before God to tear themselves from earthly joys. Romanian nature has never before been willing to be so tragic, so substantial – in a word, so Christian.”¹⁰⁶ Rather than collectively chanting the Orthodox liturgy, mourners were expected to repeat words that bound them to the Legion in the same way that they might have bound themselves to God in a different context.

Romanian funerary rituals and beliefs about the dead vary dramatically from place to place. Ion Moța came from Transylvania, and Vasile Marin from Bucharest, meaning that no one funeral held for both men could reflect the practices of their natal communities. This created a problem for any movement seeking to embody traditional Romanian peasant practices on a national scale. In Transylvania, where Ion Moța grew up, only the deceased’s closest relatives dug the grave, whereas in Vasile Marin’s birthplace of Bucharest, the priest was supposed to move the first soil. In Moldavia, where the Legion first took root, only villagers who were not related to the deceased could dig the hole.¹⁰⁷ In this case a team of Legionaries, including Codreanu, did the work. This burial was about the Legion, not about the two men’s families. Uniformed Legionaries guarded the mausoleum near the Green House in Bucharest, where Moța and Marin were buried. Legionaries were scandalized when lightning struck the mausoleum later in 1937, occasioning a fresh pilgrimage to the site.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Sima, *Histoire du Mouvement Légionnaire*, 313.

¹⁰⁶ Mircea Eliade, “Comentarii la un jurământ,” *Vremea*, 10/476 (1937): 2.

¹⁰⁷ Simeon Florin Marian, *Înmormântarea la români: studiu etnografic* (Bucharest: Editura Grai și Suflet – Cultura Națională, 1995) 207.

¹⁰⁸ “Mausoleul Legionarilor Moța și Marin a fost lovit de trăsnet,” *Ardealul*, (20 June 1937).

At Codreanu's request, Radu Gyr and Ion Mânzatu wrote "*Cântecul eroilor Moța-Marin*" ("Song of the heroes Moța and Marin").¹⁰⁹ This song was not sung at the funeral. Instead, they sang "*Imnul Legionarilor căzuți*" (the "Hymn of the Fallen Legionaries"). This was a slow, plodding dirge that emphasized the irrevocability of death, and the fact that even though everyone else – even their families – had forgotten the fallen Legionaries, the singers will never forget.¹¹⁰ "*Cântecul eroilor Moța-Marin*" introduced a different theme, which was that death itself would give birth to life and victory. Mânzatu says that the song was deliberately split into two distinct aspects: the verses would carry the accentuated march of a solemn funeral dirge, and the chorus would end in the 'apotheosis' of the fallen heroes. The lyrics of the second chorus capture the apotheosis quite succinctly by quoting Ion Moța himself, albeit in a more romanticized context than that in which he had originally written the words:

Moța, in the trench, covered in blood	<i>Moța, în șant, plin de sânge,</i>
Whispers, dying, the prayer:	<i>Șoptește, murind, rugaciunea:</i>
'Death calls us to its bosom	<i>'Moartea la pieptu-i ne strânge</i>
To make the Legion even prouder;	<i>Să creasca mai mândra Legiunea;</i>
Captain, create a country	<i>Să faci Capitane o țara</i>
Like the holy sun of Heaven'.	<i>Ca soarele sfânt de pe Cer'.</i> ¹¹¹

In this song, Gyr and Mânzatu associated the heroic acceptance of suffering and death with regeneration and new life. Legionaries could die, they said, confident in the knowledge that their sacrifices would make the Legion stronger. Relating movement, nation, and Christianity to one

¹⁰⁹ Mânzatu, 'Imnul tinereții Legionare', p. 169.

¹¹⁰ A modern recording of this hymn can be found together with the lyrics at <http://www.codreanu.ro/immuri.htm>. Accessed: 16 Dec 2011.

¹¹¹ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu Zelea, P.011784, vol. 21, f. 42-50.

another, the song suggested that the country would become holier as the Legion became prouder. Legionaries not only stated that church and nation were identical communities that were represented most perfectly by their movement; they enacted these relationships by using Orthodox funerary rituals to commemorate Legionaries as national heroes. As mothers, women were to piously raise their children to love the nation and the faith, preparing them to fight and to die for the Legion. Legionary nationalism did not replace religious communities with national communities, through ritual commemorations it reinforced the Orthodox Church as national, and the nation as Orthodox.

15.0 EPILOGUE

Government repression of the Legion increased after Codreanu dissolved the movement in February 1938. From this point onwards, the everyday experience of fascism changed dramatically for Legionaries at all levels of the movement. State functionaries and high school students now faced prison if they were found engaging in Legionary activities.¹ As the Legion no longer existed, the government insisted that Codreanu also close down Legionary restaurants and businesses. Codreanu had trouble repaying his creditors on short notice, and some Legionaries accused him of mismanaging the movement's funds.² Angry about these financial problems, Codreanu wrote an open letter to the king's counselor, Nicolae Iorga. He accused Iorga of betraying the ultra-nationalist movement that he had been instrumental in founding at the beginning of the century. Before the First World War, Iorga had called on ethnic Romanians to establish their own businesses to undercut Jewish competition, but now his government banned Legionaries enterprises. "You are unfair!" Codreanu wrote. "You are dishonest!"³ Iorga charged Codreanu with libel, and on 19 April 1938 a Military Tribunal sentenced Codreanu to six months in prison. Many of the Legion's leaders were arrested together with Codreanu, including 150 people in Bucharest alone.⁴ In Constanța county, which was not an unusually strong Legionary center, the police raided 538 houses on the night of 16/17 April 1938.⁵ That month police began confiscating crosses (*troițe*) erected by Legionaries and taking them to cemeteries, where they removed any Legionary markings and began using them as gravestones.⁶ On 27 May 1938 another Military Tribunal sentenced Codreanu to ten years in prison for treason and for inciting

¹ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 118/1938, f. 2, 22.

² Codreanu, *Circulări*, 260-263; CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu, P.011784, vol. 13, f. 329, vol. 19, f. 55.

³ The Romanian phrase is much stronger than it sounds in English: "Ești un incorect! Ești un necinstit suflețește!" Codreanu, *Circulări*, 264-267.

⁴ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 60-64.

⁵ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 96.

⁶ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 142-143.

rebellion.⁷ Most of the other Legionaries arrested that spring were tried in July and remained in prison or under house arrest for the rest of the year.⁸ In December 1938 and January 1939, groups of the most senior Legionaries still at large fled to Germany. Gathering in Berlin, they attempted to lead the movement in Romania by sending messengers to those inside the country who still respected their authority. Personal rivalries soon fractured the unity of this group, making effective leadership even more difficult.⁹

With all of its senior leaders either behind bars or in exile, the Legion's hierarchy was in chaos, allowing extremist individuals more liberty to engage in desperate actions in the movement's name. No longer a confident social movement, the Legion began to resemble a clandestine terrorist organization. Those who took over as leaders did so as wanted men and women who could not come out of hiding for fear of arrest. At the end of April 1938, Legionaries created an interim leadership team of five members, led by Ion Belgea (1909-1939), but also including Radu Mironovici, Horia Sima (1907-1993), Ion Antoniu (-1939), and Iordache Nicoară (-1939). These leaders were also arrested one by one, and by August 1938 Sima was the only one not in prison.¹⁰ Sima had joined the Legion when he was a student in Bucharest in 1927, and had proved to be a very effective organizer in Severin county during the mid-1930s.¹¹ He asked Codreanu's permission to officially take over as leader of the movement, and the latter did give his permission for Sima to continue as a leader although he ordered Vasile

⁷ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 112-123.

⁸ Ilarion Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară după Corneliu Codreanu* (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 2007) 51; CNSAS, Fond Bazavan Gheorghe, Dosar I.184933, vol. 3, f. 115, 117; Fond Demestrescu Radu, Dosar I.184933, vol. 1, f. 46-48; Fond Constantin Papanace, I.210821, vol. 2, f. 234-240; Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 3, f. 173-174. Cf. the numerous arrest warrants in AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 8/1938, f 140, 142, 150, 169, 358, 431; Dosar 91/1938, f. 161, 217-219, 234, 237, 286, 456, 458.

⁹ Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară*, 116-119, 132-136.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

Cristescu to take formal command and for Sima to rely on Constantin Papanace for advice.¹² A police report from May 1940 argued that during 1938 “Horia Sima reorganized the movement on other foundations and with other members, ... precisely in those counties whose ... [former leaders] were imprisoned.”¹³ Even though many of the imprisoned leaders swore loyalty to Carol’s regime, Sima managed to ignore their new oaths and by-pass the old chain of command completely. From this point on, Legionaries attempted to keep their hierarchy as anonymous as possible, such that each Legionary would only know his immediate superior and could not betray large numbers of Legionaries all at once.¹⁴

Police reports show the authorities becoming increasingly paranoid about a possible Legionary coup or assassination attempts over the summer. They speculated that Legionaries had begun arming themselves, and worried about prison breaks or peasant uprisings in support of Codreanu.¹⁵ Legionaries continued doing muted propaganda, rebuilding their communications networks and raising money to help those in prison.¹⁶ They introduced secret codes, and one police report claimed that Legionaries in Iași had begun petitioning to have bus stops moved to locations near their houses or offices, making it easier to pass messages or packages on and off buses when they were stopped.¹⁷

¹² Ibid., 78.

¹³ Dana Beldiman ed., *Dosar Horia Sima (1940-1946)* (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 2000) 70.

¹⁴ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 91/1938, f. 236.

¹⁵ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 8/1938, f. 58, 62, 91; Dosar 12/1938, f. 28; Dosar 91/1938, f. 1.

¹⁶ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 8/1938, f. 113, 127, 157, 274; Dosar 12/1938, f. 10, 18, 25; Dosar 91/1938, f. 153, 154, 179, 236, 302, .

¹⁷ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 8/1938, f. 366; Dosar 2/1938, f. 28.

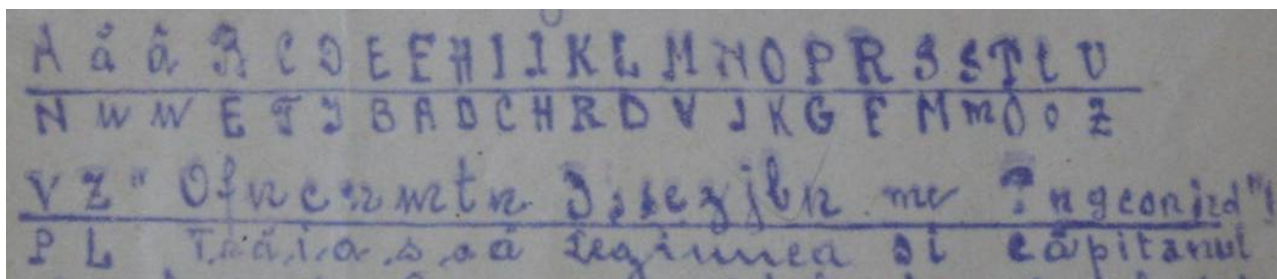


Figure 46: An example of a code used by Legionaries during 1938.¹⁸

The extent of official concern about possible Legionary uprisings can be seen in the fact that the Polish film *Cetatea tăcerii* (*Castle of Silence*, 1938) was banned by government censors two days before its premier in April 1938. The film portrayed a patriotic uprising of Polish prisoners in 1831, and censors were concerned that it might inspire Legionaries to begin a civil war. Censors demanded that all scenes involving rebellion – half of the film – be cut, and even then they were reluctant to screen it.¹⁹

Publically defending Codreanu while he was in prison was a punishable offence.²⁰ Increasingly desperate, Legionaries began a wave of violent terrorist actions at the beginning of November.²¹ That month, the first issue of *Curierul legionar* (*The Legionary Courier*, 1938) began by quoting the lyrics to Andrei Mureșanu's famous anthem, *Deșteaptă-te române!* (*Wake Up Romanian!*): “Better to die gloriously in battle / Than to be slaves once again on this ancient soil.” (*Murim mai bine-n luptă cu glorie deplină / Decât să fim sclavi iarăși în vechiul nost' pământ.*)²² Putting this dictum into practice, Legionaries used dynamite and grenades to blow up

¹⁸ AN – Iași, Fond Chestura de Poliție, Dosar 2/1938, f. 28.

¹⁹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Naționale – Direcția Cinematografiei, Dosar 20/1940, f. 1-2, 44.

²⁰ Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară*, 68, 96.

²¹ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 183-187.

²² Andrei Mureșanu, *Deșteaptă-te române!*, quoted in Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 187.

Jewish homes, factories, theaters, and synagogues.²³ The violence culminated in the attempted assassination of the Chancellor of the University of Cluj, Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă (1881-1958), on 28 November 1938 by two young Legionaries. They believed that Ștefănescu-Goangă had been behind the arrests of a number of students earlier that year. He was also the brother-in-law of another of the Legion's enemies – Armand Călinescu (1893-1939). As Minister of the Interior, Călinescu had ordered Codreanu's arrest and subsequent trials.²⁴ King Carol II was visiting Berlin when Ștefănescu-Goangă was shot, and his audience with Adolf Hitler was constantly interrupted by phone calls from Romania informing him about the attempted assassination, making it look as though Carol did not have firm control of his own country.²⁵ Two days later, on 30 November 1938, gendarmes drove Codreanu and thirteen other Legionaries into a field on the outskirts of Bucharest where they strangled and then shot them.²⁶

Legionary sources describe torture and beatings by the police during 1938 and 1939, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in Romanian prisons, and being buried or incinerated alive. According to a petition written by Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa in October 1938, “for some time now the police have begun using abhorrent torture. Scores of Legionaries are beaten and thrown into prison every day. An entire system of torture inspired by the Cheka [Bolshevik Secret Police, 1917-1922] is used. ... Twisting the legs, striking and then stabbing the soles of the feet and under the finger nails with needles and splinters of wood, holding the head in a bucket of water until the person suffocates, and other horrors make up the ordeal. Many legionaries come out of the torture chamber completely destroyed; others deaf or maimed.”²⁷ In February

²³ Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară*, 99-100, 103; CNSAS, Fond Mironovici Radu, P.014005, vol. 1, f. 17-19; Beldiman ed., *Dosar Horia Sima*, 66-67.

²⁴ “D. Ștefănescu-Goangă și arestarea președintelui [sic] Cercului studențesc din Cluj,” *Buna vestire*, (28 Jan 1938).

²⁵ Hillgruber, *Hitler, Regele Carol și Maresalul Antonescu*, 63.

²⁶ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 196-199.

²⁷ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 170.

1939, seven Legionaries were interrogated then shot by police in Huedin, in Cluj county.²⁸ Dumitru Banea writes of a high school boy from Olt county named Gaman who was brutally beaten in the basement of a police station and then shot twelve times on the edge of town. He survived, and managed to crawl back into town before dying in hospital.²⁹ Nicoleta Nicolescu, who led the women's section of the Legion, was shot and then immediately incinerated by policemen in Bucharest.³⁰ Another prominent Legionary woman, Elena Bagdad, was tortured in prison and then shot. Her last words were "Long live the Legion and the Captain!"³¹

Horia Sima fled to Germany together with other prominent leaders in winter 1938-39, where they made plans and sent orders to Legionaries inside Romania. He tried organizing a coup d'état during spring 1939, but this plan was quickly discovered by the police, leading to another wave of arrests.³² Instead of a coup, the movement's leadership in Berlin decided to assassinate King Carol II and/or Armand Călinescu, who was now Romania's Prime Minister.³³ A group of Legionaries acting under Sima's orders shot Călinescu on 21 September 1939, then took control of the national radio station and announced the murder.³⁴ The government executed the assassins in response, as well as scores of Legionaries in prison and an extra two or three in every county.³⁵ The bulk of those who had led the Legion under Codreanu perished in this round of killings, further entrenching the transformation from fascist social movement to clandestine organization that had been taking place over the past eighteen months.

King Carol lost the support of Romania's political class after Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina to Russia in June 1940. He then turned to prominent ultra-

²⁸ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 225-228.

²⁹ Banea, *Acuzat, martor*, 113-115.

³⁰ Dinescu, "Cetățui sfărâmate," in Chioreanu ed., *Lacrima progoanei*, 13.

³¹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală de Poliție, Dosar 265/1940, f. 1-4.

³² Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară*, 109-116.

³³ *Ibid.*, 137-144; Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 224, 229, 233, 234, 237-239, 272-276.

³⁴ Scurtu et al. eds., *Ideologie*, vol. 5, 270-272.

³⁵ Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară*, 145-146.

nationalists in order to form a new government led by the industrialist Ion Gigurtu (1886-1959) that included three Legionaries in ministerial posts – Horia Sima, Vasile Noveanu, and Augustin Bideanu. The Legionaries resigned from the government after only a few days, claiming that they could not work together with the king and disassociating themselves from his regime. Gigurtu's government collapsed after the Second Vienna Award gave Northern Transylvania to Hungary on 30 August 1940. General Ion Antonescu (1882-1946) assumed power five days later and the king abdicated on 6 September 1940. After extensive negotiations between Antonescu and the Legion, Romania was transformed into a National Legionary State governed by a shaky alliance between Antonescu and the Legionaries. With the Legion in power, fascism now meant an opportunity for personal gain, and thousands of new members flooded into the movement. Legionaries used the regime to give themselves well-paying jobs, to flout the law, and to forcibly confiscate Jewish property.³⁶ After five months of joint government, the Legionaries turned against General Antonescu on 21 January 1941, in a rebellion that was put down after three days of street fighting. Legionaries occupied key buildings in cities around the country, and they murdered Jews and burned down synagogues during the fighting.³⁷

General Antonescu's repression of the Legion was harsh. Those who did not flee the country were imprisoned, sent to fight on the Eastern Front, or – if they renounced their political pasts – incorporated as clerks or managers for the Antonescu regime.³⁸ Roughly four hundred Legionaries fled to Germany, where they lived in special quarters in Nazi concentration camps,

³⁶ On the National Legionary State, see Aurică Simion, *Regimul politic din România în perioada septembrie 1940-ianuarie 1941* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1976); Dana Beldiman ed., *Statul Național Legionar, Septembrie 1940 - Ianuarie 1941: cadrul legislativ* (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005); Jean Ancel, *The Economic Destruction of Romanian Jewry* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007) 69-132; Conovici, Iliescu, and Silivestru, *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 190-286.

³⁷ Serafim Duicu ed., *Ion Antonescu și "Garda de Fier": pe marginea prăpastiei, 21-23 ianuarie 1941* (Târgu-Mureș: Casa de Editură "Rom-Edition," 1991); Matatias Carp ed., *Cartea neagră*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Socec, 1946) 176ff.

³⁸ Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară*; Tiberiu Tănase, *Fetele monedei: Mișcarea Legionară între 1941-1948* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2010) 175-205; Conovici, Iliescu, and Silivestru, *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 287-343.

most of them first in Rostock and then in Buchenwald. They worked in German armaments factories, but also wrote treatises on Legionary ideology, served as volunteer firefighters, and held weekly nest meetings and cultural celebrations.³⁹ As the war drew to a close, former Legionaries established a Nazi puppet government in exile to challenge the legitimacy of the Soviet-backed regime in Romania. The “government in Vienna” quickly dissolved in the face of the Soviet advance, and its members fled to countries ruled by sympathetic regimes throughout the world. Former Legionaries regrouped abroad, where they reinterpreted their movement’s doctrine and history to appeal to a Western audience during the Cold War era.⁴⁰ Denying the anti-Semitism and hooliganism of the interwar period, they reframed the Legion as a spiritual movement aimed at fighting communism, thereby attracting limited support from the United States government and other anti-communist groups.⁴¹

³⁹ Legionary accounts of life in Rostock and Buchenwald are available in Ciuntu, *Din Bucovina pe Oder*, 51-76; Vălenaș and Dumitriu, *Mișcarea legionară*, 79-84; Nistor Chioreanu, *Legionarii români în Buchenwald* (Bucharest: Editura Ramida, 1998); and Vasile Coman, *Amintiri*, vol. 4, in AN – Cluj, Fond Vasile Coman, Dosar 4/1980.

⁴⁰ Histories on the Legionary exile include Dinu Zamfirescu, *Mișcarea Legionară în țară și în exil: puncte de reper (1919-1980)* (Bucharest: Editura Pro Historia, 2005); Nicolae Videnie, “Presă emigrației române – revista Bisericii Sfinții Arhangheli de la Paris,” in Adrian Nicolae Petcu ed., *Partidul, Securitatea și cultele, 1945-1989* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005) 261-324.

⁴¹ Examples of this literature include Gheorghe Andreica, *Punct contra punct* (Constanța: Editura Metafora, 2006); Ștefan Palăghiță, *Istoria mișcării legionare scrisă de un legionar: Garda de Fier spre reînvierea României* (Bucharest: Roza Vinturilor, 1993); Constantin Papanace, *Stilul legionar de luptă: concepția tactică a Căpitanului* (Bucharest: Editura Lucman, 2004); Horia Sima, *Doctrina legionară* (Madrid: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 1980).

16.0 CONCLUSION

In 1933, as more and more fascist groups appeared all over Europe, Constantin Onu wrote in *Axa* that “the new systems, the epochal reforms which reorganized the lives of entire peoples exist thanks to a certain type of person. ... the new man (*omul nou*). The Italian revolution succeeded through Mussolini. The German revolution through Hitler. Both had the unanimous and devoted support of the youth behind them; youth imbued with the novelty and virtue characteristic of those leaders and religions which illuminate its path.” According to Onu, the new man was a leader like Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, whose character could bring about revolutionary change. In Romania, he said, referring to Codreanu, “the new man is the one whose name Romanian youth speak with awe and in which they believe fanatically. Nameless multitudes come to him with a rare reverence and are inspired by his myth. He is, and apart from him there is no other.”¹ The idea of the “new man” soon evolved to include all Legionaries, not just Codreanu. Four years later, Ernest Bernea wrote that “the Legion is a revolutionary movement which goes to the heart of things and builds from solid foundations. It does not merely change forms or institutions; it remakes human nature itself according to its ideals.”²

As Valentin Săndulescu has argued, far from being simply rhetoric for a gullible public, between 1933 and 1938 the idea of national regeneration carried out by “new men” appeared consistently at every level of the movement: from propaganda posters and Codreanu’s writings to personal letters and orders from mid-level organizers to their subordinates.³ But how revolutionary was the Legion? Efforts to create “new men” structured Legionary activities from work camps to nest meetings to funerals, but all of these activities focused on the Legion itself – not on the Romanian nation, the “Jewish peril,” or the grievances of peasants or workers.

¹ Constantin Onu, “Omul nou,” *Axa*, 1/21 (29 Oct 1933).

² Bernea, *Stil legionar*, 22.

³ Săndulescu, “Fascism and its Quest for the ‘New Man’,” 351.

Because Legionaries did not gain power during Codreanu's lifetime, to most Legionaries during the 1930s fascism meant opposition to the status quo and obedience to the movement while waiting for revolutionary change to happen. The Legion demanded a great deal of their time, it required them to learn new skills such as publishing or public speaking, it marked them as members of an extremist organization, and it exposed them to the risks of imprisonment and physical violence. On the other hand, Legionaries gained strong, supportive social networks; they had the opportunity to influence how other people thought and voted; they learned to be proud of their country, their work, and their image; and they could attack their enemies with the knowledge that other Legionaries would support them when push came to shove.

The meaning of fascism and ultra-nationalism evolved over time. When Romanian nationalists complained about foreigners and traitors in the mid-nineteenth century, they did so to justify creating a new nation-state. Ethnic hatred was intrinsic to the ideology of Romanian nationalism. Nationalists vilified Jews as people who had economic power over Romanians but who were particularly vulnerable because their religion and culture differentiated them from most Europeans. While nationalists saw Jews as oppressors who should be excluded from a Romanian nation-state, they ridiculed and patronized Roma in order to demonstrate how noble and civilized Romanians were. In the nineteenth century, the idea that nations exist and are valid and meaningful collectivities deserving allegiance may have been new to most inhabitants of the region which became modern Romania, but nationalist propaganda soon caused people to interpret their economic and social problems through nationalist ideology. Barbara Jeanne Fields defines ideology as "the descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence, through which people make rough sense of the social reality that they live and create from day to day."⁴ No longer

⁴ Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review*, 181 (1990): 110.

simply propaganda or the belief of a small number of activists, by the beginning of the twentieth century Romanian nationalism had become an ideology.

As well as seeing themselves as peasants exploited by landlords, many people began to think of themselves as Romanians who were persecuted by Jews and other foreigners. Nationalist ideas spread throughout Romanian-speaking towns and villages thanks to organizations such as the feminist Unions, Archers groups, Scouting associations, and cultural societies like *Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român* (the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, ASTRA) and *Liga Culturală pentru Unitatea Românilor de Pretutindeni* (the Cultural League for the Unity of Romanians Everywhere). These groups agitated for an enlarged Romanian nation-state that included Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia, and they introduced the ideology of nationalism to more and more people. Alongside these more moderate nationalist associations, ultra-nationalist groups formed to agitate for the exclusion of Jews from public life.

A number of scholars have recently noted that the movement from local to national identities during the twentieth century was far from teleological. Many communities – especially those in border areas – were reluctant to exchange regional identities for the official categories being pushed by nationalizing states.⁵ Moreover, Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues have persuasively argued that ethnicity is situational, in that national categories do not automatically generate close-knit national groups, nor does identifying oneself with a particular ethnic group in one context mean that one is willing to fight for a “national” cause in another.⁶ Through their

⁵ Timothy Baycroft, *Culture, Identity and Nationalism: French Flanders in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: Royal Society and The Boydell Press, 2004); James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Heartland* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

⁶ Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, and Grancea, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*.

newspapers, rallies, and violence, ultra-nationalists articulated nationalism as an economically and politically urgent matter. People who may not have been particularly passionate about their nation did care about the dire situation of the Romanian peasantry; thus framing what was effectively an economic problem as a contest between ethnic groups enabled ultra-nationalists to mobilize greater numbers of activists.

When Romania expanded dramatically after 1918, ultra-nationalists argued that their struggle was not over so long as Jews and “traitors” controlled Romania. Drawing on Italian Fascism, anti-Bolshevism, or anti-Semitism, a number of ultra-nationalist parties emerged after the First World War. All claimed to be continuing the struggle of the previous century through their newspapers, pamphlets, rallies, and strikes. When anti-Semitic violence broke out in Romanian universities in 1922, extremist students looked to organized ultra-nationalists as their natural allies. As ultra-nationalists had done when they framed the 1907 peasant revolt in ethnic terms, anti-Semitic students blamed their Jewish colleagues for the fact that their classrooms and dormitories were overcrowded. Irina Livezeanu has shown that civil servants and politicians also viewed the education system through a nationalist lens, helping to naturalize the ideology of ultra-nationalism in day to day activities.⁷ The students borrowed tactics and symbols from radical groups abroad, and their demands for a *numerus clausus* mirrored those of similar movements throughout East-Central Europe. They successfully organized themselves into a nation-wide movement, establishing ultra-nationalist student groups in cities and towns where there were not even any universities. Through strikes, frequent attacks on Jews, riots, and violence in dormitories and canteens, ultra-nationalist students managed to establish an obvious presence on university campuses, forcing other students to either reject anti-Semitism altogether or to join in and become ultra-nationalists themselves. Ethnic violence made it easier to divide

⁷ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*.

the world into the categories of racist nationalism, and open conflict helped mobilize bystanders into one camp or another.

Led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, a handful of the most radical students made a reputation for themselves by attempting to assassinate important public figures. Codreanu's celebrity increased even more when he was tried for murdering the prefect of Iași, Constantin Manciu. Working together with *Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine* (the National Christian Defense League, LANC) anti-Semitic students cooperated with established ultra-nationalist activists to support Codreanu and his colleagues at their trials. They used pogroms, weddings, and baptisms as opportunities to galvanize diffuse networks of sympathizers into committed activists. Codreanu and his followers contrasted their youthful devotion to the nation with the cynical self-interest of the country's leaders. As more and more young people joined the ultra-nationalist cause, it came to look as if this was a generational revolt of youth against their elders. Codreanu originally framed his acts of violence in terms of anti-Semitism and anti-politicianism, however, and the idea that young people must replace their parents only came to the fore when he needed it to justify challenging A. C. Cuza for the allegiance of ultra-nationalist voters.

When he broke away from the LANC to form *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* (the Legion of the Archangel Michael) in 1927, Codreanu exploited his image as a young, virtuous and committed fighter for justice akin to one that LANC propagandists had cultivated earlier in the decade. He and Ion Moța contrasted the Legion with A. C. Cuza's LANC by emphasizing that Legionaries served a "religion," and were not engaged in politics. Anti-politicianism had been a core tenet of Romanian nationalist rhetoric since the late nineteenth century, and A. C. Cuza behaved like a typical politician when he expelled several leading LANC deputies without consulting the rest of the movement. Although the 1927 schism resulted from a power struggle

within the LANC, Codreanu's desperate attempts to rally support for himself laid the foundations for a distinct social movement that glorified youth, virtue, and decisive action while drawing on a vocabulary and symbolism taken from Orthodox Christianity.

The distinctive elements of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, such as its religious rhetoric and the glorification of youth, emerged out of the struggle between Codreanu and Cuza in the late 1920s. Legionaries articulated these ideas forcefully to distinguish themselves from Cuza's LANC, but at the time the organizational rupture – with its financial consequences for the Legionaries – mattered more than the ideas themselves. A veteran of the early ultra-nationalist struggles, Cuza saw Codreanu's move as a Jewish plot to undermine the LANC. Codreanu's followers, however, had grown up with the ideology of nineteenth-century nationalism, and did not need to articulate it in anti-Semitic terms because for them it went without saying that Jews, communists, and Freemasons were their deadly enemies. Nationalism and anti-Semitism provided the (sometimes unspoken) ideology of Romanian fascism, but its distinctive characteristics evolved out of internal struggles within the ultra-nationalist movement.

Battles between Legionaries and Cuzists for control of a *Cămin Cultural Creștin* (Christian Cultural Hearth) in Iași and of the student movement in general earned the Legionaries a reputation for brutal gang violence as well as for hard work and ingenuity. Both groups introduced paramilitary formations during the early 1930s, together with weapons, distinctive uniforms, and an enthusiasm for battle. Political violence characterized the everyday experiences of fascism for many Legionaries. Gangs of anti-Semitic students during the 1920s assaulted Jews on campus and on the streets, and Legionaries appropriated this tradition with pride. They clashed with communists and other ultra-nationalist groups during the 1930s and carried guns and knives for protection. Groups of Legionaries torched Jewish homes and synagogues; they

assassinated prime ministers and university rectors, historians and economists; and made frequent death threats against their enemies. When they came to power, Legionaries tortured Jews and destroyed Jewish property, often suffering no legal repercussions. Legionaries not only used violence, they celebrated the “propaganda of the deed,” creating what Armin Heinen has called a veritable “cult of violence.”⁸ In his analysis of published Legionary discussions of violence, Radu Harald Dinu has shown that fascist ideologues in Romania promoted violence for its own sake as a “necessary” panacea for their country’s problems.⁹ Even the language which the Legionaries used was violent. Acrimonious attacks on their critics or enemies were common and their vocabulary was very aggressive.¹⁰ Yet, even more often than they spoke about the “heroic” violence of assassination squads and reminisced about the crowd violence of their student days, Legionaries talked about Jewish and police violence. It is difficult to know exactly how often the police brutalized Legionaries in their custody because the extant police files do not record abuses perpetrated by the authorities. Yet Legionary newspapers and memoirs are full of accounts of police violence against Legionaries during election campaigns, during anti-Legionary crackdowns, and in prison. Self-portrayals of Legionaries as victims of violence fueled the idea that they were innocent and virtuous, and willing to sacrifice themselves for their nation in contrast to the greed of the country’s politicians.

Assassinations, not hooliganism, were the most successful elements in the Legion’s repertoire of violence. The movement’s reputation grew once it was implicated in two assassination attempts during 1930, marking it as a distinct and decisive opponent of the legal and political status quo. Despite having few resources, Legionaries attempted to win over

⁸ Armin Heinen, *Rumänien, der Holocaust und die Logik der Gewalt* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007) 103.

⁹ Radu Harald Dinu, “Die Legion ‘Erzengel Michael’ – Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im rumänischen Faschismus,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas* 9-10 (2007-2008): 105 - 126.

¹⁰ Cesereanu, *Imaginarul violent*, 55-69.

peasants, workers, tradesmen, soldiers, and intellectuals by appealing to widespread dissatisfaction with political corruption. When Legionary propagandists entered rural areas, they did so on foot and used folk costumes and dancing to emphasize their respect for the people they were trying to convince. When they spoke to workers and tradesmen, they talked about poverty, working conditions, and other issues of immediate concern to their audiences. But as the election campaign of 1933 gathered momentum, class-specific grievances took second place to the movement's hopes for political victory, and thus the Legion itself became the goal. Issues such as land redistribution and workers' rights would be resolved *after* the Legion came to power, the movement's leaders now said. The first priority of rank and file Legionaries was to serve the Legion itself.

Framing social and economic grievances in terms of ethnicity rather than class had been typical of Romanian nationalist ideology since the nineteenth century. This way of seeing the world was convincing during the interwar period because many factory workers had strong ties to agriculture, and no "working class consciousness" had developed in Romania. The secondary literature on the relationship of workers to fascist movements in Europe suggests three possibilities regarding why factory workers became fascists. First, Tim Mason has made the intriguing suggestion that the German Nazi party was able to attract German workers in 1933 because of a situation that he identifies as "Bonapartism": "the fascist regimes were beneficiaries of a paralysis of class forces that had simultaneously prevented the ruling class from holding power and the working class from seizing it."¹¹ The Nazis successfully integrated workers into their regime, according to Mason, because they appeared to stand above the worker-bourgeois conflict, and they satisfied working class needs that were unrelated to their laboring conditions. Rather than addressing the issues raised by workers in their conflicts with employers, Nazis

¹¹ Mason, *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class*, 16.

dialogued with workers on questions that “were in large measure dissociated from the multiple forms of alienation.”¹²

Alf Lüdtke, on the other hand, notes that many of those workers who formed the closest ties to Nazism had been involved with the Communist Party, and “*prior* to the takeover of power, the Nazi movement was able to prove attractive to industrial workers because their “anticapitalist longings” (Gregor Strasser) appeared to be given a concrete answer in the practice of local Nazi “factory cells,” especially starting in 1932.”¹³ Colin Winston makes a similar case for interwar Barcelona, where the right-wing, Church-based *Sindicalismo Libre* was only successful after more radical unions with long traditions of working-class solidarity and activism had proved unable to survive in the new political climate of the interwar years.¹⁴ The third approach is that of Tim Kirk, who argues that during this period, “the nature of industrial work itself changed, and with it the character of working-class communities. Sub-cultures built up since the nineteenth century were eroded and workers’ activities thereby considerably ‘depoliticized,’ producing ... the atomized working class of the post-war period. Such changes accompanied fascist rule, rather than followed directly from it.”¹⁵ Unlike the work of Mason, Lüdtke and Winston, Kirk’s research into Austrian workers’ experiences with Nazism does not assume that coherent working class solidarities existed when the Dollfuß regime came to power in March 1933.

In Romania, political scandals and the hardships experienced by laboring people certainly gave credibility to fascist politics and made people sympathetic to Legionaries who were seen as active opponents of an unjust system. Workers first began to join the Legion at a time when their

¹² Ibid., 268.

¹³ His italics. Alf Lüdtke, “What happened to the ‘fiery red glow’?” 202.

¹⁴ Winston, *Workers and the Right in Spain*, 108-170.

¹⁵ Kirk, *Nazism and the Working Class*, 9.

economic plight was at its worst, and they felt no conflict with the peasant-oriented rhetoric of the movement because they themselves often had close ties to peasant ways of life. The Legion provided both the vocabulary and the institutional structure for workers to think through and act upon their economic and social situations.

Both the LANC and the Legion increasingly associated themselves with fascist groups abroad, but whereas the LANC's agenda was limited to anti-Semitism, the Legionaries promised national regeneration brought about by a vanguard fascist movement. Moreover, whereas Legionaries frequently flouted the law and effectively remained outside of the established political system, A. C. Cuza continued to form electoral alliances with reputable politicians. In 1935 Cuza transformed the LANC into *Partidul Național Creștin* (the National Christian Party, PNC), a political party that respected the status quo and allied itself with the monarchy even while it made use of hooliganism and paramilitary violence. Anti-politicism figured more prominently in Legionary propaganda than anti-Semitism did, even though Legionaries grouped politicians and Jews together as two faces of the same enemy. Although Legionaries did contest elections, they consistently refused to see their movement as a political party, and distanced themselves as much as possible from Romania's political elites.

Legionaries had been publishing newspapers and pamphlets since the movement began in 1927, but they launched a number of political broadsheets in late 1932 and early 1933, in preparation for the national elections of December 1933. They also won the support of Nichifor Crainic, a poet, journalist, and theologian who put his daily newspaper *Calendarul* at the movement's disposal. In part through the influence of Crainic and other public intellectuals – not least that of the philosopher Nae Ionescu – the Legion recruited talented young writers, artists, and scientists who were disillusioned with the level of corruption in Romanian academic life.

Legionaries had relied on vague ideological formulas such as “deeds, not words” prior to 1933, but now a handful of committed intellectuals elaborated on ideas then popular with fascists throughout Europe. Corporatism, women’s suffrage, anti-democratic, and anti-Enlightenment rhetoric all entered Legionary discourse for the first time, as did the notion of the “new man.” While the ideology of nationalism provided the raw material that Legionary propagandists had to work with, Legionary doctrines were not fully articulated until the movement itself was at least six years old. Between 1927 and 1933, Legionaries expressed themselves most clearly in terms of what they opposed – democracy, internationalism, Jews, communists, Freemasons, *politicianism*, and treason. The introduction of carefully thought-through positions on economic and political issues brought new, positive content to Romanian fascism. Together with the professionalization of Legionary music and art, new honorary ranks, and the work camps system, the intellectualization of Legionary doctrine reflected a burgeoning self-confidence of Legionaries as members of a distinctively fascist movement.

The sudden importance which Codreanu gave to a small group of Bucharest intellectuals caused tensions within the movement, but these remained muted during 1933 as the violence associated with electoral propaganda increased. Groups of Legionaries clashed with gendarmes in carefully orchestrated incidents that made it look like the authorities disapproved of charitable and patriotic activities such as building a levee or erecting a cross to the unknown soldier. After the Legion was dissolved and hundreds of Legionaries arrested just days before the elections, three Legionaries assassinated the National Liberal Prime Minister, Ion Gh. Duca, on 29 December 1933. Although it landed most of the Legion’s leadership in prison for the next four months, Duca’s assassination pushed the Legion into the national spotlight. While Legionary newspapers were closed and activists were behind bars, prominent politicians came out in

support of the movement and Legionaries bonded in prison. The campaign of 1933 consolidated the Legion as an identifiably fascist social movement with a widespread support base and international notoriety. Diplomats from Fascist Italy began paying visits to the Legion, and Legionaries corresponded with fascist umbrella organizations elsewhere in Europe. Activists who had been imprisoned because of their involvement with the movement dedicated more and more time and energy to ensuring its success, and new people joined, impressed by the devotion Legionaries showed to their cause.

Between 1933 and 1938, Legionary marches and rallies incorporated many of the paramilitary features popular with other European fascist groups, including uniforms, insignia, oath-taking, singing, and calling out the names of the dead. Legionaries used such spectacles to demonstrate their discipline, numbers, and strength. Legionary songs during this period focused on heroism and dedication, promising that Codreanu would transform Romania into a country “like the holy sun of Heaven.”¹⁶ Artwork and photographs by and of Legionaries masculine ideals of beauty, strength, virility, and honor. Work camps and sporting societies helped Legionaries cultivate their bodies while teaching them discipline and obedience to authority. Fascist businesses displayed Legionary aptitude while attracting new members into the movement. All of these elements contributed to the idea of a “new man” who would renew the nation. Performing Legionarism was crucial for establishing fascism as a social category in interwar Romania. Legionaries were expected to be propagandists, so they had to look like fascists, to sound like fascists, and to behave like fascists. Prominent Legionaries from nest leaders to Codreanu himself repeatedly emphasized how important it was for their followers to obey specific behavioral codes, and put in tremendous amounts of effort to create a identical, idealized Legionaries.

¹⁶ CNSAS, Fond Codreanu Corneliu Zelea, P.011784, vol. 21, f. 42-50.

Legionary women also commanded respect, but they were expected to contribute to the movement by being mothers and through public displays of their domestic skills. Women cooked for work camps and in Legionary restaurants, and they sold their embroidery to raise money for the movement. As the women's columns in pro-Legionary newspapers such as *Calendarul* and *Cuvântul* show, Legionaries were quite ambivalent about what women could and could not do. For some women the Legion provided the opportunity to engaged in political activism and to live independent lives among people who supported their lifestyle choices. Female activists such as Alexandra Russo organized Legionary propaganda at a county level, Nicoleta Nicolescu became one of Codreanu's closest advisors, and the attorney Lizette Gheorghe took charge of both of Codreanu's 1938 trials, but these women were exceptions rather than the rule. Even while many women could and did become fascist activists, the ideal Legionary woman remained a mother and a wife who was expected to raise her children to serve the Legion.

Legionaries engaged in charitable projects, religious commemorations, and entrepreneurship side by side with gang violence and death threats during the 1930s, in part because individual Legionaries became increasingly difficult to control as the movement expanded. Whereas cavalierism and assassinations had been Legionary virtues at the beginning of the decade, now Codreanu and other leaders discouraged independent action. Legionaries who assaulted Jews or slandered politicians without having direct orders to do so were disciplined, sometimes violently. Anyone who criticized Codreanu was expelled from the movement, and in one case the offending dissident was brutally murdered. Legionaries certainly respected Codreanu as a charismatic leader, but inside the movement his authority was grounded in firm disciplinary measures rather than in vague appeals to his charismatic virtues. When the number of Legionaries increased exponentially during 1937, the leadership introduced cadre schools

where new members were taught the rituals, oaths, songs, hierarchy, and mythology of the movement. This training was repeated in nests, fortresses, and Blood Brotherhoods on a weekly basis, where Legionaries were also expected to make regular financial contributions and to obey orders from their superiors. In effect, Legionary activities did not make “new men” more virtuous or capable, but they did turn people into obedient members of a fascist social movement.

Legionary gatherings emphasized that commitment and heroism should be expressed through suffering for the cause. Legionaries remembered their colleagues who had died for the movement alongside other national heroes, and they held religious commemorations in their honor. Legionary commemorations incorporated mainstream nationalism into Church rituals, honoring fascist heroes as if they were Christian martyrs. Whereas most Romanian nationalists had been atheists during the nineteenth century, Nicolae Paulescu, A. C. Cuza, and the anti-Semitic student movement introduced religion into Romanian ultra-nationalism. They spoke about defending the nation as a sacred duty, and called on priests to bless their flags. Theological faculties were highly politicized, and many theology students became involved in ultra-nationalist politics. Legionaries held church services and funerary commemorations much more often than the student movement had, and their emphasis on discipline and suffering made Orthodox teachings about aestheticism particularly relevant to fascist politics. Priests were important members of both the LANC and the Legion because their profession allowed them to conduct religious services for fascists and their social status gave them the time and the prestige to be effective political organizers.

The Legion’s relationship to Orthodox Christianity did not isolate it from other fascist movements, many of which also drew on Christian symbolism and recruited amongst clergymen.

Fascism was so frequently associated with Christianity in interwar Europe that the team of Legionaries who travelled to Spain to fight as volunteer soldiers in the Spanish Civil War believed that they were fighting for God by defending a nationalist cause, even one in another country. While independent fascist movements such as the Legion refused to subordinate themselves to foreign direction, they frequently expressed their admiration for each other, and made vague promises to support one another when they were able. The Spanish Civil War is one of the rare instances when such support materialized, and the honors that Italian, German, and Spanish diplomats bestowed on Ion Moța and Vasile Marin shows how important foreign fascists considered their contribution to have been. More than any other moment in the Legion's history, the Spanish campaign reinforces the need to approach fascism as a network of independent regimes and social movements. Together with Ion Moța's disagreements with the *Comitati d'azione per l'universalità di Roma* (Action Committees for Roman Universality, CAUR) over anti-Semitism and foreign policy, the war and the funerals of Moța and Marin show that although fascist groups acted independently, they also sympathized with and supported one another whenever it was convenient. Viewed from a transnational perspective, fascism was a network of relationships among fascist groups, not a unified, coherent ideology or movement.

Capitalizing on the publicity surrounding the deaths of Moța and Marin in Spain, two productive years of summer work camps, and a disciplined and peaceful propaganda campaign during 1937, the Legion won 15.58 percent of the votes in the elections of 20 December 1937. By approaching peasants, workers, tradesmen, students, and soldiers on their own terms, Legionaries had managed to generate widespread support for their movement and to recruit a large number of remarkably committed individuals. The movement gave agency to people who otherwise had no ability to influence Romania's political system, and it provided rank and file

activists with realizable goals – such as building a dam or running a restaurant – that helped them believe that they were undermining the status quo. As Armin Heinen and Francisco Veiga have demonstrated, however, the Legion’s successes owed more to changes in Romanian politics than to the efforts of the Legionaries themselves.¹⁷ Moments of Legionary expansion coincided with weakness or indifference from the political center, and periods of decline with the tightening of political opportunity structures for marginal parties. The Legion’s first period of rapid growth took place in 1932 and 1933, when an economic crisis combined with a conflict between King Carol II and the National Peasant Party destabilized parliamentary democracy in Romania. Success in the 1937 elections flowed out of an anti-royal coalition which convinced the Legion’s rivals to allow Codreanu freedom of action for a few crucial months. Once King Carol II and his supporters turned against the Legion in 1938, they obliterated in a matter of months gains that Legionaries had worked hard for over the past decade. However successfully Legionaries generated public sympathy, they could not legally take power in a country where the outcome of elections was determined by political and financial interests close to the king. Legionaries had opposed parliamentary democracy ever since they had found a public voice, but once King Carol decided to abolish it, they discovered that their movement was only as powerful as Romanian democracy itself.

A careful study of Legionary activities during the 1930s shows that much more than the student movement of the 1920s, the Legion of the Archangel Michael was a large and unwieldy organization. Incorporating members of both sexes from a variety of social classes and generations, it managed to remain cohesive by insisting on strict obedience to Codreanu as an absolute leader. Codreanu could not be everywhere at once, however, and his subordinates

¹⁷ Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”*, 185-187, 217-221, 237-250, 319-354; Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier*, 17-35, 99-106, 126-131, 138-147, 245-248, 262-268.

managed to appropriate some of his authority by reinforcing distinctive Legionary practices through oath-taking, rituals, and weekly training sessions. Even the notion of “new men” functioned more as a means for maintaining homogeneity and discipline than as a way to transform the human condition. The level of commitment Codreanu demanded of his followers meant that the Legion came to replace homes, clubs, taverns, and workplaces as the primary locus for Legionary relationships. Legionaries gave so much time to the movement that some failed their exams or lost their jobs, while others were rejected by family members who disapproved of their political affiliations. Especially in times of persecution, some Legionaries became pariahs in their natal communities, while others turned into heroes who had stood up to a corrupt and unjust system.

Over time, the anti-Semitism of the 1920s gave way to a multitude of electoral promises during the great depression, which were soon forgotten once talk about creating “new men” filled nest meetings and Legionary speeches. Because fascist activism brought Legionaries into contact with policemen, Cuzists, Jews, newspapermen, and other members of society, the meaning of fascism altered as those relationships evolved. Policemen and gendarmes who had been ambivalent towards student protestors in 1922 tortured Legionaries whose activities they had come to view as treasonous by 1938. Though the LANC had unified Romanian ultra-nationalists in the early 1920s, in 1927 Codreanu convinced many people that it had become just another political party by the end of the decade. Cuza’s radical image effectively disappeared after the LANC merged with Octavian Goga’s National Agrarian Party in 1935. By the mid-1930s, prominent publicists who had ignored the Legion in its early years began offering their newspapers as sympathetic venues for Legionary writers provided that the Legion gave them something in return, such as street vendors or increased publicity. As a social category in

interwar Romania, fascism meant identifying oneself with a movement that produced strong reactions. Those in authority saw Legionaries as obnoxious hooligans who had no respect for basic social norms, whereas some of those who were disillusioned with the status quo appreciated their unconventional approach to politics. Drawing on the ideology of Romanian nationalism gave Legionaries credibility with large sections of the population, and the distinctive fascist image they displayed during the 1930s made them stand out and be noticed. Fascism was not a safe option for many Legionaries, but it was an invigorating one.

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