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ROLAND CLARK

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Claiming Ethnic Privilege:

Aromanian Immigrants and

Romanian Fascist Politics

ROLAND CLARK

Abstract

Large numbers of Aromanian immigrants in Southern Dobruja joined the fascist Legion of the Archangel Michael during the early 1930s. Deterritorialised by population transfers and state-building in Greek Macedonia, they reterritorialised themselves as ethnic Romanians ‘coming home’ to colonise Southern Dobruja. This article situates the Aromanian turn to fascist politics within the problems they faced during migration. It argues that Aromanians used fascism to assert their identities as Romanians and to claim ethnic privileges that had been denied them as immigrants.

During the 1930s, large numbers of Aromanian immigrants in Romanian Dobruja supported the Legion of the Archangel Michael (Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail), a Romanian fascist movement with a strong grass-roots following. Led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899–1938), legionaries promoted an aggressive anti-Semitic and anti-corruption agenda through street violence, assassinations, marches and charity projects. Despite official hostility, the movement grew steadily from 1927 until Codreanu’s death in 1938, and came to power for five months in 1940–1. Also known as Vlachs or Macedo-Romanians, Aromanians lived in Greek Macedonia and spoke a language very similar to Romanian. Although historically the connection between Romanians and Aromanians is difficult to determine, Romanian propagandists of the late nineteenth century presented Aromanians as their co-nationals living among Greeks and Slavs outside the borders of the Romanian nation state. When they migrated to Southern Dobruja (also known as the Cadrilater) between 1925 and 1930 Aromanians expected to be treated as ethnic Romanians, with all the rights and privileges that came with belonging to the ruling group of a nationalising nation-state.¹ Instead, they found themselves competing with Bulgarians, Turks, Tatars,

Eastern Connecticut State University, 350 Webb Hall, 83 Windham Street, Willimantic, CT 06226, USA; clarkrol@easternct.edu

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¹ The term ‘nationalizing nation-state’ is taken from Rogers Brubaker, who uses it to describe states that display a tendency ‘to see the state as an “unrealized” nation-state, as a state destined to be a

Roma and other minorities. Joining the legion gave young Aromanians allies in their fight for ethnic privileges that had been denied them as immigrants.

In a seminal article in 1988 Peggy McIntosh argued that in the United States men, heterosexuals and white people generally, are born with invisible, unearned privileges. This includes not being marked as untrustworthy or potentially criminal on the basis of ethnicity, being treated as equals by the authorities, feeling safe in one's home, and having the freedom to criticise the government without suspicion of treason or subversion. Cheryl I. Harris has even demonstrated that the US legal system treats whiteness as property and legalises 'systematic discrimination' in favour of white Americans.² McIntosh writes that not only are white people 'taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average and also ideal', but 'such privilege simply confers dominance, giving permission to control, because of one's race or sex'.³ Of course, superiority and dominance are not straightforward products of skin colour. Some scholars prefer to label the attitude that power should be linked to race 'whiteness', such that a non-white individual who assumes the privileges of whiteness in order to dominate others could be said to be behaving in a 'whitely' manner.⁴ Others emphasise that power is mediated by the intersection of identities, which is why a poor white woman does not enjoy the same degree of 'white privilege' as a rich white man does.⁵ Notions such as whiteness and intersectionality allow us to disentangle white privilege from race, and help explain the problem that Aromanian migrants faced when they tried to claim what I call 'ethnic privilege'.

After the First World War the Romanian government began working to establish ethnic Romanians as the dominant social, political and economic class within the state.⁶ Not only were the privileges now available to ethnic Romanians poorly defined, they were first and foremost for people from the Old Kingdom, and in particular for people from Bucharest. As immigrants, the Aromanians did not automatically qualify as members of the privileged group. Oscillating between racist protectionism and the notion that all citizens deserve equal rights, the interwar Romanian state pursued an inconsistent policy that frustrated liberals and ultra-nationalists alike. From 1922 onwards, anti-Semitic young Romanians fought to

nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation, but not yet in fact a nation-state (at least not to a sufficient degree); and the concomitant disposition to remedy this perceived defect, to make the state what it is properly and legitimately destined to be'. The efforts of the interwar Romanian state to facilitate the dominance of ethnic Romanians in all spheres of public life make it a classic example of a nationalising nation-state. Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 63.

² Cheryl I. Harris, 'Whiteness as Property', *Harvard Law Review*, 106, 8 (1993) 1737.

³ Peggy McIntosh, 'White Privilege and Male Privilege', in Michael S. Kimmel and Abbey L. Ferber, eds, *Privilege: A Reader* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2014), 17, 23.

⁴ Catherine Fox, 'The Race to Truth: Disarticulating Critical Thinking from Whiteness', *Pedagogy*, 2, 2 (2002): 199.

⁵ Leslie McCall, 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Signs*, 30, 3 (2005): 1771–1800.

⁶ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995).

clarify and institutionalise Romanian ethnic privilege, and young Aromanians joined their struggle in order to inscribe themselves as members of the privileged group.

Ethnic hierarchies and Romanian fascism

Aromanians were not alone in negotiating ethnic hierarchies to survive in interwar Romania. Sacha Davis has shown how Transylvanian Saxons pursued what he calls 'ethno-corporatism' (collective, non-territorial self-determination) as they manipulated family structure, language and other markers of ethnicity to demonstrate their fitness for self-administration, German schools and religious freedom.⁷ Similarly, R. Chris Davis has demonstrated that when the Hungarian-speaking Catholics of Moldavia, also known as the Csangos, faced the possibility of forced relocation to Hungary, large numbers of them 'discovered' that they were actually ethnic Romanians and applied for 'nationality certificates' from the government to prove it.⁸ But whereas Saxons and Csangos had been living on these lands for centuries, the Aromanians were recent immigrants and at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Frustrated that they were being treated like immigrants instead of as legitimate Romanians, young Aromanian activists joined the legion and used the movement to assert Romanian privilege.

Established in 1927, the Legion of the Archangel Michael drew on a long tradition of ultra-nationalist activism that demanded privileges for ethnic Romanians at the expense of Jews and other minorities. A strong ultra-nationalist student movement emerged in the wake of anti-Semitic riots during 1922. The movement continued throughout the rest of the decade under the direction of the national union of Christian students in Romania (Uniunea Națională a Studenților Creștini din România, UNSCR). The students were supported by the national Christian defence league (Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine, LANC), an anti-Semitic political party led by a law professor from Iași named A. C. Cuza (1857–1947). These students and other ultra-nationalists accused the country's elites of treason against the Romanian nation and claimed that political decisions were made to serve the interests of Jews and Freemasons.

In October 1923 a group of seven students, including the future founder of the legion, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, travelled to Bucharest intending to assassinate several government ministers and Jewish bankers. One of the conspirators betrayed the plot at the last minute, leading to the arrest and trial of the other six, who quickly became celebrities and heroes to Romanian ultra-nationalists. The conspirators claimed that they were defending Romania against 'politicianism', by which they meant corruption and the betrayal of 'Romanian values'. They were acquitted after a well-publicised trial, during which Ion Moța (1902–37), one of the accused, shot

⁷ Sacha E. Davis, 'Minority Responses to the Nation-State: Transylvanian Saxon Ethno-Corporatism, 1918–1933', PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2007.

⁸ R. Chris Davis, 'Certifiably Romanian: National Belonging and Contested Identity of the Moldavian Csangos, 1923–1985', PhD thesis, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 2012, 96–130.

his co-conspirator who had betrayed them to the police. Moța was acquitted of this murder several months later. In May 1925 Codreanu shot the police prefect in Iași on the steps of a court-house. During the media circus that surrounded his second trial, Codreanu and his LANC lawyers justified vigilante violence against state officials as patriotism and self-defence. Codreanu was acquitted once again. In effect, ethnic Romanians had the right to kill for their nation even if it had not been sanctioned by the state.⁹

Tensions emerged between A. C. Cuza and the young Codreanu soon after the latter's acquittal, and in 1927 Codreanu broke with LANC to establish the legion. The legion began with only a handful of student supporters, but grew quickly, and by 1932 it rivalled LANC's popularity among Romanian ultra-nationalists. Legionaries proudly emphasised their commonalities with Italian Fascists and German Nazis, forming contacts with like-minded groups throughout Europe.¹⁰ By 1937 Codreanu's legion could boast more support in Romania than either Hitler or Mussolini before gaining power.¹¹ Legionaries championed several causes in the name of 'downtrodden Romanians', including defending the rights of the Moți people from Transylvania's Apuseni mountains. The Moți had entered Romanian nationalist mythology because of their participation in the 1848 revolutions, and ultra-nationalists held them up as victims of Hungarian brutality during the Hungarian-Romanian war of 1918–19.¹² Pro-legionary newspapers reported severe poverty and public health issues among the Moți, and demanded land redistribution, agricultural and mining reforms, and social assistance.¹³ Legionaries organised a voluntary work camp to build a school in the region.¹⁴ They also supported Emil Siancu, a Moți and a legionary, who shot the owner of a local forest.¹⁵

Other ethnic interest groups also cultivated ties with the legion. The legion had a strong following among Romanians living in the Serbian Banat and the Timoc valley, who used legionary newspapers to agitate for Romanian irredentism.¹⁶ A small contingent of Csangos and other Catholics in Moldavia and many of the Saxons in Transylvania turned to fascism in order to advocate for their rights.¹⁷ Legionary propagandists also sought out followers among Hungarian speakers in

⁹ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 245–96; Armin Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihail': Mișcare socială și organizație politică*, tr. Cornelia and Delia Esianu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006), 101–35.

¹⁰ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail"*, 300; Ion Moța, *Correspondența cu Welt-Dienst (1934–1936)* (Munich: Colecția Europa, 2000); CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 3, f. 61.

¹¹ Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 237.

¹² M. P. Florescu, 'Pădurile Moților', *Apărarea națională*, 18 Dec. 1927, 5.

¹³ 'Situția disperată a moților', *Calendarul*, 2 Sept. 1933, 2.

¹⁴ Mihail Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă* (Bucharest: Tipografia Ziarului Universul, 1936), 12.

¹⁵ I. C. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust: Romania and its Jews* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992) 50.

¹⁶ Rebecca Ann Haynes, "'A New Greater Romania'?: Romanian Claims to the Serbian Banat in 1941', *Central Europe*, 3, 2 (2005), 117–18; Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS), Fond Documentar, dosar 012694, vol. 12, 144, 151, 153.

¹⁷ Davis, 'Certifiably Romanian', 61, 78; Tudor Georgescu, 'Pursuing the Fascist Promise: Transylvanian Saxon "Self Help" from Genesis to Empowerment, 1922–1935', in Robert Pyrah and Marius Turda, eds, *Re-Contextualizing East Central European History: Nation, Culture, and Minority Groups* (London: Legenda, 2010), 55–73.

south-eastern Transylvania known as Szeklers, who they claimed were ‘Hungarianized Romanians’.¹⁸ The Austro-Hungarian government had attempted to Magyarise Romanian-speaking peasants in Transylvania during the late nineteenth century by placing Greek-Catholic churches under Hungarian bishops, changing street names and surnames, and enforcing schooling in Hungarian.¹⁹ There is little evidence of Szekler support for legionaries, however, and counties with Greek-Catholic majorities consistently voted against the legion in the 1937 elections.²⁰ In contrast, Bessarabians had their own specifically regional reasons for supporting the legion as an anti-Russian presence in the area.²¹ Embracing a regional interest group such as the Aromanians was therefore not unusual for the legion. What is remarkable about Aromanian involvement in Romanian fascism is the extent to which Aromanians committed themselves to the legionary cause. Aromanians were among the most violent of the legionary activists and they were over-represented among prominent legionary assassins and martyrs of the movement. Oliver Jens Schmitt estimates that by 1937, 95% of young Aromanian workers were legionaries.²²

To understand why Aromanians committed themselves so heavily to the legion it is necessary to explore how the experiences of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation – to use terms coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – impacted this small community. Frustrated with structuralist anthropology’s idea that society is constituted through exchanges of goods, money, women or land, Deleuze and Guattari argue that we should see it as ‘a socius of inscription where the essential thing is to mark and to be marked’.²³ Rather than focusing on push-and-pull factors or transnational ties, historians of migration should look at how the social and cultural roots binding Aromanians to particular places were broken in Greek Macedonia and then reinscribed in Romanian Dobruja. Describing society as an assemblage of rhizomes – root systems that grow out of the nodes of auxiliary stems to establish new plants – Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy suggests that Aromanians had a multiplicity of relationships connecting them to states, local communities and land, just as ‘a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social

¹⁸ Romanian National Archives – Cluj, Fond Personal Vasile Coman, Dosar 1/1980, ‘Amintiri legionare’, vol. 1, f. 69–72; Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian intra muros: Memorii legionare* (Bucharest: Lucman, n.d.), 11–57.

¹⁹ Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during the World War II* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 21, 23.

²⁰ James Niessen, ‘The Greek Catholic Church and the Romanian Nation in Transylvania’, in James Niessen ed., *Religious Compromise, Political Salvation: The Greek Catholic Church and Nation-Building in Eastern Europe* (Pittsburgh: Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, 1993), 59.

²¹ Wolfram Nieß, ‘“Hai să dăm mână cu mână, cei cu inima română”’: Der geplante Propagandazug der Legion durch Bessarabien von Sommer 1930’, in Armin Heinen and Oliver Jens Schmitt, eds, *Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts: Die ‘Legion Erzengel Michael’ in Rumänien 1918–1938* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013), 244–5.

²² Oliver Jens Schmitt, ‘“Zum Kampf, Arbeiter”: Arbeiterfrage und Arbeiterschaft in der Legionärsbewegung (1919–1938)’, in Heinen and Schmitt, eds, *Inszenierte Gegenmacht*, 336.

²³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Penguin, 1977) 142.

struggles'.²⁴ For Deleuze and Guattari, territories are created when spaces, or milieus, are filled with people, things and rhythms that give meaning and assert ownership. 'There is a territory precisely when milieu components cease to be directional', they write, 'becoming dimensional instead, when they cease to be functional to become expressive . . . What defines the territory is the emergence of matters of expression (qualities)'. In other words, 'it is the mark that makes the territory', not the other way around.²⁵

Deterritorialising and reterritorialising involves creating new identities and new memories. Memories that had bound Aromanians to Greek Macedonia were forgotten, and new memories of Romanianness, constituted by words and signs instead of by things and events, took their place.²⁶ Assisting in the migrants' reterritorialisation, the Romanian state acted 'as a river, not as a fountainhead', guiding land distribution, economic possibilities and identity-making in a way that subordinated Aromanians to the state and inscribed them into the Romanian *socius* as debtors, beholden to the state for its benevolence.²⁷ Aromanians who engaged in fascist politics challenged the state's effort to reterritorialise them as subordinate subjects, attempting to reterritorialise the state on their own terms just as cancerous cells take over a healthy body.²⁸

Deterritorialisation in Greek Macedonia

Shifting borders and populations deracinated Aromanian communities living in Greek Macedonia, leaving them without officially recognised ties to land and nation in a region increasingly dominated by organic and territorial metaphors of nationality. Ethnic or national identities were far less salient in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire than they later became, and most peasants defined themselves as 'Christians', as members of a particular family group, or according to other regional or socioeconomic markers.²⁹ The most detailed descriptions of Aromanian communities under the Ottomans come from Romanian presses, who were interested in discovering their 'brothers' living across the border and focused on the linguistic similarities between Aromanian and Romanian. Even though many of these descriptions were written by Aromanians themselves, they Orientalised these communities and romanticised their nomadic, pastoral lifestyles. Romanians such as the historian Nicolae Iorga considered that Aromanians were predisposed to violence, and wrote that 'they come from a country where human life is cheap, where the passions have no patience and fanaticism strikes. Political battles there end

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 315.

²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 144.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 197; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 19, 180–1.

²⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 215.

²⁹ Duncan M. Perry, *The Politics of Terror: The Macedonian Liberation Movements 1893–1903* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988), 21–2.

with the saying: *a wound for a wound and a death for a death*.³⁰ According to these admittedly problematic accounts, Aromanian communities formed around herds of sheep, and were led by a hereditary chief who directed the group's movements and whose authority extended over those who travelled with his herd.³¹ H. N. Brailsford (1873–1958), who lived in Macedonia in 1903 as a British relief worker, wrote that other peasants distrusted and despised these nomadic pastoralists but respected Aromanians engaged in commerce and the hospitality industry.³² Non-pastoralist Aromanians were important traders, specialising in livestock and cheeses, and usually spoke Greek – the language of trade – except when at home among themselves.³³ The influence of Aromanian merchants dominated elements of Saxon trade in Transylvania, and the merchants of Moscopole, an Aromanian commercial centre in Albania, traded with Istanbul, Leipzig, Belgrade, Budapest and Vienna.³⁴ Dispersed across a large mountainous region, Aromanians divided themselves into roughly ten different groups according to location, occupation and style of dress. Each of these was distinctive and had little in common with the others.³⁵ The Aromanians' place within Macedonian society began to change during the course of the nineteenth century. Ali Pasha of Tepelina (1740–1822) ended the hereditary privileges they enjoyed, including limited self-governance and low taxes.³⁶ New railways through the region replaced the importance of Aromanian caravans and new customs barriers hurt their trade.³⁷ Aromanians and their neighbours suffered as imperial control weakened and banditry became more common, devastating villages and terrorising shepherds in the mountains.³⁸ Aromanian ballads from this period celebrated outlaws who sought revenge for such attacks, but there appears to have been no organised Aromanian resistance.³⁹

The emergence of other local national movements forced Aromanians to either compete (unequally) for their own national rights or to integrate into the Greek,

³⁰ Nicolae Iorga, quoted in Cătălin Negoită, *Între stânga și dreapta: Comunism, iredentism, și legionarism în Cadrilater (1913–1940)* (Craiova: Editura Fundației Scrisul Românesc, 2009), 127.

³¹ Steriu T. Hagigogu, *Emigrarea aromânilor și colonizarea Cadrilaterului* (Bucharest: Tipografia Romano-Unite, 1927) 7–8; Constantin Noe, 'Celnicii și fâlcarea', *Sociologie românească*, 3, 1–3 (1938) 18–24.

³² H. N. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 176–7.

³³ Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 179; Thede Kahl, *Istoria Aromânilor* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2006) 17–19; Theodor Capidan, *Românii nomazi: Studiul de viața românilor din sudul Peninsulei Balcanice* (Cluj: Institutul de Arte Grafice Ardealul, 1926).

³⁴ K. E. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte: Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha's Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 36.

³⁵ Dem. Abeleanu, *Neamul aromânesc din Macedonia* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice C. Sfetea, 1916), 41–53.

³⁶ Abeleanu, *Neamul aromânesc*, 20–1, 30–8.

³⁷ Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 177; A. J. B. Wave and M. S. Thompson, *The Nomads of the Balkans: An Account of Life and Customs Among the Vlachs of Northern Pindus* (London: Methuen, 1914), 77.

³⁸ James Frusetta, 'Bulgaria's Macedonia: Nation-Building and State-Building, Centralization and Autonomy in Pirin Macedonia, 1903–1952', PhD thesis, University of Maryland, 2006, 74–7, 104–5, 111–24.

³⁹ Ionel Zeana, ed., *Antologie de lirică populară aromână* (Bucharest: Biblioteca Culturii Aromâne, 2002), 49–50; Nicolae Ciolacu, *Haiducii Dobrogei: Rezistența armată anticomunistă în Munții Babadagului, Dobrogea* (Constanța: Editura Munteia, 1998), 151.

Bulgarian or Albanian nations. An Aromanian national movement emerged in the late eighteenth century in Vienna, Budapest and Trieste, but only penetrated Macedonia when activists established the first Romanian-language schools there during the 1860s.⁴⁰ The Romanian state sent money, but funds were always inadequate. Schools lacked books and teachers frequently complained of not being paid for long periods.⁴¹ Aromanians supported the Greeks in their revolts against the Ottomans during the 1820s.⁴² Moreover, when the Bulgarians established an autocephalous Exarchate in 1870, Aromanians affiliated themselves with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.⁴³ Despite the Aromanians' earlier support of Greek causes, in the wake of the Russo-Turkish War (1877–8) they were drawn into a pragmatic alliance which Istanbul and Bucharest formed against Greek interests in Macedonia. In return, Aromanians gained official protection for their schools and the right to use Romanian in church. In 1905 the Sultan recognised an Aromanian *millet*, with the right to its own schools, churches and elected officials.⁴⁴

Angry at the Aromanians' new rights, Greek insurgents (*andartes*) and Bulgarian gangs (*komitadjis*) began attacking Aromanian communities.⁴⁵ Gangs murdered an Aromanian priest at Veroia (near Thessaloniki, then under Ottoman rule) and attacked the village of Avdela (farther west, in the Pindus mountains) repeatedly during the summer of 1905.⁴⁶ Violence against Aromanians continued when Romania entered the Balkans wars of 1912–13, and now Greek officials joined in the persecution of Aromanians.⁴⁷ In Bulgaria, authorities appropriated Aromanian church buildings, donating them to Bulgarian-speaking congregations.⁴⁸ Persecution encouraged Aromanian nationalism, as did propaganda from Aromanian students studying in Bucharest.⁴⁹ Romanian writers began producing pamphlets and books

⁴⁰ Abeleanu, *Neamul aromânesc*, 53–62; Guiseppa Motta, 'The Fight for Balkan Latinity: The Aromanians until World War I', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2, 3 (2011), 254.

⁴¹ Berciu-Drăghicescu and Petre, eds, *Școli și biserici românești*, 103–12; Stelian Brezeanu and Gheorghe Zbucă, eds, *Românii de la sud de Dunăre* (Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 1997), 155–7.

⁴² Abeleanu, *Neamul aromânesc*, 28–9.

⁴³ Elisabeth Kontogiorgi, *Population Exchange in Greek Macedonia: The Rural Settlement of Refugees 1922–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006) 237. On the reception of the Bulgarian church in an Aromanian region of Greek Macedonia, see Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 84–7.

⁴⁴ Motta, 'The Fight for Balkan Latinity', 254–5.

⁴⁵ From 1903 onwards the Greek government also began sponsoring violence in Ottoman Macedonia. Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), 94.

⁴⁶ Motta, 'The Fight for Balkan Latinity', 255–6.

⁴⁷ Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu and Maria Petre, eds, *Școli și biserici românești din Peninsula Balcanică: Documente (1864–1948)* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2004), 203–5; Negoiaș, *Între stânga și dreapta*, 23–35, 112–13.

⁴⁸ Berciu-Drăghicescu and Petre, eds, *Școli și biserici românești*, 177–82, 194–5, 227–9.

⁴⁹ Panduru, '“De la “Cercul studenților aromâni”', *Neamul românesc*, 5, 45 (9 Apr. 1910): 11–12; Titu Maiorescu, *România, războaiele balcanice și Cadrilaterul* (Bucharest: Editura Machiavelli, 1995) 161–5, 241–54.

arguing that they constituted a large and important group of Romanians deserving special protection from the Romanian nation state.⁵⁰

Deterritorialised by socioeconomic changes, nationalist movements, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and sporadic ethnic violence, Aromanians had few reasons to remain in Macedonia, which had become part of Greece in 1913. In the wake of the Balkan wars hundreds of thousands of people across south-eastern Europe left their homes and fled the newly created nation states in which they had suddenly become an unwelcome minority. Too far from the borders to become the focus of ethnic cleansing themselves, Aromanians avoided the refugee crisis until the ethnic cleansings and forced relocations and exchanges at the end of the Greco-Turkish war (1919–22) flooded the region with over a million refugees from Anatolia.⁵¹ The Greek government forced locals to house and feed the refugees, and in some cases requisitioned houses, produce and land to give to the refugees.⁵² This placed a heavy strain on the local population, many of whom became hostile towards the newcomers, treating them as uncivilised imposters who were not true Greeks.⁵³ Most importantly, nomadic pastoralists, including Aromanians, suddenly found their grazing lands and migration routes in private hands and were forced to abandon their transhumant lifestyles.⁵⁴ According to the Romanian Legation in Athens, ‘little by little [the refugees] took [the Aromanians’] fields, their pastures, the hills their flocks grazed on, such that many of them were forced to sell their belongings and leave Greece forever’.⁵⁵ Increasingly alienated from Greek Macedonia, some Aromanians appealed to the Romanian government and received an invitation to settle as colonists in Southern Dobruja with the promise of land and loans to cover the costs of resettlement.

Reterritorialisation in Romanian Dobruja

Situated south of the Danube on the Black sea coast, Dobruja is a windy, arid area which had been ruled by the Ottomans until it was divided between Romania and Bulgaria in 1878. Southern Dobruja became part of the new Bulgarian state, and Romania received Northern Dobruja.⁵⁶ Romanians were not ecstatic about their new acquisition and the Prime Minister at the time, Ion C. Brătianu

⁵⁰ L. T. Boga, *Românii din Macedonia, Epir, Tesalia, Albania, Bulgaria și Serbia* (Bucharest: Tipografia Vocea Poporului, 1913), 4–5; Abeleanu, *Neamul aromânesc*, 62–7; *Revista Macedoromână*, 2, 1 (1930).

⁵¹ Kontogiorgi, *Population Exchange*, 73–6.

⁵² Kontogiorgi, *Population Exchange*, 169.

⁵³ Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, 146–61.

⁵⁴ Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, 156–7; Wave and Thompson, *The Nomads of the Balkans*, 77.

⁵⁵ Romanian Legation in Athens to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 Dec. 1926; in Berciu-Drăghicescu and Petre, eds, *Școli și biserici românești*, 418–19.

⁵⁶ Jean Nouzille, ‘La Frontière Bulgaro-Roumaine en Dobroudja’, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, 35, 1–2 (1996), 27–30.

(1821–91), portrayed it as a backwards province that Romanians had to civilise.⁵⁷ Not until the interwar period did Romanian historians emphasise that large numbers of ethnic Romanians had lived here for centuries.⁵⁸ Successive Romanian governments attempted to exploit the region economically during the late nineteenth century, generating hostility towards prefects who were appointed by and represented the interests of powerful individuals in Bucharest.⁵⁹ As Vladimir Solonari has shown, Romania also followed an aggressive policy of ethnic homogenisation in Northern Dobruja. From 1880 onwards, the state encouraged transhumant shepherds from Transylvania (*Mocant*) to settle there, and in 1888 it began granting lots to retired noncommissioned officers.⁶⁰

Romania annexed Southern Dobruja from Bulgaria following the Second Balkan War in 1913, lost it back to Bulgaria in 1918, and regained control of the region in late 1919.⁶¹ Ethnic Bulgarians in Southern Dobruja could now claim Romanian citizenship and voting rights, and Romanian documents from 1919 onwards express fears of communist conspiracies and Bulgarian irredentism.⁶² Adding to the complexity of governing the region, overlapping land titles from successive Ottoman, Bulgarian and Romanian administrations made it difficult to determine legitimate property ownership.⁶³ A new radical group emerged in 1923 called the internal revolutionary organisation of Dobruja (Вършевна добруджанска революционна организация, VDRO; in Romanian: Organizația Internă Revoluționară Dobrogeană). The VDRO had its base inside Bulgaria, but crossed the border to attack Romanian officials and colonists in the Cadrilater. The following year the Romanian government began stripping Bulgarians in Dobruja of their land. An already hostile Bulgarian public opinion roundly condemned Romania's actions. As well as supporting the VDRO, the Bulgarian minority established Bulgarian students groups and a Council for Bulgarians in Romania in 1927, but to little effect.⁶⁴ Into this situation the Romanian government sent 7,500 ethnically Romanian families from the Old Kingdom, 1,406 from the Banat, and 2,500 Aromanian families as colonists.⁶⁵ When they settled in Dobruja, the Aromanians 'reterritorialised' themselves. In the process of colonising Southern

⁵⁷ Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation- and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878–1913* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, 2002), 14.

⁵⁸ C. C. Giurescu, 'Din Istoria Nouă a Dobrogei', in *Dobrogea: Patru conferințe ale Universității Libere* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1928) 53–74.

⁵⁹ Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation- and State-Building*, 16–32, 46–63.

⁶⁰ Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation- and State-Building*, 34–8; Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 33–4.

⁶¹ Nouzille, 'La Frontière Bulgaro-Roumaine en Dobroudja', 30–40.

⁶² Dan Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul: Ideologie cominternistă și irredentism bulgar, 1919–1940* (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studierea Totalitarismului, 2001).

⁶³ A. N. Pintea, *Chestiuni Dobrogene* (Bazargic: Tipografia Gutenberg, 1924).

⁶⁴ Alberto Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico: La contesa fra Bulgaria e Romania in Dobruja del Sud, 1918–1940* (Cosenza: Periferia, 2001), 96–8, 105–8.

⁶⁵ Nouzille, 'La Frontière Bulgaro-Roumaine en Dobroudja', 41.

Dobruja, Aromanians claimed ethnic privilege together with land as they inscribed new identities for themselves as ethnic Romanians 'coming home'.

Romanians already living in Southern Dobruja did not welcome the Aromanians with open arms, particularly as cross-border incursions by Bulgarian gangs increased once the colonists arrived.⁶⁶ A memorandum written by Romanians in Silistra in May 1925 stated that

Having lived for so many centuries under the Turkish, and then Greek and Bulgarian domination, Aromanians have a violent and unfriendly nature. Any enlightened mind should be able to see what the results of settling these two nationalities in the same place will be, especially since the Macedonians will settle as masters, intent on destroying the Bulgarian element.⁶⁷

Moreover, the Romanian state did little to ease the difficulties associated with colonisation. Early waves of Aromanian colonists complained that they had received no government assistance and that the small communities which prospered did so only because of strong community spirit and hard work.⁶⁸

One of the largest migrations of Aromanians from Macedonia followed a meeting of Aromanian leaders in Veroia during winter 1924, when they recognised that they were unable to survive economically in Macedonia. The Aromanians appealed to the Romanian government and received an invitation to settle as colonists with the promise of land and loans to cover the costs of resettlement. Roughly two thousand families, many of whom were already internal refugees in Greece, migrated to Southern Dobruja in late 1925. The relationship between Greece and Bulgaria was particularly strained at this time following the War of the Stray Dog in October, and Romania had acted as a mediator between Greece and Bulgaria after the war. Taking in large numbers of Aromanian migrants would have sent a message that the Romanians did not believe their neighbours to be capable of protecting their minority populations. Moreover, the government's decision to colonise the region followed a 1921 report which formed the basis of a 'Law for the Organization of the New Dobruja' in April 1924.⁶⁹ From the government's perspective, colonisation had more to do with dominating the region ethnically and economically than with any humanitarian concerns. When the Aromanians arrived, the government offered to sell them land at high prices, and introduced unexpected taxes.⁷⁰ What land was available had been confiscated from local Bulgarians and Turks, making the colonists particularly distasteful to the region's population.⁷¹ Bandits increasingly crossed the Bulgarian border to terrorise the colonists, murdering some and provoking revenge

⁶⁶ Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico*, 92.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, 41.

⁶⁸ G. Murnu, 'Rolul macedo-românilor în viitorul economic al României', *Peninsula balcanica*, 6 May 1923, 5–6.

⁶⁹ Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico*, 90, 94.

⁷⁰ Hagigogu, *Emigrarea aromânilor*, 19–40; Vasile Th. Muși, *Un deceniu de colonizare în Dobrogea-Nouă, 1925–1935* (Bucharest: Societatea de Cultură Macedo-Română, 1935).

⁷¹ Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico*, 95, 102.

attacks from Aromanians.⁷² As another group of Aromanians prepared to migrate to Dobruja in July 1927, the Romanian government changed the rules at the last minute, forcing them to sign a declaration that they were not coming as ‘colonists’ and therefore were not entitled to receive land or funds from the state.⁷³

Violence between Aromanians and Bulgarians escalated. Aromanians invaded the mostly Bulgarian village of Cocina in 1927 following the death of an Aromanian colonist. According to the prefect of Durostor county, ‘A lot of villagers were reportedly killed and wounded. During the attack, when those slightly wounded were heading towards [the neighbouring village of] Şabla, Macedonians reached them from behind in automobiles and murdered them with knives and revolvers’.⁷⁴ The Bulgarians believed that the Romanian authorities were collaborating with the colonists, who were abusing their rights with impunity. Violence continued into the early 1930s, cementing the Aromanians’ reputation as a belligerent and incendiary group.⁷⁵ In March 1931 Constantin Stoianoff, the mayor of the village of Hardali, shot two dogs belonging to an Aromanian settler in a nearby village. A crowd of Aromanians disarmed Stoianoff, who was drunk at the time, and beat him before handing him over to the authorities.⁷⁶ Two months later a crowd of Aromanians attacked two Bulgarian politicians at the railway station, shouting ‘Traitors to the people, go back with the train or leave for Sofia, we won’t let you come here!’⁷⁷ On 8 June 1931, groups of Aromanians fought each other over a plot of land in Durostor. Both groups fired shots in the air and several people ended up in hospital with serious injuries.⁷⁸

Aromanians portrayed themselves as victims; first as members of a persecuted minority scattered throughout the Balkans and second as loyal Romanians who had been betrayed by a government that had promised them rights and then abandoned them.⁷⁹ Reports circulated that speaking Romanian on the streets in Serbian Macedonia was considered ‘seditious’ and that Aromanians in Bulgaria were physically assaulted.⁸⁰ Aromanians in Greece wrote that they had no rights there and were economically destitute, without priests or schools.⁸¹ The society of

⁷² ‘Omorârea colonistului macedo-român Tănase Goța’, *Macedonia*, 13 Nov. 1927, 1; Muși, *Un deceniu de colonizare*, 126, 138–9; Valentin Ciorbea, ‘Terorism în Cadrilater (1919–1940)’, *Dosarul Istoriei*, 7, 1 (65) (2002), 41–3; Romanian National Archives (ANIC), Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar 93/1931, f. 17.

⁷³ Muși, *Un deceniu de colonizare*, 75.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, 42.

⁷⁵ Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico*, 120–1, 139.

⁷⁶ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar 93/1931, f. 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 14.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 16.

⁷⁹ ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar 30/1926. For a summary of the problems faced by Aromanians outside Romania, see Stoica Lascu, ‘Împroprietărea românilor balcanici în Cadrilater’, *Dosarul istoriei*, 7, 1 (2002), 28–40.

⁸⁰ I. C. Grădișteanu, ‘O situație intolerabilă’, *Peninsula balcanica*, 6 May 1923, 3; T. Hagigogu, ‘Bulgari ne persecută’, *Peninsula balcanica*, 6 Oct. 1926, 1.

⁸¹ Meghea Gh. Petru, ‘Starea disperată a Românilor din Meglenia’, *Peninsula balcanica*, 6 June 1923, 11. Cf. the situation of Aromanians living in Sofia, Bulgaria, ‘Situația aromânilor din capital Bulgariei’,

Macedo-Romanian students (Societatea Studenților Macedo-Români) established in Bucharest in 1928 complained about being ‘threatened with the heavy burden of a harsh domination’. The society fought for Aromanians’ ‘free development as a people’ so that ‘the cry of pain from our brothers in Macedonia will not suffocate from the apathy of those who have forgotten their destiny’.⁸²

Scattered throughout a large, mountainous region, divided by cultural and economic differences, and integrated into local networks, pro-Romanian Aromanians in Macedonia had struggled to convince all Aromanians to support a common ethnic course of action. The experience of colonisation changed this. As they reterritorialised themselves in Southern Dobruja as Romanians, the colonists simultaneously reinforced the salience of Aromanianness as a politically useful identity. Resistance on the part of the Romanian state and hostility from local Romanians encouraged many Aromanian colonists to think of Aromanians as a special group whose agendas had precedence over those of the Romanian nation as a whole.

Aromanians join the legion

From 1930 onwards, large numbers of Aromanians turned to fascism. The legionary Constantin Papanace (1904–85) explained this decision: ‘all those who were raised during the nationalist fights in Macedonia, we had in mind the image of a spotless Great Romania (as you can only see from a distance). Once we arrived in the country, we felt disappointed’.⁸³ Another Aromanian legionary, Constantin Teja, said in an interview from 2000 that he and other Aromanians joined the legion because they wanted ‘social justice’. When the interviewer asked him to clarify what he meant by this, Teja responded:

We came to the motherland after having been exiled by the Turks and by the Greeks, 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!⁸⁴

The first instance of violence between the Romanian state and the colonists took place in June 1927 when Captain Popescu of the gendarmerie in Durostor county shot the prefect, I. Ghibănescu.⁸⁵ Earlier that year the prefect had told Aromanian migrants to return to where they had come from. Aromanian students in Bucharest

Macedonia, 12 Dec. 1927, 3; ‘Un echivoc – Congresul macedo-bulgar din Leiptzig’, *Universul*, 22 Feb. 1925) in Brezeanu and Zbucă, eds, *Români de la sud de Dunăre*, 275.

⁸² ANIC, Fond Societatea Studenților Macedo-Români, dosar 3/1928, f. 4, 17.

⁸³ Constantin Papanace, quoted in Alexandru Gica, ‘The Recent History of the Aromanians in Romania’, *New Europe College Yearbook, 2008–2009* (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2009).

⁸⁴ Constantin Teja (10 May 2000), in Mariana Conovici, Silvia Iliescu and Octavian Silvestru, eds, *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul: Mișcarea Legionară în documente de istorie orală* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008), 43–5.

⁸⁵ ‘Colonizarea cu Macedoneni și naționalizarea țării’, *Apărarea națională*, 6 June 1927, 2.

claimed that Ghibănescu also had close ties to the Bulgarian gangs.⁸⁶ Ghibănescu's assassination closely followed a visit to the area by a group of ultra-nationalist students, including two Aromanian activists Constantin Papanace and Ion Caranica (1903–38) and Teodosie Popescu, another student leader who had participated in Codreanu's assassination plot of 1923. These students led several protests against Ghibănescu shortly before his death.⁸⁷ Ultra-nationalist students in Bucharest greeted news of the assassination with joy.⁸⁸

In July 1930 an Aromanian student named Gheorghe Beza shot at Romania's Subsecretary of State, Constantin Angelescu (1870–1948), after the latter changed the laws governing the colonisation of Dobruja, leaving the colonists with smaller plots of land.⁸⁹ Beza had become interested in the legion a few days before his attempted assassination of Angelescu. He even had a legionary pamphlet in his pocket when he was arrested. The legion's leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, claimed to have had no knowledge of the planned assassination. Nevertheless, he immediately distributed a pamphlet saying that 'if the Minister, Angelescu, deserved to be defended, then young Beza deserves to be as well, both in the courts and before Romanian public opinion'.⁹⁰ Codreanu was arrested as an accomplice, and in the back of the police van he met a collection of the most radical Aromanian student activists, including Constantin Papanace, Anton Ciumeti, Mamuli Stamuli, Ion Caranica, Grigoure Pihu, and Ion Ghița, who had also published pamphlets in support of Beza's actions.⁹¹ Legionary students in Bucharest held rallies to defend Beza, and at his trial they filled the courtroom with a strong fascist presence.⁹² Reinforcing the notion that Aromanians were ethnic Romanians and therefore had the privilege to kill for their rights, one legionary newspaper in Bucharest 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]'.⁹³ Codreanu befriended the Aromanians in prison, and when they were released Papanace and Pihu set about organising Aromanian students in Bucharest into legionary cells known as 'nests', later extending their activities into the large Aromanian communities in Durostor and Cadrilater counties.⁹⁴ Aromanians constituted an important part of the early legionary movement in Bucharest: this small community alone contributed half of the funds for renting the legion's first office in the capital.⁹⁵

⁸⁶ Ion N. Caranica, 'Cadrilaterul văzut de aproape', *Apărarea națională*, 6 June 1927, 1.

⁸⁷ Gica, 'Recent History of the Aromanians in Romania'.

⁸⁸ 'Colonizarea cu Macedoneni și naționalizarea țării', *Apărarea națională*, 6 June 1927, 2.

⁸⁹ CNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 210821, vol. 1, f. 241–8.

⁹⁰ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* (Bucharest: Editura Scara, 1999), 304.

⁹¹ CNSAS, Fond Penal, dosar 13997, vol. 1, f. 18, vol. 2, f. 13.

⁹² ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar 37/1931, f. 13–18, 22.

⁹³ St. M., 'Cei 7 studenți Macedoneni închiși la Văcărești', *Garda de Fer*, 1 Sept. 1930, 1.

⁹⁴ CNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 210821, vol. 1, f. 241–8.

⁹⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel 138, dosar 2/1930, f. 91–3.

Aromanians continued to be some of the legion's most committed activists, and two of the three legionaries who murdered the prime minister, Ion Gh. Duca (1879–1933), in December 1933 were Aromanians. Historians usually situate Duca's assassination within the context of the national elections, overlooking the ethno-political motivations of his Aromanian assassins. The government banned the legion two weeks before the elections and arrested numerous legionary propagandists to prevent them campaigning. The student who shot Duca, Nicolae Constantinescu (?–1938), had been beaten by police several times over the previous few months and had been one of the activists under arrest in December.⁹⁶ The other two assassins, Doru Belimace (1910–38) and Ion Caranica (1907–38), framed the murder as a legionary act, yet they also had specifically Aromanian grievances. Duca had recently blocked Aromanians from Greece attempting to migrate to Romania; police had killed a young Aromanian legionary in Constanța a month earlier and the assassins believed that capitalists in Duca's social circles were financing Greek bandits who attacked Aromanians living abroad.⁹⁷ Aromanian and legionary notions of 'social justice' coalesced in Duca's murder, allowing Belimace and Caranica to territorialise Aromanian grievances as legionary issues.

Cultivating a minority population

Legionary propaganda among Aromanians framed the legion's agenda in terms of Aromanian grievances. In December 1930 the UNSCR, which was increasingly under legionary control, put pressure on its Serbian counterpart to lobby the Yugoslav government on behalf of Aromanians in Yugoslavia.⁹⁸ A congress of Dobrujan students in August 1933 declared its firm support for the UNSCR and discussed local issues such as a dormitory in Bucharest dedicated to students from Dobruja, cheap credit for Romanian farmers in the region, and *numerus nullus* legislation restricting the employment of ethnic minorities in Dobruja's civil service.⁹⁹ By late 1933 legionaries cemented their presence within the Aromanian communities in Durostor and Cadrilater, proselytising at first through family networks or among students who came from the same cities in Greece or Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁰ The family of Virgil Teodorescu, who was killed by police during the elections of 1933, was particularly active and helped raise support in the area.¹⁰¹ Internecine violence

⁹⁶ Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihail'*, 235.

⁹⁷ Constantin Papanace, *Evocări* (Madrid: Benzal, 1965), 78; Romanian National Archives – Iași, Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rectoratul, Reel 266, dosar 1480/1934, f. 358–9. See also 'Școlile din Macedonia nu s'au deschis încă', *Armatolii*, 10 Nov. 1933, 4.

⁹⁸ U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (USHMM), Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel 137–8, dosar 5/1929, f. 18, 24–7, 43.

⁹⁹ USHMM, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, Reel 136–7, dosar6/1927, f. 175–6.

¹⁰⁰ CNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 210821, vol. 1, f. 35, 48–53, 241–8, vol. 2, f. 72.

¹⁰¹ Ioan Scurtu, Corneliu Beldiman, Natalia Tampa, Tiberiu Tănase, Cristian Troncoță, and Puiu Dumitru Bordeiu, eds, *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România*, Vol. 4 (Bucharest: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2003), 83.

between Bulgarians and Aromanians continued in 1933, with individuals from both sides suffering injury and death.¹⁰² Nicolae Ciolacu (1911–2007), a committed Aromanian legionary, writes in his memoirs that he first learned of the legion in April 1933, when two high school students visited his village and gave political speeches at the coffeehouse, where locals gathered to talk. Their visit took place immediately after a series of attacks on Aromanians in the region, and Ciolacu claims that anger over these attacks inspired him and others in the village to immediately form two new legionary nests.¹⁰³ Students in Bucharest protested when police assaulted Aromanian settlers, and hoped that the settlers would appreciate their support.¹⁰⁴ Legionaries began holding cultural evenings, poetry recitals and dances, and used high school students to perform patriotic plays in Aromanian villages.¹⁰⁵ They also built roads and restored churches in the area as part of voluntary work projects sponsored by the legion.¹⁰⁶ When an Aromanian legionary named Bujgoli married in October 1935, a number of prominent legionaries, including some who were not Aromanian, travelled to his village in Durostor to promote the legion during the wedding.¹⁰⁷

Legionary propaganda claimed that they were continuing earlier Aromanian battles for minority rights within the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁸ Legionary publicists writing to an Aromanian audience considered Phanariots, Greeks and Bulgarians as part of the ‘Jewish menace’, and claimed that these ‘foreigners’ manipulated the ‘crypto-foreigners’ who were Romania’s rulers.¹⁰⁹ In an article entitled ‘Who we are and what we want’, the legionary Nicolae Cuvendu wrote,

Brother, we hurt and are offended to the point of revolt when we see that foreigners rule your own country! The Phanariot covering still persists through Byzantine customs and procedures. Yids have conquered and suffocated the country so that they can suck it dry more effectively. The minorities take rights that make them superior to Romanians, using dishonest politicians who have become foreigners to their own nation [*neam*]. Greeks and Bulgarians spread themselves out at the funerary meal of the country, and you, poor Romanian, must push and shove bitterly for a little space in your own home.¹¹⁰

Legionary propaganda targeting Aromanians complained about irredentist and ‘crypto-communist’ activities among the ethnic Bulgarians in Dobruja. It vehemently protested against the poor housing conditions and inadequate land which Aromanians had been offered by the Romanian government.¹¹¹ Legionaries

¹⁰² Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico*, 170.

¹⁰³ Ciolacu, *Haiducii Dobrogei*, 46–8.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Protestul studenților împotriva atacurilor din Cadrilater’, *Calendarul*, 16 Oct. 1933, 4.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Către tinerii intelectuali din Dobrogea nouă’, *Armatolii*, 1 Dec. 1933, 2; CNSAS, Fond documentar D.012694, vol. 12, f. 12–13.

¹⁰⁶ Ciolacu, *Haiducii Dobrogei*, 51–4.

¹⁰⁷ CNSAS, Fond documentar, dosar 012694, vol. 12, f. 19.

¹⁰⁸ B. Papanace, ‘Armatolii’, *Armatolii*, 1 Nov. 1933, 1.

¹⁰⁹ I. Caranica, ‘Criptostrăinii și organizațiile naționaliste’, *Armatolii*, 10 Dec. 1933, 1; Constantin Papanace, ‘Uneltiri Judeice’, *Legionarii*, 1 Oct. 1937, 1.

¹¹⁰ Niculae Cuvendu, ‘Ce suntem și ce vrem noi’, *Armatolii*, 1 Nov. 1933, 1.

¹¹¹ ‘Colonizarea Cadrilaterului: Agronomii’, *Armatolii*, 10 Nov. 1933, 4; ‘Colonizarea Cadrilaterului: Locuințele coloniștilor’, *Armatolii*, 20 Nov. 1933, 4; Ionel St. Nacu, ‘Minoritatea Bulgară’, *Armatolii*,

catalogued discrimination against Aromanians abroad and demanded action from the government.¹¹² In September 1935 the legionary and Romanian Orthodox priest Grigore Cristescu (1895–1961) visited the town of Bazargic near the Bulgarian border. Speaking to an audience of roughly 300 Aromanian students, he told them, ‘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’.¹¹³ Cristescu himself was not Aromanian, but by the mid 1930s it had become common for legionary publicists to champion Aromanian causes.¹¹⁴ By contrast, the legionary propaganda that targeted Northern Dobrujans living in Constanța framed its appeal in much more general terms. Recommended reading materials for peasant legionaries around Constanța in 1936 were the newspapers *Libertatea* (*Liberty*) and *Glasul strămoșesc* (the *Ancestral Voice*) – both from Transylvania.¹¹⁵

Legionaries from outside the region were sent to Dobruja to help organise new nests and to encourage existing ones.¹¹⁶ In the summer of 1936 Codreanu divided the Aromanian legionary students into two groups. Those from outside Romania were to spend one month in legionary work camps and the rest of the time doing propaganda throughout villages in Cadrilater and Durostor; those who came from Romania itself were not obliged to attend any work camps, but were to focus on organising cultural celebrations in Southern Dobruja.¹¹⁷ By September, however, the former group had split in two according to their places of origin. Those from southern Thessaly (known as Fârsoreți) and Aromanians from Southern Dobruja gathered around the veteran legionary Grigore Pihu and those from Veroia and the Pindus mountains around the current vice-president of the society for Macedo-Romanian students, Gheorghe Zima. Eventually only an executive decision by Codreanu was able to resolve the situation.¹¹⁸ The fact that activists struggled to remain united by their ethnicity even in the midst of asserting Romanianness and Aromanianness within the context of the legion reinforces how novel and fragile these identities were to immigrants still in the process of territorialising themselves in Southern Dobruja.

Legionary propaganda in Aromanian communities did yield positive results for the legion, however, and business boomed when Spiru Popescu and Spiru Bujgoli established a legionary co-operative in Silistra in December 1937. The co-operative’s

1 Dec. 1933, 1, 3; Cola G. Ciumetti, ‘Bulgarii din România și politicienii noștri’, *Legionarii*, 15 Nov. 1937, 1.

¹¹² Castru, ‘Scolile noastre de peste hotare’, *Armatolii*, 1 Nov. 1933, 1; ‘Tradegia unor români din Albania’, *Armatolii*, 1 Nov. 1933, 2; ‘Pensionarii români din Macedonia’, *Armatolii*, 10 Nov. 1933, 4; Diogene, ‘Sinceritatea prieteniei Sârbesti’, *Armatolii*, 24 Dec. 1933, 4.

¹¹³ CNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 258626, f. 91–9.

¹¹⁴ Dragos Protopopescu, ‘Dreptate pentru Macedoneni’, *Porunca vremii*, n.d., in CNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 210821, vol. 3, f. 112; Ilie I. Imbrescu, ‘Dreptatea oamenilor. .. și dreptatea lui Dumnezeu’, *Legionarii*, 1 Oct. 1937, 1.

¹¹⁵ Scurtu et al., eds, *Ideologie*, vol. 4, 231.

¹¹⁶ Fond documentar, dosar 008912, vol. 2, f. 111.

¹¹⁷ ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse, dosar 10/1935, f. 19, 84.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. dosar 3/1936, f. 145–6; CNSAS, Fond documentar, dosar 012694, vol. 12, f. 33–5, 45.

success is significant given that Silistra was an important economic centre with a majority Bulgarian population. Over a hundred new members joined the legion in that month alone.¹¹⁹ The only summer camps that Aromanian groups ran for students that year were legionary ones, and the forty-five students who attended did so thanks to government funding for an ‘Aromanian’ camp.¹²⁰

Disagreeing about fascism

Not all Aromanians embraced fascism. Like nationalists all over Europe, older Aromanians had praised Mussolini during the 1920s and hailed Italian fascism as the way of the future.¹²¹ Prominent Aromanians were also comfortable supporting Gheorghe Beza during his trial for the attempted assassination of Constantin Angelescu. The Macedo-Romanian cultural society, Societatea de Cultura Macedo-Români, described Beza as a ‘national hero’ and claimed that ‘Beza did not want to kill Mr. Angelescu, but those traitors who have spread terror among the Aromanian colonists’.¹²² A number of prominent Aromanians travelled to Bucharest for the trial and lobbied the judiciary in support of Beza.¹²³ The Aromanian newspaper *Apărarea* (*Defence*) declared that ‘the trial of the young Aromanian student Beza has become a trial of the Aromanians, of all Aromanian intellectuals and masses who cannot accept the grave insult of being considered foreigners in the land of Romanians and only of Romanians’.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, the majority of Aromanians in Bucharest were very hesitant about committing the Macedo-Romanian cultural society to any political position, and strongly criticised their leaders if they became too closely affiliated with any one party.¹²⁵

Legionaries had been actively recruiting among Aromanian students since 1930, and the society of Macedo-Romanian students officially elected legionary leaders in December 1934.¹²⁶ A conflict developed during 1935 between the legionary students and the cultural society, which owned and ran a dormitory in Bucharest at which roughly sixty legionary students lived. When the cultural society’s president tore down the pictures of Codreanu that were hanging on the walls, the students protested vigorously and tried unsuccessfully to replace him as president. They needed the cultural society’s support, however, because many of them came from families in Bulgaria or Greece and had nowhere else to live.¹²⁷ It is unclear precisely what

¹¹⁹ CNSAS, Fond documentar, dosar 012694, vol. 12, f. 86–7.

¹²⁰ Ibid. f. 73–5.

¹²¹ M. Delaolt, ‘Pionierii fascismului’, *Macedonia*, 28 Nov. 1927, 2. In 1939 the Italian Legation in Bucharest began a successful cultural programme aimed at attracting Aromanians to Italy. CNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 012694, vol. 12, f. 142, 163, 177, 179.

¹²² ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar 93/1931, f. 5, 7.

¹²³ Ibid. f. 13.

¹²⁴ *Apărarea*, 24 Mar. 1931; quoted in ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar 93/1931, f. 9.

¹²⁵ Ibid. f. 3.

¹²⁶ CNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 012694, vol. 12, f. 2.

¹²⁷ Ibid. f. 4–36, 57–8.

catalysed the cultural society to act against the legion, but there is evidence of continued conflict among Aromanians in Bucharest at this time. Other Aromanians resented the fact that legionaries dominated their cultural society, and legionary students refused to work together with non-legionaries. In 1936 these positions reached such an impasse that the society of Macedo-Romanian students was unable to establish a magazine even though it had the money to do so, because the two groups refused to co-operate.¹²⁸

Increasingly alienated from their elders, young Aromanians also came into conflict with other legionaries. Aromanians complained during 1937 that Bucharest's largest pro-legionary newspaper *Bună veste* (the *Good News*) had refused to publish their protest against a Greek law forbidding Aromanians in Greece from speaking Romanian. Rumours circulated that the Aromanians had 'gone cold' on the legion, and Codreanu had to dedicate more time to cultivating their affections.¹²⁹ Aromanians once again questioned whether supporting the legion was worthwhile after Codreanu was arrested in 1938. Facing widespread arrests, beatings and occasional murders, a group of Aromanian legionaries wrote to Codreanu asking him to relieve them of their loyalty oath to the movement. He refused to do so and warned them not to engage in further violence that might endanger the legion. Aromanians had consistently advocated violent reprisals against government persecution during 1938, and Codreanu's policy of non-retaliation frustrated them.¹³⁰

The movement's leadership fell into disarray after the police murdered Codreanu in prison in November 1938, and Constantin Papanace, an Aromanian, established himself as one of the legion's key powerbrokers.¹³¹ Other Aromanian legionaries quarrelled over whether they should follow official legionary policy and submit to the King Carol II's royal dictatorship even though the new regime was mistreating their imprisoned colleagues.¹³² The regime continued to distrust the Aromanian students, and closed down their dormitory, moving them into a state-run facility where they had less freedom and were afraid to talk to the other students, who might have been police informants.¹³³

Aromanian problems intensified after 7 September 1940, when Germany forced Romania to sign the Treaty of Craiova, ceding Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria and requiring the two countries to negotiate a formal exchange of populations, which included the forcible removal of Aromanians from Southern Dobruja. The legionaries had taken power together with General Ion Antonescu several days earlier, and the Aromanian legionary Cola G. Ciumetti took charge of organising the population transfer on the Romanian side. Legionary police forcibly expelled 'Bulgarians and others' from Northern Dobruja, often with little or no evidence that these people were ethnic Bulgarians. As well, Romanian gendarmes pillaged and raped

¹²⁸ Ibid. f. 33–9.

¹²⁹ Papanace, *Evocări*, 16.

¹³⁰ CNSAS, Fond Penal, dosar 011784, vol. 14, f. 318–19; Ciolacu, *Haiducii Dobrogei*, 89.

¹³¹ CNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 210821, vol. 1, f. 241–255.

¹³² CNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 012694, vol. 12, f. 113–14.

¹³³ Ibid. f. 140–1.

Bulgarians as they crossed the border, and Aromanians fleeing from Southern Dobruja destroyed their properties rather than give them to the Bulgarians. Under Ciumetti's supervision, Aromanian refugees received the best land in Northern Dobruja that had been taken from evacuated Bulgarians and relocated Germans.¹³⁴ With the legion in power, Aromanian legionaries used their authority to enrich themselves and their extended families.¹³⁵

Nonetheless, Aromanian accounts of this resettlement express frustration and disappointment that even though legionaries were in power, the Romanian state continued to treat them as second-class citizens. Bureaucratic mismanagement stalled resettlement plans, and some of them took matters into their own hands. A large community of refugees moved to Bacău and Piatra Neamț, in Moldavia, without official permission. One of the Aromanian legionaries caught up in this resettlement, Nicolae Ciolacu, explained that

Although Mr. Nicolau, the county chief, had the goodwill to help us refugees, his efforts were sabotaged by the authorities. Wherever you went, to the Financial Administration or the Office of Commerce and Industry, they would tell you to come back tomorrow or the next day, and they kept putting you off. Bacău was a strong centre of Freemasons and of the Kahal [i.e. of the alleged world-wide Jewish government].¹³⁶

According to Ciolacu, legionaries in Bacău helped Aromanians settle and take over Jewish businesses, but the state was still a hostile institution that denied Aromanians privileges they believed were 'rightfully' theirs.

Conclusion

As a fascist social movement, the legion was well suited to Aromanian needs. Deterritorialised by macrohistorical forces including urbanisation, nationalism, shifting borders, population transfers and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Aromanians needed to reterritorialise themselves in a new and hostile land. Identifying with Romanian nationalism secured them the rights of colonists, but for the most part the Romanian state held them in contempt and settling in Southern Dobruja did not end their problems. As a social movement that fought for Romanian ethnic privileges, the legion allowed Aromanians to voice their complaints and simultaneously reinforced their identity as ethnic Romanians. The legion integrated this marginal, migrant community into national politics and legionary lawyers and publicists supported Aromanian assassins when they attacked public figures. Involvement in legionary politics did bring material benefits to a handful of Aromanians for a few brief months in 1940, but more often than not Aromanian legionaries faced prison and death, and undertook gruelling labour and physically demanding propaganda marches. In this case, ideology was more important for most

¹³⁴ Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, 95–113.

¹³⁵ CNSAS, Fond Penal, dosar 13997, vol. 2, f. 14.

¹³⁶ Ciolacu, *Haiducii Dobrogei*, 96–7.

activists than material incentives. Aromanians in the legion were fighting for a unique way of understanding ethnic privilege, social justice and nationalism that emerged within Aromanian communities during the early twentieth century. To put it another way, the legion allowed Aromanians to fight for ethnic privilege as a property right that had been denied them as immigrants.

The fact that Aromanian identity was territorialised through immigration is also crucial. Richard Voyles Burks famously argued that ethnic minorities were likely to vote for communism because its international scope minimised the influence of the nation state.¹³⁷ More recent research suggests that in fact minorities voted for minority parties, and the Aromanian case shows why some minorities might have preferred fascism instead.¹³⁸ Fascism rooted minorities such as Aromanians to specific territories. If such minority communities could satisfactorily demonstrate their 'true' Romanian heritage, then the legion's blood-and-soil ideology normalised their claims to ethnic privilege. Fascism allowed minorities to lobby the state while still appearing patriotic, and it held out the promise that future power would be manifest in ethnic terms. The legion also needed the Aromanians. Like Bessarabia, Dobruja was an ethnically mixed borderland that the legion needed to dominate if it was to expand its electoral appeal among vulnerable communities needing to escape 'minority' status. The state certainly wanted to keep these borders intact, but for the time being was willing to sacrifice ethnic homogeneity for peace and economic productivity. Legionaries sought to do for the nation what the state would not, and they cherished a vision of an ethnically pure country whose borders spread as far as possible.

¹³⁷ Richard Voyles Burks, *The Dynamics of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961).

¹³⁸ Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, 'Who Voted Communist? Reconsidering the Social Bases of Radicalism in Interwar Poland', *Slavic Review*, 62, 1 (2003), 87–109.

**Revendication de privilèges
ethniques: Les Immigrants aroumains
et la politique fasciste en Roumanie**

Les immigrants aroumains de la Dobroudja du Sud ont été nombreux, au début des années trente, à s'engager dans la légion fasciste de l'Archange Michel. Déterritorialisés par les transferts de population et les efforts de création d'un État en Macédoine grecque, ils se sont reterritorialisés en tant que Roumains de souche 'retrés au bercail' pour coloniser la Dobroudja du Sud. Cet article replace le choix fasciste des Aroumains dans le contexte des problèmes qu'ils ont connus au cours de leur migration. Selon l'auteur, les Aroumains se sont servis du fascisme pour affirmer leur identité en tant que Roumains et pour revendiquer des privilèges ethniques qui leur avaient été refusés lorsqu'ils étaient immigrants.

**Beanspruchung ethnischer
Privilegien: Aromunische
Einwanderer und der Faschismus in
Rumänien**

In den frühen dreißiger Jahren traten zahlreiche aromunische Einwanderer in der südlichen Dobrudscha der faschistischen Legion des Erzengels Michael bei. Die durch Bevölkerungsumsiedlungen und Staatenbildung in Griechisch-Mazedonien deterritorialiserten Aromunen suchten sich als 'heimgekommene' ethnische Rumänen durch Ansiedlung in der südlichen Dobrudscha eine neue Heimat zu schaffen. Dieser Beitrag führt die Hinwendung der Aromunen zum Faschismus auf die Probleme zurück, mit denen sie sich während der Migration konfrontiert sahen. Er argumentiert, dass die Aromunen den Faschismus instrumentalisierten, um ihre Identität als Rumänen zu stärken und ethnische Privilegien zu beanspruchen, die ihnen als Einwanderern verwehrt worden waren.