

A Model of Fascism in European Agrarian Peripheries: the Romanian case

Introduction

The starting point of this study is the apparent incompatibility between, on the one hand, Fascism as an ideology and a set of political practices belonging to industrialized, urban countries, (thus comprising civil societies able to group into mass organizations and accustomed to mass collective manifestations) and, on the other hand, South Eastern European societies, more specifically the Romanian society, still predominantly rural and agricultural in the interwar period. The Romanian electorate was – as a result of its inertia – in favour of traditional, established institutions, mainly the monarchy and the Church, whose local administrative and religious representatives were respected by their communities, and also preferred the parties that had been in power. The method of political sociology is relevant because it reveals not only the capacity of agrarian societies to mobilize beyond their traditional limitations after the shock of World War I, but also the adaptability of Fascist movements to influence the states of mind, the type of organization and of sensitivity of the social environments they are trying to penetrate. The regional dimension is important, because Greater Romania had annexed heterogeneously developed regions after World War I as the more developed and formerly Habsburg Transylvania and Bucovina, or the rural and backward ex-Russian Bessarabia and ex-Bulgarian Dobrogea. The beginnings of the pre-Fascist movement are anchored in rural and quite backward Moldavia – even if the founding manifesto of June 1927 claims a national dimension, from the beginning rejecting the reality of this heterogeneity. By 1937, the political party representing the Legionary movement became the third biggest party in the country with more than 15 percent of the votes. Nevertheless, the main thesis of this paper is that the Iron Guard did not totally succeed in winning the Romanian villages in spite of all their propaganda that was well suited to the needs of a traditionally thinking, rural electorate.

The formulation of a Fascist ideology in Romania was a complex process, articulating a corpus inherited from the pre-war period, which was further influenced by war culture, research into new spiritual reference points, reactions to immediate post-war dangers and by the creation of a new style and discourse adapted to a rural society. The importance of concrete and demonstrative manifestations – as wearing a little bag of Romanian earth taken from different regions –, already huge in the Fascist ethos, was further enhanced by the low level of literacy in interwar Romania, a level even lower in the rural areas and in certain regions, as well as among women in general – a fact which was important for a movement which pretended to mobilize the entire society in an all-encompassing project.

The Legion of the Archangel Michael was created in 1927 by the scission of the young branch of the National Christian Defence League (*Liga Apărării Național Creștine*, LANC). The main reproach of the young Corneliu Zelea Codreanu towards his old godfather – both, real and political – Alexandru C. Cuza was that the latter had not taken advantage of the popularity of the movement after the acquittal of the former, who had assassinated the Iași police prefect in 1924. This popularity, both in urban and in rural areas, was only poorly exploited by Cuza in the 1926 elections, when the moderate nationalist General Alexandru Averescu came into power. Codreanu then understood that his aged mentor for the rest of his career would be linked to the traditional political game which gave to the King the decision of the coming to Government of the different parties, and that anti-system radical parties would never take power by peaceful means. As a matter of fact, Codreanu had tried since 1919, when he was twenty years old, to create a younger branch of a nationalist movement in order to enlarge the student agitation – which culminated with the one-year University strike begun in December 1922 – to a more mature and general political activity. The creation of LANC in March 1923, the assassination attempts of October, the assassination of the Police Prefect in Iași in 1924, the triumphal acquittal of 1925 and the breaking off with Cuza after the latter's refusal to give Codreanu a place in the Parliament in 1926 are the main steps on the path of the creation of the Legion.

Nevertheless, the chance of such a seizure of power seemed lost in front of the incontestable legitimacy won by the National Peasant Party (*Partidul Național-Țărănist*, PNȚ) after the 1928 elections – one of the rare free and fair elections held in interwar Romania. But the economic crisis crippled the moderate agrarian measures meant to contribute to the country's development – the export of agricultural products and international investment – and accentuated corruption, the lack of interest and mobilization of the electorate by the traditional political elites, beginning with the reign of King Carol II (1930–1940). After his exclusion from reigning because of private life reasons in 1925, he managed to come back in 1930 and to enlarge his constitutional prerogatives in order to take advantage of the political disputes between the National liberal industrialists and National peasant agrarians in order to manipulate the elections and to break up these fragile political parties which had formed the so-called Romanian interwar democracy. The King favoured the violent Legion – in the beginning in order to break these parties from within – at least until the Students' Congress of Târgu-Mureș in April 1936. Neither the rural demographic dispersion, nor the tendency to vote for the party in power, which also had coercive means of voter persuasion and the public richness to distribute to its supporters, favoured a lasting and profound political involvement among the rural population.

I will consider three aspects of the agrarian dimension of the Legionary Movement. First, there are some specific legionary texts about the agrarian question which must be taken into account, in spite of the fact that it is discussed in a highly ideological manner. A more external perspective allows us to consider the legionary methods of mass mobilization in a rural context. An approach from the perspective of political history will evaluate the alliance between the National Peasant Party and the Legionary Movement from November 1937 in the attempt to seize power at the beginning of the following year.

Specific legionary texts about the rural and agrarian question

There are two main specific texts about the rural question and there also is a chapter in Codreanu's main book *For legionnaires* which discusses land ownership. In fact, the latter is a harsh denouncement of Jewish monopolization of the land, which is a mere defamation, as the Jews had been prevented until the Berlin Congress of 1878 from owning land for agricultural purposes and had turned to urban occupations or at least to commercial or handicraft activities in rural areas. There is only one example which Codreanu could use and this was the timber works in the Apuseni Mountains, a poor region in Transylvania where large parts of the woods had been conceded to the capitalist timber industry in which a few Jews were implicated, therefore allowing Codreanu to denounce the role of the Jews in general.

The other two texts, *The Booklet for villagers* by Ion Banea,¹ doctor in medicine and one of the leaders of the Legionary movement in Transylvania, and *The Legionary Movement and the Peasantry* by Traian Herseni,² one of the foremost young doctors in sociology, follower of the 'father of Romanian sociology', Dimitrie Gusti, tackle political mobilization rather than the agrarian economy or even rural society. Even if the two texts are propaganda material for the 1937 elections and exchangeable with each other, Herseni's text deserve a more profound examination as at least his brochure has been written under Codreanu's direct inspiration (as he writes himself in an article from 1940 and added to the third edition of this 1937 brochure). Both were published in 1937, thus completing Codreanu's main opus, *For my legionaries*, which had been published in Sibiu by the same editor, Vestemian, one year before. All these writings which addressed particular groups and professions as Herseni's other booklet written that same year about the *Legionary movement and the workers*, were meant to prepare public opinion for the elections due in December that year. I will not thoroughly discuss them, because they repeat the known ideas glorifying the Legionary movement,³ which is presented explicitly as an object of faith and not as a party with a program, as a salvation movement led by a charismatic leader inspired by the love of his nation and his readiness to sacrifice his life for it.⁴ All these ideas are a mere summary of Codreanu's book and a good exposé of generic European Fascist ideology and organization adapted to a traditional country, by responding to its religious, monarchist, and sentimental dimensions. The few ideas adapted to the peasantry itself concern for example a brief and vague comparison with the agrarian parties, who purportedly promise the peasants more than they would deserve, whereas the Legionaries promised them exactly what they deserved – but ensuring to respect their promises, opposite to the others –, in view of the social harmony they were supposed to sustain.⁵ Herseni also recalls the civic work done by the legionary summer camps, which contributed to the building and/or repairing of 'churches, schools, hospitals and gardens, (...) fountains'⁶ – a fact which, in an under-administrated and under-equipped country, served as the Romanian equivalent of the Nazi 'people's soup' at the beginning of the 1930s.

In fact, the importance of the peasantry in the Romanian electorate and in the traditional ideology which the Legionary movement is supposed to support is not adequately addressed to in Herseni's booklet. First because the text was ordered by Codreanu and was published quite late (1937), secondly because he had already written another booklet that same year about the *Legionary movement and the workers*, whereas the industry workers represented only a little more than 500,000 persons and only 100,000 employed in modern

industry. So all this reminds me in an insistent way about a meaningful and quite contemptuous passage in Codreanu's book about the politically and culturally amorphous peasant crowd:

'In what consists our country – leaving the cities aside? A bunch of some million peasants without means of decent living, and poor; without culture, poisoned by alcohol and controlled by enriched Jews, who are the masters of the Romanian cities; or of Romanians (prefects, mayors, police, gendarmerie, ministers) who are only pro forma in charge, since they are no more than humble executors of the Jewish plans'.⁷

This quotation echoes, to a certain extent, the first words of the last chapter of the booklet entitled *The legionary peasantry*:

'The peasantry will understand, after all [that was] envisaged until now, two things: 1) that the legionary movement is fighting for it too, and that through the legion it will receive justice; 2) that its duty in the present hour is to be there where all the nation's elected children are, fighting for the country's salvation from the politicians and the Jews.'⁸

Legionaries were so linked to the student movement and, more and more, to urban activities, which were more profitable from a political point of view, that they had somewhat neglected the rural world, even if their origins were often rural. As a matter of fact, Fascism, as a modern ideology and mass political movement, is mostly successful in developed countries as Italy and Germany, because of the urban gathering of masses with a high political nationalist culture, sensitive to the modern means of mass propaganda. Indirectly, Herseni acknowledges this fact by listing all the organizations created by Codreanu before he had considered the role of the peasantry:

'The Captain had created nests for the Legion to grow, summer work camps, legionary families, legionary trade, legionary students' corps and legionary workers' corps. Soon, the Captain will also call the legionary peasantry to a new and decisive battle, the battle for the ascent of the peasantry through the arm, the mind and the legionary will.'⁹

In order to catch up on lost time, Herseni launches himself, in the last pages of his brochure, into a brief but complete program – in spite of the fact that he had claimed not to need one because of the importance of the redemption of the country by nationalist ideology embodied by charismatic leader over concrete improvement of the economic and social conditions – which mixes rational measures with ideological prescriptions.¹⁰ The first promise is of political nature:

'In the legionary state, built upon the new man, correct and ready to sacrifice himself, the peasants, even if they will be poor, as they are today, they are nevertheless masters, and not servants. In the legionary fatherland the peasantry will not be forgotten and abandoned, as it is now, immediately after the end of elections.'¹¹

But Herseni mentions some economic and social measures. The promises concern a better management of the land reform of 1921 – which had exhausted its potential because of the divisions of property following inheritance processes and which needed a revision, in order to allow the regrouping and sale of land plots – as well as some great state projects in Mussolini style, such as irrigation and the drying of swamps, which had already been included in the volunteer programs promoted by the summer camp activities of the young legionaries. Another popular issue was the widening of the scissors between farm products and industrial goods, provoked by the protectionist policy influenced by the industrialists dominating the National Liberal Party (*Partidul Național Liberal*, PNL) which had been in power during the 1920s and also between 1933 and 1937. Health policy is also an ambiguous issue for the legionary pen: it hesitates between social care for a backward and highly unhealthy population – Romanian peasants were often victims of tuberculosis and other nineteenth-century diseases – and the hygienist discourse with racist connotations which one can recognize in certain sentences:

‘The Legionary Movement wants a healthy peasantry, which will eat enough, will have clean clothes, wash, check up for [signs of] diseases early, which will have clean and sunny houses, and will not sleep with the veal, the little pigs and the hens.’¹²

Even if the author does not insist too much on this aspect, the voluntarist intervention of the state in social life is revealed by the further passages concerning churches, schools, and the building of community arts centres in order for ‘the legionary state to take care of the heart and of the mind of the peasantry’.¹³ The main aim is to tear off the old pre-Christian, pagan practices in the countryside. The accent is also laid on the emancipation of women and children in order to achieve progress for the entire society, which is one of the means of the Fascist movements to have a total impact on a society, not only on the male political body of the electors.

But in spite of its religious founded ideology and vocabulary, this bright future based on legionary promises is not intended for a better world, after death, but it began here and now grace to the legionary peasantry. Thus, legionarism is not a spiritual millenarist movement as it has often been presented,¹⁴ but a largely secularized political movement intended to seize power and to enforce social revolution in the sense of modernizing, industrializing and secularizing the traditional society. Through their personal, direct improvement rather than spiritual transfiguration (an element quoted in an urban, intellectual context) the peasants would announce the new legionary world and era:

‘They must announce, precisely through the way they behave and work, the coming of the new legionary century, and in the same way as a living witness, an unshaken certitude, that this century will be exactly the one the Captain expects it to be and as it can gaze at the hope he has lightened in the Romanians’ souls.’¹⁵

The efforts to integrate the backward Romanian rural world into the Fascist glorious and enthusiastic rebirth of the nation – in order to use the categories of the ‘new consensus’ on Fascism, and more precisely those of Roger Griffin’s palingenesis or renewal¹⁶ – were somewhat tricky. That’s why the issue was discussed officially so late by Codreanu. He knew

that anti-system political mobilization on secularized political religion and paramilitary movement was mainly an urban stance, while respect to traditional religion, local acquaintances favouring propaganda from man to man but also the more modern and nationalist conquest of the village teachers could bring, in a further step, success in the countryside. Thus, the attitude of legionaries towards traditional religion might illustrate their double discourse held to Romanians. For example, Codreanu had a puzzling position for a self-proclaimed religious man towards a very practical issue: the legionaries' time schedule on Sunday, which is God's day, but which unfortunately comes after the legionary full of fervour nests' meeting on Saturday night:

'On Sunday and during the feasts, the nests (...) must grow used to march. We do not know our country. (...) So during the feasts, come rain or come sun, in wintertime as in the summer, let us get out in the middle of the nature. Let the Romanian ground become a place rushing with thousands of nests in all directions. During the religious office, let them stop in the church they meet on their way. Let them stop at their comrades' place in the neighbouring villages. Marching is healthy. Marching rests and restores the nerves and the human soul. But above all, marching is the symbol of the legionary action, exploration and conquest.'¹⁷

These very rich sentences are a modern and laic definition of the nation replacing its orthodox nature by a geographical, biological and hygienist national identity finding its climax in the totalitarian political movement activism. Here, I stress the almost indifferent treatment of the Sunday office and the European wide breaking off between political activity and traditional spirituality.

Yet an interview taken from an old legionary in the 1990s proves a very different attitude towards religious practices in the rural medium: 'I could see what the legionaries were doing, in the countryside one could see them on Sunday beautifully dressed in green shirts, after they left the church, they were not allowed to miss the church.'¹⁸

So it is also clear that the new fascist gospel, at least in its educated and written form, but also with the new means of political faith propagation, would have to adapt itself and would not reach unchanged even the legionary militants, and certainly not the 80 percent rural and 50 percent illiterate masses. And as there cannot be a new mass political religion and a global renewal of the nation without masses, one fundamental question will be that of the concrete means of catching them, of rooting deep in the souls and minds of simple people the new rites of national spring.

Legionary methods of mass mobilization in a rural context

Fascist mobilization has three main objectives, which are difficult to achieve in a rural society. First, it has to shake away the domination that the old elites exert upon the political body by attracting some of their foremost representatives in order to progressively submit them, manipulate them as a shelter against repression and organize the upheaval against them through revolutionary means if they resist. Then, it must organize this social and political change in order for it to last longer and in a more structured manner than a short-lived rural revolt.

Finally, legionary leaders are supposed to stabilize mass mobilization once they have seized power, in order to avoid a further radicalization and a lapse into anarchy – the nightmare of every revolutionary system. Upheaval methods and regulatory frameworks were hampered by the dispersion of the rural population and by its obedience to the traditional institutions of state representatives at the village level – the mayor, the gendarme, and the priest.

Rural symbolism of the Fascist movement

Before creating the Legion of the Archangel Michael in June 1927, the young Codreanu had already tasted the somewhat bitter fruit of short-lived popularity which surrounded him after his acquittal following the assassination of police prefect of Iași in 1924, as mentioned before. He regretted not to have sufficiently structured this burst of enthusiasm, which risked to disappear as soon as it had appeared, like brutal and ephemeral peasant revolts. However, he had already created, in March 1923, a pre-Fascist movement, the LANC, the president of which was the old and conservative ‘Godfather’ of Romanian anti-Semitism, A.C. Cuza.¹⁹ But even at the time, Codreanu was considering establishing a youth organization called Archangel Michael. Meaningfully, he would distinguish between peasants, secondary school pupils and students; the latter were easier to mobilize in a lasting movement, as they were concentrated and educated in an urban milieu, but also more sensitive to Jewish competition and to the idea of breaking with the traditional forms of social domination. They were intended to become the leaders of the movement. Nevertheless, the rural population was indispensable as far as a mass movement was to be achieved. As a matter of fact, only secondary school pupils and only few students in the early movement did organize in the youth wing of the LANC.²⁰

The personality cult of Codreanu began very early, for example at Codreanu’s marriage feast held in June 1925 – soon after his acquittal –, in the countryside, near the town of Focșani, which had been considered previously as a possible venue for his trial and which is symbolically situated between Moldavia and Walachia. According to the groom himself, 2,300 vehicles and more than 80,000 mostly rural guests had come. Two kinds of feasts, one traditional and one modern, took place in honour of a 26 year-old man: first the wedding in June, then the baptism of children, usually reserved to elderly and important people, in August.

‘The whole ceremony with its magnificent deployment of marriage carts and traditional suits, with dances and demonstrations of joy and of enthusiasm of the hosts, was filmed. (...) On the 10th of August, I baptized in Ciorăști, near Focșani, hundred children, born in the last months, in the district of Putna and its neighbourhood.’²¹

The Romanian Fascist style combined the traditions of the big rural marriage feast and of choosing a patron thereof as a godfather on the one hand, and the modernity of filming the ceremony, quite incredible for Romania in the 1920s and for such a still unimportant personality on the other hand. The same comment can be made about the double crown of the wedding pair: both crowns bear the Christian symbols above and the swastika underneath.

One of the main methods of mobilization used by the legionaries were working camps, which were very useful in an under-administrated and backward country. Labour camps, which prospered in particular during summer holidays, accumulated a value of symbol and practice of the cohesion, the hygienic, and social action in a delayed country, the whole accompanied with a powerful propaganda work and with a paramilitary training. Camps such as the brickyard of Ungheni in Moldavia and the adjacent kitchen garden intended for the construction of the student residence of Iași, created from 1924, were very successful. Several reasons participated to this success. The conservative elites found a 'healthy' social activity for the student; the farmers helped a work from which benefited the children whom they sent, with big sacrifices, to study in cities; as for the civil servants, they contributed to mitigate the deficiency of the public investments. Finally, as reminds Codreanu, these camps mobilized the free willingness of each in a propaganda purpose in favour of the interclass and inter-regional merger, concerning in particular the recently annexed provinces.²²

Singing was also a means of reinforcing the cohesion of the group and the adhesion to the new political faith, as well as to avoid rational debates or the need to define a political program in front of quite a simple audience.²³ Sometimes, however, the limitations that the authorities exerted on legionary demonstrations compelled the latter to limit themselves to mute political manifestations like sitting in the market-place of the village or in the church yard and praying. But in fact, this simple and lively dynamism of singing, marching, and praying through the villages was a choice of their own; forbidding and even repressing allowed them to accentuate the romantic victimization of the movement and to capitalize upon the importance of those activities in the social and spiritual life of the Romanian village.²⁴ Furthermore, the marches would combine political demonstration with paramilitary training. They also would 'clean up and balance in a disturbed spirit and an anarchical sensitiveness'.²⁵ Such a troubled and individualist spirit was supposed, in a reactionary vision of the rapidly evolving world, to be linked to the urban and industrial space. But Fascism, as we have seen, was more an urban modernist, industrialist, and militarist response to the disembedding and destabilizing modernity.²⁶ In rural Romania, one of the varieties of the march was the horseback ride through the villages.

Labour camps, singing and marching remain nevertheless practices of young city-dwellers, as the allusion to the worried souls indicates. More simply, the physical fatigue and the dispersal of the rural activists, not to mention their rarity, even their non-existence during this period, seem to exclude the rural world from such means of mobilization. Thus, the very name of the legionary newspaper was itself a reference to the countryside – *Pământul strămoșesc* (Ancestors' Earth) – but it was a failure and was closed in April 1928.²⁷ But in fact, if modern propaganda was suited to urban youngsters, the more traditional form of man to man political communication, practical help with the little working camps – like building or mending churches, dams, roads, houses, which represented about 500 sites in the mid-1930s – and religious solidarity also had an impact on the countryside, clearly attested by the success in the 1937 elections.

The appearance of the nest, rural mass politics and the creation of a political façade, 1929–1932

Very soon, Codreanu imagined a hierarchy and a lasting framework intended to inspire his troops and maintain their faith. This form of organization was the *nest* and was described in the *Booklet of the nest leader*²⁸, the common rulebook of the new legionary 'religious' order. This total care of the human person in the *nest* corresponds to the legionary ambition of supervising the entire Romanian society, including the most intimate dimensions of life. But the *nest* was also a structure adapted to a rural country, to a scattered population, to a compartmentalized landscape and to new regions badly connected by a backward and segmented system of communications resulting from the polarities of the empires which they had belonged to.

Thus, the *nest* was a decentralized, 'grassroots' organization, respecting a kind of natural selection of those most capable to lead:

'It is not me who appointed the leaders of the *nest*, because I wanted it; the one who, by his own merits could gather, convince and lead a group, rose alone to the rank of leader. (...) I dedicated them leaders in the situations to which they has risen themselves, by their qualities and their capacities. And it is gradually, from the leader of the *nest* and through the leaders of the village, the district, the city, and the department that I came to acknowledge the rank of leader of region, only in 1934, that is after 7 years.'²⁹

This structure created competition which ensured not only the expansion of the movement, but also the obedience to the supreme leader who had the role of a referee and helped consecrate the local leader. It was the skill of Codreanu to let there flexible structures develop in a rather disorderly manner, notably in rural areas, before taking back control thereof. This happened later. Armin Heinen dates it about autumn 1932,³⁰ when the number of the members of the movement swelled during the economic crisis. This control was never perfect because, more than the Western dictators, Codreanu paid the price of the massification in the form of loss of control of certain local initiatives, including serious actions such as the life attempts and uncontrolled violence.

As for the methods, Codreanu went on with the marches and the rides on horseback. He clearly linked the new electoral trend of the movement and the 'march towards the popular masses'.³¹ For example, he took advantage of the interdiction of a meeting in the big rural village of Berești and organized a ride through the villages on the banks of the river Prut. The brief anti-intellectualist speech corresponded both to the expectations of the public and to the prejudices of the movement:

'In this new world, the place of each will no longer be fixed according to his education, according to his intelligence, according to his knowledge, but first of all according to his faith and his character.'³²

This kind of speech was intended to mobilize the less educated rural masses: Codreanu estimates that about 3,000 people attended the demonstration of the 50 riders in Berești.

But Codreanu had also imagined urban means with agrarian symbolism such as the green shirts. Such a language could, however, only evoke something to town-dwellers, sensitive to such demonstrations,³³ whereas the peasants were more used to white traditional suits or at the most the ‘German’ black suit imported from the town and which they used to wear on Sunday. The French minister André Lefèvre d’Ormesson had understood quite well:

‘The leader, Zelea Codreanu, for one, never abandons, the suit of the Rumanian peasant, which he wears even in parliament. Addressing a population almost exclusively consisting of simple and naive peasants, the leaders of the Legion knew how to find the means to strike their imagination. They claim [to be] the messengers of the Archangel Saint Michael to extirpate the devil from the Romanian soul; to correspond as much as possible to the image that the people have of angels, they circulate through villages riding on white horses, often they do not even speak to the crowd and limit themselves to go through the crowds dumbly and ecstatically, having announced their coming and having won for their cause the priests who present them as the missionaries of the sky.’

‘At other times, having got off the train at a nearby station, they arrive covered with dust in a village, assuring that they came on foot from Bucharest to spread the good word. Then, having reviled the Jews, the government, the taxes, and the thieves of Bucharest, they ask to the farmers for what they want and register each of them, for a cow, for two horses, for an ox, for when the “Iron guard” will be in power.’

‘Mysticism, demagogu, anti-Semitism, (...) are the three strings that mainly make the propaganda of the legionaries vibrate with an indisputable success in the Romanian countryside.’³⁴

However, in order to get this politically uncultivated population to make a durable commitment in favour of a political structure – even more if it was an anti-governmental one – it had to be supported by the local elites. Indeed, priests and primary school teachers were the best vectors of legionarism in the village because of their social and ideological frustrations when faced with the individualist evolution of urban civilization and their degraded social status. After the failure of the peasantist policy due to the world crisis, the school teachers had shifted from the agrarians to more radical stances, the Legion being progressively the main of them.

The creation of the Iron Guard on April 13, 1930 responded to the need of the movement to be equipped with an organization more ‘fit to be seen’ than the Legion.³⁵ Doubtless Codreanu was thinking about the image of the Legion, anchored both, in religious and folk traditionalism – with the archangel and the national costume – and in the violence of the attacks and murders during the years 1923 to 1924. With the Guard, he had the ambition to create a federation more synchronous with the radical nationalist movements – with paramilitary names such as *Stahlhelm* and other such organizations which were prospering in Europe – and with monochrome uniforms as an ideological symbol. It was certainly also an attempt to centralize the scattered *nests*³⁶ and to endow the movement with a political facade which could take part in the electoral competition. Its creation also had a meaning

at the level of the big politics led by the king with the aim of the decline of the big parties of government, in this particular case the National Peasant Party. Indeed, home secretary Alexandru Vaida-Voevod represented the right wing of the party and facilitated furtively the Legion to divert it from the anti-Semitic stance towards the communist danger in Bessarabia. For the King, it was a means to divide the direction of the party, as he had already tried to install a government of 'national union' above the parties during the brief withdrawal of Maniu in June, by which he refused to chair a government which restored Carol in his royal dignity. Carol thus pushed Vaida-Voevod against the leader of the government on the question of the support to the legionary violence, while bewareing the possibility of intervening against the legionaries if their violence went too far or if they had to represent a real electoral danger.

Codreanu also introduced a socio-cultural distinction, by distinguishing the national costume reserved for the most backward zones – the mountains – from the military uniform intended primarily for the cities.³⁷ Also, the naturalist and autochthonist vocabulary of the *nest* linked to the bottom-up dynamics combined with the Latin and Western vocabulary of modern armies – legions, battalions and companies. A 'general organization directive' dated 1930, without more details, also orders the creation of *nests*, this time on a national scale, and stipulates the need for the approval thereof at the central level.³⁸

The mature party: conquering the towns and the countryside, 1933–1938

During the period of maturation, which corresponds to the moment when interest in the movement was aroused within the high spheres of the State, the methods changed little, but started to reach the country's capital and the political, intellectual and artistic elites. The practice of summer labour camps transferred to the suburbs of Bucharest, where the legionaries received numerous personalities. Henceforth, the favours of some big industrialists close to the King and of some other personalities provided them with financial resources.³⁹ The year 1933 thus seems to correspond to a quantitative jump in organizational radicalism which eventually acquired, as often, a qualitative dimension. It is certain that the influence of the young intellectual group from *Axa* review – Mihail Polihroniade, Ion-Victor Vojen, and the poet Radu Gyr – which joined the Legionary movement in 1933, the same year when the philosophy professor Nae Ionescu, the mentor of the 'young generation' (Mircea Eliade, Emile Cioran, and Constantin Noica) moved towards the Legion – but not yet his above mentioned disciples – gave a strong impetus to the Guard. But it was not, in my opinion, the main explanation to its success,⁴⁰ as in fact intellectuals often join already successful political movements, which they help structuring and give them a new impetus.

The prime minister Ion Gheorghe Duca banned the Legion and the Iron Guard in December of 1933 and was murdered by three Legionaries the same month. Their trial ended in April 1934, and if the three murderers received life sentences, the 'ideological responsible' leaders of the Legion were acquitted. As soon as the ban was raised one year after the dissolution, Codreanu asked General Gheorghe Cantacuzino-Grănicerul (known as 'Zizi') to found a new party, 'All for the country' (*Totul Pentru Țara*), officially registered in March

1935. It thus resurrected the organization of the suppressed Iron Guard. In order to restore the hierarchical link between *nests*, departments and the centre, the level of regions (13 in number) was reinstated on June 5.⁴¹

The methods of propaganda also remained identical in their nature and their spirit, but changed scale. They would encompass both towns and village, and all the heterogeneous regions of recently unified Greater Romania. I will only tackle the rural dimension of these methods, since the electoral campaign for the December 1937 elections, was the climax of legionary popularity among the Romanian electorate, including the rural population. Some practices and symbols had been created before this period, but they became known only then. For example, the official existence of the Guard ended with its interdiction in December 1933, but its name and its symbol lasted through its official replacement by the apparently less eye-catching 'Everything for the country' party. The emblem corresponds to a word game with the words *garda* (Guard) and *gard* (fence). This simple sign is also symbolic in several fashions and adaptable to numerous situations. It simultaneously represents the defence of the Romanian nation against all suffered and potential attacks by the Legion, but also the martyrdom of the legionaries persecuted behind the bars of prisons. Turned into a *troița* (a kind of modest monument with commemorative or propitiatory value which can be found on roads or at crossroads in Romania), it also reminds of the religious dimension of the movement.

In the practice of the 'mimic-Romanian democracy', where political culture and literacy remained out of reach for half of the population, electoral law had provided for the use of electoral signs in order to help voters recognize parties on ballot papers. The Iron Guard – under the name 'All for the country' – had been using two points as a sign for a long time. Enviously, the party was second on ballot papers. Thereafter, a significant part of the work of convincing the peasant masses to vote for the movement consisted in inoculating them the electoral sign of the party. Very numerous reports of police and especially of the rural gendarmerie consulted in the National Archives and in the archives of the *Siguranța* – the political police – confirm state efforts of the parties in power to repress and limit this propaganda. Obviously, legionary propaganda had built a whole symbolism around these two points, which it presented as two eyes watching the corrupt regime. Point 46 of the Booklet is partially dedicated to these practices:

'46. What they [the leaders of nest] will do before the elections.

A) To familiarize all the men of the village with our electoral sign with.

The sign must be made on paper, in small characters, by such way as even the children of the village can know it perfectly.

B) They will try that the sign is made with chalk, with lime or with pitch both inside the village and on the road, out of the village.⁴²

It depicts the first level of the constraints in political semiology in a backward country.

Religion is consubstantial with legionarism, it distinguishes it as well as its Hungarian counterpart of the arrowed Crosses, from the atheistic Fascism and pagan Nazism.⁴³ Without discussing the advanced ideological foundations, I shall content myself with a simple

sociological reminder of the central character of religion in traditional societies for all the dimensions and the moments of life. What a society lives through daily and 'naturally', was established and transformed into politically liturgical object by the legionaries, thus moving between religious practice, religion in politics and even, in some moments, civil religion or the assimilation of political work into a new religion.⁴⁴

The success of the Iron Guard came after the failure of the National Peasant Party, which represented the moderate Agrarianism of the centre-left and which had governed Romania between 1928 and 1933. The wearing of the national costume, even in parliament, had been a natural surprise of the agrarian deputies during the first elections based on universal suffrage in November 1919. The legionaries in rural *nests* also normally wore the national dress, but the codification and the integration thereof into real choreographies such as at funerals or demonstrations are indeed evidence of the propagandistic manipulation of these signs and their symbolic content.

The ceremony of the legionary enthronement of the oath on the bag of earth at former battlegrounds in various Romanian provinces has a double symbolic meaning: a traditionalist one (*Blut und Boden*) and one that must be understood in the context of Fascist civil religion.⁴⁵ Point 83 of the Booklet describes the ceremony, which clearly belongs to the rite of a new Eucharist. The officiating 'political priests' – in the beginning mainly Codreanu himself – mix the earth received from various sites of historical battles, while reading the letters of the ones who had sent it in a liturgical tone and mood, then puts the earth in the bag and offers it to the new legionary.

Another traditional reference manipulated by Codreanu is that of the golden mythical past, that of the princes of the 15th century or even that of the charming prince – the physical appearance of which he doubtlessly had. Leaving aside all the numerous ideological developments during the decline of modern Romania, we must note the capacity of Codreanu to manipulate the traditional signs which speak to the imagination of the peasant through the episode of an epic ride:

'At the moment, we were many more, we felt the need of a badge. For want of anything better, we all put a turkey feather in our caps made of fur. And thus decorated, we went through villages singing. Are not we the shadows of the old resuscitated Moldavian warriors?'⁴⁶

The story of these traditionalist and rural symbols follows the dynamics of the development of the Legionary movement. Born as an urban group linked to Cuza's League, the popularity acquired by the violence of 1923–1924 soon turned into a rural anti-state popularity reminding of the social upheaval of 1907 savagely repressed by the urban bourgeoisie represented by the National Liberals. Then, after the creation of the urban Legion in 1927, the 'march towards the masses' of 1929 to 1930 takes a rural stance which leads to the first electoral successes of 1931 and 1932. The same urban-rural dynamics takes place after the re-creation of the party in 1934, this time boosted by the young intellectual generation – even if in practical terms, the latter was badly suited to real field electoral campaign, as an oral testimony asserts about Mircea Eliade's efforts during the 1937 campaign in the countryside around Bucharest.⁴⁷

The seizure of power and the question of the 1937 Alliance between the National Peasant Party and the Legionary Movement

The King realized in 1936 that manipulating Codreanu's violence against the democratic parties was longer an option, when after the Student Congress in Târgu-Mureş in April 'Death teams' were organized even for the King's Jewish mistress Elena Lupescu. After the burial of two leading legionary figures in February 1937 – Ion Moţa and Vasile Marin – whose death in the Spanish Civil War was capitalized as 'martyrdom', the popularity of the Legion reached national scale and its highest point ever. So King Carol could not ignore this political force, the nature of which was new to Romanian politics. But was the Legion ready to comply with the rules of the political game and cooperate with the traditional forces, even with the more dynamic ones, such as the King?

The declaration of war between the King and the Legion came at the end of February or the beginning of March 1937, during a secret interview with Codreanu, when the leader refused to give in to the King, who had asked for control over the Legion in exchange for the post of prime minister for Codreanu!⁴⁸ It was unacceptable for a charismatic leader to abandon his movement in the hands of an authoritarian monarch who had already broken into pieces the main government parties and was now pursuing the division – and then the re-composition to his own benefit – of the far-right parties. Codreanu's life was henceforth in real danger.⁴⁹

The so-called non-aggression electoral pact between Codreanu and the most respected leader of the democratic National Peasant Party Iuliu Maniu intervened in this context of the evolution of the King towards an authoritarian regime by breaking up the parties. This tactics had already been successful with the National Peasant Party – from the return of the King from exile in 1930 to the definitive loss of power of the former in 1932 – and with the National Liberal Party which had been in power since December 1933. So, from opposite political positions, Maniu and Codreanu strived to avoid the regime of a monarchic dictator who would repress both mass movements, of democratic or of Fascist charismatic nature. For the agrarian side, it should be reminded that Maniu was not the leader of the agrarian tendency in the Party, which was the result of a merger in 1926 between the Transylvanian National Party – led by Maniu – and the Peasant Party – with Ion Mihalache as its leader. So the electoral non-aggression alliance of November 25, 1937 was a regionalist and democratic move of the distinctive Transylvanian part of the party immediately after the replacement of Mihalache as leader by Maniu on November 23. The negotiations between Codreanu and Maniu started at the beginning of April on a dramatic note with the legionary leader recounting his meeting with the King and his fear to have signed his own death sentence.⁵⁰

The text of the pact signed with Maniu and with the dissident wing of the National Liberal Party of Gheorghe Brătianu is brief and worth citing as a whole:

'The undersigned parties conclude an entente with the aim of defending freedom and of ensuring the correct carrying out of the elections. These parties conclude a non-aggression pact for the time of the elections and with the proposed aim.

The non-aggression pact means the neutralization of the deeds and of the language of violence and denigration, but does not prevent the affirmation of each one's ideology and open-minded discussions. A call will be addressed to the other parties in order to join this entente.⁵¹

Much was written about this pact against nature, especially from the point of view of Maniu, because a Fascist had flexibility to manoeuvre while Maniu had a reputation of democratic intransigence. The followers of the thesis of Fascist contamination of democratic political personalities saw this pact as one of the spectacular demonstrations thereof – a thesis outdated today, but which had consequences.⁵² Let us first look at the common interest of the three participants. Excepting Codreanu, the leaders who signed it were somewhat isolated in their own camp: Gheorghe Brătianu represented a pro-German dissent in the National Liberal Party – even if his break-off first was realized in the beginning of the 1930s on a pro-Carol position, before turning against the King – and Maniu, the leader of the Transylvanian wing of the party, has taken anew the leadership in the National Peasant Party only a few days before the pact, after the failure of the Wallachian Ion Mihalache, the leader of the agrarian branch of the party, to bring it to power with the King's acceptance.

Beyond the very neutral tone of the pact, we first understand that it was a question of avoiding the possible brutality of the campaign allowing the liberal government to take measures to help it win the elections through the usual administrative intervention. The spirit of the text goes however beyond and consists in taking an option on the exit of the ballot: if this option is not positive, because a governmental coalition was excluded between parties with totally opposed ideologies, internal and international choices, as Maniu and Codreanu had clearly announced it,⁵³ it was nevertheless strong, although negative. Indeed, the electoral pact against the government led by the unpopular Gheorghe Tătărescu, the leader of the pro-Carol wing within the National Liberal Party, has isolated him to a point which could prevent him from obtaining a parliamentary majority – an extremely rare situation in the 'mimic-Romanian democracy'. Tătărescu and the king planned to win the elections thanks to the bonus granted to the party gaining 40 percent of the votes,⁵⁴ as it is expressed by the surprise of the King at the conclusion of the results.⁵⁵ The dynamics of generalized contestation of the worn out party in power were poised to contribute to isolate the National Liberal Party even more.

Beyond these immediate negative motives, the long-term strategy of Maniu can be included in the tendency of traditional right-wing parties to manipulate Fascists. This game, which had revealed its dangers in Italy and in Germany, presented much fewer dangers in still 'obedient' traditional societies. It was nevertheless a delicate game, because of the division of the non-Fascist right. Maniu had observed the failure of Carol's attempt to subdue the Legion and had understood its meaning. If he wanted to keep back the troops of Codreanu from a future royal or extreme right-wing dictatorship, he had to neutralize their leader within a negative alliance against the other right forces. All his attitudes before and after the elections prove his will to break the links of Codreanu with Carol, the newly created party between Cuza and the nationalist Transylvanian poet Octavian Goga, and nationalist General Ion Antonescu.

What were the particular motives for Codreanu to sign this pact? The explicit fear of royal repression was part of his reasoning: the Legion was vulnerable because of its violent

practices, which exposed it to retaliations. Another motive frequently admitted by Codreanu in private discussions was the fact that the legionaries were not prepared to take over power.⁵⁶ More than a sudden moment of lucidity, it was the awareness that the movement had no executives to take the reins of power and hold them over time – an aspect which justifies the circular letter of Codreanu to the local legionary leaders of January 20, 1938, after the success in the elections of December, in which he announces the creation of schools for legionary mayors and prefects,⁵⁷ apparently in the perspective of a medium-term seizure of power. For the moment, Codreanu wished to leave Carol and Maniu to tear each other to pieces at the top so that the Legion could collect the stakes of the fight between the authoritarian and the democrat.⁵⁸ The desire to seize power alone, and not within a coalition, by indoctrinating society more profoundly and on a wider scale, also stands out implicitly but clearly from his other declarations.⁵⁹ But the brutal reaction of the King showed clearly where the power and the legitimacy in such a society still was situated, even if the legionaries had gained many voters even in the countryside in the elections from the eve of December.

It can be concluded that the challenge of organizing the scattered and politically uncultivated rural masses into a party was not successfully met by the Iron Guard to the extent of seizing power in a still traditional elite dominated state. The long-lasting tradition of agrarian revolts – which had culminated in 1907 – could no longer be conceived after the effort of mobilization for war. But we return then to the combination of legitimacy and economic factors, the seriousness of the second not being able to balance the weakness of the first. It is true, however, that the shake suffered by the traditional structures during the war and during the crisis played in favour of the new mass parties, and the Iron Guard tried to take advantage of the recent rights granted to the masses through universal suffrage and a traditionalist, even archaic ideology (in *Blut und Boden* style), of the mythical history of Romanian heroes, reshaped through a modernist project of political mobilization and rural equipment. Heir to both tendencies, democratic and traditionalist, Codreanu aspired their mutual subversion to the advantage of the new generation and popular young urban and semi-intellectual elites from among which he had risen, but in the name of the inescapable values that were still represented by the authoritarian monarchy and the institutions that were more or less loyal to it – the Church, the administration and the army – which he aspired to replace. But the latter succeeded in winning the political fight against both mass movements, democratic agrarian and Fascist populist, even if they briefly joined their forces in the very short-lived pact of November 1937.

References

- 1 Ion Banea, *Ce este și ce vrea mișcarea legionară, cărticică pentru săteni*, Sibiu 1937. I quote the version to be found on the neo-legionary Internet site, <http://www.miscarea.com>, which has 15 pages in print.
- 2 Traina Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară și țărănimea*,² Sibiu 1937, 36.
- 3 See the answer to the second question of Banea's booklet: 'Why did I write a book especially for the peasants? (...) It has been noticed that in very many places lots of villagers cannot distinguish the legionaries from the other political parties.' And the answer to the third question is even clearer: 'What is this booklet about? In this booklet we will try to clarify and say in a way understandable to everyone who the legionaries are and what their organization, the Legion, is, its aims, and its ideal.' See: Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 1.

- 4 To avoid precise agrarian issues and take advantage of this publication to promote the Legionary movement and its leader, Herseni uses the classical opposition in Fascist reflection between programs and ideals: 'The peasantry will learn hereafter about something else. Namely that in this nation a MAN has risen, who has begun the great fight for the country's salvation.' Cf. Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 6. And Ion Banea thus concludes his section about 'our program': 'Since when it comes to the program: a beautiful program is useless, if you haven't got men for it. That's all. Man! Man sanctifies everything and also sanctifies the program.' Cf. Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 11.
- 5 Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 18 f.
- 6 Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 19.
- 7 Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, București 1999 (1st ed.: Sibiu 1936), 77.
- 8 Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 27.
- 9 Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 31.
- 10 Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 28 f.
- 11 Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 28.
- 12 Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2, 29.
- 13 Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară*, see fn. 2.
- 14 See the historiographical debate in 'La question fasciste en Europe centre-orientale: l'entre déchirement des droites', introduction générale au colloque tenu les 23 et 24 septembre 2005 à Paris: Catherine Horel/Traian Sandu/Fritz Taubert, *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 2005.
- 15 Horel/Sandu/Taubert, *Périphérie du fascisme*, see fn. 14, 30.
- 16 Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism, the Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, London 2007, 470 f.; see the synthetic definition he gives of Fascism, 181 f.
- 17 Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib*, Sibiu 1937 (original edition July 1933), point 16^{bis}.
- 18 Interview with Constantin Teja on the 10th of mai 2000 (ed. Mariana Conovici/Silvia Iliescu/Octavian Silvestru), in: *Țara, Legiunea, căpitanul, Mișcarea legionară în documente de istorie orală*, coll. Radio România, București 2008, 383 f., 89.
- 19 Armin Heinen, *Die Legion „Erzengel Michael“ in Rumänien. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, München 1986, 112.
- 20 Heinen, *Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien*, see fn. 19, 114 f.
- 21 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 235 f.
- 22 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 200 f.
- 23 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 235.
- 24 Cf. Ernest Bernea, *Civilizația română sătească*, București 2007.
- 25 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 285: 'Am observat că instrucția întrunită are o mare influență asupra intelectului și psihicului unui om, punându-i în ordine și în cadență mintea desordonată și simțirea anarhică.'
- 26 Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, see fn. 16.
- 27 *Pământul strămoșesc*, No. 8/April 15, 1928.
- 28 Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib*, see fn. 17.
- 29 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 263.
- 30 Heinen, *Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien*, see fn. 19, 217.
- 31 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 277.
- 32 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 287. For a touching description of such a meeting in 1937 by the Jewish American historian of Transylvanian origins Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *Green Shirts and others, A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania*, Stanford 1970, 247. For a criticism of this fascination see Horel/Sandu/Taubert, *La question Fasciste en Europe centre-orientale*, see fn. 14.
- 33 Dispatch nr. 413 from the 4th of December 1933 of the French minister d'Ormesson, Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, series Z Europe, Romania, volume 171, folio 87–89: 'They adopted green. But here, except in certain circles of cities, it is not this clothing whim which can gain them members.'
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 353.
- 36 Codreanu, in contradiction to bottom-up dynamics, decided to organize six departments in particular, with the requirement that 'in these departments nests must be created in all the municipalities as fast as possible. All the collected nests will form the legionaries' battalion. The battalion, which has to have a

- strength of 1,000 men, will march in streets in a march column, by companies.' (Annex to the note of the General Direction of the Police, January 10, 1930) in: Ioan Scurtu et al. (eds.), *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România*, vol. II: 1927–1931, București 2000, 197.
- 37 Scurtu, *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, see fn. 36: 'Suit – the national costume in the mountainous zones. Somewhere else, the field dress, the khaki, military green.' See an analysis of this type at Heinen, *Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien*, see fn. 19, 185.
- 38 Scurtu, *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, see fn. 36, vol. II, 282–286.
- 39 Heinen, *Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien*, see fn. 19, 239.
- 40 See, for such an explanation, the best study of the Legionary's movement ideological profile: Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the 'Archangel Michael' in inter-war Romania*, Trondheim 2004, 190 f. See also the corresponding chapters in Florin Müller, *Metamorfoze ale politicului românesc, 1938–1944*, Bucharest 2005, 359 f., and the briefs essays by Valentin Sandulescu, *On the ideological characteristics of the Romanian Legionary Movement: a synthetic account*, in: *Studia Universitatis Petru Maior, Series Historia*, 2005, 141–154, and by Traian Sandu, *De l'antisémitisme au fascisme en Roumanie; naissance du Roumain nouveau régénéré par la révolution de droite*, in: *Analele Universității București* 10 (2008), 32–46, online: <http://www.fspub.ro/Home/analele-stiinte-politice>.
- 41 See Horia Sima, quoted in: Scurtu, *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, see fn. 36, vol. IV, 91 f.: 'With the organization of regions, "the basic organization" of the Movement received its definitive character.'
- 42 Sima, *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, see fn. 41, point 46.
- 43 'According to me, within the framework of the Fascist movement the state element prevails, the equivalent of the organized form. We then feel the formative valence of Ancient Rome, unsurpassable in law and in political organization, and the real heir of which is the Italian people. National Socialism, on the contrary, brings to light what is bound to the vital forces: race, the instinct of the race, the national-ethnic element. In the Romanian Legionary movement, the accent lies upon what, in a body, corresponds to the element of the soul, thus upon the spiritual and religious aspect', quoted in Julius Evola, *Naționalism și asceza*, București 1998, 42 f.
- 44 See Emilio Gentile, *La Religion Fasciste*, Paris 2002.
- 45 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 267; Codreanu, *Cărticica*, see fn. 17, point 83.
- 46 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, see fn. 7, 288.
- 47 Interview with Mircea Nicolau on 26th June 2000, in: Mariana Conovici/Silvia Iliescu/Octavian Silivestru (eds.), *Țara, Legiunea, căpitanul. Mișcarea legionară în documente de istorie orală*, coll. Radio România, București 2008, see fn. 18, 120–125.
- 48 Zaharia Boilă, *Amintiri și considerații asupra Mișcării legionare* (Memoirs and considerations on the Legionary movement), ed. Maria Petreiu/Ana Cornea, Cluj 2002, 51–55; also see: Scurtu, *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, see fn. 36, doc. nr. 181, 314–316.
- 49 Armand Călinescu, *Însemnări politice 1916–1939*, București 1990, 339.
- 50 Călinescu, *Însemnări politice*, see fn. 49, See the narrative of a preparatory meeting organized by Șerban Milcoveanu and a delegation of young legionaries on April 12th with Maniu in Cluj, Șerban Milcoveanu, *Testamentul politic al lui Corneliu Z. Codreanu (1899–1938)*, al lui Mihai Morusoff (1885–1940), al mareșalului Ion Antonescu (1882–1946), al generalului Aurel Aldea (1887–1949), *Mesajul ultimei speranțe* (testamentul legionarilor nonagenari), Bucharest 1999, 22.
- 51 Scurtu, *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta*, see fn. 36, doc. nr. 220, 356 f., first in: *Dreptatea*, 27th November 1937.
- 52 Traian Sandu, *Le renouvellement de l'histoire politique roumaine de l'entre-deux-guerres*, in: Id. (ed.) *Illusions de puissance, puissance de l'illusion, historiographies et histoire de l'Europe centrale dans les relations internationales entre les deux guerre*, Paris 2005. The Romanian Communist Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu had launched the thesis of the 'Fascisation' of the moderate parties which had entered even a short-lived alliance with the legionaries. Whatever the appreciations about the clumsiness of the pact, no serious analyst dares today to claim that the national-peasant program 'was only covering an imitation of Fascist corporatism' (Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Sous trois dictatures*, Paris 1946, 120). Their odiously interested character stands out from the date of publication of these charges: drafted in 1941, the work was published at the end of 1944, then republished in 1945 and at the beginning of 1946, while the author was Minister of Justice and while he contributed to the installation of Stalinist terror in Romania of which one of the victims was Maniu himself, in 1947. See Heinen, *Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien*, see fn. 19, 332–335, see Sandu, *Le conflit entre fascisme et monarchisme en Roumanie: données structurelles et déroulement*, in: Horel/Sandu/Taubert,

- La périphérie du fascisme, see fn. 14, 9–109, especially 103–106. For an accurate analysis of the interests of the participants to the pact, see also Ann Rebecca Haynes, *Reluctant Allies? Iuliu Maniu and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu against King Carol II of Romania*, in: *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85 (2007) 1, 105–134.
- 53 Press declarations of Codreanu to the press of November, 29th 1937, in: Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, ed. Ion Mării, München 1981, 220–223.
- 54 The electoral law voted on the 27th of March, 1926 stipulated that the party that won at least 40 percent of the votes was to be declared ‘the majority group’. Then they listed the constituencies (i.e., the counties) when this party was surpassed by an absolute majority. The corresponding MP places were entirely given to the parties that achieved this. Next, half of the remaining seats at the country level were allocated automatically to the ‘majority group’. This was called ‘the governmental bonus’ (*‘prima de guvernare’*). Finally the rest of the seats were proportionally distributed to the parties which gained more than 2 percent of the total votes. The model of that electoral law was Mussolini’s legislation passed in 1923.
- 55 See the commentaries of Carol II in his diary, *Intre datorie si pasiune, însemnari zilnice, 1904–1939*, București 1995, 232–234: ‘I have the impression that he [the home secretary] did not made too many efforts, taking as excuse the recommendations that the elections are honest and the result was that the government was overcome.’
- 56 See Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian intra muros, memorii legionare*, București 2002, 225.
- 57 Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, *Circulari si manifeste 1927–1938*, 5th ed., München 1981, see fn. 53, circular nr. 126, 240 f.
- 58 Milcoveanu, *Testamentul politic al lui Corneliu Z. Codreanu*, see fn. 50, 21: ‘If I am killed, you will go with Mr. Iuliu Maniu, and you will do what he will tell you.’ How else is to explain this devolvement of the orphan Legion of his leader to a man whose political convictions were set against him, otherwise by the will to weaken the King to whom Maniu was so hostile, then to get rid of Maniu after having diverted at the base a part of the members of the party, conquered by the dynamics of the legionaries?
- 59 Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian*, see fn. 56, 225 f.