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**The Legion of the Archangel Michael: The Past and Present Appeal of Decentralized
Fascism**

By

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HIS 490 History Honors Thesis

Department of History

Providence College

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INTRODUCTION:

NEW APPEAL

In August of 2017, far right groups of the United States of America, such as the Proud Boys, Christogenea, Vanguard America, and the Global Crusader Knights, among others, gathered in an unprecedented fashion at Charlottesville, Virginia.¹ These groups believed that they were given the power to avert the changes of more liberal forces in the country. One of the organizers of the event, Matthew Heimbach, wore a shirt depicting Corneliu Codreanu.² Codreanu was the charismatic founder, and to some extent heart and soul, of the Legion of the Archangel Michael (LAM), or the Iron Guard, as it was frequently referred to in the English speaking world, the main fascist force in Romanian politics during the interwar period. It also worth noting that, in 2019, a London pro-fascist press retranslated and published Codreanu's memoir, *For My Legionnaires*. Finally, the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR) party in Romania is gaining traction as a party sympathetic to Legionary ideals, including ultranationalism.³ Why would a far-right activist

¹ Bulent Kenes, "The Proud Boys: Chauvinist Poster Child of Far-Right Extremism," n.d., 5; Emily Blout and Patrick Burkart, "White Supremacist Terrorism in Charlottesville: Reconstructing 'Unite the Right,'" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, January 4, 2021, 3–4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1862850>.

² Anna Maria Touma, "Charlottesville Nationalist Leader Inspired by Romanian Fascism," *Balkan Insight* (blog), August 15, 2017, <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/08/15/romanian-fascism-inspires-us-white-nationalists-08-15-2017/>.

³ "The AUR and the Rise of Romanian Nationalism – a New Beginning or the Remnants of the Past?," *New Eastern Europe* - A bimonthly news magazine dedicated to Central and Eastern European affairs, March 26, 2021,

in America be inclined to represent a Romanian fascist movement? Why is there demand for the philosophy of the LAM in English? Why would now be the time for the LAM to make a resurgence?



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The LAM had many of the trappings of other Fascist movements, such as extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, a focus on racial politics and the desire to abolish Democracy. However, the factor that may be the cause for the resurgence of the thought of the LAM is its religiosity. Unlike the anti-clerical Nazis, and the state-spiritual Italians, the LAM was at its core, a Christian movement, as the name may indicate. In this way, it was similar to the regime of

<https://neweasterneurope.eu/2021/03/26/the-aur-and-the-rise-of-romanian-nationalism-a-new-beginning-or-the-remnants-of-the-past/>.

⁴ Touma, "Charlottesville Nationalist Leader Inspired by Romanian Fascism."

Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain. However, the nationalism of the Romanian Orthodox Church that supported the LAM may be the cause for this preference over the Catholicism of Franco. This would likely be an important distinction, as the history of white supremacy in the United States has largely been anti-Catholic as well. Further, the LAM proved to be highly anti-statist in its approach, making it appealing to those who may be opposed to the current establishment, but not thinking or caring about what comes next. Therefore, with these ideas in mind, it is possible that the LAM was a more “exportable” version of Fascism, compared to many of the other varieties. Even though the LAM was a nationalist group, its focus on a nationalist religion helped make the ideas of the Legion more appealing to those abroad than if it was just focused on nationalism. For the English-speaking world, this is what is truly appealing, God and state, not the Romanian nation or race.

However, the Legion was a highly disorganized and violent group. It could be said that the first goal of the LAM was not so much the betterment of Romania as it was the removal of Jews. Between claims of the Jewish population of Romania existing for only 100 years, to outright violence against Jews and those who were sympathetic to them, the LAM perpetuated a threat to fellow members of the Romanian nation.⁵ Further, the group was far too unprofessional to be a major player in politics. Political disorganization and the desire to make the politics of the LAM the forefront of the daily life of the LAM made the entire system incapable of taking the power that they truly wanted. The movement had opportunities to take control of Romania, but elected not to take them, and when they did take overt action for power, they failed completely. This shows the ineptitude and failure to seize opportunity among the LAM.

⁵ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *For My Legionaries* (London: Sanctuary Press, 2019), 384; “Slays Premier of Rumania: Nazi Assassin Seized,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963); *Chicago, Ill.*, December 30, 1933.

Romania, like many European states, was not unified into a modern nation state until after World War I. It was with the additions of the provinces of Banat, Bessarabia, Bucovina, Crisana, Maramures, and Transylvania that Romania contained all territories considered to have an ethnic Romanian majority.⁶ After this union, and a number of major battles in the Great War, there was a growing feeling of power and relevance for the average peasant, rather than just for the political elite. Further advances in this growth of importance of citizens in government were the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1918, and a new constitution that officially made Romania a multiparty parliamentary monarchy.⁷ Treptow states

In the years immediately following the war, political observers were amazed at the rapid transformation of the Romanian peasant; he was no longer the 'poor plowman'... but a citizen convinced that he truly represented the basis of the country, having not only duties, but also rights that had to be satisfied by the state.⁸

The slow unification of the Romanian people was not just enjoyed by the rulers of Romania, but in time even by the peasant in the field. Thus, in the wake of World War I, the nation of Romania, experienced new power dynamics, from the demands of the average citizen rather than from the powerful political elite. Young adults would likely be especially motivated by this, coming of age just in time to make their mark on the nation's future. The dedication of the average person to the future of the country would become a cornerstone of all further political developments in Romania, both democratic and fascist, with the main distinction being what role the parliament would play in the future of

⁶ Kurt W. Treptow et al., *A History of Romania*, (Iasi: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997), 393)

⁷ Constantin Iordachi, "Country Report: Romania", Cadmus.eui.edu, European University Institute, May 2010, <https://cadmus.eui.edu/bitstream/handle/1814/19633/Romania.pdf?sequence=1>, 3.

⁸ Treptow et al., 395

Romania. The most notable new position in Romanian politics was that of the idea of the peasant state, a government formed by, and led by and for the peasants of Romania.⁹

Of the three major political doctrines of the Romanian state, the liberal industrial position was the one to receive the most support from the national government. The general policy was one of focusing on domestic production and investment as much as possible.¹⁰ Thus, the ambition of the liberals was ultimately to defend Romania by transforming the previously agrarian nation into an industrial power from the top down with governmental policies. These policies proved to greatly increase the industrial capabilities of Romania, as by 1938 was able to produce 80% of industrial products domestically, including a further 80% of agricultural equipment.¹¹ However, as a result of the policy, foreign investment drastically decreased, which severely hurt economic development between the wars, although they surpassed many other nations in the region of Eastern Europe.¹² A lack of foreign investment was a radical shift from the finances of Romania before World War I. Before the War, foreign investment amounted to roughly 80% of industrial production, however, due to the liberal's policies prioritizing the development of Romanian industry, it represented only 37%. This rapid shift in investment was one of the principal reasons for the economic lagging of Romania between the wars.¹³ In addition, this is likely a source for the radicalization of the youth of Romania, as during their formative years, they would

⁹ Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 165.

¹⁰ Treptow et al., 405

¹¹ Treptow et al., 406

¹² Treptow et al., 409-10

¹³ Treptow et al., 409

be exposed to contradictory ideas of the nation's great future, while living in an economic crisis. This would be enough to drive many to more extreme political strategies. Regardless, the political parties of Romania set in motion a great source of contention and unrest through economic policy.

Among the political parties of the Romanian Parliament, the primary power in was the National Liberal Party. The party had its first major successes in 1923, and continued with intermittent success for more than a decade. Although on the whole it claimed to support a democratic regime, it would prove to be more than willing to use military force to silence protesters, and outlawed rival political parties, such as the Communist party in 1924.¹⁴ The People's Party spawned from the People's League, a movement lead by General Alexandru Averescu, a national hero after the war, in 1920, and advocated for economic rebuilding and agrarian reform. The Peasant's Party likewise advocated for agrarian reform, although also desired greater democratic reforms.¹⁵ With so many various directions that the Romanian people were being pulled in, an excellent opportunity for a charismatic party promising a bright future opened up.

While the power of the peasants began to grow, it was challenged by the elite, who advocated for industrialization over the traditional agriculture of the past. The liberals were opposed by a group of politicians, who believed that the future of Romania lay in scientific agriculture and more limited industrial growth, known as Peasantists. Due to the vast majority of Romania consisting of peasants, the Peasantists believed that united they could

¹⁴ Treptow et al., 414

¹⁵ Treptow et al., 414-5

form a new type of government by attaining an overwhelming majority in parliament, a peasant state founded on the interests of the basic Romanian farmer. It should be noted, that despite their preference for the development of Romanian agriculture, the Peasantists were not necessarily opposed to the development of the industry of Romania, only that agriculture should be the primary focus of the nation's economy. The Peasantists were also notably in favor of keeping an open door for foreign investments, as they believed that Romania lacked sufficient money to properly exploit all of its natural resources. This is in stark contrast to the liberals that believed Romania must perform all exploitation of resources on its own. The Peasant Party, and later the National Peasant Party, would best represent the interests of the Peasantists.¹⁶

The final major non-nationalist political party of the Romanian state at the time was the Social Democratic Party. These politicians were advocates of socialism, however, they recognized Romania's inability to achieve a truly socialist system at the time, due to its lack of industrial progress. Thus, instead of focusing on directly making Romania a socialist nation, they sought to first industrialize it as a capitalist nation, and convert it later into a socialist state.¹⁷ This would allow Romania to develop and maintain the industrial capacity for the socialist government programs. They also believed in the equality of all citizens, and wanted to remove the perceived political and financial oligarchy of Romania.¹⁸ With these three groups, Romania came to a crossroads on its future. Either it could become the dominant exporter of grain in Europe or, as the liberals and social

¹⁶ Treptow et al., 398-9

¹⁷ Treptow et al., 399-400

¹⁸ Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, 171.

democrats believed, it could become a great industrial power. The very fate of Romania was in the balance, and the loser of this battle would be forced to see Romania wallow in wasted potential, in which ever field the victors decided. Even further, if the industrialists were to win this battle, the argument of whether the state should embrace socialist ideals would be on the horizon. For the Romanian citizen, the early 1920s were a time of great chaos and excitement. With the power and desire to change the fate of the nation, and with three directions for Romania to take, citizens appeared to have a bright, if undetermined future ahead of them.

Another complex issue that unified many Romanians, while alienating others, was religion. The primary religion of Romania in the time between the wars was the Romanian Orthodox Church, which recently had the religious leader of Wallachia raised to the position of patriarch, an extreme honor in the Orthodox tradition. This elevation of position finalized the position of the Romanian church as an entity independent of the Greek Orthodox Church.¹⁹ This would be a great boon for the nationalist movement of Romania, that even their religion was becoming independent from outside influences at this exciting new moment for Romania. However, this idea of the independence of the Romanian Orthodox Church occurring in the wake of World War I is disputed. According to historians Stan and Turcescu, the Romanian Orthodox Church truly had its origins in 1863, when Alexandru Ioan Cuza made a number of sweeping reforms within the nation that separated the Romanian Church from other Orthodox Churches. In addition to the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Greek Catholic Church was also a recognized national religion, due

¹⁹ Treptow et al., 404

to its establishment in the region in the seventeenth century.²⁰ However, despite the acceptance of the Greek Catholic Church, many nationalist intellectuals believed that one of the marks of a true Romanian was the following of the Romanian Orthodox Church.²¹ Many nationalists latched onto this idea, and believed the Orthodox Church should be the basis for the guiding principles of government.²² One of the major Romanian nationalists who advocated for religious integration was a theologian named Nichifor Crainic. Crainic was embraced by many nationalists and believed that Romania, with its uniquely Eastern spirituality dating back to Pseudo-Dionysius, had a destiny to save Europe from spiritual stagnation from the West.²³ With the adoption of a religious component, Romanian nationalism took on a new form, as well as allowing nationalists to exclude more people from the definition of being a “good Romanian”, especially the Jews, who would be an other for both ethnic and religious reasons. The Jews were victims of special ire, because unlike the Germans and Hungarians who were members of neither national religion, they were still Christian, and thus had some connection to the national churches of Romania.²⁴ This would inevitably make the hatred of Jews among nationalists, and especially the fascists who adopted this religious view, substantially stronger.

²⁰ Treptow et al., 404; Livezeanu, 135

²¹ Livezeanu, 13

²² Roland Clark, “Nationalism and Orthodoxy: Nichifor Crainic and the Political Culture of the Extreme Right in 1930s Romania,” Vol. 40, No. 1 (January 2012), 110

²³ Clark, 109-110

²⁴ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930*, 1st ed. (Cornell University Press, 2000), 13

One of the foremost problems of Romania at this time, like many European nations with fascist movements, was anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism was not an oddity in Romania. In a study of anti-Semitic acts across a number of countries, including Germany, France, and Italy, Romania had the highest number of both anti-Semitic acts per million people, and the highest percentage of anti-Semitic acts being violent in nature.²⁵ Specifically, for every one million people in Romania, between the years 1899-1939, .827 anti-Semitic instances occurred. Further, of these many incidents, thirty four percent were violent in nature. While this is certainly not most people committing acts of violence against Jews, this is still a significant statistic, with vast amounts of violence against them. Many of the LAM's members resented the Jewish people for their success. One of the main reasons for this was the perception of them controlling more of the industry and professions of Romania. Many Jewish communities were associated with commerce and were located in more urban areas.²⁶ Resentment over this perceived dominance of Jews in the professions was likely buttressed by the fact that about 16.4% of all university students from 1921 to 1933 were Jewish.²⁷ For reference, Jews represented about 4% of the total population in 1930.²⁸ This resentment was compounded by a fact that was unique to the Jews among the various ethnic groups of Romania, location. Most of the ethnic groups of Romania, like Germans and Hungarians, were centered in specific regions of Romania, the Jews were dispersed throughout the nation.²⁹ The fact that there was a small group of people, of higher economic status spread across

²⁵ William I. Brustein and Ryan D. King, "Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust," *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 25, no. 1 (2004): 43.

²⁶ Livezeanu, 12.

²⁷ Raul Carsocea, "Anti-Semitism in Romania: Historical Legacies, Contemporary Challenges," n.d., 10.

²⁸ Carsocea, 8.

²⁹ Livezeanu, 12

the country meant that there was a perceived artificial ceiling. Even if an individual were able to leave their home and move from Iasi to Bucharest, the same general situation would remain. Thus, many anti-Semitic Romanians thus felt that Jews had more wealth and status than the native born and, in their view, rightful rulers of Romania should have. Those who thought this way were incapable of escaping this, no matter where in their home country they went. When these factors combined, it produced a synergistic understanding among many Romanians that the Jews had found a place in society above them, as though they were second class citizens in their own country. For anti-Semites, this problem was made worse by the Citizenship Law of 1924, which was to naturalize minority populations, Jews included among them.³⁰ This law was considered a necessity due to the massive influx of new residents from the new territories acquired after the war, and international political backlash from continued refusal of Jewish citizenship.³¹ These feelings of resentment would bubble up in the form of virulent anti-Semitism, that would be one of the major forces in the creation of national organizations for the protection of the interests of the Romanian people, such as the LAM or the League of National Christian Defense (LANC).

One of the ideas that fanned the flame of anti-Semitism was the idea of a Jewish conspiracy to take control of Romania. This conspiracy was not one of an external force, that would defeat Romania from the outside, but a closely guarded secret within the nation's very borders. Failure to confront this conspiracy would result in the loss of sovereignty by Romanians to Jews, therefore making the conspiracy a mortal danger in the eyes of the nationalist.³² The idea of the conspiracy

³⁰ Livezeanu, 123

³¹ Iordachi, 3.

³² Dragos Stoica, "Do Radicals Believe in their Mythologies? A Comparison Between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Legion of the Archangel Michael in the Light of Four Political Mythologies." *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 15, No. 1 (2014), 108-9

came from the industries that were dominated by Jews. According to Codreanu, the fields of literature, news, film, theater, and banking were all taken over by Jews, and used to corrupt the soul of Romania.³³ Some Legionaries even believed that the rise of democracy was part of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, thus making an already unpalatable break from tradition all the more corrupt.³⁴ This accusation would help to connect far-right dissenters together against a scapegoat, and help to turn those who were unsure of democracy away from it.

Given the events above, it appears natural that a fascist group, that exploited the youth and was intrinsically bound to religion, emerged in Romania in the late 1920's. While the LAM certainly had its similarities to the Nazi party of Germany, its less effective use of political power and personnel distinguished it, in addition to its use of Christianity. The use of one of the most populous religions in the world is one of the reasons that the LAM has a longer longevity than its low success rate would suggest. For this reason, it has seen recent resurgence among ultranationalists in the United States and Europe.

³³ Stoica, 109

³⁴ Stoica, 109.

CHAPTER ONE: IDEAOLGY OF THE IRON GUARD

Just after 10:00 PM, December 19, 1930, Sinaia, Romania. A distinguished man walks through a crowd in the train station. Unbeknownst to him, a hateful enemy is among the throng, looking for revenge. The quarry, Premier Ion G. Duca, is the head of the newly elected liberal government of Romania, and has just finished up a meeting with a number of other political figures, including the King of Romania himself. Informed that his train has been delayed, he arrives late to the station. His stalker, Nicholas Constantinescu, is waiting for him, and is seeking vengeance for the arrest of many of his political comrades and the outlawing of his party, the Iron Guard. Perhaps most interesting about him though, is the fact that this was not a hardened, experienced killer, but a young student. As Duca approaches a salon coach, a noise like thunder rings out in the room, followed by three more. The crowd is thrown into disarray, confused by what has happened. They realize just what occurred, when they view the corpse of the Premier lying on the floor. This is when Constantinescu makes his escape. Though he wounds a police prefect, ultimately, he is captured by police before the incensed crowd was able to have their own bloody vengeance on the young assassin. With the premier of the nation dead, the newspapers interview his assassin, utterly unrepentant of what he has done.³⁵

³⁵ "Slays Premier of Rumania: Nazi Assassin Seized." *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963); *Chicago, Ill.* December 30, 1933. 1.

This assassination was the work of the Iron Guard. In Constantinescu's account of the assassination, he claimed that he murdered "Duca, friend of the Jews...in order to avenge the death of my comrades in the Iron Guard who were killed in conflict with the gendarmery during the recent anti-Semitic riots at Constantza."³⁶ While perhaps more brutal than the average event in the history of the Iron Guard, this anecdote perfectly encapsulates the thought process and behavior of the Iron Guard. This political organization was characterized by anti-Semitism and a lack of organization and forethought in action. Brutish revenge assassinations like that of Duca's were not unheard of, and fits in with other acts of nearsighted violence and extreme escalation of the organization. Despite this type of violence and reprisal, the organization found a strong niche in Romanian society by its appeal to youth, and its culture of a belief in a greater meaning in what it was doing.

The Iron Guard was founded as the Legion of the Archangel Michael (LAM) in a moment of defiance from the established government, as many of its most defining moments would be. It began amongst a group of roughly fifteen university students, each ambitious, politically minded, and nursing a rabid hatred of the Jewish people. The group, led by a young man named Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, broke away from a much larger group, known as the League of National Christian Defense (LANC) in 1927. The students completely lacked any funds for a political organization, they did not even have enough in the way for postage to tell their former comrades of their departure.³⁷ Then, in 1930, the

³⁶ "Slays Premier of Rumania: Nazi Assassin Seized." 1.

³⁷ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, (London: Sanctuary Press Ltd, 2019), 285

LAM formed the Iron Guard as a paramilitary wing.³⁸ Effectively this is the same organization, though the term Iron Guard is more popular in the English-speaking world. However, regardless of the difficulties that it would entail, such as government sanctioned killings, and fueled by hate and the desire for the supremacy of the Romanian people, these young men strove to do what they believed was right, for God and for country.³⁹

The LANC was a critical organization in the foundation of fascism in Romania. Founded in March 1923, the LANC was a product of two forces officially joining together. The first of these forces was Alexandru C. Cuza, a professor of law at Iasi University. Cuza was notable at this time for leading opposition to the presence

of Jews

in the law schools of Romania, and advocated for a *numerus clausus*.⁴⁰ This is a limit of how many Jews were able to be admitted into any given school based on their percentage of the population.⁴¹ The force of this powerful, anti-Semitic personality melded well with the second entity, that of an anti-Semitic student movement of 1922. This student movement was a group of law students at Iasi university, who followed an expelled student, Corneliu Codreanu. Despite Codreanu's official expulsion, the law school of Iasi University continued to educate him, until his graduation in 1922. In this period, Codreanu was able to establish a Christian student association,

³⁸ Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Cornell University Press, 2015), 100.

³⁹ Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, 175.

⁴⁰ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 265-6

⁴¹ Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, June 5, 2012), 28

which isolated the Jewish and leftist student societies. This student association also admired Cuza's anti-Semitic beliefs, and so eventually Cuza became the official leader of these students in 1923, when they founded the LANC.⁴² Once merged together, the LANC hosted many social events, in addition to its attempts to break into parliament.⁴³ These attempts eventually became successful, after merging with two minor political parties.⁴⁴ The time that Codreanu spent in the LANC would not last forever however. In his own recollection of events, Codreanu believed that the LANC was split into two separate factions, all as a result of the lack of leadership of Cuza. According to Codreanu, small dissatisfactions with the leadership snowballed into growing resentment, until several members of the league, including Codreanu's father were expelled without trial. It was from this schism and infighting that Codreanu took initiative and formed the LAM with a small group of young students.⁴⁵

The goal of the Legion was initially fairly amorphous: to bring about a revolution in the spirit of Romania, rather than in its political system. What this meant practically was a renunciation of many of the popular currents that Romanian politicians were trying to convey. One of the Legion's greatest interests would be the rejection of the role that material wealth played in society, as the Legion believed that what was important were matters of the spirit, such as honor and virtue.⁴⁶ This mindset put the Legion at odds with the liberals of the National Liberal Party, who advocated for an increase in industrialization and the wealth associated with it, and the Social

⁴² Livezeanu, 266

⁴³ Clark, 28; 60

⁴⁴ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 61.

⁴⁵ Codreanu, 279-80

⁴⁶ Clark, 23

Democrats who desired industrialization in a socialist economic system.⁴⁷ The Legion appealed to those, especially the youth, who did not believe that the future of Romania lay in either a liberal industrial state or that of a socialist state. Ultimately, the Legion advocated for modern industrial technology, but without socialism or democracy.⁴⁸ Although it is true that the Legion resented the place of material wealth, they did not necessarily oppose its use or existence. In the words of Codreanu himself, “We were not denying and will never deny the existence of matter in the world, but did deny and forever will deny the right of its absolute domination.”⁴⁹ The LAM and its followers saw wealth merely as a means to an end, rather than a good in itself. The fact that the LAM was not opposed to industry, while also promoting Romania’s agriculture, might have given the appearance that it would have common ground with a third political party, the National Peasants Party, but this was not the case, due to the Peasants party’s adherence to democracy and liberties for all citizens.⁵⁰

The LAM was at its core, an organization more founded in ideals than in plans. The goal of the LAM was powerful and clear enough, but the membership did not have specific plans to facilitate this change in idea. Codreanu asserted that “...it is not programs that we must have, but men, new men. For such as people are today, formed by politicians and infected by the Judaic influence, they will compromise the most brilliant political programs.”⁵¹ This indicates there was little actionable plans being made to advance the goal of changing the culture of Romania, and

⁴⁷ Kurt W. Treptow et al., *A History of Romania*, (Iasi: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997), 398-9

⁴⁸ Clark, 176; Codreanu, 317-8

⁴⁹ Codreanu, 286

⁵⁰ Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, 169.

⁵¹ Codreanu, 292

implies a level of unprofessionalism and disorganization in the Legion. While it is natural for any movement to not be highly organized or have an intricate plan at its inception, this was something that Codreanu was boasting about in his memoir, about a decade after the founding of the movement, and after it joined the political stage. These appear to be his thoughts at the time of the publishing of the second edition of the book shortly before his death, so should be accurate to the public story of the time.⁵² Further, this idea indicates that the Legion would need to drag its affairs into the everyday life of the Romanian people. As the movement was based on the idea of action, and rarely planned ahead in the long term, this would be a source of many problems.

During its existence, the Legion's stance on Jews had a distinct impact on Romanian society. In fact, the LAM's anti-Semitic propaganda led one young man into a failed murder attempt. The only result of the murder, was that the Council of Ministers officially banned the Iron Guard in early January 1931.⁵³ The Legion believed that the Jews were in league with communists to take control of Romania, and used a number of different avenues to assert their control.⁵⁴ While it is possible that a large number of important and lucrative jobs were filled by people of Jewish descent, the fascists gave little to no evidence of any actual conspiracy, beyond the banning of the Iron Guard for attempted murder, as they believed the democracy was run by Jews, and therefore were trying to silence them.⁵⁵ With Jews being perceived as having such a large portion of the professions of the nation, they became an even easier scapegoat for anti-Semites. At this point in

⁵² Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 150.

⁵³ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 366.

⁵⁴ Dragos Stoica, "Do Radicals Believe in their Mythologies? A Comparison Between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Legion of the Archangel Michael in the Light of Four Political Mythologies." *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 15, No. 1 (2014), 109

⁵⁵ Stoica, 108; Clark, 95; Codreanu, 367.

history, while the future of Romania was more in the hands of the average Romanian citizen than ever, it was also uncertain and potentially frightening for some. Politically, democracy was still a relatively new experience, especially when applied to every Romanian man. Because of the presence of Jews in the positions of power most associated with these fields, the Jews became quick and obvious targets for these issues. It is no coincidence that the fascist perspective saw the Jews as responsible for the introduction of democracy, as both were reviled by the fascists.⁵⁶ However, while the fascists hated democracy, a new political system that challenged the prior establishment of Romania and the world that the fascists sought to build, the hatred of the Jews reached back centuries. According to historian Dragos Stoica, “The religious anti-Semitism of the Middle Ages is rationalized as a defensive theory against a shadow empire, designed to destroy everything in its path. The consequences of non-action will be the total domination (direct or by proxy) over a social body structured by anomy and powerless against a coordinated assault.”⁵⁷ Thus, the fascist anti-Semitism was both a mixture of long festering hatred, and a fear of the new and the unknown. This combination of hatred allowed the Legion of the Archangel Michael (LAM) to make an effective scapegoat, especially for any youth that were disheartened by the state of Romania.

Further, it was not an accident that the Iron Guard’s origins came from the universities of Romania. In order to compete in government jobs, which were in high demand and almost guaranteed upward social mobility for the rural Romanians, a college degree was required.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Dragos Stoica, “Do Radicals Believe in their Mythologies? A Comparison Between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Legion of the Archangel Michael in the Light of Four Political Mythologies.” *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 15, No. 1 (2014), 108

⁵⁷ Stacos, 109

⁵⁸ Zvi Yavetz, “An Eyewitness Note: Reflections on the Rumanian Iron Guard,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 26, no. 3/4 (1991): 599.

Essentially, seats in universities were in high demand, and as they were highly competitive, the material backgrounds of students were important factors. According to Zvi Yavetz, a contemporary Jewish observer, “the number of places in dormitories was limited, rents were high, and government scholarships few. Jewish students, however, came from urban areas, lived at home with their parents, and even if they were not rich, appeared as such in comparison to Rumanian students. Any anti-Semitic propaganda thus fell on fertile ground.”⁵⁹ This explains a great deal of the anger toward Jews from Romanians who attempted to enter the universities of their home country. The system seemed rigged against Romanians, and skewed unfairly towards Jews, who represented up to 40% of some departments.⁶⁰ Therefore, when groups like the LAM began calling for a *numerus clausus* to call for a more representative university selection system, the poorer Romanian who wanted to make a better life was more inclined to agree with this than a more extreme entry point for such an organization. These potential students were experienced with what appeared to be a corrupt system that catered to a minority group while leaving the poorer majority at a serious disadvantage. If there was already seemingly proof of a conspiracy, it would be much easier for the prospective member to be convinced of a greater conspiracy, and therefore become a dedicated to the cause. Therefore, it is possible that one of the earliest issues of interest to the LAM was in fact a useful recruitment method as well.

Rather than simply making speeches and advocating the sidelining of the Jewish people, the Iron Guard frequently radicalized their members and committed heinous acts of violence toward members of the Jewish community. The Iron Guard was much quicker to take action on what they believed to be the problems of the state. As an example of the organization’s eagerness

⁵⁹ Yavetz, 599.

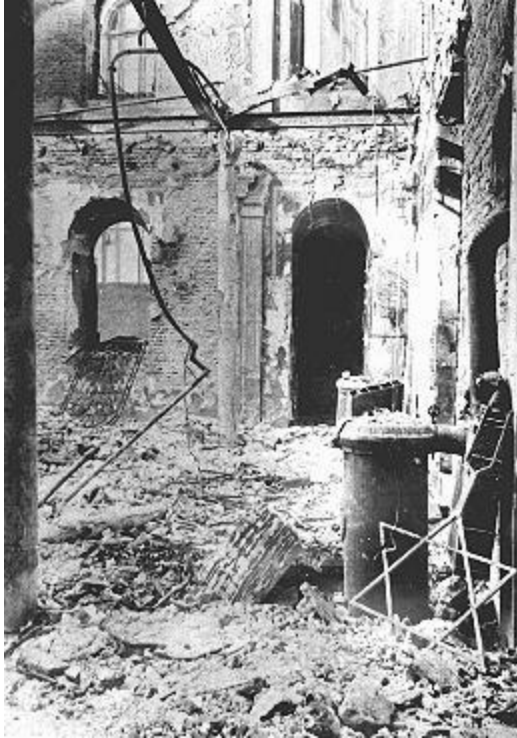
⁶⁰ Carsocea, “Anti-Semitism in Romania: Historical Legacies, Contemporary Challenges.”

to act, comes an episode in Cernauti in 1938, in which two synagogues, five Jewish owned private houses and two Jewish owned factories were burned down by members of the Iron Guard, who willingly confessed to the crime.⁶¹ This violence against Jews became more prevalent the more power the Iron Guard was afforded. An example comes from the testimony of David Stoliar, a survivor of the Holocaust in Romania. According to Stoliar, in 1941, violence against Jews was very widespread, to the point of there being open killings of Jews in the streets. Stoliar recalls that these murders were allowed to happen, as many members of the police by this point were either members of, or friendly to, the Iron Guard.⁶² Finally, during the Legionary Revolt in 1941, the Legionaries also incited a pogrom in Bucharest, that led to violence against more than 2,000 Jews, as well as their property. Included in the devastation of the pogrom was the defacing or destruction of twenty-five synagogues, one of which is pictured here.⁶³ Either by direct action, or simply by the lack of enforcement of the law for the Jews, the Iron Guard was responsible for the actions of the radicalized Romanians who murdered many Jewish people, regardless of if they were students or not.

⁶¹ G.E.R. Gedeye, "Rumania to Crush Iron Guard Group" *New York Times*, 1938. Pg. 10

⁶² "Oral History Interview with David Stoliar - Collections Search - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," accessed January 31, 2021, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn558432>.

⁶³ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 231; "Synagogue Destroyed during a Pogrom in Bucharest," accessed March 7, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/photo/synagogue-destroyed-during-a-pogrom-in-bucharest>.



A critical element to the Legion's attempt to gain power in the political sphere of Romania came from its low-level organization. This was what was known as the *cuiburi*, or nest. These nests would be the smallest units within the LAM for men, in some cases being as small as three individuals.⁶⁴ The purpose of the nest was to cultivate the virtues the LAM regarded as desirable for young men. Codreanu believed that this would be the way to bring about his dreams of spiritual revolution in Romania. The foremost reason for this thought was that starting out with an overt attempt against the government would be doomed to fail. Instead, a leader would gather a group of other young men, and they would set out to live by the virtues that the laws of the legion set out. The laws of the Legion demanded that the men be disciplined, hardworking, active in their

⁶⁴ Livezeanu, 288

communities, educated in the Legion, always available to help a fallen legionnaire, and honorable. These nests were integrated into villages, districts, counties and provincial commands, based on how much the individual leaders could manage. This was not a strictly organized, hierarchical affair, but one that was based entirely on the abilities of the leaders. In theory, whoever was most qualified to lead the largest swath of land for the Legion would do so, allowing for a greater overall competency of each leader.⁶⁵ These nests would use their small size to their advantage by encouraging more personal relationships, and be not just a place for politics, but also where one would be accepted by peers. The nest would be a family made of the members' friends, rather than their blood. Codreanu writes, "One did not come in as into a cold barracks but as into his own house, among his own family."⁶⁶ With a bond this close, the members had a greater stake in the organization. The nest was led by its founder and passively attracted members by being an example of a traditional Romanian man and not by "sleeve pulling and fishing for members."⁶⁷ This would allow the new members to become truly committed to their ranks, and less likely to leave if they had second thoughts on the ideology. Further, the fact that these nests were for the most part young men, generally nineteen years or older, but with sections for younger men, meant it could act as an additional incentive to join a nest.⁶⁸ As the movement spread throughout Romania, it is likely that young men would be willing to join simply for the opportunity to meet other passionate and driven young people, through the invitation of legionnaires.⁶⁹ Thus, the nest was a critical element

⁶⁵ Codreanu, 320-1

⁶⁶ Codreanu, 289

⁶⁷ Codreanu, 290

⁶⁸ Clark, 67

⁶⁹ Clark, 159

in paving way for the future of the fascist Romania. Without the nests assuring that the populace was ready for their movement, the LAM would make no attempts at direct political changes.

Related to the nests were *ceiățuie*, or fortresses. The fortresses were the equivalent of the nest for women, and would serve a slightly different purpose.⁷⁰ Rather than focusing on the virtues of the man, the fortress aimed at promoting the idea of what a woman ought to be, mothers of good Romanian men who would take care of and support the men as they established the front against modern life.⁷¹ The historian Roland Clark writes, “fortresses took part in sewing competitions to produce legionary insignias and collect dry flowers to sell for fund raising purposes. Even if their legionary work required many of the same skills that their domestic duties did, it was being used for political purposes.”⁷² This system of nests and fortresses, and how they focused on the what the meaning of their gender was, proved to be quite useful in transforming the lives of those who were drawn into the politics of the legion.

However, it is in this low-level organization of the Legion that one of its greatest problems throughout its history can be found. While the nest system was a highly successful recruitment method, not to mention a way to keep members engaged, it was the only formal organization of the movement. This meant that there was some degree of chaos in the structure of the organization as a whole. To move beyond the small purview of a nest, which was only meant to be comprising up to thirteen people, Codreanu said,

How did I acquire leaders over the larger units? I nominated no leader for village, district or county. I told them: ‘Conquer and organize! And, as much as you can organize, you will be chief over.’ I just confirmed them leaders in the positions to which their power, qualities and aptitudes elevated them. We started with the nest’s leader and progressively he grew

⁷⁰ Livezeanu, 288

⁷¹ Clark, 68

⁷² Clark, 116

to village leader, district, the town and county leader, and only in 1934, that is seven years later, to the regional leader.⁷³

While on paper the idea of only having the most qualified and successful be the higher-level leaders, this does pose a significant problem. Just because one is a successful leader at the level of nest, does not necessarily mean they will be as competent as at higher levels. While this may be a problem shared with a democratic system another weakness is that of human ego. Should a given nest leader be hungry for advancement within the organization, they would not be likely to consider that perhaps they have flaws that might not be conducive to an effective power dynamic. Further, this model of advancement creates cutthroat competition between the members. If there is one suitably ambitious or unscrupulous individual looking to take control of a county's division of the LAM, corruption or some other underhanded method for attaining power would be more devastating. Finally, the idea that the movement is structured as to what the given leader believes that they can organize is another shortcoming. This is almost welcoming nest leaders to bite off more than they can chew, and cause friction within the movement. Judging from what Codreanu said in his memoir, there is no safe guard against the possibility of two or more nest leaders disagreeing over who is actually in charge of a given area. This would inevitably result in a breakdown of communication, and a complete lack of efficiency in the mission of the Legion, as members would need to take sides and devote energy into this conflict. This romantic ideal of a Darwinian "Survival of the Fittest" approach to leadership would be just as likely to leave the rank-and-file confused and without leadership. While later on the Iron Guard would appear to take on slightly more organized trappings, fitting of their paramilitary ambitions, these "battalions" and

⁷³ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 320.

dividing Bucharest into sectors did little to alleviate the fact that the movement still remained disorganized in its functioning, and remained short-sighted in action.⁷⁴

The Legion managed to become as successful as it was, because it was capable of taking in the young people of Romania, especially the students of Romania, and giving them an outlet to use whatever skills or ambitions they had. Even something as simple as sewing or flower picking became a source for a great sense of purpose that encouraged members to be active and to recruit new members. With this sort of recruitment campaign, impressionable and malleable young people would be easy for the nest leaders to lure into the cause, and mold into whatever roles were needed. One of the most prolific idealogues of the Guard, Ion Mota, expressed a similar sort of sentiment in a letter regarding his involvement in the Spanish Civil War. He wrote, “There, I have said that they are ‘blessed’, these soldiers... because the only way a man can be really happy is to live this earthly life in such a way as to be able to hope for the salvation of his soul.”⁷⁵ This line of thinking suffuses every action of the Guard. When all activities have a sacred layer, it incentivizes greater effort, especially among the conservative youth that the Guard were trying to recruit. Considering that even before the height of the movement, when it may have contained as many as 272,000 members, more than 3,500 of its members could be arrested at once and not impact its growth a large amount, this appears to have worked fairly well.⁷⁶ Utilizing this sort of devotion to work, that no matter how small or large a task it was still vital and meaningful to the work of the

⁷⁴ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 99; Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 407.

⁷⁵ Ion Mota, “The Roman Legionary’s Mission in Spain,” *Testamento di Ion Mota* (All’Insegna del Veltro: Genoa, 1984), 40-1, 1st edn. 1937. in Roger Griffin's *Fascism*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 1995):219-220.

⁷⁶ “Iron Guardist Leader Hunted in Roumania; Police Rout Membership,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (blog), December 12, 1933, <https://www.jta.org/1933/12/12/archive/iron-guardist-leader-hunted-in-roumania-police-rout-membership>; Roland Clark, “European Fascists and Local Activists: Romania’s Legion of the Archangel Michael (1922-1938),” n.d., 1.

organization, the Guard had a large source of eager to please young people, who were more than ready to take on any role given to them.

This sense of belonging is combined with another, numinous feeling of belonging for the members of the Legion. The Legion was heavily based in traditional Orthodox Christian values, and thus had a transcendent frame of looking through the world. This meant that every act of the Legion was in some way suffused with the believe that it was part of something greater. In *For My Legionaries*, Codreanu writes about the importance of four values in the lives of the first Legionaries. The very first of these is as follows, “1. *Faith in God*. All of us believed in God. None of us was an atheist. The more we were alone and surrounded, the more our preoccupations were directed toward God and toward contact with our own dead and those of the nation. This gave us an invincible strength and a bright serenity in the face of all blows.”⁷⁷ Here, Codreanu writes of the zealous approach that he and the other Legionaries had to life in the early Legion. This is indicative that the LAM would approach all things with the same belief in something greater than the individual. This use of Christianity would be quite appealing to those who may have been disillusioned from the current Romanian social order, by appealing to traditional values and promising that what recruits knew was good would lead Romania to power and greatness.

Despite its foray into democracy, the LAM was fervently opposed to it, seeing it as a fundamentally flawed system that would not bring about the best results for the Romanian people. Codreanu identified six reasons why the Romanian nation should shed off democracy, and instead opt for a form of government founded on the values of the Romanian Orthodox Church. This government would be led by a single chief whose will would represent the single truth, which the

⁷⁷ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 289.

public would share with him, though no election would take place. There would be an unspoken understanding that this chief would be selected, as he would be the best leader of men and be guided for the interest of the immortal nation.⁷⁸ The first reason for this aversion was the fact that democracy divides people.⁷⁹ The Iron Guard believed that Romania's power was best preserved not just by the unity of its people, but specifically the ethnic Romanian people. In a democracy, the people of Romania would be divided, as a democracy requires some form of division in order to provide choices. To the Iron Guard the choice of National Liberal Party, National Peasant Party, or any other party ultimately did not matter, as they all divided Romanians, and thus the power of Romania. This fear was exacerbated by the novelty of democracy at the time. By the time of the LAM's founding in 1927, the constitution making Romania a democracy with universal male suffrage was only about four years old.⁸⁰ Without a longstanding democratic tradition, such as those held in the United States or United Kingdom, the idea that each person who lived in Romania should have an equal voice in politics was an even more alarming proposition to some citizens than it was in those democratic countries. Even those countries had issues with representing each person, so a nation that is just getting started with democracy would likely have a harder time coming to terms with this system. To the ultra-nationalistic Legion, the Romanian race was subordinate only to God. Thus, they believed that appealing to unity of the race was more important than answering to the authority of the constitution and a democratic government that divided the people of Romania along party lines. Ion Mota demonstrated this aversion to democracy when he wrote in a letter just before entering the Spanish Civil War in 1936, "No force, no love exists which

⁷⁸ Codreanu, 317-8

⁷⁹ Codreanu, 384

⁸⁰ Kurt W. Treptow et al., *A History of Romania*, (Iasi: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997), 403

is higher than the race (and can only be realized in the race), except for the force of Christ and the love of Him.”⁸¹ For the member of the Iron Guard, the act of placing anything above the good of the race was akin to blasphemy. By placing democracy above a race that is second only to the will of God, they were elevating democracy to a form of idolatry.

The second major issue that the Iron Guard had with democracy was how it treated Jews.⁸² The Iron Guard was principally concerned with the role of Jews in Romania, believing them to be one of the root causes of the woes of the Romanian people. Any form of government that would protect the rights of the Jew and raise them to the same level as that of the native ethnicity, would be abhorrent to them. The Iron Guard was vehemently opposed to the constitution, as it upheld the rights of Jews. Codreanu wrote, “We have lived here for thousands of years; with the plow and the weapon; with our labor and our blood. Why should we be equal to those who have been here for hardly 100, 10, or 5 years?”⁸³ With this outlook, one can see the logical process that the Iron Guard took to believe in the discrimination against Jews.

Codreanu’s third complaint about democracy was that of a lack of what he called continuity. The principal here was that when the reins of power are capable of being transferred from one party to another, it is much harder for legislation for a single grand plan to survive to see completion. In the context of the fascist Iron Guard, this would likely involve legislation to disenfranchise and, as implied by the violence the Guard used against them, remove the Jews from Romanian society.⁸⁴ Legislation that would act this way, barring interference from a dictator,

⁸¹ Mota, “The Roman Legionary’s Mission in Spain.”

⁸² Codreanu, 384

⁸³ Codreanu, 384

⁸⁴ “Anti-Semitic Riots Curbed in Rumania”, *The New York Times*, (New York, NY), Nov. 29, 1933. 10

would likely need more than a single term in office to get through to make a meaningful effect. While it is not impossible to achieve long term plans through democracy, it would certainly be harder to do so. Thus, Codreanu's aims to expunge Romania of all its "Judaic corruptions" was best served by eliminating democracy, allowing for the development of a long-term plan of attack to remove the Jewish people from the nation.

The fourth point that Codreanu raised against the institution of democracy was related to the idea of authority. Codreanu believed that since the politician is beholden to their constituents, one cannot make a hardline stance on any given issue that the public may not like. In this way of thinking of democracy, the roles of the traditional tyrant and people in Western thought are reversed. Rather than one tyrant exerting his will against an innocent majority, the tyrannical majority forces the moral politician to choose "either the renunciation of his lifetime's labor or the satisfaction of his supporters."⁸⁵ Due to the need of gaining public support, a politician would not necessarily be able to do what he believed needed to be done for the best interest of the nation.

In the fifth point, Codreanu believed that political parties could not resist corruption. The Iron Guard's hatred of wealth and democracy dovetailed together into a similar hatred of those who embezzled and stole wealth from others. Further, even if one party were to pursue adversaries for their corruption, Codreanu believed that the party taking the initiative would eventually reveal its own corruption in the process. This would lead to both sides losing support from the people, thereby allowing the cycle of corruption to continue.⁸⁶ In fact this hatred of corruption actually briefly outweighed the Guard's hatred of democracy. In a period of constructive contribution to

⁸⁵ Codreanu, 385

⁸⁶ Codreanu, 385

the parliament in the mid-1930s, the Iron Guard gained great support for its hardline stance against corruption in government.⁸⁷ However, this cooperation with democracy was only temporary. The Guard was willing to work in parliament until democracy and the constitution could be dispensed with. This period of cooperation appeared to be mainly caused by the movement's opposition to wealth and corruption, which they saw as endemic to the system.⁸⁸

The Guard was not alone in believing that the Romanian government was corrupt. During his time in Romania, a foreign minister from Finland, Carl Gustaf Idman, observed Romania from his posting from the late 1920s to late 1930s in Bucharest. Idman was the Finnish envoy to both Poland and Bucharest during this period, so his observations in both places were likely not as deep as if he had only been assigned to one.⁸⁹ Regardless, in one of his dispatches, Idman wrote of a soldier who was capable of escaping an eighteen-month term of service in only six months by paying a portion of his salary to his commanding officer.⁹⁰ This alleged defender of the Romanian people was able to easily shave off two thirds of his service time, merely by paying an officer. While a single instance of such an event happening is not likely to create a serious problem for the country at large, the fact that this was seen by a foreign minister who was unlikely to have the time to investigate issues like this or spend time with common people to find out about it, implies that it was unlikely that these issues were rare. Further, Idman, present in Romania for 1938, attributes the entire genesis of the Legionnaire movement to the corruption of Romanian officials, claiming

⁸⁷ Treptow et al., 426

⁸⁸ Codreanu, 385.

⁸⁹ Silviu Marian Miloiu, "Mindsets and Perceptions across Europe: Karl Gustaf Idman's Portray of Romanian Corruption in the 1930s" 11 (January 1, 2009): 95

⁹⁰ Miloiu, 95–101.

it was, “rooted into the Romanian inner life and not a result of German sponsorship.”⁹¹ As an outside observer looking into the issues of Romanian society, Idman had a unique perspective on what the Iron Guard did and stood for. Rather than being as emotionally connected to the movement as someone who had to live his entire life under the influence of these officials, Idman was capable of a more disconnected and dispassionate response to this movement.

The final point that Codreanu outlines as the reasons against democracy is the fact that democracy is under the control of big finance.⁹² Since the Iron Guard was fervently opposed to the role of wealth in the nation, it makes sense for the organization to likewise be opposed to an institution that would promote the role of wealth in the nation, particularly its use in election campaigns. Instead of doing what was needed or what was right for the nation, the idea is that those under the influence of finance will instead be corrupted by the wealth available to them. Either the need to repay the money borrowed for a campaign, or the simple fact of having such a grand amount of money may have made some politicians more focused on money than doing the right thing. Further, he believed that this meant that the politicians would be slaves to Jews. Codreanu writes, “Because of the expensive system and the competition among various groups, democracy needs a lot of money. As a natural consequence it becomes the slave of the great Jewish international finance which subjugates it by subvention.”⁹³ The 1931 Neamt campaign, the Guard’s first major success, was a counter idea to this feared state of corruption. Rather than spending princely sums of money on an election campaign, a nearly resourceless Iron Guard put

⁹¹ Miloiu. 98.

⁹² Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 385.

⁹³ Codreanu, 385.

on an ultimately successful election bid in the countryside, using only the will of the party members. Thus, this campaign strategy used rendered the amounts of money in use for usual election campaigns extravagant and unnecessary. In this way, cheaper and possibly more effective methods of campaigning made traditional financing for campaigns obsolete. However, one can go even further in the needs to eliminate unnecessary funding for the reason of government. Even the Neamt campaign needed some money to organize and conduct. If, as the Guard thought was best, there were no elections, there would be fewer opportunities for money to tempt politicians. Instead, only the Iron Guard, who believed themselves above the corruption of material wealth due to their self-reliance, would be capable of making the decisions for the nation.⁹⁴

During his time in Parliament, Codreanu failed to capitalize on the surprising amount of political power that the party was able to attain, despite being openly against the very institution that afforded them that power. Codreanu made a list of seven demands for the parliament of Romania. These seven demands were ultimately targeted against other members of parliament, and was aimed to curtail perceived abuses of the Romanian people by wealthy actors. One night, Codreanu claimed that he was showing the parliament that the country was invaded by an insidious plot of Jews. The cause of this accusation was the fact that many members of parliament owed money to a bank that Codreanu believed was a “Judaic nest of conspiracy and corruption”.⁹⁵

Codreanu’s solution to this problem was as follows:

1. We demand the introduction of the death penalty for the fraudulent manipulators of public funds. ...
2. We demand the investigation and confiscation of the wealth of those who have bled our poor country.

⁹⁴ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 327-8

⁹⁵ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 381-82.

3. We demand that all politicians who may be proved guilty of having worked against the interests of our country by supporting shady speculations or in any other fashion, be brought to justice.
4. We demand that in the future, politicians be barred from the administrative boards of the various banks and financial enterprises.
5. We demand the expulsion of the hordes of pitiless exploiters who have come here to drain the riches from our soil and exploit the work of our hands.
6. We demand that the territory of Romania be declared the inalienable and indefeasible property of the Romanian Nation.
7. We demand that all campaigning agents be sent to work and that a single command be established, which will inspire the whole Romanian Nation with one heart and one mind.⁹⁶

This list of demands shows that the LAM was not a well-developed organization capable of ruling a nation. Codreanu, in essence, proposed a coup to parliament, without any kind of political infrastructure to be able to support this list of demands. With the combination of demands one and three, Codreanu essentially proposed the murder of several of his colleagues in parliament. This strategy was doomed to fail, as it only made members of parliament who were otherwise enemies united against a common enemy. Further, it speaks to the fact that the LAM, Codreanu especially, was not gifted with foresight. The sentiment of the LAM being nearsighted and reckless is confirmed by Codreanu himself in the following paragraph, where he states “They were not the result of some prolonged thinking or ideological search, but the result of momentary reflections over what the Romanian people needed then, without delay.”⁹⁷ Codreanu admitted that he did not put a great deal of thought into a proposed abolition of democracy, and acted merely based on what he thought was most pressing in the moment. This is the same leader who believes that he is a member of Romania’s elite, “who possess certain aptitudes and specialties.”⁹⁸ He genuinely

⁹⁶ Codreanu, 382–83.

⁹⁷ Codreanu, 383.

⁹⁸ Codreanu, 386.

believed that this was the best way to secure power for his movement, to propose a sudden revolution when his party had a total of two seats in parliament as their share of government power.

At its formation, and even through much of its later life, the Iron Guard did not have political agendas as complex as more developed political parties. However, this did not stop the Guard from organizing into their distinctive nests and fortresses, and acting to try and bring about the end of the Jewish conspiracy that they perceived all around it. These nests would be used to great success to allow the Guard to grow in power until it could even feasibly attempt to run for office in the early 1930s. It was through this experience in office that Codreanu, the leader of the Guard would crystalize his hatred of democracy, and articulate why it would be incompatible with the fascist order he sought to enact in Romania. Through dogged persistence, and a refusal to compromise with anything that came in its way, the Iron Guard established their goal, and acted in order to pursue it: an undemocratic nation ruled exclusively by the Romanian people, for exclusively the Romanian people. However, the tendencies of the Iron Guard toward thuggish violence, lack of planning ahead, and despite its occasional competence, the Iron Guard failed to attain the power in Romania that it was looking for.

Chapter Two:

Fitting in: 1931-41

The early 1930s were a time of turbulent clashes in Romanian society. Many clashes occurred between conservative students, such as those in the Iron Guard and the League of National Christian Defense (LANC) and police forces. One cause of these clashes were the roles of the Jews in society. One incident, ordinary in its scope and rhetoric, was the demonstration in Galatz, in 1930. This event occurred after a period of time of mounting tensions between the Iron Guard and the Jewish communities of Bessarabia, including the vandalism of Jewish cemeteries in the region. Ultimately, these growing tensions led to a confrontation between the students and police and gendarme forces. During this violent clash, after breaking through a police cordon, students allegedly shouted “Death to the Jews!”⁹⁹ Evidently the students were extremely dedicated to the removal of Jews from all public spaces of Romanian life, willing to potentially risk their lives in running a police barricade, as fatal shootings of legionaries were not unheard of. In fact, it was not uncommon to have religious services for these fatalities.¹⁰⁰ This sort of rabid fanaticism was not uncommon for members of the Iron Guard, nor was their hatred of the Jews.

The Iron Guard’s relationship with the Romanian public was complicated. Rather than being overwhelmingly accepted by both government and the people of Romania, or being hated

⁹⁹ “Anti-Jewish Riots Recur in Rumania”, *New York Times*, May 22, 1930. Pg. 8

¹⁰⁰ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 74.

by both, the Iron Guard had a mixed reputation. Its opposition to Communists and Jews, in likely endeared it to the more traditional members of Romanian society, while its disorganization and penchant for violence made it a nuisance for the government of Romania. Throughout the years leading to the Iron Guard's violent end in the Legionary Rebellion of 1941, it could be said that the Iron Guard found support among the Romanian public, but never found such a niche in the Romanian parliament.

To begin, it should be noted that the LAM was able to attract a large number of supporters throughout its life. Otherwise, it would not be worth discussing this movement, if they had no popular support. The height of this general public support was demonstrated in the 1937 elections, while operating as the legal *Totul Pentru Tara* (Everything for the Country) party, the LAM received the third largest number of votes, securing 66 seats in parliament, behind the Liberal party's 152 and the Peasant party's 86 seats.¹⁰¹ This represents a massive increase in votership from only 1931, shooting from 1 to 15.58% of the popular vote of the nation. Among these voters were principally the young, although it attracted a large swath of disillusioned and upset people of Romania.¹⁰² Regardless of who they were, the LAM was able to attract a significant portion, if not the plurality, of the Romanian populace.

Jews and Communists served to be one of the most prolific scapegoats for the Romanian fascists. Much of the turmoil and distress of the aftermath of World War I was placed squarely on their shoulders, and were often harshly treated as a result. In terms of the fear of Communists, there was a very real reason to fear a potential threat. Over the course of about two years, Romania had no less than two neighboring nations transform into Communist regimes, Hungary and the

¹⁰¹ Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*. 173-4

¹⁰² Hitchins. 173

USSR. In both cases, not only was there the threat of traditional cultural mores being obliterated by the new economic and political system, but also of bloody and brutal violence due to the new parties coming into power. Although the Hungarian communist party was short lived, when combined with the threat of Soviet Union, it likely left a lasting and frightening impression on the Romanian people.¹⁰³

The Russian Revolution was seen as a warning for some members of the Romanian people. The very first group that Corneliu Codreanu organized was a pact of fellow high school students in 1919 to defend their home of Husi. Codreanu starts his memoir, *For My Legionaries* with the formation of this pact in the Dobrina Forest near his home town. He described calling together twenty students of diverse years of high school to meet in the woods. Codreanu voiced his concern of the possibility of the Bolshevik army invading the Moldavian region of Romania, and suggested that the boys form a militia to defend their home. Evidently the students, and even many of the adults of Husi agreed, as the militia quickly formed, scavenged the necessary arms for drilling, and found itself approved by the Husi high school principal. The militia was known as “Mihail Kogalniceanu”, seemingly named after a Romanian nationalist, and foreshadowing later Legion of the Archangel Michael (LAM) activities, held many lectures in public to promote nationalist ideas.¹⁰⁴ Codreanu believed that the need for such an organization was a product of the times, writing, “There was then such a chaotic state of affairs in the country that we, but children hardly over 18 years of age, understood all too well.”¹⁰⁵ Codreanu recognized the fact that it was unusual and concerning for such young people to be engaged in these types of politics. It is likely that the

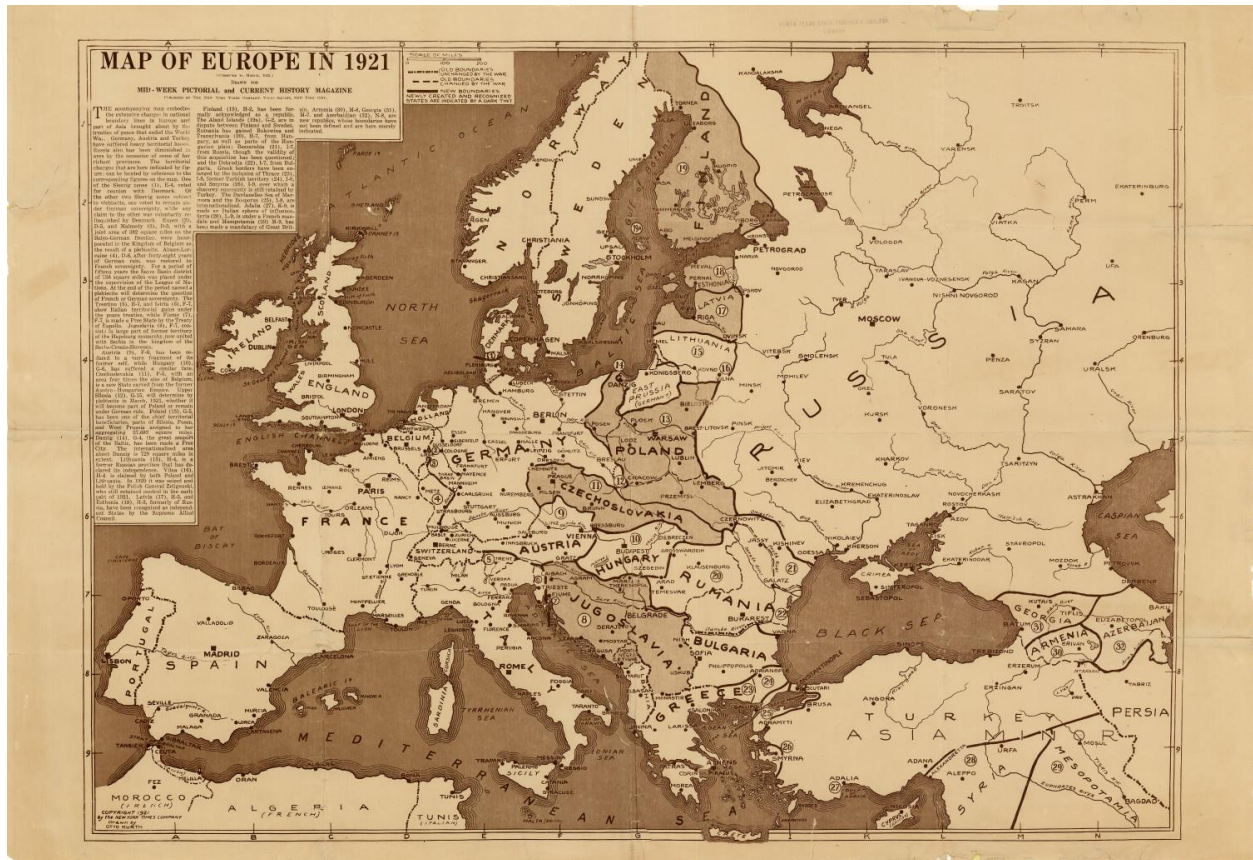
¹⁰³Jorg K Hoensch.. *A History of Modern Hungary: 1867-1986*. (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1988). ?

¹⁰⁴ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 57; Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, 90.

¹⁰⁵ Corneliu Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, (London: Sanctuary Press Ltd, 2019). 57

experience of organizing this group led to the successes of the Legionary movement in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Codreanu most likely took the skills that applied to recruiting for this organization, and modeled some of the practices of the LAM after what worked for the Mihail Kogalniceanu. Despite the fact that the Russian Revolution was less immediately dangerous for the generations of students who joined the LAM during the height of its power, the fact was that the Soviet Union was still a nation sitting on the border of Romania, practicing a social order that advocated for the destruction of what many Romanians held dear. It is also important to note that Bessarabia only became a part of Romania in 1918, following an initiative proposed by Romania to protect it from Bolshevism in early 1918.¹⁰⁶ With one province of Romania already being a large target for a potential irredentist desire among Bolsheviks, this situation made it very easy for a militia to spring up. Further, if this militia was the earliest ancestor of the Iron Guard, its disorganization would make more sense, as it was a small group of high schoolers being brought together to fight, without military training.

¹⁰⁶ Svetlana Suveica, "Between Science, Politics and Propaganda: Emmanuel de Martonne and the Debates on the Status of Bessarabia (1919-1920)," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 58, no. 4 (2017): 594.



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In the August of 1920, there was another war raging after the Great War ended the year prior. This war is known as the “Russo-Polish War”, the “Polish-Bolshevik War” and the “Soviet-Polish War”. The cause for the war can be summed up as the Red Army trying to take back land vacated by the German Empire, in order to establish Soviet Republics. Among these areas was Poland, and so, as a result of the disintegration of the Tsarist empire, the Red Army and Polish army came into conflict. However, even during the Red Army’s thus far successful invasion of Poland, the communists pushed for even more territory, by entering the Romanian territory of Bessarabia. Romania then issued an ultimatum, that if the Red Army did not withdraw within three

¹⁰⁷ Otto Kurth and New York Times Company, “B’Map of Europe in 1921.’;” Map, UNT Digital Library, b 1921, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc407/m1/1/>.

days, Romania would mobilize. While no military action actually occurred as a result of this, the mere necessity for a declaration of war so shortly after World War I spoke volumes.¹⁰⁸ Further, the next year, the Romanian government made an official military alliance with Poland for the event of the Soviets trying to invade Romania by way of Bessarabia again.¹⁰⁹ The event of a Soviet invasion was evidently on the minds of the leaders of Romania. Due to there being the constant enemy of a communist state on the horizon of Romania, it seems that the LAM had a good reason to be opposed to Communists. Because of the proximity and threat of a communist state, it would not be unthinkable that there would be agents for them working within Romania. Thus, the LAM was able to find a role by opposing the communists, which helped make the organization more appealing to traditionalists in Romania. The use of the communists as a political target may have also been helped by the fact that they were not an especially powerful political group at the time. In the 1928 elections, for example the Communist party was unable to achieve the necessary two percent of the vote to be represented in Parliament.¹¹⁰ While this may not seem significant, it made the Communist party an easy target. It both had reason to be detested, and was not politically strong enough to be able to easily dismiss the claims of the LAM. Therefore, the Communist party proved to be one of the LAM's safest targets to demonstrate to the public that the Legion was a worthwhile entity.

An excellent example of someone who was endeared to the idea of the anti-Communism and an anti-USSR foreign policy was Michel Sturdza, one time prince of Romania, and member of the Iron Guard. Though he was not a founder of the movement, he was highly devoted to it,

¹⁰⁸ "Current Events", *The Youth's Companion*, Aug. 19, 1920. Pg. 487

¹⁰⁹ "Roumania and Poland United as Red's Foes", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 28, 1921. Pg. 4

¹¹⁰ "Maniu Starts House Cleaning of Roumania", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 16, 1928. Pg. 23

even coming to face legal repercussions on account of his actions.¹¹¹ Sturdza claimed that the Soviet Union aimed to make a fake alliance, which he on more than one occasion refers to as a trojan horse, in order to situate itself to destroy the Western World.¹¹² Sturdza then went on to say that

The Legionary Movement represented the most powerful, the most irreducible opposition in Rumania to the Anonymous Powers that wanted to introduce to the Kremlin gang as comrades-in-arms in the drama of European Rivalries. The greater and more intimate grew the collusion between the Soviets and those powers...the greater grew also the campaign of slander and the persecutions of against the Movement and its chief, Codreanu.¹¹³

Here, two things about Sturdza are shown. First, that he perpetuated unsubstantiated claims that there was a conspiracy among the Romanian government to hand the nation over to the Soviet Union, and that any criticisms of the Iron Guard were a result of collusion with these powers. This shows that, even among the upper echelons of Romanian society, the Iron Guard had an appeal based on its devotion to being opposed to Communism. It seems that this was likely the main reason why Sturdza was involved with them in the first place. Taking Sturdza's belief in both the role and the power of the Iron Guard, it is not unreasonable to assume that there were others throughout Romania who likewise believed that the Iron Guard was the best hope as a guard against the Soviet Union and Communism.

The beginning of public acceptance of the Iron Guard was found in 1931, specifically in Neamt. The 1931 general elections marked the first successes of the Iron Guard in the democratic government of Romania, while operating under the name of the "Corneliu Codreanu Group", because the Iron Guard was officially banned by the government in 1931. The group was able to

¹¹¹ Michel Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe: Memoirs of Prince Michel Sturdza Former Foreign Minister of Rumania*, 1st ed. (Western Island Publishers, 1968), 225.

¹¹² Sturdza, 54.

¹¹³ Sturdza, 55.

secure a modest number of votes, but ultimately, not enough to influence parliament. In August, when a seat in the Romanian Parliament had opened up in the county of Neamt, the Iron Guard made its attempt to break into the sphere of national politics. However, due to the campaigning in the earlier general election, the Guard exhausted its resources for any further political ambitions. This did not deter Codreanu from marshalling his forces for the new election. With financial donations from one family who were members, the movement successfully registered onto the ballot. Rather than spending immense amounts of money on a traditional campaign, Codreanu turned out his one hundred campaigners, "...on foot, in boundless faith, though they knew no one, not what they would eat or where they would sleep from then on."¹¹⁴

During the campaign, the Guard took up an interesting, yet simple form of propaganda in order to persuade the peasants to their cause. Members of the legion would work on the farm, helping many potential voters perform their daily chores and tasks.¹¹⁵ This also provided the opportunity for the Guard to proselytize their beliefs directly to the people who would be voting.¹¹⁶ As a result of the campaign, the Guard won a surprising victory in the county, with 11,300 votes compared to the next highest count of 7,000 votes for the liberals. Codreanu attributed this victory to focused campaigning on the electoral districts that favored the Guard rather than splitting resources to deal with those districts that opposed him. Ultimately it was the sense of belonging and purpose that the nest and Guard gave to the young people of Romania that enabled this victory.

¹¹⁷ The campaigners were loyal enough to the cause to leave with meager belongings, and work

¹¹⁴ Codreanu, 378

¹¹⁵ Radu Ioanid, "Nicolae Iorga and Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 3 (1992): 467–92.

¹¹⁶ Raul Cârstocea, "Building a Fascist Romania: Voluntary Work Camps as Mobilisation Strategies of the Legionary Movement in Interwar Romania," *Fascism* 6, no. 2 (December 8, 2017): 163–95, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00602002>.

¹¹⁷ Codreanu, 379-80

alongside farmers in order to secure votes for the movement that had taken them in. The kind of belonging that the Guard offered would be especially comforting for young people who spent their formative years hearing that Romania would be a great power, a message which contrasted with the world and failing economy of their nation around them. Thus, this system was able to lure in the young people of the nation, and utilize them as extremely effective political tools.

Despite the success of this form of campaigning, this highlighted the decentralization of the LAM. In this particular instance, the LAM benefitted from it, in that the individual members were allowed to go out into the country side, and do all they could to convince the peasants there to vote for the party, but ultimately, this was not a thought-out plan. This was simply seizing an opportunity that presented itself, while the movement had little in the way of funds. Acting rashly, and without a concrete plan was a common thread throughout the history of the Iron Guard, and ultimately led to its downfall, when it went against a better organized and better armed adversary in the Romanian Army. Because events like the Neamt campaign of 1931 succeeded for the Legion, it is likely that the organizers did not see the need for more thought out, long term plan.

Another important factor to the public acceptance of the Iron Guard was how the upper echelons of society endorsed the anti-Semitism of the Guard. According to Yavetz, this important role is one of the elements that helped the iron Guard to grow the way that it did. Before 1935, the Iron Guard did not have a very pleasant reputation. Indeed, Yavetz claims that many of the members of the Guard were in fact embarrassed and afraid to openly wear their green shirts outdoors. However, between 1935 and 1937, many prominent individuals spoke in favor of the Iron Guard, and more specifically the idealism of the young people who were joining. Some of these were politicians, however others were people as influential as King himself and the Patriarch

of the Romanian Orthodox Church.¹¹⁸ With such support being specifically aimed at the youth joining the Iron Guard, it is no wonder that there was positive growth for the organization.

The LAM was never particularly accepted by the government of Romania, although it did have a substantial appeal to the populace. The story of the simultaneous welcoming of the LAM by the people of Romania can be seen through its turbulent relationship with the police, and its extreme success in the election of 1937. The Legion frequently ran afoul of the police of Romania, due in no small part to its thuggish nature and attempts to silence enemies. As the incident in Galatz shows, Legionaries were usually not afraid to engage in physical resistance to the police whenever the two clashed, nor were the police afraid to respond in kind. Throughout most of its existence the Legion was considered to be a terrorist group, rather than an official party with the same prestige as the Liberal or Peasant parties.¹¹⁹ Given the methods that the Legion used, this was not an unreasonable assumption to make. According to the Times of London, in 1938 there was allegedly a spree of death threats against multiple government officials. As the publication comes from London from just before the outbreak of war, any pro-Nazi groups, like the LAM, are likely to be viewed with more suspicion, though perhaps not with the hostility that may have been seen a few years later. Regardless, the alleged author of these threats wrote, “You will be assassinated between January 1 and 15 because you oppose the Nationalist Movement.”¹²⁰ With this type of reaction to simply opposing the movement, it makes sense why the police would be opposed to the Legion whenever it made waves in Romanian society.

¹¹⁸ Yavetz, “An Eyewitness Note,” 604.

¹¹⁹ Stoica, 117

¹²⁰ From Our Correspondent, “Iron Guard Murder Threats,” *The Times*, November 30, 1938, The Times Digital Archive.

However, the Romanian public did not share this same antipathy to the LAM. The Legion's success in the 1937 elections mattered little in the long run, as King Carol II decided to choose a prime minister from a much smaller party, hinting to the first of a number of dictatorships.¹²¹ From here, Carol continued governmental animosity with the Iron Guard. This tension was increased when King Carol and his minister of the interior, Armand Calinescu, had Codreanu and other members of the Iron Guard arrested.¹²² Rather than allowing a trial, he and several other members of the Iron Guard were arrested, and then executed in a staged prison escape attempt.¹²³ While this may have been an attempt to destroy the leadership of the Iron Guard, this was a severe miscalculation, as the movement did not take kindly to their almost deified founder and leader being executed. As a result of Codreanu's charisma, and the cult of personality that was built around him, his death only made him a martyr, and likely increased the LAM's resolve.¹²⁴ Emil Cioran, as cited by Stoica, wrote

In a nation of slaves, the Captain brought the concept of honor and in a spineless crowd he gave us pride. One man's faith gave birth to a world that is deeper than the ancient Greek tragedy or Shakespeare. With the exception of Jesus no dead man was that present among the living. From this moment on, our country will be ruled by a dead man. This dead man has spread a perfume of eternity over our human misery, and brought back the sky over Romania.

In the Legion's eyes, the assassination of Codreanu brought him onto the level of Christ, the very man that the LAM worshipped. So, by taking such a hardline stance against the Legion, the Romanian government merely provoked and incensed the already fanatical LAM.

¹²¹ Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*. 174.

¹²² From Our Correspondent, "14 Iron Guards Shot", *Times of London*, Dec. 1 1938. Pg.14

¹²³ Stoica, 134

¹²⁴ Stoica, 118

This provocation may explain one of the final notable acts of terrorism the LAM engaged in against the government itself. In September of 1939, shortly after the onset of World War II, the Iron Guard took its revenge on Calinescu, now prime minister. According to the *Times of London*, the prime minister was assassinated by six young men of the Iron Guard, as he was travelling in Bucharest. Following this incident, the men stormed a broadcasting center and announced over the radio what happened, and that the Legion was responsible for it.¹²⁵ This episode shows that the LAM did not respond to governmental pressure to stand down without a fight. By killing the prime minister, the Iron Guard tried to show that nothing would stand in their way from achieving power and bringing about the changes they deemed were necessary for society. This assassination ultimately led to as many as 400 members of the Iron Guard being executed, according to Mihail Sebastian, a contemporary Jewish writer.¹²⁶ However, the Iron Guard remained extant until 1940, when Carol allowed General Ion Antonescu, an officer with connections to both the LAM and the Nazi party of Germany, to form a government.¹²⁷ It was under this government that Romania entered World War II on the side of Nazi Germany, to respect Nazi wishes.

Under Antonescu, Carol was exiled on September 5th, 1940, and his son, Mihai, granted Antonescu complete power over the state on the next day.¹²⁸ Under this regime, the Legionary movement found the closest that it ever had to governmental acceptance. Antonescu and the new leader of the Legionary movement, Horia Sima, established a Legionary state. Sima became deputy prime minister, and five other legionaries held ministerial posts.¹²⁹ Under this government

¹²⁵ "Murder Of Rumanian Prime Minister," *The Times*, September 22, 1939, The Times Digital Archive.

¹²⁶ Mihail Sebastian, *Journal 1935–1944: The Fascist Years* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 240.

¹²⁷ Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*.

¹²⁸ Hitchins.

¹²⁹ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 222.

the Legion took control of broadcasting and publication, resulting in daily propaganda on the radio and in newspapers. Antonescu even called for a day of prayer throughout Bucharest, and ordered people to stay on their knees and pray.¹³⁰ For once, the Legion was finally in a position of true power, and no longer needed to worry about law enforcement clashes. In fact, with their newfound power, Legionaries took the opportunity to engage in police brutality and abuse their power. Jews were the primary victims of these abuses, although anyone who was not enthusiastic enough about the Legion's power were subject to beatings.¹³¹ This period of Legionary ascendancy was extremely short lived, due to the excessive violence. Fissures began to form between members of the Legion, as some found Sima repugnant, and Legionaries began assassinating political prisoners in their cells, and even murdered two politicians in their homes.¹³²

On January 21st, 1941, in possibly the height of the movement's disorganization and political ineptitude, the Legionaries broke with the greater power of the Romanian government. *The London Times* argues that this break was caused by Antonescu's close relations with Germany, and that the Iron Guard wanted to remain independent.¹³³ While this is certainly a possible motive, given the movement was largely nationalistic in nature and would therefore prefer a greater amount of autonomy from an ally, it is also possible that this press piece may be more likely to attribute this to anti-Nazism. Another interpretation comes from Mihail Sebastian, who recalls a student manifesto calling for the removal of the head of the state police, reinstatement of the legionary

¹³⁰ Clark, 222–23.

¹³¹ Clark, 224.

¹³² Clark, 227–28.

¹³³ "The Rumanian Revolt," *The Times*, January 29, 1941, The Times Digital Archive; From Our Diplomatic Correspondent, "The Rumanian Disorders," *The Times*, January 24, 1941, The Times Digital Archive.

interior minister who was allegedly removed earlier that day, and a government comprised solely of legionaries. This version of events seems more likely, as the revolt was recorded as being highly disorganized, with some pockets of Legionaries in the country unaware of what was happening, and in some locations was represented by peaceful demonstration.¹³⁴ Regardless of which version of events are true, thousands of legionaries in Bucharest began to demonstrate against the Antonescu government.¹³⁵ After about three days of fighting, the Legionaries in Bucharest were defeated, and the others throughout the countryside quickly followed suit, with Sebastian even remembering it on the 24th as “a minor event, which fortunately had no consequences”.¹³⁶ The end of the rebellion, for the most part, led to the death of the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Afterwards, about 400 of the Legionaries fled to Germany where they were hidden away in concentration camps, but were not forced into labor. They held a variety of jobs, and unlike the prisoners in the camps were allowed to write on their ideology. Some members of the Legion even worked with the Antonescu government, but by and large the power of the Legion was broken.¹³⁷

Throughout its time in history, the Iron Guard was never fully accepted by society or the government. That is not to say that the Guard did not have significant support from some sectors of society. It indeed had a fairly substantial voter base, that in some cases proved loyal to the point of shedding blood. It was through the Legion’s hardline stance on Communism, the Soviet Union, and the Jews that it was able to attain this loyal voting base. By blaming the Jews for all that was

¹³⁴ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 230.

¹³⁵ Sebastian, *Journal 1935–1944*, 305.

¹³⁶ Sebastian, 309–10; “The Rumanian Revolt.”

¹³⁷ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 232.

wrong with Romania, the LAM was ultimately alienating a sizeable portion of the population, but was also welcoming another large part. Additionally, by giving people, especially the young men who felt that they were not getting the control of the nation they deserved, a target to blame, the Legion found a ready new supply of voters. By giving people a way to confront a perceived communist threat, it provided safety to those who were frightened by such cultural changes. However, the fact that the LAM rarely took a subtle and peaceful approach to trying to change what it wanted to change, and the fact that sometimes some parts of the Legion did not know what the rest were doing, was ultimately its downfall. Perhaps receiving blow after blow from police in small numbers may have helped the Legion in appearing as martyrs, but when mobilized in mass against the military, the Legion, and the youth that it attracted, were unable to endure.

CONCLUSION:

COMPARISONS

The Legion of the Archangel Michael (LAM) and its paramilitary wing, the Iron Guard, did not exist in a vacuum. The Nazis and Italian fascists were both more successful, and are more well-known even into the modern day. Therefore, it is useful to look at the LAM and how it succeeded or failed in comparison to these more infamous and successful movements. They are all united in the idea of their home nation being something to save and protect, and for a hatred of Jews. Additionally, in order to survive into the future, all three devised youth movements to carry the momentum of the party forward. However, in each of these areas, the fascists do not necessarily copy each other. Instead, each movement had its own unique outlook on the situation. In short, while the Italians and Germans were interested in the expansion of the nation, structured opposition to human rights, and preparing the youth for war, the LAM was concerned with religion, maintaining Romania, and integrating the youth into the wider political movement. Finally, the LAM's disorganization and orientation toward small-scale violence led to its destruction by a domestic foe, not an invasion of a foreign army.

To understand the differences between the Fascist organizations, it will be important to have a basic understanding of these parties in isolation. The Nazi party took power in Germany in

1933, and shortly thereafter formed the Hitler Youth.¹³⁸ The Nazi party was infamous for its treatment of the Jewish people, as a means to recover from perceived problems following World War I. This general sense of anti-Semitism was not an invention of the Nazis, but was present for a long period of time, even being used to exclude the Jews from so-called “battle communities” during World War I. These communities were theoretical groups formed by soldiers in a time of war, under the idea that the stress of combat would form the unit into a closer feeling of connection than just through being employed by the same organization, but having an almost familial bond. While in many cases these bonds did not form anyway, the German military during World War I actively encouraged the distancing of Jews from these communities. The German military was frightened by the growing number of working-class recruits who may have had socialist tendencies, so to find a scapegoat to shuffle off any blame for the war effort, the German military established a commission to investigate an alleged underrepresentation of the Jews.¹³⁹ This attempt to make it appear that the Jews were unwilling to fight for the country therefore likely made it significantly easier for people to accept anti-Semitic propaganda should it arise. After all, in their minds, they had precedent for this behavior. Thus, with this lie already in place, the Nazis had an easier time blaming Jews for the failures of Germany. In this setting, it is possible that the German public viewed these acts as just punishments against the Jews. This makes the Nazi emphasis on race an easier argument to make. If the race of the Jews were unwilling to fight for the country they lived in, but the Germans were, it would make sense to view the Germans as superior. In this

¹³⁸ Michael H. Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, United States: Harvard University Press, 2006), 12, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/providence/detail.action?docID=3300302>.

¹³⁹ Omer Bartov, “Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust,” *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): 776–77, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2650572>.

line of thought, it is the Germans who are risking their lives for a higher cause than self-preservation. Each lie about the Jews was a calculated step to reinforce the Nazi teachings of race.

The Nazis did not stop at only having anti-Semitic propaganda and rhetoric, but took steps to remove rights from the Jewish people of Germany. Nearly immediately after attaining power in Germany in 1933, the Nazis stripped away the abilities of the Jews to be lawyers or serve on juries, and by 1935 they were officially second-class citizens.¹⁴⁰ This is in sharp contrast to the anti-Semitism of Romania, where disorganized mob violence was the most popular overt form of expression. This was because the Nazi party was more organized, had more of a plan to deal with what they perceived as a Jewish problem, and knew how to use political office to their ends. Modern historian Timothy Snyder supports this claim, writing, “In everyday life, measures directed against Jews forced Germans to think about Jews, to notice Jews, and to define themselves as ‘Aryans,’ as members of a group that excluded the Jews with whom they shared the country.”¹⁴¹ This speaks to organization from the top down to change how people look at Jews and try to force the people to see them as an enemy. In comparison, than the Iron Guard’s the Iron Guard took a bottom up approach to try and preach anti-Semitism to the masses. Then it is through this perspective that the Hitler Youth leaders must have molded by the children of Germany. Included in this program was the fact that the instructors of the Hitler Youth taught children the Nazi ideology of the superiority of the Aryan race from an early age. So, for the youth, there was a two-pronged assault on the perception of Jews during the Third Reich. With the top-down measures of trying to push Jews out, and the bottom-up education that the Jews are inferior, the result was a far

¹⁴⁰ Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, Reprint edition (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2016), 43.

¹⁴¹ Snyder, 43.

more powerful push against the Jews than the mix of more passive preaching, and extreme violence of the Iron Guard. The result of this difference was a more organized form of anti-Semitism than was found in Romania. This organization to anti-Semitism made for a more sanitized form of anti-Semitism for the public, as the German citizens did not need to see all the horrors of a pogrom. In the beginning of the Second World War, the German forces engaged in the Eastern theater practiced forms of mass executions.¹⁴² Instead, later on the government was entrusted with the job of removing Jews. This happened not only in the infamous concentration camps, but also by using the local authorities of the conquered territories. For example, in Estonia, the vast majority of the Jews who stayed were killed by the Secret Police, under the watchful eyes of the German authorities.¹⁴³ This was because the practice of using government resources to isolate, group and kill enemies of the state while out of the public eye of the German civilians, was both more efficient and more palatable for the public of these states. By doing this, the Nazis were able to keep public support for expansion and persecution, by obscuring the truth of their actions.

If the Nazis learned how to shift where Jews were taken to be killed, and how readily available they were to be seen by the public, then the LAM never learned this lesson. For example, in the Bucharest pogrom of 1941, during the Legionary Rebellion, the Legionaries did not make any attempt to keep the 2,000 Jews that they abducted, tortured and killed out of public sight. Rather, they marched into the two largest Jewish neighborhoods, rounded up Jews and brought them to be killed. In fact, some were even held in the headquarters of a subdivision of the LAM.¹⁴⁴ Further, rather than take over businesses after Jews were removed, many of the Legionaries

¹⁴² Snyder, 179.

¹⁴³ Snyder, 180.

¹⁴⁴ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 231.

decided to simply destroy buildings. In the same pogrom, over 1,000 buildings were destroyed by the brute force of the Legionaries.¹⁴⁵ Once again, this is in contrast to the method of the Nazis, who after Kristallnacht switched to a less immediately visible method to persecute in Germany. The extent of the damage to the psyche of even non-Jewish citizens of Romania was demonstrated in doubts to the stability of the government of Romania. According to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, in December of 1933, that Foreign Minister Nicholas Titulescu complained, “that the existence and the activities of the Iron Guard were shaking confidence in the Roumanian government and making his task as Foreign Minister exceedingly difficult.”¹⁴⁶ This indicates a very real feeling of revulsion in some segments of the Romanian populace, if faith in the entire government is being shaken due to the activities of a single domestic group. It also indicates that the anti-Semitism of the Iron Guard negatively affected the international relations of Romania as a whole, making other nations wary of dealing with a nation with such a blatant problem.

The youth movements of these organizations were radically different. In the Nazi regime, the Hitler Youth had a significant emphasis on preparation for war. In many ways the Hitler Youth were a form of preliminary military training. These ways included riflery training, roll calls with military trappings, and even practicing war games among teenagers in German society.¹⁴⁷ By introducing the youth to these practices, discipline and the basics of marksmanship, not only would these soldiers be more suited for the battlefield than otherwise, but also allowed a greater volume of soldiers to be turned out during wartime than would be possible in an ordinary matter. This was

¹⁴⁵ Clark, 231.

¹⁴⁶ “Bucharest Is Planning to Put Foot Down on Anti-Semitic Iron Guard,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (blog), December 11, 1933, <https://www.jta.org/1933/12/11/archive/bucharest-is-planning-to-put-foot-down-on-anti-semitic-iron-guard>.

¹⁴⁷ Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 29.

especially true following the March 1935 introduction of universal conscription.¹⁴⁸ Not only would more members of the future generations of the German public be members of the Nazi party due to the indoctrination of the youth, but they would also be career soldiers, knowledgeable about the life of the common soldier in a militarized culture. This would likely cause a cycle of increasing militarism and competence, as the generations of Nazi party members that embraced the teachings of the Hitler Youth take positions in the government understand war. Having a cadre of experienced officers in government, who happen to also be zealots in the name of a German first political philosophy would lead to a German state in a prime position to wage war and expand. At the core of this cycle, is the fact that the beginnings of military prowess and expansion are placed on the shoulders of pliable youth.

Likewise, the Italian model of fascism saw the great need for a youth movement. It saw the youth as the future, and naturally attracted them.¹⁴⁹ The very first of what could be considered the youth movements of Fascist Italy was the Student Vanguard (AS), which was an organization aimed at uniting high school and university students in promoting fascism, and discouraging student organizations of rivals like Socialists and Catholics.¹⁵⁰ Instead, Mussolini had the AS reorganize in the early 1920's into the Fascist University Groups (GUF) and *Avanguardie Giovanili Fasciste* (AGF), in order to be under direct party control and indoctrinate the youth in a more uniform and organized way.¹⁵¹ Under the fascist party's reign, an additional segment, the

¹⁴⁸ Kater, 29.

¹⁴⁹ Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Wisconsin, United States: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 27, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/providence/detail.action?docID=4417140>.

¹⁵⁰ Ponzio, 28.

¹⁵¹ Ponzio, 31.

Balilla Groups, was formed, for the sake of incorporating young children into the indoctrination of the masses in Italy.¹⁵² In 1926 however, all youth movements were incorporated into the Opera Nazionale Balillo (ONB).¹⁵³ Part of the curriculum of the ONB were marches, camping trips, first aid training, and even military drills with muskets and bayonets.¹⁵⁴ Between the aggressive government and the inclusion of these practices, it is clear that the ONB was intended to prepare the young Italians for foreign wars of expansion. Very similarly to Germany's Hitler Youth, these paramilitary training programs would be part of a vicious cycle allowing for the gradual militarization of the youth.

The use of these youth movements contrast with the Iron Guard, in that the movement primarily used the youth for the sake of advancing its domestic political agenda. While it is true that the Iron Guard eventually involved its members in paramilitary training, the primary reason for this training was not for foreign wars of expansion such as in Italy and Germany. The paramilitary "death teams", were used for domestic agitation, such as the undermining of the current political order, to grow the strength of the Legion in Romanian society. Other duties of these death teams were attacking civilians and inciting violent protests.¹⁵⁵ This is a critical difference between the Nazi Hitler Youth, in that the Hitler Youth was concerned taking the fight to the enemy beyond the borders of the nation, while the young members of the LAM were not. Instead, the paramilitary aspirations of the Romanian fascists were directed to their fellow Romanians. Therefore, the LAM was more concerned with securing the cultural mores of Romania

¹⁵² Ponzio, 34.

¹⁵³ Ponzio, 36.

¹⁵⁴ Ponzio, 36.

¹⁵⁵ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 98–100.

than creating an empire. This also speaks to the experiences of the rest of the Romanian fascist movement. Most of the efforts of the Iron Guard were more internally focused. Likely due to the fact that the Romanians lost no territory during World War I, Codreanu did not speak of any irredentist tendencies, and instead focused on creating a new type of Romanian.¹⁵⁶ This indicates a low priority for expansionism and foreign policy. With this in mind, it makes perfect sense that the Iron Guard was relatively unconcerned with preparing the youth for an “unavoidable war”.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the Romanian fascist group was not quite a dire threat to their surrounding neighbors, but proved to be one to their own country. This shows that even without a direct desire for military conquest or highly organized, industrialized murder, fascist groups can cause immense damage to a country and its people.

A similar group to the Iron Guard however, were the German *Sturmabteilung* (assault battalions), alternately known as the SA or the brownshirts. Like the Iron Guard, the SA frequently engaged in hooligan violence, with a political backing. An example of this violence, was when the SA would start fights over relatively unimportant events, such as auctions, so long as Jews were involved.¹⁵⁸ Another comparison point between the two, is the fall of the SA, as after the Nazis came to power, the SA became a liability due to their indiscipline and violence.¹⁵⁹ In 1934, during the “Night of the Long Knives”, much of the SA were purged by the Germans, in circumstances

¹⁵⁶ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 292.

¹⁵⁷ Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 30.

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Denis Lepage, *Hitler's Stormtroopers: The SA, The Nazis' Brownshirts, 1922–1945* (Barnsley, United Kingdom: Pen & Sword Books, 2016), 118, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/providence/detail.action?docID=4760883>.

¹⁵⁹ Lepage, 216.

very similar to what Sturdza claims happened during the Legionaries' Revolt.¹⁶⁰ According to Sturdza's account, the Legionary Revolt was fabricated by Antonescu, in much the same way as the SA purge appears to have been performed. Regardless of the veracity of Sturdza's claims, the result was the same: a junior partner in a dictatorship was liquidated after proving itself to violent and undisciplined for the good of the regime.

Perhaps the most significant difference in the Legionary Movement between the German and Italian Fascists, was the use of Christianity. From the very instant that the Movement was founded, it was entwined with the Romanian Orthodox branch of Christianity. This can be viewed easily by Codreanu's writing, "Moving forward in a united front, with the help of God and the Romanian people's justice, no matter what destiny awaited us—that of being vanquished or that of death—it would be a blessed one and it would bear fruit for our people."¹⁶¹ This passage speaks of a uniquely religious form of conviction. Rather than being focused only on the racial aspect of the nation, the religious is also called into service of the Legionaries. They believed that it was this presence of God that would make their movement great, and even carry a form of acceptance should the movement be defeated. This is unique from the other two mainstream fascisms, which were more concerned with the idea of race and the nation, rather than religion.

An additional factor to the use of Christianity as a part of the movement, was the relatively recent origin of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and its intense nationalism was likely a factor in the forming of the LAM as a movement. It was not until 1918 that Romania, in the form that the Iron Guard imagined it as, came to be. Instead, Romania was a small territory, missing some

¹⁶⁰ Lepage, 243; Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe: Memoirs of Prince Michel Sturdza Former Foreign Minister of Rumania*, 211.

¹⁶¹ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 284.

regions of ethnic Romanians. Further, many members of the new territories did not necessarily see themselves as Romanian, so the state needed a mechanism to incorporate the new territories ideologically into the new nation. Because of this, the state turned to religion to use as a unifying factor.¹⁶² Faith was to become the mortar by which the Romanian nation was built. This united well with the LAM, as many, not limited to the LAM believed that being a good Romanian required adherence to the Orthodox faith. According to Stan and Turcescu, the Romanian philosopher Nae Ionescu even said, “Roman Catholics and Jews could be ‘good Romanians’, that is, dutiful citizens of the modern Romanian State, but they could never be members of the Romanian nation, which he defined along ethnic lines.”¹⁶³ In this way, any nationalists had an easy way of excluding others who were not deemed “Romanian enough”. The fact that this was a trait that was common among many of the Romanian Orthodox faithful means that the LAM would not have even needed to work especially hard to use this as rhetoric, as it would likely have already been widely spread.

While religion was not the mainstay of Nazism or Italian fascism, it is not to say that they completely neglected religion in their movements. The Legionary movement was defined by its religious element, there was no Legion of the Archangel Michael without Christianity. However, while the Nazis used some rhetoric of being shaped by Protestantism, it was not entwined with the movement.¹⁶⁴ This is compared to the contemporary writer Alfons Wild, who believed that the Nazis were in no way related to Christianity. In comparing *Mein Kampf* to the Bible, Wild declares

¹⁶² Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, “The Romanian Orthodox Church: From Nation-Building Actor to State Partner,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 25, no. 2 (2012): 405–6.

¹⁶³ Stan and Turcescu, 406.

¹⁶⁴ Richard Steigmann-Gall (2007) The Nazis’ ‘Positive Christianity’: a Variety of ‘Clerical Fascism’?, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 8:2, 318

that the Nazi movement was not in fact a Christian one. He refers to it as “heathen through and through. It is not the case that the heathen worldview is just a secondary element... To the contrary, it is the source of many errors and distorts the few truths to be found in Hitler’s thinking. Thus love of the Fatherland is transformed into idolization of one’s own nation.”¹⁶⁵ Here, it is seen that fundamentally, Nazism is a completely different school of thought from Christianity. It may share some similar attributes, but ultimately these are not the crucial elements of either. Instead, the Nazis believed in the “gospel of race”.¹⁶⁶ This small statement shows the difference of the driving force of the two movements. Whereas Nazism was most concerned with the Aryan race and their belief of superiority, the LAM believed that it was faith in Christ and their mission to deliver Romania from corruption and Judaism. While it is true that the LAM believed in the superiority of the Romanian race, it does not appear to be to the same way that the Nazis did. The LAM was still concerned with race, but almost as if the Romanians were the new chosen people of God. Therefore, it seems as though the LAM was more concerned with the matters of the spiritual than they were with more concrete issues such as race.

Likewise, the Italian fascists, while by no means completely atheistic, were less concerned with Christianity than the LAM was. The Italian fascists were indeed motivated by a spiritual dimension, not just by the material ideas of nation and race. However, the spirituality is more focused on the idea of the spirit of the nation, rather than religion. For example, in a speech, Mussolini once said, “For us the nation is not just territory, but something spiritual. There are states which have had immense territories and which have left no trace in human history. It is not a question of size, because there have been minute, microscopic States in history that have

¹⁶⁵ Alfons Wild, “Hitler and Christianity,” in *Nazism*, 2000, 41.

¹⁶⁶ Wild, 41.

bequeathed memorable, immortal specimens of art and philosophy. The greatness of the nation is the totality of these qualities, of all these conditions.”¹⁶⁷ Here, there is a similar kind of spiritual ideal of the LAM, however, bent toward the nation before any kind of religion. Mussolini believes that the will of the nation is the ineffable source of power that will lead the fascists to victory over their foes, rather than, for example, the intervention of God. While this is a small difference between the two, it is a distinct difference. Like how Alfons Wild wrote, the Italians in favor of the fascists were becoming involved with idolizing and worshipping their nation, rather than a god. That is not to say that there was no connection between Fascism and Christianity in Italy. In fact, many members of the Catholic Church participated in Fascism, and even worked with Mussolini in public events, such as the interring of “martyrs” in churches.¹⁶⁸ The main distinction here though, is that religion was an “add-on” to Italian Fascism, while in the LAM, it was a central experience. This means that fundamentally, there is a difference between the Fascism of Italy and the Fascism of Romania, despite having many similar motifs.

For these reasons, it is reasonable to compare the LAM with the Falangist movement of Spain. This movement was a highly conservative movement in Spain in the mid 1930’s, that with the help of Francisco Franco and the Fascist powers of Europe, took power following the Spanish Civil War of 1937. The Falangist movement had a number of distinct similarities to the LAM, not the least of which was the role of Christianity. Bailey W. Diffie, writing during World War II, quotes Jose Pemartin, as saying “The total Catholicization of Spain cannot be achieved without a decided and opportune fight against the anti-Catholic sects: Freemasonry and Judaism...Freemasonry and Judaism are the two great and powerful enemies of the Fascisms, of

¹⁶⁷ Benito Mussolini, “Fascism’s Myth: The Nation,” in *Fascism*, 1st ed. (Oxford, New York, 2009).

¹⁶⁸ Walter L. Adamson, “Fascism and Political Religion in Italy: A Reassessment,” *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 1 (2014): 59.

the regeneration of Europe, and even more specifically, of the regeneration of Spain in the sense of the total Catholicization we envision.”¹⁶⁹ Here, Catholicism and Fascism are treated as almost being the same. In Spain, one cannot thrive without the other anymore. The Falangists believed that nothing good could come of modern society, and that Fascism, a regression to the glory of the medieval era, was what was needed.¹⁷⁰ Further, Diffie also claims that Franco attributed his movement to the teachings of the Catholic Church.¹⁷¹

If the case is that the Falangist government, was Fascist and heavily Christian, why then would the modern far right be interested in the LAM? After all, the Falangist movement was not only able to come to power, but retain it until 1975, outliving even its continental cousins in Germany and Italy. There are two possibilities for a far right activist to favor the LAM to the Falangist movement. The first is the history of anti-Catholicism being linked with white supremacy in the United States. For a long period of time, groups, such as the KKK, have seen Catholics as a group to keep out of America.¹⁷² One of the specific arguments used was that the Catholics had two allegiances, one to country and one to the pope.¹⁷³ In a nation like Spain, where Catholicism has been the predominant religion for centuries, this was not a problem, as being Catholic can be syncretized to being Spanish. However, in a nation like the United States, where this history as a predominant religion is not present, it is much harder to find Catholicism to be a unifying factor. Thus, the LAM, which was supported by the nationalistic Romanian Orthodox Church, becomes

¹⁶⁹ Bailey W. Diffie, “The Ideology of Hispanidad,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 23, no. 3 (1943): 466, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2508538>.

¹⁷⁰ Diffie, 459.

¹⁷¹ Diffie, 468.

¹⁷² David J. Goldberg, “Unmasking the Ku Klux Klan: The Northern Movement against the KKK, 1920-1925,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 15, no. 4 (1996): 33–34.

¹⁷³ Goldberg, 34.

more appealing. It is not likely for Romanian Orthodoxy to be the specific religion used in the United States, but a denomination that is similarly nationalistic would work in much the same way. Believing that one nation did something in the right way does not preclude one from being a nationalist of another. The same could be said for a nationalist denomination. Secondly, it is possible that the reason why the LAM may be attractive to the modern far right is that the background of the LAM was more against established authority. While the Falangist regime was certainly opposed to the government of its day, its most well-known leader was Francisco Franco, a general of the Spanish army. On the other hand, the LAM was founded and led by a civilian, Codreanu. This could serve as an inspiration to someone who may not have been permitted in the American military, or simply did not want to serve. The belief in opposition to the established authority is eerily similar in the LAM as it was to the modern far right.

A critical difference in the LAM compared to Nazism and Italian Fascism, was that the LAM never gained full control over its government. This largely was because of the Legion's inability to take advantage of political power, their focus on the small scale in Romanian society, and antagonism toward the established government. This antagonism led them to renounce their opportunity to become the sole rulers of Romania, as King Carol, in June of 1940, was looking for an ultranationalist partner after being forced to hand over Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina to the Soviet Union. The King needed to form a new government, likely to regain public support after a significant portion of the country to their most dangerous neighbors. Among the nationalists selected were three Legionaries, including Codreanu's successor, Horia Sima. However, despite having ministerial roles in the government of Romania, they decided to resign rather than work with the king. It was not long before the king was overthrown by Antonescu for ceding more

territory to Hungary.¹⁷⁴ While it is possible that this decision may have bought the LAM a few more months, it is equally possible that the exchange would not have happened if the Legionaries were willing to work with King Carol for the sake of advancing their goal. Zealots like the LAM would be unlikely to freely relinquish control of territory to a neighbor, especially one that was not as powerful as Stalin's USSR at this point. Essentially, rather than working to subvert the royal regime and take power when the opportunity presented it, the Legionaries decided to be romantic martyrs and resign instead. Once members of the LAM decided to take up arms against the military regime for the dismissal of a single minister, it became clear that the political future for the Iron Guard was bleak.¹⁷⁵

By virtue of the fact that all four are fascists, it is to be expected to find many similarities between the LAM, Italian Fascists, Falangists and the Nazis. However, this is not to say that the four movements were simply copies of one another, with the only differences being where and to what race they catered to. Rather, the LAM can be distinguished from the other movements in the form of its integrated youth movement, attachment to Christianity, and its disorganization and lack of political savvy. The LAM represented a very different form of Fascism than that of the Italians and Germans. Focusing largely on religion, it endears itself more toward the traditionalists, making it more likely to be embraced by the older members of society, while engaging the youth to tap into a steady supply of new recruits. This seeming contradiction was likely responsible for its limited success, while the incompetence in politicking was the seed of its own downfall.

The LAM was at its core, a Christian fascist movement. This combination of spiritual and national elements is one that is echoed in the present day as of the writing of this project in 2021.

¹⁷⁴ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 221–22.

¹⁷⁵ Sebastian, *Journal 1935–1944*, 305.

Throughout the history of the United States, many white nationalist movements have used Christianity as part of their platform to define what makes someone an American.¹⁷⁶ In this way, there are resonant themes between the LAM and American groups, such as the KKK and any offshoots. Therefore, a modern far-right activist may be attracted to using the LAM as a model for how to behave politically. Due to the connection between white supremacy and Christianity in the United States, the connection between the nationalist Romanian Orthodox Church becomes familiar and something that is easily emulated. Because of this connection, the LAM was something of a role model. Due to being one of the largest fascist groups in Europe, and coming from very humble beginnings, the LAM is somehow a symbol of hope for the neofascist, showing how much of an effect a group can have with little more than the will to change the nation through violence.

The LAM was fundamentally a disorganized movement. The LAM, while willing to work in Parliament did not primarily seek to use organized, traditional political methods to achieve their goals. Their primary method of shaping the political theater of Romania was through chaotic violence, be it the assassinations of Ion Duca and Armand Calinescu, or the Legionary Revolt in Bucharest.¹⁷⁷ The fact that the Nest system prevented the level of organization that would be necessary for a larger level political force in parliament is not an accident.¹⁷⁸ With the organization of the movement being so centered on the ambitions of members, who were stoked by the emotional and irrational rhetoric of the LAM, it is no wonder why they so commonly resorted to

¹⁷⁶ Laura Pulido et al., “Environmental Deregulation, Spectacular Racism, and White Nationalism in the Trump Era,” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 109, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1549473>; Goldberg, “Unmasking the Ku Klux Klan,” 35.

¹⁷⁷ “Slays Premier of Rumania: Nazi Assassin Seized”; “The Rumanian Revolt.”

¹⁷⁸ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, 320.

violence. This was the easiest way to try and exert their power on the world. Likewise in modern far-right activists, as can be seen in the January 6th, 2021 US Capitol attack, many are easily incited to violence with limited organization or planning. This is not to say that all members of the mob were not planning on attacking, but there was a large number that were quick to be incited to violence. In this way, if the far-right were to truly be this quick to incite to violence, then the LAM would be an ideal candidate to emulate. With a similar temperament, it is reasonable that such a group would seek to take inspiration from the LAM.

The LAM, or the Iron Guard, was a highly religiously inspired form of fascism. It drew many supporters in its day in the limelight of Romanian politics. Unfortunately, it appears that the appeal for such a hateful group still exists today. While the Legion itself may be consigned to the past, for now the politically active must be careful in attempting to deal with descendants and those inspired by the Iron Guard.

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