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POLITICAL AND ideological nationalism in Romania, as in other Central and East European countries, was of particular importance being singular in character and dominating political and cultural life for a considerable period. Following World War I, Romanian nationalism underwent a differential evolution in several distinctive directions. The focus of this book, however, is confined to the essential and specific element of antisemitism within Romanian nationalism and its considerable repercussions on various frameworks of Romanian society.

The decade to which I have devoted this study was, from this point of view, of overwhelming importance. In this period Romanian society was transformed from a vulnerable democracy to a right-wing dictatorship, passing through a significant fascist phase, albeit in specifically Romanian forms. These dramatic changes were linked to a head-on confrontation between political ideas and an uncommon politicization of intellectual life. The ideological debates concerning the destiny and calling of Romania and its culture, in relation or opposition to Western civilization, were, in these years, transposed into political terms and grounded in ethnicity and religion.

The discussion surrounding the principal ideological and cultural questions, such as national fulfillment through culture, as well as the ever-present, “urgent” concern with defining and achieving ethnic specificity with spiritual and artistic values, was accompanied by and interwoven with the “Jewish question.” Although this is difficult to understand today, the “Jewish question” was perceived not only as a political and social “idea” but also as a vital question of Romanian culture.

The antagonism toward Jews was rooted in a particularly important branch of traditional Romanian national ideology (as

presented in Chapter 1). However, it became significantly prominent after 1930, as it was projected into the center of political and intellectual life. In becoming a *test* of the ideological orientation of each intellectual, it inevitably became linked to the essential options of the time: fascism, Communism and democracy. The exacerbation of antisemitism contributed, among other political and social factors, to the discrediting and weakening of democracy and parliamentary life. The analysis of this nationalist antisemitic direction, and of the forms that the ideological struggle against the “Jewish threat” assumed, is the core of the present study.

Clearly, the angle from which I have looked at Romanian intellectual life, by analyzing antisemitic ideas and attitudes, does not exactly favor the subjects of this research; the risk of presenting a disfigured and one-sided picture is great. However, the twenty years following the end of World War I and preceding the outbreak of World War II were one of the most fertile and creative periods in the history of Romanian culture. An unparalleled intensity and diversity of intellectual and artistic life was matched only by the relatively large number of personalities who had already completed a significant body of work or, as in the case of the “young generation,” were on their way to exceptional achievement. The tragic destiny of some of these figures was determined above all by the grave political events and World War II. However, the spiritual and political trajectory of the intellectuals was determined by their own attitudes and concepts, and in this context the problem of intellectual antisemitism must be considered.

Among the exponents of this nationalism were, as in previous periods, a number of representative personalities in Romanian culture. Their names conferred legitimacy on the antisemitic trends and facilitated public acceptance of these ideas. By analyzing the antisemitic ideas and attitudes of these figures, my purpose has not been to *indict* them. Rather, I have sought to examine and explain the phenomenon from the historical and sociological perspectives. The few, perhaps inevitable, implications of morality and intellectual conscience recorded here are not part of this study’s explicit objectives.

Some leading figures of the so-called “young generation”

became well-known thinkers and scholars: Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran and Constantin Noica. In the late 1930s they underwent a strong phase of intellectual adhesion to the fascist and blatantly antisemitic Iron Guard. After the war they repudiated, either directly or in allusion, fascist ideology and rejected antisemitism. Nevertheless, they avoided, with consistency, any critical reconsideration or recognition of their own previous political commitment in this regard.

The problem of the intellectuals’ engagement in politics was aroused once more, with no less intensity, in the decades following World War II, with the onset of the Communist regime. Although dissimilar in ideological underpinnings, both periods reveal a common trait: the “treason” of the intellectuals in supporting, unconditionally, a political framework—whether right or left—which lacked any foundation in the values of democracy and freedom of thought.

This book was prepared for publication in the last days of 1989. The formidable overturn of events in Romania and other European countries will inevitably affect research on Romanian nationalism. Perhaps influenced by the present optimistic ambience, I am inclined to believe that, with regard to Romania, the failure of a dictatorship that was ideologically based on the manipulation of an old-new demagogic nationalism, with particular and insidious forms of antisemitism, also heralds the failure of the ethnocentric and xenophobic trend, whose most strident phase, in the 1930s, is analyzed here.

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L.V.

Nationalism and Antisemitism in Modern Romanian History

The National Ideal and the Appearance and Development of the "Jewish Question" in Political and Intellectual Life

Historians of Romanian culture are more or less agreed that the concepts of national awareness, the modern idea of homeland and patriotism influenced by the Enlightenment and Western culture first appeared in Romania in the eighteenth century.¹ The Latin origins of the Romanians, "discovered" culturally one century before, and the subsequent assumption of Dacian descent formed the basis of an ethnic identity that was enhanced by the particular situation of the Romanian people, isolated as they were by a mass of surrounding peoples of Slavic origin, and became a veritable "myth of identity."²

The generation of intellectuals that came to the fore on the eve of the 1848 revolution lent the national idea a romantic and missionary aura. The creation of the national myth and the

¹The process of the formation of national awareness and of the romantic national ideology is analyzed in detail in: V. Georgescu, *Political Ideas and the Enlightenment in the Romanian Principalities, 1750-1831* (New York, 1971); P. Cornea, *Originea romantismului românesc* (Bucharest, 1972), pp. 458-911; S. Lemny, *Originea și cristalizarea ideii de patrie în cultura română* (Bucharest, 1986), chap. VI; K. Verder, "Moments in the Rise of the Discourse of National Identity," in I. Agrigoroaei, Gh. Buzatu, V. Cristian (eds), *România în istoria universală*, vol. III-1 (Jassy, 1988).

²S. Alexandrescu, "Le paradoxe roumain," *International Journal of Rumanian Studies* (Amsterdam), 1-2 (1976), p. 10.

substantiation of the nationalist doctrine were a product of the same generation. The basic concepts of homeland, people and nation, had indeed formed strong roots in the "pre-history" of the collective mentality; however, from the early nineteenth century onward they were intellectually and culturally reformulated, outlining an ideology that enjoyed an ascending and eventually dominant impact on Romania's political and social life.³

The intensity of the national myth was heightened by the continuous danger presented by the neighboring powers: Turkey, Austria and Russia. National union and sovereignty remained a claim, an ideal for a considerable long period. The union of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859, and the declaration of independence in 1877, which constituted partial fulfillment of the dream, were constantly threatened by the possibility of foreign intervention.⁴ This was also one of the causes of Romanian xenophobia, and of the overt distrust of foreigners of all kinds, both within and without the country.

Romanian romanticism coincided with Western-inspired secularization and cultural modernization and, sociologically, with the emergence of the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia as distinct social strata. This romantic generation produced the first ideologists of "democratic nationalism" (Mihai Kogălniceanu, Nicolae Bălcescu, Alecu Russo) as well as the first poets and writers who sought above all to be crowned the "national bard," "the messenger of the forefathers" and the prophetic spiritual leader of their people.⁵

Obsessed with the desire to catch up with the West and aware of the absence of clearly defined social categories, Romanian intellectuals became writers, heads of public institutions, politicians and social reformers. This tradition was continued in the following century as well. Nevertheless, the prestige of the Romanian intelligentsia did not grant them a correspondingly

³ On the concept of *people* in the romantic period with Romanian intellectuals (around the year 1848), see P. Cornea, *Regula jocului* (Bucharest, 1980), pp. 208–43.

⁴ S. Alexandrescu, op. cit., p. 3; A. Zub, "History and Myth in Romanian Society in the Modern Period," *International Journal of Romanian Studies*, 2 (1987).

⁵ For details, see: L. Volovici, *Aparitia scriitorului în cultura română* (Jassy, 1976).

high social status, even though their influence on public life was considerable.

The Romanian national ideology, formulated in the language of historical romanticism (greatly influenced by authors such as Jules Michelet, Robert de Lamennais, Edgar Quinet and Adam Mickiewicz), was based on native traditions. The preservation and definition of the national character remained an uninterrupted and obsessive concern of Romanian culture.⁶ Several traditionalist currents dominated Romanian spiritual life. The central elements consisted of *Romanianism, ethicism* and *Orthodoxism*.⁷ Together with the national ideal, liberalism, taken from the egalitarian principles of the French Revolution, became an ingredient of the ideological and political manifestos of the first national ideologists; in principle, it was also applied to the Romanian Jews. At a time when the Romanians were fighting for their rights, they exhibited a natural solidarity with those who suffered from the laws of "the old regime." The draft constitutions discussed on the eve of the 1848 revolution granted the Jews rights that still remained only a hope half a century later: namely, full equality under the law.⁸

Twenty years after the revolution, even some of the 1848 leaders were among those who most vehemently opposed statutes granting civic rights to Jews (Ioan Heliade-Rădulescu, Cezar Bolliac, Ion Ghica, Simion Bărnuțiu, Vasile Alecsandri).⁹ The "spirit of the times" had changed. Former fighters for the liberation of minorities now held important functions. The beliefs they had held in their younger days were adjusted to the reality and the pressure exercised by dominant groups.¹⁰

⁶ P. E. Michelson, *Myth and Reality in Romanian National Development* (Huntington, Ind., 1986), reprinted in *International Journal of Romanian Studies*, 2 (1987). For a collection of articles on Romanian national characteristics, see: F. Mihăilescu (ed.) *Aesthesis Carpatho-Dunărean* (Bucharest, 1981).

⁷ For a broader view, see: Z. Ornea, *Traditionism și modernitate în decenii al treilea* (Bucharest, 1980).

⁸ P. Cornea and M. Zamfir (eds), *Gindirea românească în epoca pașoptistă (1830–1860)* (Bucharest, 1969), p. 79.

⁹ C. Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie (1866–1919): De l'exclusion à l'émancipation* (Université de Provence, 1978), pp. 31–62.

¹⁰ C. Durandin, "Bonheur et malheur: Les intellectuels roumains d'une génération à l'autre, 1848–1878," *International Journal of Romanian Studies*, 1 (1984–1986).

Nationalism now signified the struggle for national sovereignty, the creation of a unified Romanian state. The national ideal had become national policy and national interests were to be defended above all, even to the point of conflict with other countries or various national minorities.

The fear of foreigners rationalized by external threats, is usually strengthened by the specific traits of a community that tends to resist change, often in reaction to some foreign model that has caused it to feel inferior in some way.¹¹ With the Romanians, this did not exclude a constantly tolerant attitude toward different ethnic and religious groups living in the territories inhabited by them.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Romania's social structure remained primarily rural and patriarchal, and the culture it developed was based and focused on the village and traditional, popular values.¹² As a result of this special emphasis on the rural element (the peasant, with a spirit and ethic of his own, was the prototype of the Romanian), the national doctrine, from its inception, developed several negative stereotypes of the foreigner: the *Turk* (pagan, invader), the *Pole* in earlier days (arrogant, invader),¹³ the *Hungarian* (oppressor of the Romanians in Transylvania), the *Russian* (occupier of Romanian lands, enemy of the union and a threat to Romanian sovereignty, the danger of "Russification").

The negative internal stereotypes, particularly in the eighteenth century, were the *Greek* and, as always the *Jew*. Both were imbued with all the moral defects of the *internal foreigner*.¹⁴ Numerous Greeks, brought to Moldavia and Wallachia by the Turkish-appointed Phanariot ruling princes, settled there in the

¹¹ Z. Barbu, "Rumania," in S. J. Woolf (ed.), *Fascism in Europe* (London, 1981), p. 152.

¹² E. Turczynski, "The Background of Romanian Fascism," in P. F. Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism in the Successor States* (Santa Barbara, 1971); M. Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics and Society* (London, 1985), pp. 1-4.

¹³ For the Poles as a negative stereotype, see: L. Volovici, "Polonii și Tara Legesescă în literatura română," *Anuar de lingvistică și istorie literară*, XXVIII (1981-1982), pp. 57-64.

¹⁴ On seeking the "common enemy" to define national identity, see: K. W. Deutsch, "Nation Building and National Development," in *Nation Building Dissent and Intellectual Consent: The Case of Rumania* (Jerusalem, 1978).

eighteenth century. Many became important dignitaries, "laid their hands on" commerce and "Hellenized" the culture of the upper classes. Contemporary literature and subsequent essays were full of anti-Greek pamphlets. However, one and a half centuries later, the "Greek problem," which had been acute, had disappeared. The Greeks had not left; they had become assimilated. What remained in Romanian historiography was a powerful "myth of the Phanariots," signifying a national, social and moral degradation said to have been caused by "evil" Greek influences.¹⁵ This "myth" was eventually substituted in the public awareness and in various nationalist doctrines by the myth of the "Jewish threat." Greek or Jew, the internal *foreigner* who had penetrated Romanian economic and social life was perceived as a major problem in the country's politics. And it was fully exploited because it derived from an indubitable reality: "foreigners" did enjoy a dominant position in the middle class and national economy. Jews were identified with both prototypes of foreigners: *internal* because, unlike the Greeks who were Orthodox Christians, they did not assimilate with the native population; and *external* because of the real and imaginary links between the Jewish bourgeoisie in Romania and other countries, which was claimed to constitute a worldwide "conspiracy."¹⁶

The "waves" of Jewish immigrants from Galicia and Russia, which were set at totally exaggerated proportions in antisemitic writings in order to heighten the sense of threat, were not the actual source of the concern with the "Jewish question" in Romania. The origins of political and ideological antisemitism in the mid-nineteenth century were also not a direct consequence of the growth of the Jewish population, which amounted to 135,000, or 3 percent of the total population in 1859, and 266,000, or 4.5 percent by the end of the century.¹⁷ With the creation of the

¹⁵ On the image of the Greek in Romanian culture, see: S. Lemny, "La critique du régime phanariote: clichés mentaux et perspectives historiographiques," in A. Zub (ed.), *Culture and Society* (Jassy, 1985). On the "Phanariot myth": A. Zub, "History and Myth in Romanian Society in Modern Period," *International Journal of Romanian Studies*, 2 (1987).

¹⁶ On the development of the Jewish population of Romania, see: M. Schwarzfeld, *Ochire asupra istoriei evreilor în România* (Bucharest, 1887); W. Filderman, *Adevărul asupra problemei evreiescă în România* (Bucharest, 1925).

unified Romanian state, the problem appeared on the political agenda, at which time the status of the Jews, who were still regarded as foreigners, inevitably came up for discussion. However, the question of altering the status of the Jews and granting them civil rights was not a result of the normal evolution of Romanian society and its modernization modeled on Western Europe. In effect, it was imposed upon Romania by the European powers. The implementation of essential national objectives and international recognition were made contingent on the emancipation of the Jews.

The violence in both political debate and public manifestations reached its peak in 1866, when, despite pressure from Germany and France, Article 7 of the Constitution, maintaining the status of Jews as foreigners, was adopted. The same was true after the declaration of independence (in 1877), when, after the Congress of Berlin, Romania was virtually forced to modify that article in favor of the Jews.

The response of politicians and leading intellectuals to the demands of the Western powers was a near unanimous and categorical refusal.¹⁷ The few political personalities who opted for a positive resolution, among them Gheorghe Costa-Foru, Petre Carp and Titu Maiorescu, could not influence the general trend, which continued to remain hostile to the emancipation of the Jews in the decades that followed. With the exception of Maiorescu, the men who set the guidelines for the development of Romanian political, social and cultural thinking were opponents of emancipation. They included Mihai Kogălniceanu, Ioan Heliade-Rădulescu, Cezar Bolliac, Ion Ghica, Simion Bărnuțiu, Constantin Negruzi, Ion C. Brătianu, Vasile Alecsandri, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, Vasile Conta and Mihai Eminescu.

The anti-Jewish mood proved most rampant among the middle and upper classes and among the intellectuals.¹⁸ If even penetrated the cultural society of the Jassy elite "Junimea," which had started out as a Masonic Lodge,¹⁹ Resistance to "outside" 5
moso

interference" revived and increased all the anti-Jewish prejudices that had been generated by the Church and had survived from the Middle Ages. These were consolidated by new arguments, taken from contemporary German, Austrian and French publications, thereby immediately integrating Romanian antisemitism with the post-1870 antisemitic trend in Europe.²⁰

The "Jewish question" was usually associated with the "peasant question," the central problem of Romanian economic and political life²¹ after the penetration of capitalism into Romania and its negative impact on the old, feudal social structures. As in Russia and Poland, the presence of Jews as leaseholders and innkeepers in the villages was viewed as the cause of the decline of rural life and the impoverishment of the Romanian peasantry. The main argument against emancipation and the most widespread slogan of traditional antisemitic propaganda was the allegation that the Jews were the "bloodsuckers of the villages" and "the sore" of the peasantry. Points of extreme crisis in social conflicts, climaxed by rural uprisings, coincided with peaks in antisemitic manifestations.²²

During this period the "Jewish question" became the central subject of political debate and discussion in connection with the country's social and economic situation. The historian and statesman Kogălniceanu, one of the ideologists of the Romanian national movement, put it quite bluntly in a speech in 1864: "Let me tell you, gentlemen, no question is more important to Moldavia than the Israelite question."²³

Brănișteanu, a seasoned observer of the social and political scene in Romania, noted in his diary after half a century of experienced journalism: "Two large problems played a predominant

¹⁹ C. Iancu, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 119-134. An opposite point of view, in G. Cliveti, *România și Puterile garantie* (Jassy, 1988). The official Romanian attitude was not provoked by "pretended antisemitic tendencies", but by the "national interest" of the new Romanian state (p. 122).

²⁰ S. Antim, *Chestia evreiască* (Craiova, 1926), pp. 4-9. On the political importance of the agrarian question, and linked to it the "Jewish question", see the fundamental work of H.L. Roberts, *Romania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven, 1951).

²¹ S. Antim, op. cit.

²² Cetățnea israelită înaintea Adunării Generale a României din 1864 (Bucharest, 1879), p. 19.

¹⁷ Referring to the same period, the well-known critic Garabet Ibrăileanu wrote: "Let us note in passing that almost all our classes are more or less antisemitic." See *Spiritu critic în cultura românească*, third edition (Bucharest, 1929), p. 189.

¹⁸ M. D. Sturdza, "Junimea societate secretă", *Ethos* (Paris), I (1973): 81-109.

ant role in the political struggles in this country: the agrarian peasant question and the Jewish question.²³ These circumstances, particularly the reaction to external pressure and traditional xenophobia, transformed the "Jewish threat" into a catalyst for the consolidation of nationalism and a stimulus to "national awakening." In a speech given in 1879, Vasile Alecsandri emphasized this point:

The Alliance Israélite . . . opened our eyes to the danger threatening us and aroused our instinct for national preservation. . . . What is the use of independence if we are forced to inaugurate that independence with an act of submission. . . . Article 44, which makes recognition of our independence conditional, stands for a vote of blame we do not deserve, an insult to our Romanian dignity.

To refuse citizenship to the Jews, added Alecsandri, "means to refuse suicide by our people."²⁴ Booklets, studies and petitions addressed to the Chamber of Deputies, most of them written in virulently polemical language, seeking to demonstrate the grave consequences on the national economy if the Jews were emancipated, began to appear in 1865. The authors included such an authoritative economist as Dionisie Pop Martian²⁵ and the great philologist and writer Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu.²⁶ Economic arguments were reinforced with an emphasis on "the negative qualities" of the Jews (according to Hasdeu's formula), which included parasitism, dishonesty, hostility to other peoples, and absence of patriotism.²⁷

In the mid-1880s an essay by another important writer, Ioan Slavici (1848–1925), lent a more complex motivation to the refusal

²³ B. Brănișteanu, "Jurnal: 1943–1944" (manuscript), Yad Vashem Archives (Jerusalem), O-11/77; note from 31 July 1943, p. 148.

²⁴ Motiunea nerevisioniștilor în cestunea israelită (Bucharest, 1879), pp. 149, 166–8.

²⁵ D. P. Martian, *Proprietatea și Naționalitatea și ochire în mareă chestie a jidanelor* (Bucharest, 1866).

²⁶ B. P. Hasdeu, *Industria națională, industria străină și industria oreeiască fată cu principalii concurenți* (Bucharest, 1866).

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 10–34.

of granting Jews Romanian citizenship. The Jews had a powerful ethnic individuality that was "alien to the nature of our society"; they "disturbed social harmony"; their religion was "the negation of all religions"; they refused to mix with other peoples. Furthermore, the specific economic and political conditions of Romanian society made it impossible to assimilate yet another foreign population at that stage.²⁸

According to Slavici, the Romanians simply could not envisage the full social integration of the Jews:

For Romanians it is inconceivable that Jews could be in communal and county administrations, in the judiciary and the army, that there could be Jewish professors, deputies, ministers and even boyars [landowners]. They don't know why, but they feel that, when all is said and done, this just cannot be.²⁹

A decision that ignored Romanian sensitivities could provoke large-scale violent reactions and, as Slavici suggested, even lead to the possibility of genocide:

In the last resort, at a given sign, we might have to close our frontiers, cut the Jews down and throw all of them into the Danube so that nothing of their seed remains. This is the one and only solution which, in a sound mind, is left to a durable people in circumstances such as those prevailing today.³⁰

From the very start journalists and writers contributed most intensely to the shaping of the cultural antisemitic stereotype. Jacob Katz's observation on the composite character of modern antisemitism³¹ is fully confirmed in the case of Romania: the traditional antisemitic stereotype was enriched with new elements and justified and adjusted in tune with new situations. It was "ennobled" by the writings of prestigious intellectuals and became an asset of national culture.

²⁸ I. Slavici, "Soli" și "Haben". *Cestuna ourelor din România* (Bucharest, 1878), pp. 11, 47.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 70–71.

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³¹

³¹ J. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism 1700–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), p. 320.

The appearance of the literary stereotype of the “Polish Jew,” or *Ostjude*, in Romanian literature was largely due to Vasile Alecsandri (1821–1890), the most important and most popular writer of the time. The Jew was depicted with sidecurls and caftan, he used characteristic jargon and was portrayed as having “typical” personality traits—he was an unscrupulous cheat, a profit-hungry usurer, an exploiter and “poisoner” of the peasant. This became the Jewish prototype in a lengthy propagandistic series.³² During the debates in the General Assembly (1864) on the “Israelite question,” Kogălniceanu called up the caricature image of a Jew in one of Alecsandri’s plays in order to justify his point of view on the rejection of global emancipation: “Gentlemen, all you have to do in order to become acquainted with the Jews of Moldavia is to go and see the play *The Village Bloodsuckers*, and believe me, that play is not fiction, it is the most real truth.”³³

A frequent participant in the fiery debates raging in the press during 1876–1879 on the proposed changes to Article 7 was the poet Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889). His categoric opposition to “even the most insignificant juridical or economic concession to all Jews”³⁴ was not particularly important, as he was then a young journalist working for conservative publications and still at the start of his literary career. However, in the decades following his death in 1889, his genius and the fact that he came, quite rightly, to be considered the greatest Romanian poet, as well as his tragic life, lent the aura of myth to his personality. The Eminescu cult, as powerful today as it was at the beginning of the

³² For Alecsandri’s antisemitism, see: B. P. Hasdeu, *Trei orei: jupînul Shylok, domnul Gobsek al lui Balzac și jupînul Moise al lui Alecsandri* (Bucharest, 1865); G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent* (Bucharest, 1941), pp. 253, 279–80; C. Iancu, op. cit. (note 9), p. 211. On the “Ostjude” as an antisemitic symbol in German and Austrian literature, see: S. E. Aschheim, “Caffan and Cravat: The Ostjude as a Cultural Symbol in the Development of German Anti-Semitism,” in *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe: Essays in honor of G. L. Moses* (New Jersey, 1982).

³³ “Sedinta din 5 Martie 1864,” in *Cestiunea israelită înaintea Adunării Generale a României* (Bucharest, 1879), p. 18.

³⁴ M. Eminescu, *Opere*, vol. IX: *Publicistica, 1870–1877* (Bucharest, 1960), p. 217.

twentieth century, assumed almost religious trappings. His image was superimposed on that of Christ. One of the most frequent metaphors found in the prose and poetry in homage to him is that of the crucified martyr. His nationalistic ideology and his attitude to the “Jewish question,” expounded in his newspaper articles and considered as sacrosanct as his poetry, exerted an overwhelming influence on the direction taken by nationalist currents and on the creation of a “national mysticism.”³⁵ All antisemitic movements claimed him as a precursor, quite often with little justification, and ennobled the nationalist banner with quotations from his articles.³⁶ Antisemitic texts published by the Romanian press in Bucharest in the 1980s also invoke the “Eminescu heritage” and the image of the martyred poet tortured by the Jewish danger.³⁷

Eminescu’s intellectual structure and artistic temperament were closest to German romanticism, in whose spirit his nationalist ideology was crystallized: it was earthy, linked to “the national soul” and the ethnic spirit, backward-looking, and predisposed to xenophobia.³⁸ Like his friend Slavici and other

³⁵ E. Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne* (Bucharest, 1925), vol. II, p. 139.

³⁶ On the successors to Eminescu’s ideology, Lovinescu wrote in 1926: “Held in check for a time, Eminescu’s influence quickly made up for lost time: launched by *Semîndor* movement and then promoted by various people and actions, it still survives in some xenophobe or fascist manifestations which claim to descend from ‘the topical nature of Eminescu’ . . .”; *Istoria literaturii române contemporane*, vol. I, new edition (Bucharest, 1973), p. 14. On Eminescu’s xenophobic nationalism and its legacy, see also: G. Ibrăileanu, *Spirituil critic în cultura românească*, third edition (Bucharest, 1929), pp. 153–92; E. Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, vol. II, p. 139–53; G. Călinescu, *Opera lui Mihai Eminescu*, vol. I (Bucharest, 1934); T. M. Munteanu, “Antisemitismul lui Eminescu,” *Convorbiri literare*, vols. 6–9 (1939); I. Zamfirescu, *Spiritualitatea românești* (Bucharest, 1941), pp. 326–31; D. Murărăș, *Nationalismul lui Eminescu* (Madrid, 1955); V. Nemoianu, “Purest Dacian,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4233, 18 May 1984. An attempt to justify Eminescu’s xenophobia with “neo-Marxist” arguments can be read in I. Bădescu, *Sincronismul european și cultura critică românească* (Bucharest, 1984).

³⁷ M. Shafir, “From Eminescu to Goga via Corneliu Vadim Tudor: A New Round of Antisemitism in Romanian Cultural Life,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, 3 (1984).

³⁸ For the nationalism of German romanticism and the rejection of the Jew as a foreigner, see: S. Almog, *Nationalism & Antisemitism in Modern Europe, 1815–1945* (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 6–11.

Romanian intellectuals, particularly natives of Transylvania, Eminescu studied in Vienna (around the year 1870), one of the first centers of modern European antisemitism.

For Eminescu, rejecting the idea of altering the status of the Jews is integrated with the clearly and richly argued logic of his conception of the nature and evolution of Romanian society. In the case of the Jews, and foreigners in general, including Greeks, Bulgarians, Austrians and Armenians, the starting point is the "objective conflict" of socioeconomic competition. The poverty and decline of the peasant class, the one and only "productive class," is seen to have been caused by the capitalist economy, which produced a new, largely foreign bourgeoisie whose destructive competition prevented the development of a native middle class. Although he sometimes mentioned the Jews who had immigrated during that period from Galicia and Russia, Eminescu did not deal with them any differently than he did with those who had lived in the country for several generations—all of them were *aliens*. Like the Greeks, whom Eminescu sometimes attacked even more violently than the Jews,³⁹ the latter constituted parasitic "overlaid strata" nourished by the exploitation of peasant labor.

National economic protectionism was repeatedly used as the main argument against Jews: "it is not hatred of the Israelite race, passion or religious precepts that have forced us to maintain such a strict point of view, but rather the nature of Jewish economic occupations."⁴⁰ Religious tolerance, which Eminescu supported, did not imply rights: "the Jew does not deserve rights anywhere in Europe because he does not work... He is the eternal consumer, never a producer."⁴¹

The poet's nationalist views held that economic conflict was ultimately and essentially a question of national preservation. The penetration of the Jewish element into the country's

³⁹ "Whenevr order and tradition in these [Romanian] lands deteriorated, when we lost provinces, set aside good old customs with levity, and corruption and cowardice entered the old classes of Romanian society, the source of these evils always was a Greek or a handful of Greeks." Quoted in D. Murărașu, op. cit. (note 36), p. 200.

⁴⁰ Mihai Eminescu, *Opera politică*, vol. I, p. 546; quoted by Al. Oprea,

"Introduction" to Mihai Eminescu, *Opere*, vol. IX, p. 33.

⁴¹ Mihai Eminescu, *Opere*, IX, p. 301.

economy was therefore an *ethnic* threat: "The danger is not that the Jews are acquiring all property, but that they are *not, and cannot be Romanians*, just as, generally speaking, they are not, and cannot be Germans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Frenchmen or Italians."

These historical circumstances and the rural, archaic spirit of Romanian society, which Eminescu elevated to the rank of a unique and eternal national model, exacerbated the negative image of the foreigner and stimulated xenophobia. Even in Eminescu's poetry, the foreign threat provoked terrifying images, like those of the apocalyptic invasion by aliens in the folk-style poem *Doina*, which reverberated in the Romanian awareness.

For Eminescu, the nation, "in the truest meaning of the term," meant the peasant class, "the most positive class of all, the most conservative as to speech, costume and custom, the bearer of a people's history."⁴² Of the foreigners who had settled among the Romanians, the Jews were the most distant from this idea of nation; they were "*foreigners of a non-Christian persuasion* who could 'not merge with our people.'⁴³ Essentially townspeople, they were as a social stratum living off the labor of the peasant, as well as "aliens," constituting an alien body within the nation.

Eminescu's virulent journalistic style was provoked in great measure by the criticism of the persecution of Romania's Jews published in the foreign press and often goaded him beyond the framework of his ideological nationalism. As a result, in addition to the "classical" language of his predecessors, Alecsandri, Negruzi, Heliade-Rădulescu, Bolliac and Hasdeu ("blood-suckers and traders," "unproductive aliens"), he also adopted clichés from the European antisemitic press. The Jews, he wrote, "conspire in synagogues against the Christians"; "they are an economic army, a race of natural associates against everything that is not Jewish," representing "the occult authority of a state within the state," with "secret committees of the universal alliance"; they "poison" European journalism and literature, "a weapon of foreigners against us."⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., p. 302.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 173.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 281.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 301, 303.

Vasile Conta's speech in parliament in September 1879 and published under the title "The Jewish Question" received far greater public reaction than had Eminescu's articles. A professor of law and a newly-elected deputy, Conta (1845-1882) was the most important Romanian philosopher of the late nineteenth century. In his speech in parliament, Conta wanted to imbue anti-Jewish discrimination with scientific substantiation in accordance with "the principles of modern science." He was the true founder of Romanian ideological antisemitism. His criteria were no longer those of a socioeconomic nature; they were derived from the "nationalities principle," nationalities as units of race and religion, forming the basis of the existence of a state and a homogeneous nation.⁴⁶ The extraneous element could only be accepted if it were of the "Christian rite" and if, by intermarriage, it mixed with the native element. In the case of the Jews, this was impossible: "The *yids* constitute a nation that is different from all the other nations, and they are their enemies. Moreover, we may say that the *yids* are the *best* constituted and most distinctive nation in all the world." They were "descendants of a single race, which has always kept itself pure."⁴⁷ Their religion was actually "a social and political organization in the form of religion," "a theocratic social organization" designed to prevent Jews from integrating as loyal citizens within a state.⁴⁸ The supreme aim of Jews, formulated in the Bible and the Talmud, was to "enslave all the other peoples to the Jewish people" in order to secure "the rule of the entire world by the *yids*".⁴⁹

Therefore, the Jews represented a universal threat: "They brought ruination and corruption wherever they went, and even destroyed the people in whose midst they were living."⁵⁰ The instruments they used to dominate the world were the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* ("in fact a government of the *yids*")⁵¹, economic conspiracies, and the seizure of the world press ("three quarters of the world's press are in the hands of *yids*").⁵²

⁴⁶ Vasile Conta, *Opere complete* (Bucharest, 1914), p. 642.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 648.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 645.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 650.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 652.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 658.

⁵² Ibid., p. 657.

The Romanians were even more exposed because the Jews, who were plotting to recreate a state of their own, had chosen Romania in which to build "a purely Jewish country; in other words, to establish that long-awaited Palestine foretold in the Talmud."⁵³ Conta's warning was clear-cut: "if we do not fight against the Jewish element, we shall perish as a nation."⁵⁴

Vasile Conta's arguments never invoked the stereotypes offered by the Church. For the materialist philosopher the Jewish threat related only to the existence of races and nations. It was the ethnic criterion, "the principle of preservation" (as with Eminescu) that had to guide Romanian vigilance and opposition to changes in the laws dealing with Jews.

Although he was eager to give his exposition an academic tone, Conta did not use the word *european* ("Jew"), but its popular synonym *jidan* ("yid"). This term, particularly in written Romanian, had already acquired highly offensive connotations.⁵⁵ It had been used before with the same touch of contempt by other great writers such as Negruzzi, Alecsandri, Hasdeu and Slavici, and also in Eminescu's articles, in the most virulent polemical passages. The prestige of these authors had kept the word in the public consciousness, even at the highest level of culture, for some time.

The concept of *Romanianist*, developed as part of the nationalist ideology, appeared in Romanian journalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially, it expressed the feeling of belonging to the Romanian nation and established the ethnic qualities considered specifically Romanian, the sum of inborn qualities reinforced by tradition, custom, religion and a common history.

In 1879, Hasdeu founded the "Romanismul" Society, which published the periodical *Foaia Societății, "Românismul"*.⁵⁶ The term *Romanianism* acquired more importance when it was used

⁵³ Ibid., p. 660.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 647.

⁵⁵ *Dicționarul limbii române* (Academia Română) (Bucharest, 1937), tome II, part II, fasc. 1, pp. 20-22.

⁵⁶ See: C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Românismul: Catehismul unei noi spiritualități* (Bucharest, 1936), pp. 98-100.

in a xenophobic context and as a contrasting element especially to the "Jewish spirit." Essays dealing with this juxtaposition were printed in the 1890s.⁵⁷ As we shall see, *Romanianism* acquired a remarkable theoretical depth after World War I, both in the right-wing nationalist movement and in sociological and philosophical studies on the national character. Its strong xenophobic and antisemitic connotations, especially in the 1930s, "discredited" it and thus was almost totally abandoned in our time.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the national myth, with its xenophobic and anti-Jewish component, became a conscious factor, acquiring its cultural expression and consolidating itself as a structural element in Romanian spiritual life. In Romania, as in Germany and Poland, antisemitism was part and parcel of the country's intellectual history.

Antisemitic Organizations, Parties and Intellectual Circles

In post-1880 Romania, antisemitism became a common social and political phenomenon.⁵⁸ External pressure for the emancipation of the Jews was exploited by politicians to create an atmosphere of "vigilance" and alarm in the face of the "danger" of intrusion by the Jewish element. Thereafter foreign observers viewed Romanian society as an environment in which antisemitism was predominant. For instance, the description found in a report from 1900 by the French ambassador to Bucharest, A. Henry: "Antisemitism in Romania is more than just an idea, it is a passion common to politicians of all parties, the Orthodox church, and, one could also add, to all the peasants, both Wallachian and Moldavian."⁵⁹

The political parties and the press constantly associated the "Jewish question" and the presence of the Jewish element in the

new, capitalist structures with the grave situation of the peasantry. The latter were still fettered, even in the twentieth century, by feudal structures, economic crises and other negative phenomena generated by a backward agriculture and the unequal, chaotic development of a capitalist economy. As regards propaganda, the peasant unrest in 1888, and especially the great peasant uprising of 1907, acquired a pronounced antisemitic character.

Historical and economic studies at the turn of the century frequently examined the "Jewish question" in connection with socioeconomic processes and, as a rule, reached the same conclusion: it was not the penetration of capitalist forms that favored the assertion of Jews in trade, finance, industry and crafts, but the other way around [the Jewish "invasion" brought capitalism and all its negative consequences: the destruction of the peasantry as a class, its pauperization, the ruination of the large landowners, etc.]⁶⁰

Until 1880, one of the basic arguments in antisemitic manifestos was the refusal of the Jews to assimilate; after 1900, this thesis tended to be replaced by a contrary slogan, reflecting a new reality: the integration of Jews into Romanian social structures, which was growing in proportions, had to be prevented because it was threatening the Romanian national character.

Certain developments in the life of the Jewish community, the emergence of the first forms of Jewish sociopolitical and cultural organization⁶¹ with programs of demands and Romanian-language newspapers, the first Zionist movements,⁶² and the participation of numerous Jews in the socialist movement were reflected in the more numerous and "modern" forms of antisemitism and the appearance of new "counts of indictment" in the

⁵⁷ I. M. M. [Manolescu Mladin], *Caracteristica eureilor sau Românismul în ţara cestuii jidoneşti* (Jassy, 1892).

⁵⁸ C. Iancu, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 220–229; M. Stanislawski, "Introduction" to E. Dorian, *The Quality of Witness*, M. Dorian (ed.) (Philadelphia, 1982), p. XXVI.

⁵⁹ Quoted by C. Iancu, op. cit. (note 9), p. 229.

⁶⁰ Two well-known examples: A. D. Xenopol, *La question israélite en Roumanie* (Paris, 1902) and Verax [Radu Rosetti], *La Roumanie et les Juifs* (Bucharest, 1903). The essay by Xenopol, one of Romania's great historians, provoked a response from the Jewish socialist Adolphe Clarnet: *Les Juifs roumains: Réponse à M. A. D. Xenopol* (Paris, 1903).

⁶¹ *Encyclopædia of Jewish Communities. Romania* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1969), vol. I, pp. 31–40.

⁶² M. Schaerf, *The Torch was Lit in Romania: Samuel Pineles and Early Zionism in Romania* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1986).

campaign against granting civic rights to Jews. By the year 1912, only 361 Jews had received Romanian citizenship.⁶⁸

The first antisemitic organizations emerged at the same time as similar groups in other countries; some were even 'interconnected or linked to "international" organizations. The constituent congress of the "Universal Anti-Israelite Alliance," attended by delegates from Romania, Hungary and France, took place in Bucharest in 1886. Edouard Drumont was elected its president. His book *La France Juive*, published in 1886, was widely read and appreciated by antisemitic intellectuals. In 1895 the "Antisemitic Alliance," led by a man called Dumitrescu, and the "Universal Antisemitic League," whose founders included Alexandru C. Cuza and Nicolae Iorga were established.⁶⁹

Although we might omit other antisemitic student and professional organizations we must mention the creation, in 1910, of the Democratic Nationalist Party, also founded by Iorga and Cuza. Its program was explicitly antisemitic.

All these organizations had considerable influence in the press, but relatively little effect on political life. With the exception of Cuza, no politician could make a solid political career relying on an exclusively antisemitic program because, in varying degrees, antisemitism was implicit in the policy of the large liberal and conservative national parties. However, the aspiration of leading Romanian politicians to integrate Romania into the Western world, to give a democratic, liberal image to their country, led also to a constant effort to avoid any antisemitic "stigma." This could compromise Romania in European public opinion and cast doubt as to its commitment in the decisions of the international conferences. An effective antisemitic policy was never openly declared: "noisy" antisemitism was rejected.

The well-known Romanian socialist theorist, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855–1920), explained this peculiar duplicity in a letter to the Russian writer Vladimir Korolenko in 1912:

This tactic of silence, of silencing, concealing and, if I may say so, appeasing the Jewish problem has been a brilliant success

⁶⁸ J. Starr, "Jewish Citizenship in Rumania (1878–1940)," *Jewish Social Studies*, III, 1 (1941), p. 53.
⁶⁹ C. Iancu, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 220–225.

of our government and the ruling classes, and that is why they are terrified of noisiness, rows and the rowdy raising or discussion of the Jewish problems; and whoever raises it in a rowdy way, even in the form of a small anti-Jewish pogrom or the antisemitic trial of a ritual murder is considered to be a veritable traitor to his country, a conscious or unconscious agent, and a partisan of the *Alliance Israélite*. That is why we here are afraid neither of pogroms nor of anti-Jewish trials; our government takes good care that they do not happen. With us, the oppression of Jews and the suppression of their political and civic rights is taking place in total silence, calmly. It is forbidden to be noisy.⁶⁵

The spread of antisemitism was visible in intellectual and cultural circles, but more pronounced among the middle classes and "intellectual proletariat"; these sectors lacked "cultural capital" and were eager to acquire prestige and social position. This expansion into larger strata was, however, accompanied by a gradual decrease (when compared to the year 1878) in the number of representative intellectual personalities. The primarily economic, but also social and cultural "Jewish threat" was an inexhaustible subject of newspaper articles and political discussions. Violently antisemitic pamphlets and books multiplied in times of tension. They advocated expulsion and anti-Jewish "protectionist" measures to stimulate the "Romanization" of the economy and the free professions. The preface to one such propaganda volume at the turn of the century is a good illustration of the language used at that time, of the meaning of the term "antisemite" as employed by the journalistic "agitators," and of the increasingly threatening vindictive tone:

To be an antisemite today does not mean being dominated by the narrow and strict views of national or religious exclusivism; it does mean being a dedicated fighter against a materialistic current which places money before honor, virtue and the highest sentiments of the dignity of human nature . . . the antisemite has to struggle against the *yids* and the Judaized

⁶⁵ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. VIII (Bucharest, 1983), p. 279.

and corrupt spirit of certain people who misunderstand and even prostitute the words tolerance and civilization. . . . Antisemites are the embodiment of the deepest aspirations and feelings of the soul of the Romanian people, inhumanly impoverished and exploited by the flood of *yids* who invaded the country from everywhere; they are the forerunners of the liberation of the long-suffering Romanian people from odious subjection by the foreign, oppressive Jewish element. . . . When the knife reaches the bone, the Romanians will lose patience and show the *yids* the way they came, and if they pretend they do not understand, as they have done so far, they will be obliged to take whatever measure is dictated by the instinct of preservation.⁶⁶

The author of these lines, Mina Savel, lists his credentials on page one of the volume: "Former editor of the antisemitic paper *Alarma Moldovei*, member of the International Antisemitic Congress, held on August 26, 1886, in Bucharest, and bearer of the 'Crown of Romania' order."

In the same letter written in 1912, Dobrogeanu-Gherea expressed his overall opinion on the antisemitism of Romanian intellectuals:

all Romanian intellectuals, with the exception of the president of the present government, P. Carp, the late Caragiale, and two or three less important people, all have an antisemitic predisposition and are steeped in the antisemitic spirit.⁶⁷

It must be emphasized that the author of this categorical view was one of Romania's most important social ideologists who, although himself a Jew, avoided, in conformity with an established socialist and Marxist tradition, direct involvement in the fiery debates on the "Jewish question."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ M. Savel, *Judaismul în România* (Jassy, 1896), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁷ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, op. cit., p. 279.

⁶⁸ The only exception was the interview he gave to the newspaper *România muncitoare* (December 5, 1913), in which he noted that the status of Jews in Romania was "a unique juridical absurdity" (see *Opere complete*, vol. V, p. 169). For a presentation of Gherea's attitude to the "Jewish question," see M. Shafir, "Romania's Marx and the National Question: Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea," *History of Political Thought*, V, 11 (1984).

Political and Social Changes after World War I

The results of World War I considerably changed the terms of the Jewish problem. After the Union of December 1918, the new borders of Greater Romania included the provinces of Transylvania, Bessarabia, North Bukovina and part of the Dobrudja, in addition to Moldavia and Wallachia. The Jews, numbering 230,000 before the war, had increased to 767,000; that is, 5 percent of the total population, ranking third, after the Hungarians and Germans, in the list of national minorities.⁶⁹

The newly annexed Jewish communities really were strangers to the Romanian environment as far as culture and language were concerned; a high proportion of their bourgeoisie was, however, integrated into economic life.⁷⁰ The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Hungarian revolution included numerous Jewish protagonists and had a definite impact on the Jewish intellectuals of Romania. This strengthened the negative image of the Jew as a revolutionary, anarchist and "Bolshevik."

The antisemitic movement in Romania was further incited to unprecedented intensity and scope when citizenship was granted to all Jews born in Romania and to those who had participated as members of the Romanian armed forces in the war. The measure was decreed by the Romanian government, again in deference to foreign powers. This time the catalyst was the peace treaty of Versailles, confirmed by the Constitution of 1923.⁷¹ The most affected circles in Romanian society were the intellectuals of the towns and cities, students, teachers and magistrates, who grew alarmed by the growth in the number of Jews in universities, law offices, journalism, etc. This led to violent street demonstrations, strikes and student rallies and also to the creation of new political organizations and parties with new "protectionist" programs in order to stimulate the promotion of ethnic Romanians.

⁶⁹ W. Filderman, *Adevărul asupra problemei evreiescii în România* (Bucharest, 1925), p. xliii.

⁷⁰ E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington, 1983), pp. 173-83.

⁷¹ "Motiune din partea evreilor români," *Indrepărtarea*, 25 (1926), p. 2; M. Campeano, *Les troubles antisémites en Roumanie et la question antisémite en général* (Bucharest, 1928).

nians in the economy and culture and to reduce the economic power of the Jews, Hungarians and other minorities.⁷²

Like Germany and Hungary in those years,⁷³ Romania witnessed the first important fusion of the ideologists of antisemitism and "the groups of incitement" rousing the middle classes; the ideologists became the leaders and organizers of those groups. A parody of the old "revolutionary," the antisemitic intellectual "went out into the streets"; the small "revolutions" were now held exclusively in Jewish neighborhoods.

Ideological Antisemitism: Alexandru C. Cuza and Nicolae Paulescu

The social and political changes that occurred after 1922 led to a radicalization of antisemitism. In intellectual circles this produced a regrouping of forces and trends. Initially, though, the tone and direction were set by the "veterans," the ideologues who had asserted themselves in the last decades of the nineteenth century. For them, antisemitism was a political program, even a philosophical and esthetic creed. This group was dominated by the university professor Alexandru C. Cuza (1857–1944), who had been on the scene since 1888. His activity in this area had been preceded by participation in socialist circles and publications in his youth. Cuza was the most consistent theorist and propagator of antisemitism in the press, in university and political life and at public rallies for well over half a century. In 1910, together with Nicolae Iorga, he founded the Democratic Nationalist Party. In 1919, he established the Guard of National Awareness, and in 1923 the Christian National Defense League (L.A.N.C.), which merged two years later with the other two organizations. In 1935, together with Octavian Goga, he created the National Christian Party. He was a deputy to parliament almost without interruption

⁷² T. Teodorescu-Branște, "Incepurile mișcării antisemite în România după primul război mondial," *Toldot* (Jerusalem), 1 (1972).

⁷³ A. Hillgruber, "The Extermination of the European Jews in its Historical Context—A Recapitulation," *Yad Vashem Studies*, XVII (1986); V. Karady and I. Kemény, "Antisémitisme universitaire et concurrence de classe: la loi du numerus clausus en Hongrie entre les deux guerres," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 34 (Sept. 1980).

from 1911 to 1938, when the body was dissolved. In December 1937 he assisted Goga in the formation of a government that actually legislated antisemitism.⁷⁴

Cuza was the author of economic treatises of disputed value and was even accused of plagiarism. He was also the perfect illustration of the mediocre intellectual who made a remarkable scientific and political career based exclusively on the promotion of a program to combat the "Jewish threat."

Although Cuza's antisemitism was often considered to be a maniacal obsession,⁷⁵ one can distinguish several stages in its evolution, as well as significant shifts in the disciplines from which he gleaned his arguments. The first phase, lasting until the outbreak of World War I, was dominated by economic, ethnic and cultural elements. The religious element was almost totally absent, probably due to the residual atheism of the ex-socialist, but also no doubt as a result of the impact of the late nineteenth-century European antisemitic literature, with which Cuza was familiar. According to Cuza, the major threat represented by the Jew to the Romanian nation was ethnic:

Of an alien race, being equipped with certain physical and moral characteristics, and built in such a way that they do not assimilate with any people, the *yids* tend to replace us in Romania. What we are dealing with here is not a passing invasion but a real conquest, a life-and-death struggle between two different peoples, one of which, the Jews, destroys the other, the Romanian.⁷⁶

Studies of the structure of the urban population by trades and occupations, as well as demographic statistics were aimed at confirming the Jewish threat to the national economy and promoting the need for a protectionist policy. The principal goal

⁷⁴ On the political activity of A. C. Cuza, see: G. T. Pop, *Caracterul antinational și antipopular al activității Partidului Național Creștin* (Cluj, 1978); M. Rusenescu and I. Saizu, *Viața politică în România, 1922–1928* (Bucharest, 1979); Pamfil Ţeicaru, *Un junimist antisemit*: A. C. Cuza (Madrid, 1956); Carol Iancu, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 217–229.

⁷⁵ I. Ludo, *In jurul unei obștii* (Bucharest, 1936).

⁷⁶ A. C. Cuza, *Meseriașul român* (Bucharest, 1893), p. vi.

was the "Romanization" of the middle class by the gradual elimination of the Jews.⁷⁷

Cuza's "classical" ideological work, *Nationalitatea în artă* (Nationality in the Arts), had an ambitious aim: starting from the principle that "nationality is the creative power of human culture," he sought to demonstrate that, in the case of the Romanians, too, national culture could be created only by those having "Romanian blood" in their veins. The participation of Jews—"strangers, belonging to another race, having different laws and other cultural principles, incapable of assimilation" can only be detrimental.⁷⁸ Jews were dangerous not only because they were aliens, but also because they belonged to an inferior race, which was illustrated by their sterile, destructive and morbid culture: "[Jews] never produced a work of permanent value"; they "had gifted people, but no genius"; "they never had a positive significance for the advancement of human civilization." To illustrate his points, Cuza reviewed the history of the Jews since the biblical period by compiling paraphrases from Drumont, Momson, Reman and H. S. Chamberlain. In our day, argued Cuza, the Jews are the carriers of new microbes of social dissolution: humanitarianism, atheism, socialism, "democracy with sidecurls."⁷⁹

After 1918, Cuza's antisemitism was updated according to the changing circumstances. The participation of the Jews in World War I as soldiers in the Romanian army, an important argument in favor of their emancipation, was laced with disrepute by allegations of treason, desertion and spying for the enemy.⁸⁰ After the emancipation of the Jews by the 1923 Constitution, the new slogan of the antisemitic struggle was the *numerus clausus* designed to stop the "onrush" of the Jews to schools and universities: "The *yids* who are occupying the universities ... will guide the destiny of the Romanian nation and falsify the Romanian national culture."⁸¹ The *numerus clausus* was merely a

preliminary phase, "a form of transition to the next, only logical and therefore definitive form: the *numerus nullus*".⁸²

At this stage Cuza discovered the effectiveness of some historical arguments taken from Christian theology. Quite unexpectedly, he became an exegete of the Christian doctrine, which he sought to "reform" in order to make the militant anti-Jewish message of the teaching of Jesus more effective.⁸³ He condemned the Church for not having repudiated the Old Testament, thereby permitting Satan, "embodied by the Jews," to become all-powerful.⁸⁴ The strong emphasis on the *national Christian* meaning of the antisemitic struggle had appeared before, in the writings of Nicolae Paulescu. Cuza was quick in taking up these clichés, intuitively sensing the changes in direction and language of the new antisemitic currents.⁸⁵

Mystical commonplaces were also predominant in his articles and booklets written for the "popularization" of antisemitism. Cuza's newspaper *Apărarea Națională* (National Defense), published in association with Paulescu from 1922, serialized scenes of ritual murder and other abominations attributed to Jews in various countries throughout the ages. The series concluded with the following words:

There are other innumerable cases proven and described by authors on the basis of contemporary evidence. Almost all of them demonstrate the same thing: the killing is carried out in a barbarous manner, the victim is tortured, most often by repeating the torment of Jesus Christ, the blood of the victim runs into vessels, or on sheets, which are burned as the resulting ashes are used in all kinds of barbaric rites. Similar examples taken from history could be quoted *ad infinitum*.⁸⁶

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷⁸ A. C. Cuza, *Învățătura lui Isus. Judaismul ori teologia creștină* (Jassy, 1925); *Doctrina naționalistă creștină* (Jassy, 1928); and *Doctrina cuizistă: Lupta pentru credință și problema invârfămintului religios cu ilustrații din Thora* (Jassy, 1928).

⁷⁹ A. C. Cuza, *Învățătura lui Isus*, p. 25.

⁸⁰ A. C. Cuza, *Apărarea Națională*, no. 10, 15 Aug. 1922. The reports on ritual murder provoked an interesting response by a medical doctor and theologian who discredited the legend in a detailed study: Virgil Ciobanu, 'Omorul ritual' din punct de vedere istoric și medical' (Bucharest, 1924). An observation in his preface is worth noting: "In Transylvania, with few exceptions, belief in ritual murder is general in all strata of society."

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. xxxii.
⁷⁸ A. C. Cuza, *Nationalitatea în artă* (Bucharest, 1908), p. 6.
⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 147-49.
⁸⁰ A. C. Cuza, *Jidăni in război* (Bucharest, 1924). See also the response of W. Filderman op. cit. (note 69).
⁸¹ A. C. Cuza, *Numerus clausus* (Bucharest, 1923), p. 32.

The "science of antisemitism" was substantiated by Cuza in the same newspaper: "The object of the science of antisemitism is Judaism as a social problem, therefore necessarily being the synthesis of all the sciences capable of contributing to its solution." The sciences to which he referred included history, anthropology, theology, politics, political economy and philosophy. All his interdisciplinary investigations led to the same practical solution:

The elimination of the *yids* from the midst of the other peoples, thereby putting an end to their unnatural, parasitic existence due to an anachronistic concept that runs contrary to civilization and the peace of all nations, which the latter can no longer tolerate.⁸⁶

The science of antisemitism constituted the third element and a corollary of the other two elements of antisemitism: (1) *instinct*, which arouses the violent reactions of the masses; and (2) *awareness of the Jewish threat*.

In the late 1920s, under pressure from more recently formed antisemitic groups, which tended to escape his tutelage, Cuza redefined his doctrine. He now called it the "Christian nationalist doctrine," setting it into the larger sphere of "a system of thinking and action" that he called "Cuzism".

Cuzism presents itself with its own, complete, unitary and scientific system of the Christian nationalist doctrine, and proves, in the sum of its biological, theological, economic, sociological and historical elements, and in each one of them, that the only feasible solution of the Jewish question is the elimination of the *yids*, which implies immediate action, in all fields and at all times, on the basis of a clear program designed for this necessary and possible elimination.⁸⁷

Summed up in ten fundamental theses, the doctrine, as

⁸⁶ A. C. Cuza, "Ştiinţa antisemitemului," *Apărarea Națională*, no. 16, 15 Nov. 1922.

⁸⁷ A. C. Cuza, *Doctrina naționalistă creștină* (Jassy, 1928).

expounded in 1928, placed greater emphasis on purity of race, of "blood," on the Christian religion, as well as on the need for a general mobilization in order to eliminate the enemy. The radical program of Cuza's party, the L.A.N.C., founded in 1923 advocated the abrogation of the political rights of the Jews, the expulsion of those who had entered the country after 1914 and the dismissal of Jews from the army and public offices. The entire program was presented under the slogan "The Romania of the Romanians!"⁸⁸

In order to keep in step with other competing antisemitic groups, Cuza tried to outdo them by dissociating himself from *L'Action Française*, now considered to be too moderate, and advocated expulsion in a more decisive way: "Immediate action: the elimination of the *yids* from every field—and setting them in an empty land in which they, too, create their own culture."⁸⁹

From 1921, the *swastika* became the distinctive symbol of Cuza's movement; it appeared in its publications, booklets and electoral programs. Cuza claimed priority and a purely Romanian character for this symbol, without in any way referring to the circulation of the swastika in Germany.⁹⁰

It is a significant fact that in the 1920s Cuza was highly respected in Romania, for at the same time extremist political antisemitism was endorsed by prestigious establishments. Due to his seniority, Cuza had been the president of the Chamber of Deputies since 1922.⁹¹ The Christian National Defense League was inaugurated with a religious ceremony at the seat of the Bishop of Jassy, followed by a festive assembly in the main hall of

⁸⁸ "Programul L.A.N.C.," reprinted in I. Mironescu-Nor, *Moldova creștină și judeaismul talmudic* (Bucharest, 1927), pp. 163–64.

⁸⁹ A. C. Cuza, *Doctrina naționalistă creștină*, p. 16.

⁹⁰ "The swastika is linked to the cult of sun. It appears in the countries inhabited by the Pelasgic race, which we find from the very beginning in our lands. In general, the swastika is the distinctive sign of the Aryan race, particularly of its Thracian branch, from which we descend. The oldest swastika signs were found on our soil. . . . Being here since ancient times, the swastika therefore is, in the first place, ours, *Romanian* by its descent from the Thracian Aryans. . . . The swastika is our national emblem. The cross is the emblem of our faith, just as it is with all Christian peoples. It is only together that the Swastika and the Cross display our entire being, our body and soul. We are Aryans and Christians." (A. C. Cuza, *Inovația lui Isus*, pp. 33–34).

⁹¹ P. Ţeicaru, op. cit. (note 74), p. 20.

Jassy University, the oldest in Romania.⁹² The rise in Cuza's social standing continued throughout the next decade, without being directly linked to the political successes or failures of his movement.⁹³

Nicolae C. Paulescu (1869–1931), a scholar and well-known professor of physiology at the Medical School of Bucharest, was a close associate of Cuza. He had assisted Cuza in the founding of the post-1922 ultra-nationalist movements and parties; together they published the newspaper *Apărarea Națională*.

Unlike Cuza, Paulescu concentrated on the development of the religious aspect of the Romanian antisemitic doctrine, but also attempted to substantiate antisemitism through medicine and psychopathology. He himself was an interesting case of visceral obsessive antisemitism. In his scientific expositions, one of which was also published in Paris in 1913, Paulescu gathered all the accusations against Jews and delivered them at an increasing speed to the point of delirium. His starting point was a theory of passions and of social conflicts examined from the angle of a discipline he called "philosophical physiology." It was illustrated, in the main, by the behavior of Jews, who represented the extreme case of a race ruled by two essential passions: the instincts of domination and ownership.⁹⁴ The instruments to secure world domination with a view to the extermination of other peoples were the doctrine of the Talmud and the organization of the "Cahal." Paulescu described in great detail the "Cahal"'s complicated and secretive function, using the texts of

⁹² C. Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* (Sibiu, 1936), pp. 119–20.

⁹³ I. Mironescu-Nor, author of the volume *Moldova creștină și judaismul talmudic* (1927) was a zealous pupil of A. C. Cuza. In the spirit of the L.A.N.C. program, which he reproduced, Mironescu proposed that the first intermediary measure, before the achievement of "the extinction" of the Jews of Romania, should be the expulsion of the Jews who had reached the age of twenty-one (only the male Jews); "in general the women of the Jews are not a threat". For the antisemitic education of the Romanians, the author suggested courses on the Hebrew religion and sermons warning against the dangers of the Talmud.

⁹⁴ N. C. Paulescu, *Physiologie philosophique. Les passions. Les conflits sociaux. Remèdes moraux* (Paris, 1914); *Fiziologia filozofică. Talmudul, Cahalul, Franc-Masoneria* (Bucharest, 1913); *Fiziologia filozofică. Sinagoga și biserică fățu de pacificarea omenei* (Bucharest, 1923); *Complot jidano-framasonic impotriva neamului românesc* (Bucharest, 1924).

Drumont, Jacob Brafman and August Rohling, and also examples of the "diabolical" Jewish-community of Romania. Even the peasant uprising of 1907, he said, was prepared, financed and organized by the World "Cahal," which specialized in "revolutionary plotting." This idea had not occurred even to Cuza.⁹⁵

A morbid collection of sexual descriptions and perversions, designed to expose the demoniac means Jews used to corrupt the Romanian people, inevitably led to the idea of exterminating the "enemies." It was already formulated in 1913, albeit in the form of a question:

We Romanians are faced with a capital question: What shall we do with these uninvited guests who suddenly installed themselves in this country, or rather, with these evil parasites who are both *thieves* and *assassins*? Can we exterminate them just as, for instance, bedbugs are killed? This would be the simplest and handiest way of getting rid of them; if we were to act according to the laws of the Talmud, it would even be legitimate.⁹⁶

Paulescu in fact rejected this solution out of Christian considerations and advocated a more constructive plan of forcible reeducation of the Jews by obliging them to abandon the dogmas of the Talmud and liquidate the "Cahal."⁹⁷ After 1922, Paulescu saw the conflict in religious terms, as a powerful struggle between "Godly Christianity" and "Devilish Judaism." Because the Jews were preparing to create a country of their own in Eastern Europe and to "exterminate the native peoples," as they had done in Russia, Paulescu called for the mobilization of the entire Christian world: "The union of all Christians is an imperative and inexorable necessity, especially today when the question is life or death for Christianity and for Romania."⁹⁸

The doctrinaires of Orthodoxy of the following decade looked upon Paulescu as one of their precursors, as he had

⁹⁵ N. C. Paulescu, *Talmudul* . . . , p. 11.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁹⁷ N. C. Paulescu, *Sinagoga și biserică . . . , pp. 166, 177.*

identified the Orthodox Christian dogma as an element of nationalism and had exposed the Jews as the most serious threat to the Christian world. Nichifor Crainic, the principal ideologist of Orthodoxy, paid homage to Paulescu by calling him "the founder of Christian nationalism" and "the most complete and most normative eminent doctrinaire of our nationalism."⁹⁸

The doctrines represented by Cuza and Paulescu did not penetrate Romanian political life until the 1930s, when a considerable sector of the Romanian political body began to accept the thrust of these arguments. Eventually these ideas became a part of official state policy.

The National Myth and the "Jewish Question": Nicolae Iorga

After World War I the two dominant ideas in Romanian intellectual and political life were *democracy* and *nationalism*, and their equivalents in various ideological currents. The approach to the "Jewish problem" was part and parcel of the debate between these divergent orientations.

In the nationalist doctrines the terms *nationalism* and *democracy* were mutually exclusive. As Romanian right-wing nationalism absorbed the theories of H. S. Chamberlain and Charles Maurras, with particular emphasis on the idea of the soul of the nation, it irrevocably left the Jews outside the national sphere; they were doomed to remain *aliens* for ever. The concept of democracy was cloaked in an exclusively negative connotation. Democracy became the principal enemy of nationalism, and the relationship between the Jew and democracy was naturally construed as axiomatic.

The same process had taken place in other European countries two or three decades earlier.⁹⁹ The specific Romanian feature centers around the aspect of continuity and the replacement of the romantic national myth, or "revolutionary nationalism,"

⁹⁸ Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocratie* (Bucharest, 1937), pp. 146-58. See also Pan M. Viziulescu, "Ortodoxia și Etnocrația—doctrina salvării și a misiunii noastre," *Gândirea*, 9 (1938).

⁹⁹ H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930* (New York, 1958); Z. Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire, 1885-1914: Les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris, 1978).

with a clear-cut conservative ideology, defined by patriarchy, traditionalism, ruralism and xenophobia.

For several generations the historian Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) was the voice of the nationalist ideology. He was the most important propagator of the Romanian national character and the "Romanian soul" in culture and in the arts. Iorga was the greatest Romanian historian. From the last years of the nineteenth century until his death in 1940, Iorga dominated, with his powerful and contradictory personality, cultural and academic life in Romania. Having received his doctorate at Leipzig University in 1893, Iorga began lecturing in world history at the University of Bucharest in 1894, and continued to do so for forty-six years. Iorga was the author of an impressive number of monographs and collections of documents in all fields of Romanian culture and history, as well as on ancient and modern history. He founded important Romanian cultural and scientific institutions and was elected an honorary member of the most prestigious European academies.

A social theorist, prolific writer and active politician (a founder of political parties, as well as a deputy, government minister and prime minister), he and the poet Octavian Goga confirmed the significant persistence of the romantic myth surrounding the writer as the spiritual leader of the nation. Both men became the inspired promoters of yet another myth dominating Romanian culture—the myth of *national regeneration*. The anachronism of this leadership model at a time when intellectual life had become autonomous¹⁰⁰ might also explain their political failures, but it confirms the high degree of intellectualization in Romanian political life.¹⁰¹ As with Eminescu, Iorga's nationalist ideology was built around a national mystique. It consisted of the cultural and political promotion of the traditional values of Romanian rural life, opposition to modernization and, in different periods, varying degrees of xenophobia.

¹⁰⁰ For the autonomization of intellectual life in Romania, see M. D. Gheorghiu, "La stratégie critique de la revue *Vîta românească*, 1906-1916," in A. Zub (ed.), *Culture and Society* (Jassy, 1985).

¹⁰¹ P. Michelson, *Myth and Reality in Romanian National Development*, (Huntington, 1986) (see note 6 above for full citation).

After a brief socialist crisis in his youth, Iorga, in close association with Cuza, plunged into vigorous journalistic and political activity, characterized by nationalism and inflammatory antisemitism, which he advocated mainly in his newspaper *Neamul Românesc* (1906–1944). In 1910 Iorga and Cuza created the Democratic Nationalist Party, which had a clear-cut antisemitic manifesto, and were elected to parliament.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the two were very different as far as their intellectual worth and their approach to the national idea were concerned. After 1922 they severed their relationship, and Iorga, always anxious to minimize their former partnership,¹⁰³ took care not to be politically associated with Cuza.

During the period of their joint militancy, however, Iorga's favorite political subject was the economic domination of the Jews and its evil effects on the peasantry, a domination contradicting the exclusive right of true Romanians to control the country's entire socioeconomic organization.¹⁰⁴ The Jewish "invasion" of certain old Romanian cities such as Jassy and Suceava was felt to be an acute degradation of the nation's spirit. The superimposition of the Jewish stratum, especially the commercial class, on the native-born population was a "sullying," a profanation of sacred historical places:

Three-quarters of the inhabitants of Jassy are Jews. Wealth, life and mobility are theirs. The flame of Zionism was lit there and burns strongly. There are only two things we have at Jassy: school and church. And the king of Romania comes to a capital city that is oppressed by the dirty business world of another people. Its actions and words link our past and present inseparably in the eyes of the heathen and hostile foreigner. But, however high the dirty wave of profit-seekers, the soil is ours. And one day the wind will blow away the scum it has brought, and we shall remain.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² C. Iancu, op. cit. (note 9), p. 227.

¹⁰³ N. Iorga, *O viață de om aşa cum a fost*, vol. II (Bucharest, 1934).

¹⁰⁴ N. Iorga, "Sentiment național și idee națională," *Neamul Românesc*, no. 147–148, 25 Dec. 1909.

¹⁰⁵ *Semănătorul*, 10 Nov. 1904. Quoted also by S. Schafferman, *Dr. W. Filderman* (Tel Aviv, 1986), p. 12.

A highly gifted and persuasive orator, Iorga's nationalistic and xenophobic discourse prophesied terrible cataclysms and vengeance. Sometimes the attacks on "the alien" were direct, much like indictments; on other occasions they were cryptic allusions to mysterious threats. In a trance of patriotic enthusiasm, Iorga became a messenger of the Romanian forefathers demanding revenge. The impression in some of his inflammatory pamphlets was that the struggle had almost been lost and that the Romanians had become serfs of the Jews; his was the voice of the embattled leader of the hosts calling on his fighters to realize his last hope of reconquering lost positions.

However, this was only one of his discourses. Iorga's fanaticism was mostly a question of rhetoric. In a sudden change of tone, Iorga became *conciliatory*, an enlightened "European" rejecting violence and extreme measures, putting forward constructive solutions. Romanian Jews had a history of their own, and Iorga now delved into it.¹⁰⁶ Some Jewish personalities (for example, Moses Gaster, and even the socialist Dobrogeanu-Gherea) had contributed to Romanian culture, but, on the whole, they remained aliens and, because of their number and socioeconomic weight, a threat to the Romanian nation. Their gradual, "peaceful" removal from the important sectors of social life, corresponding to the formation of ethnic Romanian elements capable of replacing them, was of vital necessity. Directing Jews to other spheres of activity—agricultural labor, for example—might diminish the intensity of the conflict.¹⁰⁷ Iorga's cultural and literary activity in the *semănătorist* movement (so called after the traditionalist *Semănătorul* [The Sower of Seeds] review, 1901–1910) also included public appearances all over the country, but particularly in Vălenii de Munte, where he lived and established a people's university that exercised a powerful influence on students, teachers and priests. The halo of "the people's apostle" was indicative of his call to "the more vigorous assertion of the Romanian soul."¹⁰⁸ The

¹⁰⁶ N. Iorga, *Histoire des Juifs en Roumanie* (Bucharest, 1914).

¹⁰⁷ On Nicolae Iorga's conception of nationalism, see: W.O. Oldson, *The Historical and Nationalistic Thought of Nicolae Iorga* (New York, 1973).

¹⁰⁸ N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane* (Bucharest, 1934), p. 63.

enduring belief in "national rebirth" through culture, and bore the hallmark of the historian's exceptional personality.

In this framework, every antisemitic discourse,—his own and those of his guest lecturers, among them Cuza,—assumed the gravity of a high national commandment. By associating the program for the revival of Romanian spiritual values with the fight against the "Jewish threat," Iorga imbued the movement with the aura of a patriotic mission and a legitimacy that it had thus far lacked.¹⁰⁹

But Iorga's involvement remained consistent with his nationalistic beliefs. When, in the years 1922-1923, the antisemitic movement assumed extreme forms, Iorga rejected it; the new slogan demanding a *numerus clausus* was, he said, "an absurdity."¹¹⁰ He looked upon the nationalist doctrine he represented and redefined in a lecture in December 1922, as the continuation and natural development of the traditional Romanian spirit, whose structure was derived from the peasantry, and of the national direction inaugurated in 1840 by Kogălniceanu, one of modern Romania's first theorists and statesman. It was a "democratic," that is, a purely *popular* and *rural* nationalism aiming to stimulate the natural, "organic" evolution of the nation ("the natural and organic being") through education and moral action.

It was in the context of the strong antisemitic agitation and the new configuration of the minorities in postwar Romania that Iorga also deduced his attitude to the Jews, without naming them (his wording is very prudent and diplomatic), from the nationalistic doctrine. His tone was constructive and conciliatory, in obvious contrast to his previous orientation. In his allusive style, Iorga sought to detach himself politically from his former comrade Cuza, and his vociferous disciples:

This conception I have asserted, and done so without any polemical barbs, against a category of this country's inhabi-

tants who must be made to understand more fully that they have obligations toward the country in which they were born and toward the nation which is predominant in this country, but who can by no means be considered as the natural enemy of a people which would wish to have no natural enemy whatsoever, and if there is one he should be outside its body politic. A very essential difference has thus been produced, determining certain separations that I am proud of having made because, had I not done so, I would be ashamed of appearing before you as the accomplice to certain actions that dishonor a civilization.¹¹¹

The elements of "non-Romanian blood" must become aware of the need to collaborate with "the legitimate masters of this land."¹¹²

In later years, Iorga was brought back into the antisemitic discourse by political circumstances, his temperamental fluctuations, and, more particularly, by the contradictions of his powerfully xenophobic "Romanianism."

Nationalism and Populism: Constantin Stere

A populist root of Romanian nationalism with an antisemitic element can be found in the early sociological studies of Constantin Stere (1865-1936), an important politician and the principal ideologist of *poporanism* ("populism").¹¹³ After World War I, he became the leader of the National Peasant Party.

In his 1907 essay "Social Democracy or Populism?" which attracted a strong following in Romanian intellectual and political circles, Stere inaugurated a new form of antisemitic nationalism, one which, in the name of "healthy and true nationalism," rejected "noisy" antisemitism, excesses, violence and demagogy. In the section entitled "The National Question and Social Democracy—Antisemitism," Stere set out to analyze

¹⁰⁹ Cf. E. Lovinescu, *Titu Maiorescu, și posteritatea lui critică* (Bucharest, 1943). Another point of view, "exonerating" Iorga, is that of M. Martin, *Identificări* (Bucharest, 1977), pp. 157-61.

¹¹⁰ A. C. Cuza, *Numerus clausus* (Bucharest, 1923), p. 3.

¹¹¹ N. Iorga, "Doctrina naționalistă", in *Doctrinile partidelor politice* (Bucharest, 1923), pp. 45-46.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 46.

¹¹³ On Stere's work and political activity until World War I, see: Z. Ornea, *Viața lui C. Stere*, vol. I (Bucharest, 1989).

objectively the "Jewish question" from the national and social perspective:

I wish to discuss the "Jewish question" in which, as I have said, a real conflict of interests, a necessary and legitimate struggle has been completely distorted by the vulgar and ferocious Judeophobia of our antisemites, who not only discredit us in the eyes of the world, thereby making a rational and just solution more difficult, but also transpose it from an unassailable position to a terrain where it is a foregone conclusion that we shall be condemned to inevitable and fatal defeat.¹¹⁴

The Jews were, he went on, "an impediment to our normal development" because of their qualities and not, as the antisemites believed, due to their defects.¹¹⁵ The sources of the conflict resided in the type of culture represented by the Jews and in the characteristic features of Romanian social structures. A universally valid catalyst was the "archaic" nature of the Jewish religion, which "inevitably" led to conflict with modern cultures because it transformed the Jews into an autonomous social and political organism that was "ferociously" and "fanatically" exclusivist (just like the "antisemites") and opposed to all innovation. The Jews would, however, be able to integrate into a universal culture if they left "the stranglehold of the *Talmud*" and renounced the pattern of Jewish culture. But this would lead to the disappearance of the Jews as a distinctive cultural type, which explained the "conservative fanaticism and national and religious exclusivity" of Judaism, "thereby perpetuating this tragedy which has already lasted far too long."¹¹⁶

According to Stere, the Romanian aspect of the "Jewish question" was of a social nature. Stere took up the principal tenets of Eminescu's articles, but presented them in a new, more sociological language. Under the conditions of the economic and social backwardness of Romania, then at a transitional stage, the

Jews, having entered the country in great numbers due to uncontrolled immigration, were able to constitute "the entire layer of the *middle classes*, thereby hampering the country's normal development." From the economic point of view the Jews represented "usurious," "banking," "vagabond" capital that did not play the "progressive, creative, revolutionary" role of industrial capitalism.¹¹⁷

This state of affairs produced serious consequences for the national culture: a foreign middle class, "which does not speak the language of the people and has no use for its literary creations," was blocking the Romanian people's access to its culture. The defensive response was therefore quite legitimate: Can a people, however tolerant, resign itself to shifting the political center of gravity for the benefit of foreign elements, thereby entrusting its destiny to a foreign class?¹¹⁸

As the Romanian sociologist Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu recently put it, the aim of Stere's thesis was to delegitimize the middle class only because it was ethnically heterogeneous.¹¹⁹ The social problem had become an exclusively ethnic problem. It was, concluded Stere, "a national conflict," "painful and fatal, a deep and real conflict; its victims are ourselves and the Jews."¹²⁰ As the situation was so severe, a renunciation of "noisy" antisemitism, which he attacked with great sarcasm, was in order:

The rusty weapons taken from the arsenal of medieval persecutions, the spreading of hatred, the passionate kindling of excesses, the stirring of beastly instincts in the masses, the coarse and obscene insults humiliating only those who proffer them—all they do is to discredit a just cause which is *not* the cause of antisemitism.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 197, 199.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 198.

¹¹⁹ M. D. Gheorghiu, *Scena literaturii. Elemente pentru o sociologie a culturii românești* (Bucharest, 1987), pp. 195-198.

¹²⁰ C. Stere, op. cit., p. 204.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 205.

¹¹⁴ C. Stere, "Social-democrație sau poporanism?", *Viața Românească* 8 (1907), p. 186.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 187.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 192, 193.

"The just cause" as formulated by Stere in 1907 (and later abandoned) was actually a "civilized" antisemitism spelled out in a balanced policy underpinned by a well-articulated ideology. However, the practical measures proposed were no less radical: a program for the expulsion of "this surplus Jewish population," the rigorous organization of Jewish emigration "regulated and channeled in conformity with our interests."¹²²

In essence, Stere was expressing the official policy of the Romanian "historical parties," a policy pursued either overtly or covertly until 1938.¹²³ In his above-mentioned letter to Korolenko (1912), Dobrogeanu-Gherea was correct in guessing his friend's true position:

And there is our common friend Stere who, in his article on the Jewish question, puts forward as the solution to this problem the banishment of the Jews from Romania to the backdoor of hell at the expense of the state (how wonderful he is!), and being a prefect, he would look after their evacuation and their colonization in certain pre-established places.¹²⁴

Stere's theories about the negative, anti-national role of the "middle class," composed of foreigners and representing "predatory" capitalism, were, in the early 1980s, taken up again in Romania, albeit in a "neo-Marxist" language.¹²⁵

After World War I Stere pleaded for democratic reforms to resolve the situation of the Jews: "After the collapse of Czarism, Romania cannot remain the only one country where the Jewish question is given a solution different from everywhere else in the world."¹²⁶

His declarations of sympathy and interest toward Jews multiplied in accordance with the growth of antisemitic tension

¹²² Ibid.
¹²³ H. L. Roberts, op. cit. (note 20), p. 147. On Stere's nationalism, see A. Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation* (Munich, 1986), pp. 79–98.

¹²⁴ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, op. cit. (note 65), vol. VIII, p. 279.

¹²⁵ I. Bădescu, *Sincronism european și cultură critici românească* (Bucharest, 1984).

¹²⁶ C. Stere, "Calea de mîntuire", *Lumina*, 5 Apr. 1919.

in the country. The Jewish question was "a raw wound," "a chronic disease to which no moral conscience, no noble soul, can be reconciled."¹²⁷ In 1929, Stere wrote of the importance of the Jews in the history of mankind and voiced the belief that they would continue to occupy "a place of honor in the comity of peoples." Overall, he now referred to the general situation of the Jews in the world ("a great historical nation is actually excluded from the sphere of law") and did not return to a social analysis of the "problem" in Romania.¹²⁸

Nationalism and Antisemitism in Transsylvania:

Aurel C. Popovici, G. Bogdan-Duică.

Octavian Goga

In Transsylvania, which was annexed to Romania as late as 1918, the nationalist current in Romanian intellectual life had particular forms and a special intensity. Since the eighteenth century Transsylvania had been the focus of a very powerful Romanian cultural movement directed toward the preservation of Romanian identity in the face of Magyarization. As a result of Austro-Hungarian persecution, Romanian nationalism was more ardent and dramatic in Transsylvania. Transylvanian ideologists were also distinguished by their intellectual receptivity (after studies in Vienna) to German cultural influences.

As the Romanian-Magyar conflict was the more acute, the "Jewish question" initially was only of secondary concern; however, at the beginning of the twentieth century and after the union of Transsylvania with Romania it began to take precedence, and the trans-Carpathian province contributed to the promotion of antisemitic ideas.

After 1900, one of the most reputed nationalist ideologists was Aurel C. Popovici (1863–1917). An adherent to the ideological heritage of Eminescu, Popovici, an editor of Nicolae Iorga's *Semănătorul*, adopted the conservative viewpoint, which he

¹²⁷ C. Stere, "Nemuritorul Izrael," *Adevărul literar și artistic*, no. 258, 15 Nov. 1925. In the same spirit, his interview in *Curierei israelit*, no. 43, 7 Dec. 1930.

¹²⁸ C. Stere, "Iudaismul și politica evreilor din România", in A. Blumentfeld-Scrutator, *Greșeli în politica eureiască* (Bucharest, 1929).

expounded in detail in an essay significantly entitled “Nationalism or Democracy” (1910). The healthy development of the Romanian nation, he maintained, depended on the preservation of the “patriarchal character” of the Romanians and the maintenance of ethnic purity, although a small coefficient of foreign admixture could be tolerated:

Because each nation has its own coefficient in its power of assimilating foreign elements. Once the infusion of ethnically foreign blood exceeds a certain limit, even the biggest and most powerful nation decays.¹²⁹

The enemy of nationalism was “cosmopolitan democracy.” Social crises and other forms of “perversion of the national mentality” were the effects of democracy, and democracy had been introduced to Romania by foreigners.

One of the most damaging consequences of democracy was the enormous power of the press. In the hands of the Jews, newspapers, “plutocratic powers,” were able to manipulate public opinion, to create, for their own purposes, sensational events such as the Dreyfus case, yet remain silent about equally serious injustices, such as the persecution of Romanians in Transylvania.¹³⁰

The novelty in Popovici’s doctrine was that he adopted the ideas of H. S. Chamberlain, from whom he borrowed in particular the theory of racial inequality, which enabled him, *inter alia*, to rank the Hungarians among the inferior races.¹³¹ He praised Aryanism, “the German spirit,” the spirit of the “Germanic tribes,” and was proud that the Romanian people, although part of the Latin race, also had “some German blood in its veins.”¹³² The only difference between Popovici and Chamberlain was the importance the Romanian ideologist accorded to Christianity as a decisive element of the national character. As we shall see, it

was this point that distinguished all Romanian nationalist ideologists from the theories circulating in Germany.¹³³

Another Transylvanian man of letters, the nationalist literary historian Gheorghe Bogdan-Duică (1866–1934), was much more concerned about the “Jewish menace.”¹³⁴ An erudite man, Bogdan-Duică analyzed in detail Sombart’s *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben*, August Rohling’s studies and also Jewish authors (e.g., Arthur Ruppin *et al.*) as well as numerous volumes of theology, sociology and political economy. He marshalled a host of arguments and numerous bibliographical sources in order to vindicate the ideas of Cuza and Paulescu: the “economic Judaization” of Romania, the inherent danger in granting civil rights to the Jews of Romania, Jewish arrogance, the “religious stupidity” of the Jews, and their “racial inferiority.” A great many facts and statistics concerning the Jews of Galicia, Russia, Austria, Hungary, Bukovina and Transylvania demonstrated the existence of “the great arch of the circle that besieges us” and the urgency of taking defensive measures.¹³⁵

He rejected the “novelties” advocated by the young leaders of the fascist “Legion of Archangel Michael” and carried on a harsh academic polemical exchange, in 1927, with Ion I. Moța, a co-founder of the movement.¹³⁶ Without any clear program of political action, though totally absorbed in his antisemitic research, Bogdan-Duică was not accepted as a political ideologue, but remained simply an “authority” on extreme antisemitic theories.

In 1922, when Iorga abandoned active political antisemitism, (Octavian Goga) (1881–1938) joined the movement, captivated by the nationalist ardor of the youth. The poet and politician Goga

¹²⁹ Only one year after its publication, Aurel C. Popovici’s study received an interesting reply in a book of the same title by V. I. Bârbat, “*Nationalism sau Democrație*” (Bucharest, 1911). This author contested Popovici’s main theses, particularly on the transformation of nationalism into a “universal philosophy of life” (p. 19) and its predisposition to acquire “an autocratic-utopian character, a formalistic and authoritarian character” (p. 29).

¹³⁰ G. Bogdan-Duică, *Români și Orei* (Bucharest, 1913); *Orei pământeni și subpământeni* (Bucharest, 1913).

¹³¹ G. Bogdan-Duică, *Români și Orei*, p. 191.

¹³² I. I. Moța, *Cranii de lemn* (Bucharest, 1937). pp. 77–87.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 343.

was a representative figure of the Transylvanian variant of Romanian nationalism. Passionately involved in the struggle of the Romanians of Transylvania for national rights before World War I, Goga was a member of several governments and a leading figure in the political parties that sprang up after the integration of Transylvania into Romania's borders. He exerted a great deal of influence in his native province.¹³⁷

One of the most important twentieth-century Romanian national poets, Goga illustrated in his journalistic and political activity the metamorphosis of traditional nationalism into a form of *Romanianism*, an ideology of struggle against foreigners. Goga was a constant sympathizer and almost unreserved admirer of the new antisemitic impetus represented by the generation of young intellectuals who joined the "Legion of Archangel Michael." When that movement began, he discovered its roots in Romanian tradition, and if, for reasons of political strategy, he had not kept his distance from it—to the point of becoming its adversary in the struggle for power—he might have been its most prestigious ideologist.

In a long series of essays, collected in the volume *Mustul care fierbe* ("Must in Ferment," 1927), he discussed, with growing sympathy and solidarity, the student movements for the *numerus clausus* and pointed with unerring intuition to the manifestations of deep-seated change. The movement was a "great rebellion of youth" in search of "a new religion"; it came from "the organic truths of the race"; it was "the first vanguard of this evolution of the national consciousness," announcing "a new ferment in moral life," a "purifying storm"; it "represented the fanatical and intransigent national religion, the most important foundation of our state life."¹³⁸ Political assassination was "a case of conscience," "an outburst of protest of the national instinct" and, above all, a warning to the foreigners:

This truth should be understood by everybody who can

¹³⁷ On the political activity of Goga, see P.A. Shapiro, "Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: The National Christian Party in Power, December 1937–February 1938," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 1 (Spring 1974).

¹³⁸ O. Goga, *Mustul care fierbe* (Bucharest, 1927), p. 69.

influence public opinion in this country, by the native-born and foreigners. Those who are at home here should guide the living pulse of the national instinct in a constructive direction, and those who have found shelter in a blessed land should realize that audacious provocations are pushing the old-fashioned patience of a people to its extreme limit.¹³⁹

For Goga, too, the *national idea*, defined as "fanatical belief in the people's specific patriotism,"¹⁴⁰ emanated directly from Eminescu's ideology, but he placed significant emphasis on "racial purity," "prerogatives of the blood," and "the organic truths of the race."¹⁴¹ The principal threat of a menacing "race" came almost entirely from the Jews. Even the Magyar danger was "Hungarian Semitic."¹⁴² His very militant and poignant articles were dominated by metaphors of *danger* and *decisive struggle*. Goga was one of the first Romanian politicians and cultural personalities who saw the resurgence of antisemitism as proof of the outbreak of a war against foreigners (Jews), who were the aggressors. Romanian violence was no more than a justified defense posture:

It is true that two militant camps are facing one another in Romania today. An abyss has opened up between them in recent years. Integral Romanianism, with all the impulses of a history of millennium, is on one side; on the other are the new citizens of the peace treaty, the merry war profiteers. Two different concepts of life are fighting each other. The earth [i.e., the native Romanians] speaks with the flecks [i.e., the Jews] brought by the wind. We agree that reconciliation becomes more and more difficult. The truth, though, is that this terrible clash was started by the few. It is they, Romanians according to the paper signed by the new authorities, totally alien to the logic of the blood, who launched the attack. Always impetuous and intolerant, and often insolent and despising of their surroundings, they slapped us on both cheeks....

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 55, 140.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 24.

This attack has produced a response. Violence provokes a reaction. . . . Once the war has started, the means of snatching victory recedes to secondary importance. . . . We shall see what is going to happen. One thing, though, is certain: Romanianism is becoming fully mobilised and, being at home, it will win the victory either in a flood of theoretical arguments or in a forest of slaps in the face.¹⁴³

2

Like Iorga, Goga rejected the charge that he was a dogmatic antisemite. His attitude had "objective" causes: demographic changes, along with a wave of "undesirable intruders" from Bessarabia and Bukovina,¹⁴⁴ the pro-Hungarianism of the Jews of Transylvania; their "seizure" of the national press; their poisonous infiltration of cultural life; the threat they posed to the ethnic purity of the Romanians.

For Goga, the Jewish menace was embodied in the Jewish journalist, "who pollutes public consciousness and poisons the world."¹⁴⁵ This was a marked transfer of the antisemitic stereotype from the economic and social fields to the intellectual sphere.

The spiritualization of antisemitic theses was sharpened and amplified by another important ideologue, Nichifor Crainic. He was joined by other intellectuals who entered the ranks of the Iron Guard. The spotlight now shifted to exposing the spiritual character of the "Jewish menace."

The years immediately following World War I were decisive in the evolution of Romanian antisemitism and its attendant social and political ideas. Student demonstrations throughout the country and the vitriolic antisemitic press were a revolutionary turning point. The antisemitic discourse now threw off traditional democratic, rationalist inhibitions and adopted an attitude of open struggle, of a "holy war" against the Jews. The language of this discourse and these new political means were directly rooted in the totalitarian doctrine that was then being crystallized.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 396.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 434.

Between Democracy and Dictatorship (1930–1938)

The New Political Context of the "Jewish Question"

The Romanians' optimistic expectations following the creation of Greater Romania did not fully materialize. The Romanian state was faced with great difficulties in meeting the demands resulting from the substantial changes that had occurred in the country's configuration. Administrative problems in the recently annexed provinces, with their specific political traditions and diverse economic structures, were immediately compounded by political difficulties. The national parties of the Old Kingdom suddenly became "regional" organizations and were unable to find suitable ways of integrating the political groupings of the Romanians living in Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia.¹

The democratic institutions sanctioned by the new constitution of 1923 were put into effect despite the absence of any true democratic tradition: the electoral system was pervaded by corruption; an unwieldy bureaucracy entailed heavy state expenditure;² the postwar agricultural reform did not go far enough to improve life in the villages; the peasantry remained a passive mass manipulated by the political parties. The economic crisis of 1929 accentuated the weaknesses of the country's

¹ P.A. Shapiro, "Romania's Past as Challenge for the Future: A Developmental Approach to Interwar Politics," in D.N. Nelson (ed.), *Romania in the 1980s* (Boulder, 1981), p. 21.

² J. Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Washington, 1974), pp. 286–7.

economic structures: the poverty of the agricultural proletariat, unemployment of intellectuals and the continuity of "neofeudal" relations in a capitalist society. Graduates of certain university faculties grew in disproportion to the country's economic development. Lawyers and engineers were unable to find positions in the already overstuffed state apparatus. This created a huge stratum of "intellectual unemployed" (some 20,000 in 1936).³ A large number of intellectuals, as well as numerous university students, joined extremist organizations and parties. The depression of 1930–1933, which struck a primarily rural national economy, despite the attempts at industrial modernization (merely 7.7 percent of the population was engaged in the industrial sector) and the slow progress of urbanization, also accentuated ethnic tensions, especially in many towns of Moldavia and recently annexed provinces with an overwhelming proportion of minorities.⁴

According to the 1930 census, some 30 percent of the population in postwar-Romania consisted of ethnic minorities, including Jews. The inadequate and frequently hostile policies directed toward the minorities were the source of acute tensions, particularly in the relations between the Romanians and the Hungarians of Transylvania and the Russians of Bessarabia. Territorial litigation with Hungary and the Soviet Union and the close "Bolshevik threat" also exacerbated the growth of xenophobia and contributed to the political success of extremist right-wing movements.

The Orthodox Church, too, was in a precarious position after the incorporation of the new provinces. It had to confront a trend toward autonomy in the Orthodox Church in Bessarabia and the power of the important Catholic community in Transylvania, which was directly subordinate to the Vatican hierarchy. The traditional policy of the Romanian Orthodox clergy was to reinforce state authority and to favor any movement, even extremist, whose program included loyalty to Orthodoxy. Many priests therefore became members of the Iron Guard and thus increased the organization's influence in the villages.

³ H. Prost, *Destin de la Roumanie (1918–1954)* (Paris, 1954), p. 108.

⁴ M. Shafir, *Romania. Politics, Economics and Society* (London, 1985), pp. 6, 132.

Studies dealing with the history of Romania in the interwar period point to a sharp deterioration in political life in the late 1920s. Romanian liberalism often proved precarious, as it was liable to corruption and abuses of power.⁵ The decline was glaringly spotlighted by the appearance of political assassination as a means of protest introduced by young extremists belonging to the Christian National Defense League. Police Commissioner Manciu was shot and killed at Jassy by the university student Cornelius Zelea Codreanu on October 25, 1924. This was the first in a long line of political murders, including some large-scale massacres that left their marks on Romania's political life.

Stimulated by the Nazis's rise to power in Germany, violent outbreaks during student demonstrations and election campaigns, as well as rampant violence (such as felonies, robberies and small-scale pogroms) in the Jewish neighborhoods multiplied after 1933.⁶ The stage for these events had been prepared nearly ten years before. Public reaction to the trial of Codreanu in 1925, which had ended in his acquittal, heralded the nationalist fervor of the following decade. Prosecutor C. C. Costa-Foru, himself a publicist, described in an interview the state of mind of the local notables during the trial:⁷

Everybody in the hall, full of the best people of the town... was wearing those Cuzist badges they call swastikas or fylfots, signs of antisemitic hatred... a whole town of otherwise educated and peaceable people was seized by a general madness... by a psychosis.⁷

In his diaries entries for the years 1925–1926, Nicolae Iorga noted with concern the escalation of antisemitic manifestations by

⁵ C. Durandin, "Orthodoxie et Roumanie: Le débat de l'entre deux guerres," *Romanian Studies* (Leiden), V (1980–1986), p. 105–6; V. Georgescu, *Istoria românilor de la origini pînă în zilele noastre* (Los Angeles, 1984), pp. 227–36; A. Polonsky, *The Little Dictators: The History of Eastern Europe since 1918 1932–1940* (Durham, N.C., 1989).

⁶ For a detailed account of Legionary crimes and attacks, see: M. Fătu and I. Spălateu, *Garda de Fier, organizația teroristă de tip fascist* (Bucharest, 1971).

⁷ "Convorbire cu d. Costa-Foru," *Curierul israelit*, no. 21, 31 May 1925.

young men, often in the framework and with the support of the Church. He commented on the atmosphere sparked at those meetings and the confusion and passivity of the authorities.⁸

King Carol II returned to Romania and his throne in 1930. His ambition to build up his own political force became yet another factor in the destabilization and weakening of the bourgeois parties. Numerous fragile governmental coalitions succeeded one another at brief intervals. This accentuated the lack of confidence in the parliamentary system's capacity to solve economic difficulties and put an end to corruption and lawlessness.

After several short-lived transitional governments (among them, a government coalition led by Nicolae Iorga between April 1931 and June 1932), the National Liberal Party returned to power in November 1933. Only one month later, the new Liberal prime minister, Ion G. Duca, considered responsible for the ban of the Iron Guard, was murdered by Legionary terrorists. The Liberals remained in power until December 1937. The new prime minister, Gheorghe Tătărescu, representing the "youth" wing of the party, was supported by Carol II as he was more conciliatory to the king's manipulations, but was opposed by the "old guard" of the Liberals, under the strong leadership of Constantin I. C. Brătianu.

The second important political group, the National Peasant Party, led by the well-known Transylvanian politician Irina Maniu, tried, unsuccessfully, to thwart the king's political ambitions. The 1937 election confirmed the decline of the major political parties. None secured the necessary 40 percent of the votes, which allowed the king the opportunity to concentrate more power in his hands. Octavian Goga, the leader of the new right-wing National Christian Party (assisted by A. C. Cuza) was asked to form a government, despite his party's low results in the election (9.15 percent). The unexpected monarchial solution revealed the king's desire to avoid the main parties yet, at the same time, to stop the ascension of the Iron Guard, which had obtained an impressive third place in the election and was

strengthened also by an electoral agreement with Maniu's National Peasant Party. The Goga-Cuza formula failed, however, after only forty days.

The rise of extreme right-wing parties was the most notable feature of Romania's political history in the 1930s. Although they had not scored any significant initial successes, the groups that dated back to the late 1920s now began to carve out a space for themselves. The most assertive was the Iron Guard, whose progress continued despite attempts made by the government to stop it by both legal means and repressive measures. The growth of the Guard among various social strata was more significant than its electoral victories (the most important in 1937, when it gained 16.5 percent of all votes cast). Although basically a terrorist movement, it was courted by several reputable political leaders who sought to enter into electoral agreements with it. This lent it a certain aura of legitimacy.

Assassination attempts of political adversaries, as well as other acts of violence, grew frequent during the 1930s. Two prime ministers—Ion G. Duca in 1933 and Armand Călinescu in 1939—as well as cabinet ministers, politicians and university teachers fell victim to Iron Guard assassins. A number of Legionnaires (Iron Guards) were killed by the authorities, who often stooped to the same terrorist means as the Guardists.

German influence in Romanian politics was channeled almost exclusively through Romanian profascist organizations. In the late 1930s these opened the way for the Reich's direct involvement in Romanian affairs, while the major political parties and King Carol II still advocated a pro-British and pro-French orientation. The weakening of the National Liberal and Peasant parties and the increasing trend to abandon democratic ways were exploited by King Carol. Eventually, he signed the decree that was the virtual death certificate of the Romanian parliamentary system and proclaimed a royal dictatorship on February 10, 1938. A few months later, the Legionary movement was "decapitated" with the killing of Codreanu and other fascist leaders. The king then set up his own organization, the Front of National Renaissance, on December 15, 1938. It was intended to replace the Iron Guard and offer a political framework to his brand of a somewhat revised nationalism shorn of excessive attitudes.

⁸ N. Iorga, *Memoriu*, vol. V (1925-1930) (Bucharest, 1939), pp. 23, 28, 39, 61, 68, 131, 144.

However, international and internal circumstances did not favor him. His loyal and capable prime minister Armand Călinescu, appointed in March 1939, was assassinated after six months by the Guardists. As a consequence of the Soviet-German secret agreement (the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact), Romania was forced to give up Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR (June 1940) and Northern Transylvania to Hungary (August 1940). This meant that Romania had lost 40 percent of its territory and half its population. Under the great political pressure and popular discontent, Carol II was forced to abdicate in favor of General Ion Antonescu, which associated the Legionary Movement, supported by Nazi Germany. Romania became, in September 14, 1940, a dictatorial "national Legionary state". In January 1941, after Antonescu suppressed a Legionary rebellion, he gained full control of the country.

One of the arguments in favor of the idea that a right-wing dictatorship could solve social and economic problems was that it would bring about the settlement of a crucial question—the Jewish threat.

According to the official statistics of 1930, out of a total population of 18 million inhabitants, Jews accounted for either 4 percent (728,115 "ethnic Jews" or 4.2 percent (756,930 persons who declared they belonged to the Jewish faith).⁹ However, these figures in no way reflected the much larger role played by the Jews in Romania's economic and social life.

Some ten years after acquiring political rights, the Jews of Romania had achieved a high degree of integration into the country's social life. They had done so in a specific form of assimilation that had not led to the loss of their identity.¹⁰ Their pronounced acculturation, particularly in the Old Kingdom, which stopped short of total assimilation, was also related to the strong opposition to Jewish emancipation, which was again perceived as an imposition by the European powers and to the

determination of Jews to assert themselves in social and cultural fields.

Important differences among the principal communities of Romanian Jewry, which had developed under various historical and political circumstances, also persisted. The Jews of Bukovina, Bessarabia and Transylvania were considered above all anti-Romanian aliens and were constantly accused of being pro-German, pro-Russian or pro-Hungarian. There were more Jews living in these provinces than in Moldavia and Wallachia. Some 50 percent of the inhabitants of Kishinev and Czernowitz were Jews.¹¹ Of all the national minorities in Romania, Jews made up the highest proportion of town dwellers (68 percent).¹²

In some of the "free" professions, such as law, medicine and journalism, Jews accounted for a proportionately high percentage. In 1927, some 15 percent of all university students were Jews,¹³ but in some departments, such as medicine and pharmacy, they consisted of 30 to 40 percent of the student body.¹⁴ Jewish students sometimes had the advantage of coming from urban families or of being in a better financial position than their Romanian colleagues.¹⁵ Initially, the aim of the student movements, which originated in 1922 and reached a much larger scope in the following years, was the *numerus clausus*, the limitation of Jews in all fields to the percentage of Jews in the total population.

The contrast between the proportion of Jews in industry, finance and business and their insufficient absorption by the Romanian environment, which remained hostile, inevitably led to increased xenophobia. In addition, especially in Moldavia and Bessarabia, there were large areas of poverty-stricken Jews, virtual "ghettos," which also generated antagonistic feelings. Brought into being by social strata affected by economic crisis and by "intellectual proletarians," the antisemitic movements

¹¹ J. Rothschild, op. cit., p. 289.

¹² Encyclopedie Românească, vol. I (Bucharest, 1938), p. 150.

¹³ V. Georgescu, op. cit. (note 5), p. 246.

¹⁴ A. Heinen, Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation (Munich, 1986), p. 50.

¹⁵ H. Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918–1941 (Cambridge, 1946), pp. 290–91. See also: I. Livezeanu, The Politics of Culture in Greater Romania: Nation Building and Student Nationalism, 1918–1927 (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1986).

⁹ The statistics concerning Jews from the 1930 census may be found in J. Rothschild, op. cit. (note 2), p. 284.

¹⁰ J. Ancel, "Introduction," in A. Safran, Resisting the Storm. Memoirs (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 16–22.

were maintained and stimulated by political groupings that were interested in channeling dissatisfaction into these traditional directions. In an extension of its prewar line, the National Liberal Party, which had remained the most powerful Romanian political party, advocated and applied a nationalist policy of economic protectionism that contained an element of moderate antisemitism. This characterized other ruling groups as well. The party's ambiguous behavior, combining antisemitism in practical politics with democracy in its political declarations, enabled it to enter into electoral arrangements even with Jewish organizations, especially the Union of Romanian Jews (U.E.R.).¹⁶

The new, ultranationalist parties founded in the 1930s, however, turned antisemitism into their central objective. Among these was the Romanian Front, founded by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, who served as prime minister in 1933 and advocated a harsh policy of discrimination directed against national minorities (*numerus valachicus*). Even more profascist and antisemitic was the National Christian Party, set up the same year following the merger of the parties led by Goga and Cuza. Despite their extremist slogans, however, neither represented a serious threat to the Iron Guard in exploiting the antisemitic sentiments that reached their peak in 1936. The principal aims included the annihilation of the "Jewish" democratic press, the exclusion of Jewish lawyers from the bar, and the antisemitic manipulation of the trial of several Communist leaders.¹⁷ The king's long love affair with the Jewess Elena Lupescu, presented by the right-wing press as a symbol of Jewish rule in Romania, also enhanced the antisemitic atmosphere.

Octavian Goga served as prime minister from December 1937 until February 1938. He assured Western diplomats that his discriminatory measures were no more than the price that had to be paid (particularly by the Jews) in order to prevent the rise to power of the Iron Guard, which was a much greater threat to the

¹⁶ A general survey of the political context of the "Jewish question," in B. Vago, *The Shadow of the Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936-1939* (London, 1975), pp. 21-72; and M. Musat and I. Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, vol. II, part II (Bucharest, 1988).

¹⁷ I. Bercovici, *Romanian Topics: Cultural and Political Trends in Romanian Jewry between 1918-1941* (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp. 68-81.

Jews. With his legislated, openly proclaimed and vociferous antisemitism, Goga was the first prime minister to break with the Romanian government's tradition of a "moderate" but effective antisemitic policy that still respected the formal aspects of constitutional principles. King Carol's dictatorship returned to that tradition; however, it also tacitly continued Goga's policy. Although it was kept within bounds, this provoked protests from Britain, France and the United States.

All Romanian governments between 1937 and 1940 officially advocated in international forums proposals for the organization of massive Jewish emigration from Romania, which, they suggested, would solve the "Jewish question."¹⁸ Another proposed solution was the renunciation of liberal models, in keeping with the overall antidemocratic spirit that was gaining ground in Europe, and their replacement with one of the native variants of the totalitarian state: *ethnocracy*, or a national peasant, or national Christian, corporative state.

In the confrontation between democracy and dictatorship, the "Jewish question" became an assemblage of social and national "threats" and "maladies," assuming an importance altogether out of proportion to the gravity of other crises besetting the country's domestic and foreign policies. The Jews continued to be portrayed as the main impediment to improvement of the economic situation. They were the source of social inequality; they embodied the Bolshevik danger and the threat of invasion by foreign capital; they were the cause of corruption and of petty politics; they were exponents of harmful modernization and alien and noxious forms of culture. The Jew, the *internal enemy*, was a concrete and discordant presence in everyday life and became the focus of the population's increased dissatisfaction and apprehensions more than any adversary abroad.¹⁹

Antisemitic manifestations in all social strata and within the main institutional forms of the state, political bodies, the Academy, universities, professional organizations and the press

¹⁸ J. Añel (ed.), *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust*, vol. X (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 1-28.

¹⁹ S. Fischer-Galati, "Fascism, Communism, and the Jewish Question in Romania," in B. Vago and G. L. Mosse (eds.), *Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe, 1918-1945* (New York & Jerusalem, 1974), p. 158.

grew steadily in the 1930s. The destruction of Jewish shops and beatings of Jewish students and magistrates—actions introduced into Romanian life by Cuzist and Legionary groups—became daily occurrences and were reported in the Jewish press almost continuously.²⁰

One of the most widely circulated slogans in the years 1935–1937 was the demand to annul the citizenship granted to the Jews in 1923. Campaigns were organized to discover persons who had acquired Romanian citizenship “through fraud”. The actual number of such cases was altogether insignificant, but, like the extent of “the invasion” by immigrants, it was inflated to exorbitant figures.²¹ Another aim of political antisemitism was the *Romanization* of the economy, the universities and the free professions. These targets were achieved by the decrees of the Goga-Cuza government.

The daily papers organized discussions and polls on the solution of the “Jewish question.” They sought to create an atmosphere of public opinion concerning the urgency and gravity of the problem, which would secure passage of anti-Jewish laws in parliament. The most comprehensive and manipulated inquiry was initiated in 1937 by Pamfil Șeicaru, a well-known politician and publicist, editor of the daily *Curentul*, who was also active in the efforts to have parliament withdraw citizenship granted to Jews. The title of the inquiry, “Romania and the Division of Palestine,” as well as the wording of the queries, lent the discussion a definitely tendentious slant. Obviously stage-managed, the poll revealed a clearly stated general antisemitic trend among important representatives of Romanian public life, including government ministers, leaders of non-extremist parties, the high clergy, and intellectuals.

Whether worded in moderate or brutal terms, the conclusions were almost unanimous: Romania had to be totally or partially “disburdened” or “disinfected” of Jews (both verbs were used by several participants). Romanian Jews should be colonized in Palestine or anywhere else in the world. Supporters of this thesis included government minister Istrate Micescu; Professor

²⁰ See, for example, the newspaper *Curiul israelit*, in the years 1930–1937.

²¹ J. Starr, “Jewish Citizenship in Rumania (1878–1940),” *Jewish Social Studies*, III, 1 (1941), p. 69.

Gheorghe Brătianu, president of the National Liberal Party; Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, president of the Romanian Front and former prime minister; Nicolae Iorga; Dem. Dobrescu, a former Lord Mayor of Bucharest; P. Partenie, a leader of the Orthodox clergy; Mihai Manolescu, a university professor and politician; Grigore Perîeteanu, president of the Union of Romanian Lawyers; Professor N. I. Herescu, who became president of the Society of Romanian Writers; and others. Almost all these men were traditional liberals. While they proposed radical measures, they did so in diplomatic language; violent outbursts were rare. The statement made by Miron Cristea, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, was typical of the antisemitic atmosphere of those years. Brushing aside the self-restraint demanded by his function and dignity, the patriarch spoke in the same style and language as did Cuza:

One has to be sorry for the poor Romanian people, whose very marrow is sucked out by the Jews. Not to react against the Jews means that we go open-eyed to our destruction. . . .

To defend ourselves is a national and patriotic duty, not “antisemitism.” . . . Where does it say that only you Jews have the privilege of living on the backs of other peoples, and on our back, the back of the Romanians, like parasites?

The Jews had laid their hands on “all the riches of the country”; they were “promoting and supporting, often in the most sophisticated forms, the epidemics of corruption as well as many other social ills, in addition to having seized the press.” He rejected the Zionist solution (“Leave Palestine to the Arabs”) and called upon Jews to find asylum somewhere else:

You have powerful organizations . . . you have sufficient qualities and opportunities to look for, find and acquire for yourselves a country, a homeland that is not yet inhabited by others. . . . Live, help each other, defend yourselves and exploit one another, but not us and other peoples whose entire wealth you are taking away with your ethnic and talmudic sophistications.²²

²² *Curentul*, no. 3430, 19 Aug. 1937.

Almost all personalities polled by *Curentul* were "respectable" and "liberal" men; extremists like Cuza, Nichifor Crainic and the Legionary leaders were not asked for their opinion. This enabled the daily to prove what it had set out to do: that the traditional political and social-institutions were radically antisemitic.

The Development of Nationalist Ideology

Political radicalization was matched by the polarization of Romanian intellectuals. After 1930, the polemics surrounding the definition of ethnicity, the Romanian national character and spirit, which had dominated the previous decade, assumed a more doctrinaire expression. Symptomatically, the discussion now exceeded the cultural sphere and assumed a political direction. As noted by one of the outstanding participants, it became "the most bitter debate of the period."²³

The theorizing about nationalism was followed by, or implied, a particular option for a certain type of Romanian society and practical proposals as to the directions the Romanian state was required to take. The men who did not politicize their nationalist conceptions became obsolescent "abstractionists" and were marginalized by the militant media.

The struggle was waged in the first place against those who linked the concepts of ethnicity and national character to yielding to Western culture and civilization, toward liberalization and "synchronization" with the developed European countries. The advocates of this direction included sociologists, economists, historians of culture and writers who adhered to liberalism, democracy, rationalism—the "old" values of the West.²⁴ They included famous personalities in Romanian culture, like Eugen Lovinescu, Stefan Zeletin, Mihai Ralea, P. P. Negulescu, Petre Andrei and the writer Camil Petrescu. Fighting them also meant challenging the cultural establishment in the name of the young generation. The challenge was extended to men like

Nicolae Iorga, who also represented a nationalist and traditionalist creed but were "obsolete" and "old fashioned."

The ideologists of the "revolutionary right"²⁵ wanted to reformulate tradition by highlighting their irrational roots, supposedly inherited from the ancient Thracian culture and Orthodox Christian mysticism. Although this new trend was promoted by vigorous propaganda, it did not dominate cultural life. Established personalities kept their distance and avoided being caught up in the fever of irrationalism and mystic spiritualism.

In the 1930s, Romanian nationalist ideology divided into two main directions. The process had begun in the preceding decade,²⁶ but now it became more clear-cut and wrought significant consequences in intellectual and political life. One line was constructive, cultural nationalism, represented by Nicolae Iorga, particularly in the new phase of the immediate postwar years. This was an organic nationalism striving to develop native values within the framework of a peasant state, with a moderate, critical opening for the introduction of Western values.

The philosopher Constantin Rădulescu-Motru (1868–1957) was the most important theoretician of the old generation representing *Romanianism*, a specific equivalent of nationalism.²⁷ Having made a name for himself at the beginning of the century as a researcher of Romanian rural social structures and civilization, on which basis he had advocated a reform of the Romanian state, Rădulescu-Motru made a remarkable effort in the 1930s to adjust to the new currents in ideas. His aim was the renewal and profound study of the concept of Romanianism with a view to bring it into harmony with "the new European spirit," which had

²³ The "revolutionary right" formula, which became widely known through Zeev Sternhell's essay *La droite révolutionnaire. Les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris, 1978), was used by Romanian doctrinaires in the 1930s; it was probably taken from the French ideologists of "integral nationalism." Nicolae Roșu considered himself an exponent of the "revolutionary right." In his volume *Dialectica naționalismului* (Bucharest, 1936) he included a chapter on "The sociological conditions of the right-wing revolution."

²⁴ Z. Ornea, *Traditionalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea* (Bucharest, 1980), pp. 301–468.

²⁵ On Rădulescu-Motru's concept of Romanianism, see N. Bagdasar, *Scrisori (ed.), Social Change in Romania: A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley, 1978).

²⁶ C. Petrescu, *Teze și opiniile* (Bucharest, 1936), p. 184.

²⁷ K. Hitchins, "Gândirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise," in K. Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania: A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley, 1978).

been saved from the political mutilations of "the right."²⁹ In Rădulescu-Motru's view, fascism, Hitler's racism and "Sovietism" were new forms of nationalism that did not suit the Romanian spirit.³⁰ Romanianism was just as distinct from xenophobia, which he considered "a sign of primitivism or a sign of degeneration of nationalism." For this Romanian philosopher, the term nationalism had a purely positive meaning:

The force of a people does not come from cultivation of antagonistic trends, but from convergence of all trends. There never were and never will be peoples of a pure race. Above race, there is historical destiny.³¹

The consistently rationalist character of Motru's traditionalism and the fact that it eschewed antisemitism made it unacceptable to the new generation of nationalists, who accused it of lacking "the perception of the historical moment."³² The great poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga (1895–1961), although from a different philosophical school, belonged to the same non-xenophobic category. Despite the fact that he first asserted himself in the Orthodoxist pages of the *Gândirea* review, he built his original theory of the national specific, the most important in the history of Romanian philosophy, from the ontological perspective.³³ The concept of race was used to denote an ethnic style within the framework of his philosophy of culture justifying the coexistence of all "races."³⁴

The right-wing direction of the *new nationalism* was theorized and sustained in a great many articles by Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu and a large contingent of the "young

²⁹ C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Românismul: Catehismul unei noi spiritualități* (Bucharest, 1936), p. 22.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 129, 130.

³² P. C. Deleanu, "Românismul d-lui Motru: Noul Naționalism," *Ideea Românească*, 2–4 (1935).

³³ K. Hitchins, op. cit. (note 24), p. 158.

³⁴ L. Blaga, "Despre rasă ca stil," *Gândirea*, 2 (1935). For the philosophy of culture and the ethnic specific in Lucian Blaga's thinking, see G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent* (Bucharest, 1941), pp. 864–6; Z. Ornea, op. cit. (note 26), pp. 446–54, 617–27.

As we shall see, for the "new nationalists" the struggle against the Jewish element and ensuring its exclusion were essential aims, a vital condition in the preservation of nationality. The Jewish factor became the discordant element, "the alien body" at all levels of the nationalist conception: the state and the national economy, national culture and the native spirit.

Politically speaking, both directions failed. The model of a peasant democracy, as advocated by Rădulescu-Motru, no longer corresponded to the post-World War I situation, and the establishment of an ethnocratic state in its Legionary or corporatist variant, which was planned by the "new nationalism," was prevented by the establishment of Antonescu's military dictatorship.

Despite its temporary success in large circles of the intelligentsia and the petty bourgeoisie, the "new nationalism" did not become the dominant feature of the national spirit, as it did in Italy and Germany. Traditional nationalism proved to have powerful roots in the mentality of Romanian politicians and society as a whole. The temporary support for or sympathy with the Iron Guard and other extremist groups on the part of traditional institutions such as the Orthodox Church signified no radical change; it only demonstrated the customary conformist submission to the representatives of power or to men who looked like they might be in positions of power in the near future.

During the decade preceding World War II, Romania remained a rural civilization with traditional values. The penetration of Western-type liberal forms was greatly delayed and weakened by stagnating economic and social structures opposed to renewal and reform. The village remained society's social, moral and ethnic model. The modern culture of towns and cities, with its high proportion of "foreigners," was derided as being "on loan," "cosmopolitan," alien to "true," native values. A considerable section of Romania's intellectuals was strongly attached to these



The Iron Guard and the Essence of Legionary Antisemitism

values, to the exclusion of all others. The goal of the most important cultural movements was to re-establish the traditional, "specifically Romanian" values that were threatened by modernist currents and foreign influences.

Mircea Vulcănescu, one of the outstanding ideologists of the "young generation," adopted Iorga's judgement and theorized about "the two Romanias": one of the villages, structured according to "the organic style of the indigenous population," and a Romania of the towns, ruled by "the hybrid life style of our cities' scum."³⁵ The intellectuals believed themselves to be exponents and spokesmen of the village. Their affection for the rural world was linked more to the rural "spirit" and less to support for social reforms that would have actually improved the peasants' situation.

The years under review recorded a more visible presence of "the intellectual proletariat": schoolmasters, lawyers, students and university graduates. This social category continued to grow, but it met with great difficulties in asserting itself and gaining a satisfactory social status.³⁶ Its members were handicapped by their precarious social situation and financial difficulties during their years of study. Most of them were "first-generation" intellectuals or the sons of teachers, priests or petty functionaries. They were the main source of the right-wing movements' audience and accounted for a high proportion of the antisemitic organizations' membership. As in Poland and Hungary,³⁷ the relatively large number of Jews in the universities and free professions exacerbated the frustration of young people in their endeavors to carve out "a position" for themselves in the urban social structures. These elements formed the basis for the consolidation of the Iron Guard.³⁸

³⁵ M. Vulcănescu, "Cele două Români," *Dreptă*, no. 2, 11 Dec. 1932.

³⁶ A. C. Janos, "Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective," in K. Jowitt (ed.), op. cit. (note 24).

³⁷ J. Tomaszewski, *Rzeczypospolita wielu narodów* (Warsaw, 1985), pp. 163–4; V. Karady and I. Kemény, "Antisémitisme universitaire et concurrence de classe: la loi du *numerus clausus* en Hongrie entre les deux guerres," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 34 (Sept. 1980).

³⁸ E. Weber, "The Man of the Archangel," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 22, 3 (July, 1987), (1966), pp. 103–107.

The Legion of the Archangel Michael, later known as the Iron Guard, first appeared in the mid-1920s, but underwent a spectacular and dramatic development after 1930. It represented an important "fascist experience" of the Romanian society, particularly of the young intellectual circles.³⁹

Founded as an independent organization in 1927 by the law student Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the Legion started with young students of the "22 generation" who had become politically conscious in the battles for the *numerus clausus* and then rallied diverse social strata among the petty bourgeoisie—teachers, priests, lawyers, and military officers from the lower classes.⁴⁰ The social structure of the organization was also reflected in the list of candidates for the Senate put up by the "All for the Country" Party (this was the name under which the Iron Guard presented itself in the 1937 elections). In decreasing order, the candidates included military officers, university professors and school teachers, priests, magistrates and shopkeepers.⁴¹ Election results confirmed the importance of the Guard's ascension: in December 1937 the Iron Guard won 16.5 percent of the votes and was entitled to sixty deputies, becoming the third largest political force in the country.

In addition to the features common with European fascism, such as anti-Marxism, rejection of democracy and liberalism, the need for moral and spiritual revolution, a cult of the elite and of the "new man,"⁴² the Legionary movement was in some ways distinguishable from other fascist movements. In a certain sense

³⁹ For the Iron Guard's ideology, see the studies by L. Pătrășcanu, H.L. Roberts, E. Weber, N. Nagy-Talavera, E. Turczynski, S. Fischer-Galati, D. Zamfirescu, Z. Barbu, A. Heinen, M. Musat, F. Veiga, cited in the Bibliography.

⁴⁰ C. Z. Codreanu's successor, Horia Sima, noted: "The Legionary movement was a movement of the new generation; its cadres were students or intellectuals who had recently left the universities." See H. Sima, *Articol politice*, 1950–1963 (Madrid, 1967), p. 129.

⁴¹ "Lista candidaților la Senat a partidului Totul pentru Țară," *Buna Vestire*, no. 229, 30 Nov. 1937.

⁴² Z. Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche. L'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris, 1983); idem, "The Anti-materialist Revision of Marxism as an Aspect of the Rise of Fascist Ideology," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 22, 3 (July, 1987).

its leaders were justified in priding themselves on their originality and precedence. As to practical political activity, the Iron Guard was the first to introduce in Romania murder as a method of combatting adversaries.

In its program the Iron Guard advocated an emphatic reaction against petty politics and political life in general in a concerted endeavor to bring about moral and spiritual change, ethnic "regeneration" by returning to Orthodox Christian values, and "salvation" through asceticism and sacrifice. A populist movement with strong mystical characteristics, the Legion was founded as a conspiracy, a "blood brotherhood" and secret organization, with rituals taken from medieval Orthodox Christianity dedicated to the cult of the dead and later to "the martyrs" of the movement.

The myth of the Legionary leader, created by Codreanu through his behavior and written "teachings,"⁴³ was a combination of an indigenous popular hero—the "haiduc" (an outlaw, Robin Hood-type fighter against corrupt authorities)⁴⁴—with a Christian prototype: the *apostle* and *teacher* invested with the power to *reveal* the road to "salvation" and to *command* and *punish* in the name of the divine power and national precepts. The purpose of the mystical rituals and oaths, the cult of death and sacrifice, severe discipline and punishment, and the myth of the "leader," was to fashion a model of the "new man," the *Legionnaire* who prepared and heralded the general transformation of society, "a new Romania and the long-awaited resurrection of this Romanian nation."⁴⁵ The Legionary-Christian state foreseen by the movement was a new political form (the name "dictatorship" was avoided) that would achieve a perfect accord between the will of the chief and the will of the people, "a state of unanimous luminosity found in great religious experiences."⁴⁶ With the passage of time, the movement's mystical and fascist features acquired a certain singularity and internal coherence,

⁴³ C. Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* (Sibiu, 1936); idem, *Circulaři și manifeste* (Madrid, 1951).

⁴⁴ E. Turczynski, "The Background of Romanian Fascism," in P. F. Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism in the Successor States* (Santa Barbara, 1971), p. 111.

⁴⁵ C. Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 319.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 334.

but they originated in an acknowledged search for new forms of struggle against the "Jewish threat" and a more effective mobilization of the nation against its supreme enemy and those serving him. "The historic mission of our generation," Codreanu wrote in a circular in 1937, "is the solution of the Jewish problem. All our battles over more than fifteen years had this purpose."⁴⁷

The anti-Jewish character borne by the movement from the start—the fight for the *numerus clausus* and the abrogation of the law granting citizenship to Jews—directly and indirectly dominated its structure, program and political evolution. All other aims depended on victory in the "holy war" against the "Jewish plot."

In his study on the political youth movements published as early as 1928, the Romanian sociologist Petre Andrei pointed out the characteristic nationalism of the new organizations:

We have the impression that our young people confine nationalism particularly to *antisemitism*, that they attribute more of a destructive than a creative, constructive note to it. . . . Typical of all these organizations is antisemitism. They demand the settlement of the Jewish question even by violent means and put forward as immediate legal measures the removal of Jews from the army and administration, the protection of Romanian trade against foreign competition and the *numerus clausus* in order to limit the number of Jews in the universities, where the country's ruling class is being trained.⁴⁸

In his book *Pentru legionari* (For Legionnaires), Codreanu mentioned the sources of his nationalist beliefs: "the obvious literature of the Romanian classics" and the articles by Iorga and Cuza printed in *Semănătorul* and *Neamul Românesc*. He summed up the three ideals of the Romanian people as derived from what he had read: "(1) The union of all Romanians; (2) Raising the peasantry by giving it land and political rights; (3) The solution

⁴⁷ C. Z. Codreanu, *Circulaři și manifeste*, p. 199.

⁴⁸ P. Andrei, "Mișcări sociale și politice ale tinerimii," *Minerva*, 1 (1928); reprinted in *Opere sociologice*, vol. II (Bucharest, 1975), pp. 156-7.

of the problem of the *yids*.⁴⁹ As in the case of his ex-mentor Cuza, alongside whom he had collaborated during the first phase of his movement in 1923–1927, all his actions were in fact obsessively concentrated on point number three.

The Legion represented a breach, a “revolution” in Romanian political culture, but, as far as antisemitism was concerned, it fell into line with tradition and inscribed the names of the great founders of Romanian nationalism, quoted with veneration, on its banner.⁵⁰

There was also a continuity in the fundamental arguments and stereotypes sustaining the idea of a Jewish threat. In order to demonstrate this, Codreanu even edited an antisemitic anthology—considered a “catechism”—in which he included, in addition to his mentors, A.C. Cuza and N. Paulescu, extracts from the “classics”—Conta, Alecsandri, Kogălniceanu, Heliade-Rădulescu, Eminescu, Hasdeu, Costache Negri and Alexandru D. Xenopol.⁵¹

What novelties did the Legionary movement add to the development of Romanian antisemitic ideology?
First, a change linked to recent political events: *the identification of the Jew with the threat posed by the Bolshevik revolution*. The initial stimulus for the creation of the movement, recalled Codreanu, was the instinctive mobilization of young people against the new shape of the Jewish threat—Bolshevism. “In his radius of action, each and every *yid*, trader, intellectual or capitalist banker, was agent of these anti-Romanian revolutionary ideas.”⁵² *Jew = Communist* became one of the fundamental slogans of both the movement and Codreanu (“when I say Communist, I mean *yid*”⁵³), as well as of Romanian antisemitic propaganda in general, which reached virtually epidemic proportions during World War II.

⁴⁹ C.Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, pp. 13–15.

⁵⁰ The continuity between one generation and the next assumed symbolical and even . . . hereditary forms. Codreanu’s father was an active member of the League of A.C. Cuza, who was the metaphorical and actual godfather of his son Cornelius. See Jean and Jérôme Tharaud, *L’envoyé de l’Archange* (Paris, 1939), p. 6.

⁵¹ C.Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, pp. 132–44.

⁵² Ibid., p. 10.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 378.

The Iron Guard’s program shifted the emphasis from social and protectionist economic demands to *radical revolutionary measures designed to settle the “Jewish question.”* The replacement of the parliamentary system with a totalitarian regime was intended to guarantee, *inter alia*, the irreversibility of the elimination of the Jews. As to the political program, there was the transition from the *numerus clausus* to the *numerus nullus*, in order to prepare, as Ion I. Moța, a founding member, put it, “a total purification.”⁵⁴

The Legionnaires were looking for new organizational forms with which to fight the Jews and to learn to know their adversary more thoroughly, to understand “Jewish power and its way of thinking and acting.”⁵⁵ These forms included sessions and seminars of antisemitic indoctrination⁵⁶ and “technical and heroic education.”⁵⁷ The favorite weapon from the old arsenal was the distribution of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which had been translated by Moța in 1923.⁵⁸

The Iron Guard added to the “spirituality” and “sanctity” of antisemitism by attributing to it a lofty national mission, thereby carrying forward Iorga’s “missionary” and “apostolate” and mystically coloring the battle against the “Jewish threat.” “Legionary antisemitism”—a term penned by Vasile Marin, another founding member and leader of the movement—was “of an altogether superior nature and a different essence,”⁵⁹ coming from “the most spiritual nationalism.”⁶⁰ Vasile Marin spotlighted this qualitative difference:

We are not antisemites because our places are occupied by others; for that reason as well, but it is not the principal one. Into the living body of a unitary nation another body is introduced which falsifies the meaning of its life, falsifies the

⁵⁴ I.I. Moța, *Cranii de lemn*, fourth edition, (Bucharest, 1940), p. 82.

⁵⁵ C.Z. Codreanu, op. cit., pp. 116–17.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 261.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁹ V. Marin, *Crez de generație* (Bucharest, 1937), pp. 72–3.

⁶⁰ T. Herseni, “C.Z. Codreanu, Pentru legionari,” *Gând Românesc*, 12 (Dec. 1936).

direction of the development of its moral life and falsifies the cultural sense of its spiritual life.⁶¹

When the young Legionary plotters decided to "punish" the enemy, they selected the most dangerous symbolical representatives: first came the *rabbi*, the occult force, next the *banker* and then the *journalist*.⁶² The change in priority also indicated a change in attitude.

The mythological projection of the struggle against the Jews as a clash between God and Satan, or between the Archangel Michael, the patron saint of the Legion, and the dragon was no longer merely a Christian metaphor, as it had been with Paulescu; now it had a life of its own and was integrated with the "program" of a national movement and part of the current vocabulary used in the organization's "circulars."

The demonization of the Jew was more emphatic in so-called "Legionary literature." Unlike other antisemites, the Legionnaires did not cultivate antisemitic anecdotes. The Jewish threat was much too "grave"; it was a life-and-death struggle and could not be minimized by jokes. The Legionary song, an essential element in the ritual and a means of education and mobilization, intensified the myth of the diabolical Jew, the Antichrist, the dragon who was sucking the blood of the Romanians and poisoning their soul. As the movement had only two or three talented poets, this type of literature did not become a notable cultural phenomenon, but its dissemination, particularly among high-school pupils, typified the way the collective psychosis was fuelled and the ideology was justified.

Especially with Codreanu, hatred of the Jews assumed morbidly mystical, obsessive forms, which he also transmitted to his entourage. Legionnaires were forbidden to have any contact with Jews. They could not enter a Jewish home or shop; they could not shake hands with a Jew.⁶³ Foreign correspondents who met with Codreanu noted the paranoid forms of his aversion to Jews.⁶⁴

"The holy war" was waged not only against Jews. It was directed

⁶¹ V. Marin, op. cit., p. 73.

⁶² C. Z. Codreanu, op. cit., p. 169.

⁶³ C. Z. Codreanu, *Circulaři și manifeste*, p. 198.

⁶⁴ Jean and Jérôme Tharaud, op. cit.; A. L. Easterman, "The Jew-Hater," *Zionist Review*, 17 Jan. 1941.

to the same extent against "traitors," corrupt-Romanian politicians who had "sold" themselves to the Jews, those who were responsible for the plague of petty politics, the sins of democracy and liberalism that had favored Jewish domination.⁶⁵ The punishment of "traitors" was carried out with terror. Several politicians and state officials were among the victims of "the holy Legionary vengeance." "Sacrifice," too, was more than a mere cliché in the movement's vocabulary: hundreds of Legionnaires were killed in reprisals for murderous assaults. C. Z. Codreanu was killed in November 1938.

More so than other extreme right-wing organizations, the Iron Guard sought an international coordination of antisemitic actions. Since its inception, the Legion had maintained an "international section" charged with establishing contact with other European fascist movements. The young Codreanu therefore travelled to Germany and France:

Following the studies we had made, we fully realized that the character of the Jewish question was international, and reaction to it also had to be international, that a total settlement of this problem could be reached only by the action of all Christian nations awakened to awareness of the threat posed by the *yids*.⁶⁶ Other leaders, among them Vasile Marin and Ion I. Moță, enjoyed good relations with *Action Française* and corresponded with Charles Maurras, whom Marin addressed as *Cher Maître* in an open letter.⁶⁷

The movement won recognition in European fascist circles, and Codreanu's name became quite well known. Some ideologists of the new right in France considered Codreanu a model nationalist fighter.⁶⁸ At the congress of the Fascist International, "Traitors"—Aspects of the Antisemitism of the Iron Guard," *Romanian Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem), 1 (Spring 1987).

⁶⁵ C. Z. Codreanu, op. cit., p. 70.

⁶⁶ V. Marin, op. cit., p. 93.

⁶⁷ Entire pages in several issues of the paper *Je suis partout* featured C. Z. Codreanu and extensively translated extracts from his volume *Pentru legionari*. See *Je suis partout*, no. 372, 7 Jan. 1938; no. 386, 15 April 1938; no. 412, 14 Oct. 1938; no. 414, 28 Oct. 1938; no. 420, 9 Dec. 1938; no. 421, 16 Dec. 1938. An apology of Codreanu in Paul Guiraud, *Codreanu et la Garde de Fer* (Munich, 1974) [manuscript from 1941].

held in Montreux on December 16-17, 1934, Moța demanded that fighting "Jewish domination" be included among the fundamental aims of the international fascist movement. In the absence of the Nazi representative, however, this appeal did not yield the desired effect.⁶⁸

Since his entry into politics, Adolf Hitler had been admired by the Iron Guard for the radical character of his antisemitic measures. However, there were significant differences of doctrine between him and the Legionnaires, who did not make much of Jewish racial inferiority and who considered the anti-Christian spirit of National Socialism as altogether alien. Indeed, Codreanu proudly and repeatedly claimed precedence in Europe for his movement, which had been unjustly accused of imitating the Nazis.

In spite of the ideological differences, however, Hitler's rise to power also increased the prestige and political influence of the Iron Guard. Codreanu viewed Germany and Italy as his principal allies and supporters.⁷⁰ On the eve of the 1937 elections, he declared:

Forty-eight hours after the victory of the Legionary movement, Romania will have an alliance with Rome and Berlin, thereby entering the direction of its historic mission in the world: to be the defender of the Cross, of Christian culture and civilization.⁷¹

The annexation of Austria also produced an antisemitic euphoria, voiced in a telegram sent to the *Führer*:

With a joy beyond words, I salute the victory of truth in German Austria. All the forces of Judaism and freemasonry are defeated by the triumphant light of truth. You are the bearer of that light, and no power will ever be able to defeat it.⁷²

⁶⁸ A. Heinen, op. cit. (note 14), p. 324.

⁷⁰ A. Simion, "Organizațiile fascisto-hitleriste din România—factor de subminare a independenței și suveranității naționale," *Anale de istorie*, 4 (1985).

⁷¹ "Declarările d-lui C. Z. Codreanu," *Buna Vestire*, no. 229, 30 Nov. 1937.

⁷² C. Z. Codreanu, *Circulați și manifeste*, p. 247.

Unlike Cuza, his mentor, Codreanu integrated the "Jewish question" into a movement for the moral reformation of Romanian society.⁷³ The realization of his ethnic and religious program depended on the solution of the "problem" and elimination of "Judaized" politicians. "In Romania," wrote Codreanu, "fascism could only mean the elimination of the dangers threatening the Romanian people, that is, the elimination of the threat posed by *yids*, and the opening of a free road leading to the life and grandeur to which the Romanians are entitled to aspire."⁷⁴

The mystical and national exaltation typical of the Iron Guard was rooted in the particular way it adopted national myths. In the fanaticism of the movement, the "Jewish threat," too, became a *Legionary myth*. Outside the mystical context, when trying to "logically" demonstrate the necessity of fighting the Jews, Codreanu humbly fell back on traditional antisemitic stereotypes worded in a rudimentary fashion. He compiled articles by Cuza and Paulescu. He remembered a few "elementary truths" and repeated them obsessively. Codreanu was the apostle of a cause, not its theoretician or ideologist.

On the political stage, there was a rapid change in the attitude of the various parties to the "Jewish question." With its first appearance, the Legion shocked everyone with the radicalism of the antisemitism it propagated, but in less than ten years it had to compete with other extreme right-wing groups. In reality the conflict had more to do with the struggle for power than with anti-Jewish measures.

All the parties, even the moderate "center" parties, outdid each other by including plans for point-blank antisemitic measures in their programs. A typical example was the turn taken by the National Peasant Party, which had had a democratic and non-chauvinistic tradition. In 1938, the leaders of that party adjusted to the new spirit. They accused the Goga-Cuza government of inconsistency and weakness in the application of

⁷³ S. Fischer-Galati, "Fascism, Communism and the Jewish Question in Romania," op. cit. (note 19), p. 165.

⁷⁴ C. Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 73.

antisemitic legislation and announced a program of their own for the "Romanization" of the economy and "the settlement of the Jewish Question."⁷⁵ In fact harsh antisemitic legislation was introduced, in December 1937, not by the Iron Guard, but by a rival, the party led by Goga and Cuza. The royal dictatorship of Carol II also professed its own antisemitic policy. Nevertheless, the Iron Guard remained the political nucleus of the new nationalism and of the new stage in the development of Romanian antisemitism.

The "New Nationalism" and the Fascist Temptation: Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu and the "Young Generation"

At first, despite the support among students and university graduates, the political group founded by Corneliu Codreanu was not a representative intellectual movement. With a few and insignificant exceptions, the leaders of the Legion—Codreanu, Ion I. Moța and Vasile Marin—enjoyed little prestige or influence in Romanian intellectual life. Although from the start the movement gained the sympathy of some well-known personalities, such as Octavian Goga and Nichifor Crainic, it was not effective in drawing them into its ranks. Among its first adherents from university circles were professors Ion Găvănescu and Traian Brăileanu.

The initial hesitation of established nationalist ideologists was primarily a result of the shock that had been produced by the violent means employed by the Legionnaires (as murder was absolutely new to Romanian political life). The Iron Guard's political and ideological program, on the other hand, was not the main deterrent.

The decisive change occurred in 1932–1933. Political developments such as the maneuvering of King Carol to subordinate the political parties in order to establish a personal dictatorship, the economic crisis, and especially the spectacular rise of the Nazis in Germany produced a radicalization of the right-wing political groupings. This was accompanied by a marked swing to the

⁷⁵ L. Pătrășcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi* (Bucharest, 1946), pp. 88–9.

political right of a significant number of young intellectual leaders. In swift strokes, respected personalities among the older generations and traditional cultural establishments, some of the highest standing, also fell under the influence of extremist political groups.

At that stage the radical "new right," which had taken clearer shape in the closing years of the 1920s, became an important phenomenon in political and intellectual life. A "revolutionary right," it imparted to the Iron Guard all the attributes of a *national revolution*, the embodiment of the myth of national, spiritual and moral regeneration.

During the election campaign of 1932, Codreanu engineered an important change among the "young intellectuals in the capital city"—the young people affiliated with the review *Axa* (Mihai Polihroniade, Vojen, Constant), as well as the poet Radu Gyr, and others now joined "the ranks of the Legion."⁷⁶ The movement's leader had created a framework calculated to attract the young students. The organization's structure included "student nests" and "intellectual nests." Lecture series were held on "ideological" subjects.⁷⁷ The general aim was to create an atmosphere of intellectual "apostolicism."

As expected, the first to join or unreservedly support the Legionary revolution were the ideologists who had made a name for themselves in the previous decade, the Orthodoxist philosophers and the adherents of ethnocentrism and autochthonism. One of the first important supporters of the Iron Guard was the theologian, poet, journalist and politician, Nichifor Crainic (1889–1972), the principal catalyst and theorist of the traditionalist currents known as *autochthonism*, *Orthodoxism* and *Gândirism*, so called after the journal *Gândirea* (Thinking), which he had edited since 1926.⁷⁸ Crainic, wrote Codreanu, "supports our struggle, watching the courage of the Legionary troops step by step."⁷⁹ Mihai Stelescu, another leader of the Iron Guard, who eventually became a dissident and was assassinated by order of

⁷⁶ C. Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 438.

⁷⁷ C. Z. Codreanu, *Circulaři și manifeste*, p. 16.

⁷⁸ Z. Ornea, *Traditionalism și modernitate*, p. 133.

⁷⁹ C. Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, p. 433.

the "Captain" (Codreanu), publicly voiced his gratitude: "You Mr. Crainic were the only one to love us. You still love us. You have led us and are going with us."⁸⁰

In his political actions, though, Crainic kept a certain-distance from the Iron Guard. He was careful not to link his political career too closely to the Guard's terrorist adventurism. He was also keen to claim for himself "primacy in the initiation of the spirit of salvation in our time" and in the "new-style nationalism."⁸¹

The pro-Legionary orientation of Nichifor Crainic was less instrumental in influencing the inclusion of the new generation in the "Legionary revolution" than was the adherence of the philosopher Nae Ionescu (1890–1940) to the Iron Guard in 1933. His lectures on logic and metaphysics, his political, theological and cultural articles do not offer sufficient evidence for the exceptional influence he exerted on his students. Most of them belonged to the so-called "young generation," a heterogeneous group of intellectual elite that had come together in the late 1920s. They defined themselves as exponents of a "new spirituality," as opposed to the previous rationalist and liberal generation of intellectuals. Their spokesman and leader was Mircea Eliade, a very young (born 1907), successful writer and brilliant essayist who specialized in Indian religion and philosophy.

Although established philosophers had mixed feelings about Ionescu and he was looked upon as "a superior second-rate actor,"⁸² and a politically opportunistic and versatile Balkan sophist,⁸³ Nae Ionescu remained a compelling figure to his disciples and prompted a surprisingly persistent cult.⁸⁴ Mircea Eliade considered him "my teacher and the teacher of my generation."⁸⁵ In a

postscript to *Roză vînturilor* (The Wind Rose), published in 1937, in which he gathered a selection of his master's articles, Eliade saw in Ionescu the "great teacher of his people," the source of the principal ideas that had directed young intellectuals since 1922: "Everything discussed by the 'young generation' at that time, 'experience,' 'adventure,' 'Orthodoxism,' 'authenticity,' 'living,' everything has its roots in the ideas of Professor Nae Ionescu."⁸⁵ That year Emil Cioran also wrote about the demonism and charm of his personality.⁸⁶ To Constantin Noica and Mircea Vulcănescu, Ionescu was a master philosopher⁸⁷ and the supreme intellectual authority in the country.⁸⁸ Mihail Sebastian, educated in the same cult, called him "the guide of our consciousness."⁸⁹

With few exceptions, obviously including Sebastian (a Jew), Nae Ionescu's disciples followed him in the spectacular "Guardist conversion"⁹⁰ that began, in a declarative fashion, in 1933 and reached its climax in 1937–1938. The newspaper *Cuvântul*, edited by Nae Ionescu, unreservedly supported the Iron Guard. He and his collaborators vehemently protested the banning of the organization by the government headed by I. G. Duca. The signatories to these protests included Nichifor

⁸⁰ M. Eliade, "Postfață," in N. Ionescu, *Roză vînturilor* (Bucharest, 1937), p. 431.

⁸¹ E. Cioran, "Nae Ionescu și drama lucidării," *Vremea*, no. 490, 6 June 1937.

⁸² C. Noica, "Ce învăță filozofii de la Nae Ionescu," *Vremea*, no. 490, 6 June 1937.

⁸³ M. Vulcănescu, *Tendințele tinerei generații* (Bucharest, 1934), p. 5.

⁸⁴ M. Sebastian, *Cum am devenit huligan* (Bucharest, 1935), p. 83.

⁸⁵ The expression appears in Sebastian's diary in the entry dated February 25, 1937. A document of exceptional value, the diary includes, in addition to personal notes and details on Sebastian's literary activity, frequent commentaries on the intellectual and political life in Romania between 1935 and 1941. Sebastian noted, with increasing concern and distress, the political and moral metamorphosis of his friends, leading intellectuals of the "young generation," and their spiritual guide, Nae Ionescu. Large extracts of these commentaries were published (after Sebastian's death in an accident in 1945) in M. Sebastian, *Opere alese*, vol. II (Bucharest, 1962, pp. 401–28; *Toldat*, 1 (Jan.–March 1972), and *Manuscriptum*, 2 (1976). The author has researched a microfilm of the original manuscript, but, unfortunately, was not granted permission by Sebastian's family to include in this volume, as an appendix, additional, as yet unpublished, extracts from the diary that shed further light on our topic.

⁸⁰ Axa, no. 19, 1 Oct. 1933.

⁸¹ N. Crainic, *Lupta pentru spiritul nou. Germania și Italia în scrișul meu de la 1932 încoace* (Bucharest, 1941), p. 15.

⁸² G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române* ... pp. 866–7; L. Pătrășcanu, *Curențe și tendințe în filosofia românească*, third edition (Bucharest, 1946), pp. 104–12.

⁸³ On Nae Ionescu's philosophy, see V. Băncilă, "Introduction" to N. Ionescu, *Istoria logicei* (Bucharest, 1944); M. Eliade, "Nae Ionescu," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York, 1967), vol. IV, p. 212; M. Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade: The Romanian Roots, 1907–1945*, vol. I (New York, 1968), pp. 91–126.

⁸⁴ M. Eliade, "Dezmințire," *Limite* (Paris), 9 (April 1971).

Crainic, Mircea Eliade, Ovidiu Papadima and Dragoș Popescu.⁹¹

In his preface to a volume by the Legionary leader Vasile Marin, who died in Spain in 1937 as a volunteer on the side of the Falangists, Nae Ionescu confessed to his beliefs "to the militants of the national revolution" and recalled that his paper, *Cuvântul*, had "inevitably joined the Legionary movement" in the autumn of 1933.⁹² Always one to strike a pose, the professor of metaphysics sat down at the feet of Codreanu, during a Legionary fête at the seaside, exclaiming: "This is my place, Captain!"⁹³ The symbolic implication was a suggestion of the new relationship represented by the two men: the *Spirit* accepted the primacy of Action, i.e., political action.

Following Nae Ionescu, the "rebellious" intellectuals,⁹⁴ foremost among them Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica and Mircea Vulcănescu, "discovered" in the Legionary movement the national and spiritual setting so "natural" to their philosophy. In the 1930s social and even philosophical ideas became politicized, and related primarily to the "Legionary revolution." Their philosophical orientation now disposed them toward a more coherent adoption of fascist doctrines and the reformulation of their philosophical, political and social ideas in more pronounced fascist colors. These were now clearly adjusted to the principal tenets and to the spirit of the Iron Guard. Although profession of faith was a key element, the options were far from being peremptory or "definitive." There was an abundance of compromise and opportunism. Adherences followed by retractions were a recurrent phenomenon, depending on the evolution of internal political events, on the spectacular ups and downs of the movement.

The trends of the "new nationalism," which asserted themselves after 1920, were formulated more and more explicitly in the language and spirit of the Iron Guard leaders; they were voiced with a literary talent the founders of the Iron Guard had lacked.

⁹¹ *Axa*, no. 24, 23 Dec. 1933.

⁹² N. Ionescu, "Prefață," in V. Marin, *Crez de generație* (Bucharest, 1937).

⁹³ I. Fleseriu, *Amințiuri* (Madrid, 1977). Quoted by J. Popper, "O emisiune interzisă," *Minimum* (Tel Aviv), 2 (1987).

⁹⁴ I. Ianoși, *Literatură și filozofie* (Bucharest, 1986), p. 153.

The importance of the Jew as an antithetic term rapidly increased in the years 1933–1940. For the new intellectual right, the "Jewish menace" and the ravages wrought by the "Jewish spirit" in all fields of intellectual life—be it political, socioeconomic, philosophical, religious, ethnic, or cultural—became essential factors in the definition of the basic concepts of the new ideology. The justification and urgent application of ethnocracy, the Orthodox national state and the ethnic spirit was given new impetus. One of the characteristic symptoms of "Guardist conversion" was this antisemitic coloring of all aspects of the politically right-wing or extreme right-wing intellectual life. However, this phenomenon also extended to larger categories of Romanian society and also penetrated the university, some academic circles, and the Church hierarchy, although these establishments were not actually restructured under the influence of the new "national revolution." A predisposition to conformism and the attribute of versatile adjustment to the powers that be eased their rapid reintegration, without significant upheaval, into other political contexts after the demise of the Iron Guard.

The fundamentally antisemitic orientation of the Iron Guard obliged or stimulated its intellectual affiliates and sympathizers to adopt radical antisemitic terminology or, at least, to voice their adherence to the Iron Guard's antisemitic program. Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu and their disciples produced a neo-antisemitic ideology; some actually made original contributions to the redefinition of the "Jewish question" in the new spirit.

Orthodoxism, Romanianism, Ethnicism and the Legionary "Spiritual Revolution"

* In the field of philosophical ideas, the developments recorded in the 1930s were stimulated and favored by trends that could be observed in European thinking as far back as the beginning of the century. These became widespread in Romania after World War I and needed no significant redefinition in order to be adjusted to the new orientation.

Antirationalism, religious mysticism and spiritualism became

the catchwords in the "young generation"'s intellectual circles,

particularly toward the end of the decade.⁹⁵ By 1926, "Cartesian rationalism" had already become the target of Nae Ionescu⁹⁶ and Crainic.⁹⁷ At the time there was also frequent talk about a "mystical revolution" and "spiritual primacy." These were the main factors in the definition of the "new spirituality." To these, Mircea Eliade added "mystical contemplation gravitating toward orthodoxyism,"⁹⁸ "Christian metaphysics and Eastern Orthodox living."⁹⁹ A spiritual adventure that had to be "purified, exalted and cultivated."¹⁰⁰ The young philosophers intensely felt that they were experiencing a spiritual crisis, a metaphysical despair.¹⁰¹ They were dominated by "a twilight psychology" and predisposed to exaltation and eschatological imagination.¹⁰² An inquiry among intellectuals of various generations about the "new spirituality," organized in 1928 by the review *Tiparnița literară*, indicated that mysticism and Orthodoxyism were its principal characteristics; this was maintained by Goga, Blaga, Crainic, Vulcănescu, Eliade and Polihroniade. Those who remained totally un receptive to the new spirit included Iorga,¹⁰³ Rădulescu-Motru, Eugen Lovinescu and Ţerban Cioculescu.¹⁰⁴ Some responses clearly indicated the metamorphosis that was to come. Polihroniade, one of the first to join the Iron Guard, saw the "new spirituality" as a "thirst for hierarchy, order and authority . . . the need for the primitive, subconscious and irrational."¹⁰⁵ In general, though, the polysemantic fluidity of terminology confined the discussion to the sphere of ideas, that is, metaphysics and esthetics, without any political contingencies. This explains why the supporters of "the spiritual revolt"¹⁰⁶

⁹⁵ L. Pătrășcanu, *Curente și tendințe . . .* pp. 14-15. See also Z. Ornea, *Traditionalism și modernitate . . .* pp. 282-300.

⁹⁶ N. Ionescu, op. cit., p. 25.

⁹⁷ Z. Ornea, op. cit., pp. 262, 270.

⁹⁸ M. Eliade, "Precizări pentru discuție," *Cuvântul*, no. 1133, 19 June 1928.

⁹⁹ M. Eliade, "Confesiiuni și semnificații," *Cuvântul*, no. 1242, 6 Oct. 1928.

¹⁰⁰ M. Eliade, "Aventura," *Cuvântul*, no. 1271, 4 Nov. 1928.

¹⁰¹ M. Vulcănescu, op. cit. (note 88), pp. 8-9.

¹⁰² A. Zub, "Timp și propensiune escatologică în perioada interbelică". Paper delivered at the Symposium "Times-Historiography," Nieborów, 1988. On the "spiritual revolution" of the "young generation," see also K. Hitchins, op. cit. (note 24), pp. 168-72.

¹⁰³ "Noua spiritualitate," *Tiparnița literară*, no. 2, 30 Nov. 1928.

initially included also Jewish intellectuals such as Mihail Sebastian and Ion Călugăru, and why the "Criterion," their cultural association (1932-1934), was alternatively accused of having Communist or Legionary sympathies.¹⁰⁴

The exploration of irrationalism and the subconscious, all the cultural and esthetic values linked to myth, were gradually juxtaposed premeditatively to reason, truth and a critical spirit and transposed into a right-wing ideology whose political expression was overtly or covertly pro-Legionary or pro-Nazi. Everything pertaining to spiritual values was now considered right-wing. Nae Ionescu declared that all great creative personalities had been on the right.¹⁰⁵ Noica—"I shall be on the right, the spiritual right of the Romanian collectivity"¹⁰⁶ and Mircea Eliade expressed the same opinion.¹⁰⁷

The "treason of the intellectuals," a subject also discussed in connection with the representatives of the "new spirituality," refers not only to political commitment to an essentially anti-intellectual movement, opposed as it was to freedom of thought, but also to the perversion of esthetic and philosophical values. The latter were now used only as political counters and arguments. The sign of "treason" was not so much commitment as the replacement of thinking by commitment, the exchange of the criterion of truth—now in the service of mysticism and politics—for myth, the repudiation of the intellect and the praise of barbarism.¹⁰⁸

There was a significant consensus among right-wing circles that they should "distance" themselves from Titu Maiorescu, one of the founders of modern Romanian culture in the nineteenth century and thus to reject his heritage. It was considered obsolete because it represented the supremacy of a critical, rationalist

¹⁰⁴ P. Comarnescu, [Letter to Basil Munteanu, 30 May 1936], in B. Munteanu, *Correspondențe* (Paris, 1979), pp. 317-18. See also L. Antonesei, "Le moment 'Criterion'—un modèle d'action culturelle," in A. Zub (ed.), *Culture and Society* (Jassy, 1985).

¹⁰⁵ N. Ionescu, op. cit., p. 370.

¹⁰⁶ C. Noica, "Scrișoare unui european," *Ara*, no. 3, 27 Nov. 1932.

¹⁰⁷ "All great artists are on the right" (Mihail Sebastian's Diary, 27 Nov. 1935). See above, note 90.

¹⁰⁸ L. Kolakowski, "Intellectuals against Intellect," in S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *Intellectuals and Tradition*, part II (New York, 1973).

approach based on the criterion of truth.¹⁰⁹ "We live in an era of the liquidation of the critical spirit," announced Nae Ionescu.¹¹⁰ In Eliade's view, the "mystical," creative and missionary orientation of his generation was incompatible with the critical spirit:

I cannot lose my confidence in the historic mission of Romania and her intellectual vigor, especially because for the last twenty years we have constantly moved away from Maiorescu. He has never been further away, more of a stranger or more indifferent to us than today. . . . Especially today Eminescu means to us that Romanian nationalist and "mystical" nineteenth century against which the [cultural society] Jumnea, T. Maiorescu and Caragiale were fighting. . . . The critical spirit is a luxury which a culture can afford only late in the day.¹¹¹

One of the reasons Hitler commanded the admiration of Emil Cioran in 1933–1937 was his merit in winning the victory of the mystical spirit over the critical spirit:

There is no politician in the world today who inspires my sympathy and admiration to a greater extent than Hitler. . . . The mysticism of the *Führer* in Germany is fully justified. . . . It is Hitler's merit that he has ravished the critical spirit of a nation. . . . Hitler has poured a fiery passion into political struggles and dynamized an entire domain of values, reduced by democratic rationalism to platitudes and trivialities, with a messianic spirit. All of us need mysticism because we are tired of so many truths which do not spark a flame.¹¹²

Cioran was not the only one to make a powerful political

¹⁰⁹ E. Lovinescu, *Titu Maiorescu și posteritatea lui critică* (Bucharest, 1943), pp. 200–33.

¹¹⁰ N. Ionescu, "Dincolo de tocmaiă," *Cuvântul*, no. 3135, 5 Feb. 1938.

¹¹¹ M. Eliade, "Popor fără misiune? . . ." *Vremea*, no. 416, 1 Dec. 1935. Nica, "Titu Maiorescu, tip universalist, în fața tineretului de azi," *Vremea*, Easter 1937.

¹¹² E. Cioran, "Impresii din München. Hitler în conștiința germană," *Vremea*, no. 346, 15 July 1934.

impression with these kinds of spiritual notions. Mysticism, the new ethics, the new man, messianism and the cult of violence acquired clear-cut political connotations. The "spiritual revolution" identified with the "Legionary revolution."

Eliade, who only two years before had regretted the trivial politicization of great intellectual ideas,¹¹³ "discovered" in 1935 that Codreanu's movement was their perfect embodiment:

A political leader of young people [C. Z. Codreanu] has said that the aim of his movement is to "reconcile Romania with God." This is a messianic formula. . . . because a "reconciliation of Romania with God" means, in the first place, an inversion of values, a clear primacy of spirituality, an invitation to creativity and to a spiritual life.¹¹⁴

For the sociologist Ernest Bernea, the ethics of "suffering," the "new ethics," was synonymous with "the ethics of the Legion."¹¹⁵ It meant, first and foremost, a cult of power; "the irrational cult of power and the powerful cult of the irrational," as defined by Emil Cioran, applied primarily to political life. Again, the Nazi success was the most persuasive example of "the passion of a secund and creative barbarism."¹¹⁶ Nazism also meant "a new way of life," a new ethos:

I like the Hitlerites because of their cult of the *irrational*, their exaltation of vitality as such, their virile expansion of energy, without any critical spirit, without reserve and without control.¹¹⁷

Romania could be saved from political and spiritual decay by adopting this ethos:

To the skepticism and vulgarity we have, I would much prefer a

¹¹³ M. Eliade, "Creație etnică și gîndire politică," *Cuvântul*, no. 2994, 26 Aug. 1933.

¹¹⁴ M. Eliade, "Popor fără misiune? . . ." *Vremea*, no. 416, 1 Dec. 1935.

¹¹⁵ E. Bernea, "Etica nouă și progresul," *Cuvântul*, no. 3121, 22 Jan. 1938.

¹¹⁶ E. Cioran, "Aspecte germane," *Vremea*, no. 314, 19 Nov. 1933.

¹¹⁷ E. Cioran, "Germania sau Franța sau iluzia păcii," *Vremea*, Christmas 1933.

remnant of barbarism that would accompany us as a reservoir or driving force... It is more than evident that in Romania we need a different ethos, a different understanding of life, a different spirit... Against this devitalization of Romania we have to install the cult of power, of explosive energy, of a vitality that will be self-fulfilling".¹¹⁸

The philosophical, ethical and esthetic ideas, as well as the sociopolitical doctrines introduced after 1923 and particularly in and around 1930 by these intellectuals had one purpose: the ideological justification of the "new nationalism." Nationality, autochthonous tradition and the national character were supreme and sacred spiritual values; the purpose of intellectual activity was to create its theoretical substantiation. In 1937, Nichifor Crainic proudly recapitulated the merits of his own person and of the paper he was publishing on the redefinition of nationalism and new supporting conceptions:

The term ethnic, meaning "specifically ethnic," imprinted in all kinds of manifestations of the nation, like a mark of its original characteristics, was introduced sixteen years ago into great literary circulation by the periodical *Gândirea*: so were the terms autochthonism, traditionalism, Orthodoxy, spirituality and many others which have become the common property of the current nationalist language.¹¹⁹

Almost concomitantly, although using somewhat different terms and methods of argument, Nae Ionescu became the other principal propagandist of this trend. Both he and Crainic placed *Eastern Christian Orthodoxy* and the religious mystique at the center of the new nationalism's ideological construction. Indeed, this was the most important innovation that they brought to the concept of nationality in Romanian thinking.¹²⁰ Since the early medieval period, the Romanians belonged to

the Eastern Orthodox Church and were under the direct religious influence of Byzantium. Christian Orthodoxy, employing Greek Eastern rite and the Slavonic language, was, for centuries, a characteristic of Romanian spirituality and culture. On this basis, Crainic, Ionescu and their disciples, following Russian mystical philosophers such as Nikolai Berdyaev and Sergei Bulgakov, conceived a Romanian Orthodox philosophy. They emphasized the essential spiritual differences with regard to Catholicism and tried to discover the uniqueness of Romanian Orthodox spirituality.

The powerful assertion of Orthodoxy was also linked to the institutional activity carried out at the time by the Orthodox Church. As a result of the presence of a great mass of non-Orthodox believers following the expansion of the country's borders, the Church devoted its efforts to centralize its power in the face of the autonomous Orthodox churches in the recently integrated territories.¹²¹

The radical right-wing ideologists' option for Orthodoxy and an Orthodox ethnic state was an important argument in the delegitimization of democracy, which was incompatible with the organic nature of the Church-state symbiosis. It also offered the ideal "solution" for the inferiority complex that existed in Romania with regard to the country's backwardness in developing along the lines of the Western liberal democracies. This was a way to drop out of this "competition" with the West and choose the alternative of a Balkan, patriarchal model in the autochthonous tradition.¹²²

These ideas recurred frequently and in an insistent and polemical tone in Crainic's articles. The "autochthonous spirit" as repeatedly defined by him was, first and foremost, mystically Orthodox, of Oriental origin, as opposed to the Western spirit;¹²³ it expressed a patriarchal outlook and "autochthonous ethic," a "Christian and Romanian" truth.¹²⁴ In another passage, "the mystique of the soil" and Orthodoxy were said to be the two components of the native spirit.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ E. Cioran, "Cultul puterii," *Vremea*, no. 352, 26 Aug. 1934.

¹¹⁹ N. Crainic, *Orthodoxie și etnocratie* (Bucharest, 1937), p. 277.

¹²⁰ Cf. C. Durandin, "La Grande-Roumanie: l'échec du modèle national-libéral," in *Les conséquences des traités de paix de 1919-1920 en Europe Centrale et Sud-Orientale* (Strasbourg, 1987), pp. 292-313.

¹²¹ C. Durandin, "Orthodoxie et Roumanité," op. cit. (note 5), p. 114.

¹²² C. Durandin, op. cit., pp. 123-4.

¹²³ N. Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în istoria (Bucharest, 1936)*, p. 83.

¹²⁴ N. Crainic, op. cit., p. 143.

¹²⁵ N. Crainic, "Viața spirituală în România de azi," *Gândirea*, 10 (Dec. 1940).

The other important philosopher of Orthodoxy, Nae Ionescu, even spoke of an "Orthodox logic."¹²⁶ The Church had to create "a new spiritual equilibrium," a "new mystique."¹²⁷ Ionescu's Orthodoxy was emphatically "peasant,"¹²⁸ as were the structures of the Romanian state he wanted to see established.¹²⁹ In keeping with the above-mentioned difficulties of the Orthodox Church, Nae Ionescu contested the Romanian nationality of Catholic Romanians since, "in their normal state, present and past Romanians were Orthodox." To be Romanian meant "to be Orthodox."¹³⁰

Some of the disciples of these two ideologists of traditionalist Orthodoxy actually specialized in an eminently Christian theological philosophy (Vasile Băncilă, D. Stăniloae, Gh. Racoveanu). Emil Cioran, however, was a dissident and rebel in this field. In his view, ruralism was a more serious impediment to harnessing national energy and to unchaining messianic "frenzy":

Our misfortune comes from the living conditions of agrarian peoples. . . . Enthusiasm for the village has always been the common mark of our intellectuals, their bad mark. . . . The village is the substructure and biological basis of a nation, but never its bearer and motor.¹³¹

Cioran reproached the traditional Orthodox spirit particularly for its lack of fanaticism and intolerance:

The absence of passionate religiosity, and especially the absence of religious intolerance were [up to the appearance of phenomena of collective religious psychosis in 1935] saddening signs revealing a very low interior standard.¹³²

The Romanian fascist movement, bearing a strong mystical—

¹²⁶ N. Ionescu, *Istoria logicei* (Bucharest, 1944), p. 13.

¹²⁷ N. Ionescu, *Roză vînturilor*, p. 7.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 35.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 287.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 201.

¹³¹ E. Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României* (Bucharest, 1937), p. 108.

¹³² E. Cioran, "Maglavitul și cealaltă Românie," *Vremea*, no. 408, 6 Oct. 1935.

religious and Christian mark since inception, had no difficulty in absorbing traditionalist and pro-Orthodox trends. The planned Legionary state was to be the political expression of the ethnocracy and the Christian national status expounded by the ideologists. Ionescu and Crainic—to the extent that he refrained from vacillating according to circumstances—regarded the Iron Guard as the spiritual and de facto bearer of the new Orthodoxism that they supported.¹³³

In this respect, too, Eliade remained a devoted disciple of Nae Ionescu. When his master became closely associated with the Iron Guard, Eliade was more strongly stimulated to adopt the Christian element, the idea of Christianity in the Legionary spirit as a characteristic feature of national "rebirth" and the national "spiritual revolution." In 1933 he was still writing about "religious rebirth" and "cosmic Christianity" without making any reference to a movement that represented these principles.¹³⁴ In 1937 Eliade considered the mystical, Christian spirit, asceticism, the cult of death and salvation promoted by the Legionnaires as the very essence of the true spirit that would revolutionize and redeem Romanian destiny. To him, the death of Moța and Marin, two Legionary leaders, in Spain was the most exalting example:

The voluntary death of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin has a mystical meaning: sacrifice for Christianity. . . . Like his chief and friend Corneliu Codreanu, Ion Moța believed that it was the young generation's mission to reconcile Romania with God, to transform a dead letter into Christian life, to fight with all and every means against the powers of darkness. When he felt that Lucifer was again preparing to fight Christ, Ion Moța, the Orthodox crusader, went out boldly, with peace in his heart, to sacrifice himself for the victory of the Savior.¹³⁵

The swearing of allegiance ceremony at that memorial assumed the significance and symbolism of a revelation:

¹³³ Crainic published a survey and unreserved apologetic of the Iron Guard only after the movement seemed to have won full victory and power. See N. Crainic, "Revoluția legionară," *Gândirea*, 8 (Oct. 1940).

¹³⁴ M. Eliade, "Renașterea religioasă," *Vremea*, Easter 1933.

¹³⁵ M. Eliade, "Ion Moța și Vasile Marin," *Vremea*, no. 472, 24 Jan. 1937.

It is not often that a youthful movement born of the will to make history and not politics has expressed itself as totally as in this oath. . . . The significance of this oath is overwhelming. The extent to which it is fulfilled and bears fruit will also demonstrate Romania's capacity for spiritual renewal. . . . Never before has the Romanian soul wanted to be more tragic, more substantial, that is, more Christian.

The significance of the revolution for which Mr. Corneliu Codreanu is striving is so profoundly mystical that its success would be another victory of the Christian spirit in Europe, in a large Europe in which Christ has not been victorious too often, although millions of people believed in him. This oath, which so clearly expresses the thoughts of Mr. Codreanu, proves how far away the Legionary movement is from merely a "nationalist revolution." What matters is not gaining of power at any price, but rather, and first and foremost, a *new man*, a man for whom spiritual life exists and Christianity is lived responsibly, that is, tragically, ascetically. . . .

If, as we are told, Nazism is based on the Nation and Fascism on the State, then the Legionary movement has the right to claim for itself that it is the only Christian mystique capable of leading human communities . . . a Christian revolution, and an ascetic and virile spiritual revolution never before known in the history of Europe.¹³⁶

A declaration by Mircea Eliade ("Why I Believe in the Victory of the Legionary Movement") published at the end of 1937, was actually a profession of his credo that its profoundly Christian character was of overwhelming importance for the Legion and Romania's destiny, as it presented the world with a new model of revolution, which, by its spirit, was superior to all others:

I believe in this victory because, above all, I believe in the victory of the Christian spirit. A movement originating from and fed by the Christian spirit, a spiritual revolution that fights especially sin and dishonor is not a political movement. It is a *Christian revolution*. But never before has an entire

people experienced a revolution with all its being, never before has the word of the Savior been understood as a revolution of the forces of the soul against the sins and weaknesses of the flesh; never before has an entire people chosen monasticism as its ideal in life and death as its bride. . . .

That is why, whilst all revolutions are *political*, the Legionary revolution is *spiritual* and *Christian*. Whilst the aim of all contemporary revolutions is the winning of power by a social class or by a person, the supreme target of the Legionary revolution, is, as the Captain has said, *the salvation of the people*; the reconciliation of the Romanian people with God. That is why the sense of the Legionary movement will lead not only to the restoration of the virtues of our people, to a valorous, dignified and powerful Romania; it will also create a *new man* attuned to a new type of life in Europe.¹³⁷

The principal reason for Mircea Eliade's admiration of the "revolution" of Salazar, to whom he dedicated a book in 1942, was the Christian essence of his dictatorship, "a Christian form of totalitarianism," a fulfillment of the failed dream of the Iron Guard, which by then had been removed from the stage of Romanian politics: "The Salazar state, a Christian and totalitarian state, is based, first and foremost, on love."¹³⁸ With Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu and his disciples, Orthodoxy, even more so than rural traditionalism, was the principal characteristic feature of the *ethnic spirit*, of *Romanianism*, of the concepts of ethnicity and the national specific; it was the hallmark distinguishing the "new nationalism" from "traditional nationalism." In this respect, as in politics, the differences were profound. The partisans of the "new nationalism" always claimed, with a modesty one could not but suspect, to be descendants of the "precursors." However, the last, and most prominent, "traditional" nationalist, Nicolae Iorga, refused to acknowledge his successors, whom he considered, with respect to Orthodoxy, too, as imitators and deviants.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ M. Eliade, "De ce cred în biruința Mîșcării Legionare," *Buna Vestire*, no. 244, 17 Dec. 1937.

¹³⁸ M. Eliade, *Salazar și revoluția din Portugalia* (Bucharest, 1942), p. 8.

¹³⁹ N. Iorga, [On the "New Spirituality"], *Tiparul literară*, no. 2, 30 Nov. 1928.

¹³⁶ M. Eliade, "Comentarii la un jurământ," *Vremea*, no. 476, 21 Feb. 1937.

The generation of the “new nationalism,” favored by the new political context, succeeded in monopolizing concepts that later became slogans for right-wing causes; in politics and culture, it succeeded in appearing as the only and legitimate flag-bearer of Romanianism and the national ideal. The philosopher Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, author of the most substantial studies on Romanianism and nationalism,¹⁴⁰ was “esteemed,” but represented no positive model for young intellectuals.¹⁴¹ To Crainic, his main theses in the exposition of a social and political theory of the Romanian national character were “a naive and confused mystification of Romanianism” precisely because they lacked any antisemitic or xenophobic note.¹⁴²

In “Integral,” “organic,” “new-style” and “ethnicist” nationalism were terms in constant use in right-wing cultural and political papers, often without paying attention to the ambiguity of the terminology. *Ethnicism*, “the formula of Romanian nationalism today,” as Nae Ionescu defined it,¹⁴³ summed up the attitude of an autochthonous exclusivism and a mystique of ethnic singularity, different from the concept of racism for the fascist ideologists. Crainic vaguely defined the ethnic element as “the people’s own nature.” It had “a biological and ethical meaning,” it meant “blood and soul.”¹⁴⁴ The principal factors in “The Program of the Ethnocratic State” were “soil, blood, soul and belief.”¹⁴⁵

In addition to stressing the preponderance of the religious element, the new nationalism also maintaining its distance from the old at the level of the sociopolitical doctrine from which it was derived. The old nationalism was “liberal,” the new—“natural” and “organic,” based on a totalitarian, ethnocratic conception.¹⁴⁶ In 1938 Nae Ionescu traced the evolution from one phase to the next in Romania as a natural transition:

¹⁴⁰ C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Românismul: catehismul unei noi spiritualități* (Bucharest, 1936).

¹⁴¹ M. Eliade, “Românismul d-lui Rădulescu-Motru,” *Vremea*, no. 395, 7 July 1935.

¹⁴² N. Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocratie*, p. 125.

¹⁴³ N. Ionescu, “Naționalismul de ‘import’,” *Cuvântul*, no. 3183, 25 March 1938.

¹⁴⁴ N. Crainic, op. cit., p. 129.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 284.

¹⁴⁶ N. Ionescu, “Primejdia celor de pe urmă,” *Iconar*, 4 (1935).

As a political formula, ethnicist nationalism is the reflex of a certain historical structure. It was an impossibility at a time when the world was dominated by liberalism, . . . rationalism, democracy, idealism, Protestantism and whatever. . . . That is why, before the war, ethnicist nationalism could not develop effectively and could not take over the political field. But the war has speeded this process of dissolution. The organic mentality has become the rule everywhere, throwing out the juridical mentality, and liberalism has made way for a collective understanding of life; therefore the individual has also been replaced by the nation.¹⁴⁷

In spite of the admiration for Hitler’s “German revolution,” the idea of racial superiority or purity attracted only insignificant supporters. Although elements appeared in propagandist texts that reiterated Nazi slogans, German racism, having no Christian religious content, was repugnant to Romanian nationalist ideologists. Crainic rejected “the mistakes of German racism” in a polemical tone, in striking contrast to his praise of the successes of “the German revolution.” The racist dogma was in direct contradiction to the other, Christian dogma that was at the center of his nationalism. “German nationalism is based on that totally arbitrary dogma of the German race’s superiority.”¹⁴⁸ The idea was accepted, and even enthusiastically welcomed, in only one respect: as a “biological,” “natural” argument for a policy of the definitive exclusion of Jews—and only of Jews—from social and economic life.

The evolution of Mircea Eliade in relation to nationalism was especially fascinating. Among the terms in circulation at the time to describe the new nationalist spirit, Eliade’s favorite was *Romanianism*. The involvement of the writer and essayist in the continuing debate coincided with his public declaration of sympathy with the Legionary movement. That is why, from 1933, the redefinition of his views assumed an increasingly explicit political hue and was made in language, despite its intentional

¹⁴⁷ N. Ionescu, “Naționalismul de ‘import’,” *Cuvântul*, no. 3183, 25 March 1938.

¹⁴⁸ N. Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în istorie*, p. 163.

ambiguity, that would facilitate linkage to the Legionary doctrine and, in the final phase of the political metamorphosis, identification with it.

In 1933, that is, at the time of Nae Ionescu's association with the Iron Guard, the young intellectuals who had joined the Guard publicly recorded in their journal *Axa*, "Mircea Eliade's conversion to Romanianism":

Mr. Mircea Eliade, the talented writer, famous essayist and admirable cultural personality, seems to be making determined steps in a direction dear to us and different from the one he had been taking. So far his career as a journalist has had unexpected picturesquesque turns and zigzags. Mr. Mircea Eliade has played with ideas and attitudes to life, has accumulated experience, has wandered over the world, has always and everywhere been brilliant, but . . . has refused to anchor himself definitively in Romanian reality.

However, some time ago, Mr. Mircea Eliade began to change. And, no offence intended, perhaps as a result of reaching maturity, he has begun to become serious. . . . Mr. Mircea Eliade is beginning to see Romanian reality, to integrate with it, to subordinate himself to it.¹⁴⁹

Eliade protested this interpretation. He did not acknowledge any "change"¹⁵⁰ but, quite rightly, claimed to belong to a continuum of nationalist political thinking of the "Eminescu—Iorga—Pârvan—Gândirea generation," decisively shifted by Nae Ionescu's doctrine, with special emphasis on action, on ethnic creativity and the harnessing, through art, of the ethnic qualities, of the "irrational substance of our ethos."¹⁵¹

However, the intuition of his friends at the Legionary *Axa* was not completely off the mark. Eliade was gradually "remodelling" tradition in order to use it as the basis of the new trend and the new political setting. First, the concept of Romanianism had to be

¹⁴⁹ [M. Polihroniade], "Convertirea d-lui Mircea Eliade la românism," *Axa*, 18 (1933).

¹⁵⁰ M. Eliade, "O convertire la românism," *Cuvântul*, no. 302, 22 Sept. 1933.

¹⁵¹ M. Eliade, "Creație etnică și gîndire politică," *Cuvântul*, no. 2994, 26 Aug. 1933.

Why should this term, "Romanianism," be discredited, why should it be identified with demagoguery and chauvinism? Because Mr. Goga also happened to use it? . . .

This term, "Romanianism" has been totally discredited. Who still has the courage to state publicly that he is a "nationalist?" You are immediately told that you are a Hitlerite, a hooligan, racist, fascist, mercenary, and that you want war! If, by chance, you say something about "this country" (and if you don't say it as a pejorative) you are suspected of "Iron Guardism" or antisemitism. . . .

It should be said that Romanianism means neither fascism nor chauvinism, but simply the desire to have an organic, unitary, ethnic and equitable state. The gentlemen who are talking so much about justice and social equality might see that the nationalism of Eminescu and Iorga . . . is only an endeavor for social justice, for the natural organization of this country's forces, for equity.¹⁵²

Freed from "nationalist demagoguery", obviously of the old type, Romanianism can now be sought and identified in the sphere of national creativity. This is followed by a significant game of substitution (patriotism/nationalism/fascism) aiming not only to legitimize the "new nationalism" with the aid of the prestige of coopted "precursors," but also daring to adopt possible similarities to fascism:

For us, Romanians, renunciation of Romanianism means to renounce life, to take refuge in death. . . . But I am surprised to discover that they [the meanings of Romanianism] are sensational here. I also discover that they are the creations of Mussolini and Hitler. If, to use a phrase, I

¹⁵² M. Eliade, "Compromiterea românismului," *Vremea*, no. 329, 11 March 1934.

did not know the "classics," I might be disposed to believe that the statement "I am Romanian" means "I am a fascist," or "I am a Nazi." . . . I just cannot see Eminescu as a Nazi. Nor can I see Pârvan as a fascist.¹⁵³

Oscillations, with a political substratum, in the definition of nationalism continued in 1935. Sometimes Eliade even appeared to adhere to the non-chauvinistic, "centrist" Romanianism of Rădulescu-Motru.¹⁵⁴

From 1936, his option for the extreme right was clear-cut. Instead of abandoning it, "tradition" had to be transposed in its entirety as the basis and justification of the new current. In Eliade's writings, the offensive appellation "hooligan," as applied to right-wing extremists as a pejorative by their adversaries, became a title of honor that he awarded to the nineteenth-century forerunners Kogălniceanu, Conta, Hasdeu and, above all, Eminescu.¹⁵⁵ The nationalist fanaticism of the "hooligans" was also attributed to "the classics." In the case of Eminescu, whose abusive "enrollment" was the most attractive, the transference resulted from the proposition of a tendentious hypothesis: how would Romanian public opinion receive the great poet now, in the 1930s?

His ferocious antisemitism and nationalism would arouse the ire of a cohort of critics and moralists who, in the best case, would tell him about Romania's obligations to the minorities, about humanitarianism and our alliance with France, and so on. This great "hooligan," this poet who cursed only once—those who "are in love with foreigners"—would be overwhelmed today by abuse, calumny and intrigue.¹⁵⁶

Eliade, his commitment spiraling, attributed the role of the one

¹⁵³ M. Eliade, "Criza românismului? . . ." *Vremea*, no. 375, 10 Feb. 1935.

¹⁵⁴ M. Eliade, "Romanismul d-lui Rădulescu-Motru," *Vremea*, no. 395, 7 July 1935.

¹⁵⁵ M. Eliade, "Mai multe feluri de naționaliști . . ." *Vremea*, no. 444, 15 July 1936; and "În jurul poezilor lui Hasdeu," *Vremea*, no. 507, 3 Oct. 1937.

¹⁵⁶ M. Eliade, "Mai multe feluri de naționaliști . . ." *Vremea*, no. 444, 15 July 1936.

¹⁵⁷ M. Eliade, "Cele două Români," *Vremea*, no. 457, 4 Oct. 1936.

¹⁵⁸ M. Eliade, "Noua aristocrație legionară," *Vremea*, no. 522, 23 Jan. 1938.

and only messenger of the national ideal to the Iron Guard and its leader. It was with veneration that Eliade quoted, in three articles published within one year, the "prophetic" words of C.Z. Codreanu about Romania's reconciliation with God, a formula expressing the mystical sense of the movement. "Only Bălcescu and Heliade-Rădulescu were speaking like that," wrote Eliade.¹⁵⁷ The new *national messianism*, the creation of the *new man* embodying the movement's spirit and bringing about the national revolution are linked exclusively to the Legionary movement:

Legionarism has reintroduced to Romania the joy and the pedagogy of the honest, open struggle. . . . The promotion of manliness and of the offensive spirit—aristocratic, European values—has led to another change in the soul of the young Romanian generation. It has created the awareness of an historic mission, the feeling that we were born in order to carry out a unique revolution in the history of the nation. . . . But in this new, Legionary aristocracy which is being born, the Romanian Middle Ages are reborn: awareness of the historic mission, worthiness, manliness, contempt and indifference toward the powerless, scoundrels and clever fellows.¹⁵⁸

The identification of nationalism with the Guardist spirit found its emotional and programmatic expression in his above-mentioned manifesto:

I believe in the destiny of the Romanian people. That is why I believe in the victory of the Legionary movement. A nation that has demonstrated huge powers for creation at all levels of reality cannot be shipwrecked at the periphery of history in a Balkanized democracy, in a civil catastrophe . . . A nation blessed with so many biological, civil and spiritual virtues, can it perish without having fulfilled its great historical mission? . . . I believe in the destiny of our nation. I believe in the

¹⁵⁷ M. Eliade, "Cele două Români," *Vremea*, no. 457, 4 Oct. 1936.

¹⁵⁸ M. Eliade, "Noua aristocrație legionară," *Vremea*, no. 522, 23 Jan. 1938.

Christian revolution of the new man. I believe in freedom, personality and love. Therefore I believe in the victory of the Legionary movement, in a proud and a powerful Romania, in a new way of life that will transform the riches of the Romanian soul into universal spiritual values.¹⁵⁹

In the opinion of Emil Cioran, too, the new nationalism was essentially fanatic and exclusivist. It was based on a cult of irrational force—just like its model, Hitler's Germany—exalted because it was successful. Unlike Eliade, Cioran did not believe in the existence of a valid Romanian tradition that might be harnessed by the initiators of the national revolution in order to "transform Romania." All the forces of the essayist as a pamphleteer and his extraordinary aphoristic style were marshalled to a kind of merciless flagellation of the traditional Romanian spirit. The essays he published in *Vremea* and *Schimbarea la față a României* ("Romania's Transfiguration," 1937) comprise the despairing lamentations of a prophet disgusted by the centuries-old inertia of his fellow countrymen and sombre meditations on the allegedly "minor" and "mediocre" destiny of the Romanians—a small people, lacking aggressiveness and the calling for barbarism and expansion:

God knows what excuses or secret justifications one should seek to find for the accursed inertia of this indifferent people. . . . To the skepticism and vulgarity we have, I would very much prefer a remnant of barbarism that would accompany us in culture as a reservoir or driving force. . . .

Indifference, doubt and disappointment are the cancer of our national being. The Romanians do not believe blindly in anything, nor do they deny anything passionately; they systematically doubt everything, turning oscillation into a virtue. . . .

As to the Romanian peasant, what is there to say? Instead of admiring him without justification, we should see what we have to destroy in him.

¹⁵⁹ M. Eliade, "De ce cred în biruința Mișcării Legionare," *Buna Vestire*, no. 244, 17 Dec. 1937.

Next to Nae Ionescu, Emil Cioran was the most radical critic of the old nationalism; he recorded the differences and qualitative leap to the new nationalism with exactitude. Having no "theoretical awareness," the new nationalists were "making history" instinctively and rejected democracy. The antisemitic, xenophobic program was not their sole aim; their ideal was the radical transformation of the national destiny by the establishment of the cult of force. A new, fanatical and mystical messianism was its hallmark:

Romania needs exaltation reaching fanaticism. A fanatical Romania is a transfigured Romania. The fanaticization of Romania is the transfiguration of Romania. . . . Our people are too kindhearted, too decent, too quiet. *I can only love a delirious Romania.*¹⁶⁰

The new components of Romanianism introduced by Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu and their disciples were also current, in the form of stereotyped myths, in the pro-Legionary cultural and political publications. They included a mystical repetition of words with a biblical resonance, such as "the people's transfiguration," "ethnic resurrection," "the triumph of Romanianism," "the regeneration of the Romanian nation," and more.¹⁶¹

An attempt to introduce a "Romanian racism" with the use of Nazi "scientific" terminology was more noticeable in Nicolae Roșu and other journalists with no intellectual prestige whatsoever.¹⁶² The distinctive note of the new nationalism was not racism; it was the exacerbation of xenophobia, substantiated

¹⁶⁰ E. Cioran, "Cultul puterii," *Vremea*, no. 352, 26 Aug. 1934.

¹⁶¹ E. Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României*, pp. 39, 46, 88.

¹⁶² Expressions from *Vremea* (1935) and *Porunca Vremii* (1937).

¹⁶³ I. Foti, *Concepția eroică a rasei* (Bucharest, 1936); N. Roșu, "Hărțile rasei românești," *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, 10 (1940).

not so much with arguments about racial superiority as about the ethnic defense of Romanianism. Just as with the traditional nationalists, the foreigner represented the threat of de-nationalization, of the perversion of the national spirit and culture. The principal novelty of the ideologists of the "revolutionary right" was to attribute to foreigners, and foremost to the Jews, the role of the blocking the way to the achievement of a totalitarian ethnic state and carrying out national "revolution" and "regeneration."¹⁶⁴

3

Ethnocracy, Antisemitism and Legionary Commitment

The "New Antisemitism": Christianity versus Judaism

Xenophobia, which had been an important factor in one of the principal directions of Romanian nationalism from its inception, now became a dominant feature of the "new type" of nationalism. The constructive, positive character of the national messianism of the first revolutionary generation, which distinguished itself around the year 1848, now turned eminently negative. Fighting foreigners became the favorite form of expressing patriotism and the national specific.

One of the explanations for the increased xenophobia of the new nationalist ideology, in addition to its exacerbation in the context of European fascism, can be found in the persistent difficulty of integrating the minorities living in the territories that Romania had acquired after World War I. The ethnic homogenization of the Romanians of all the country's provinces was also felt to be an, as yet, unfinished process; this provoked alarmist reactions with regard to foreign threats that might question the very existence of the Romanian nation.

In the cultural spheres, a fluctuating perception of native values, oscillating between an exalted national projection and

depressive inferiority complexes caused by comparisons with the West, stimulated the impulse to regard the foreigner as a barrier

on the road to recovery and the assertion of the values of

Romanian civilization. "One of the reasons for our xenophobia,"

¹⁶⁴ N. Rospa, *Orientări în viață* (Bucharest, 1937), p. 220.

wrote Emil Cioran, "is the historical inequality between the minorities and ourselves. If we were an established nation, our struggle with them would assume less dramatic forms."¹ Cioran identified a certain form of instinctive, natural xenophobia as an intrinsic feature of Romanian nature; because of its obsessive character, it was felt to be an insufficiency:

Hostility to foreigners is so characteristic of Romanian national feeling that the two will always be inseparable. The first national reaction of the Romanian is not pride in the destiny of Romania, or a sentiment of glory, which is a hallmark of French patriotism, but revolt against foreigners, often aired as a swear word, and sometimes crystallized in a durable hatred. This produces some of the insufficiencies of Romanian nationalism. *Romania's problem would not be less serious if we eliminated all foreigners.* It would only begin. It is obvious that the foreigners have to be neutralized; but this should not be the central mission of nationalism, because if our eyes are glued too long on foreigners we shall no longer see our own realities, our essential misery. We have lived under foreigners for 1,000 years; not to hate them and not to eliminate them would demonstrate an absence of national instinct.²

With Nichifor Crainic, the "elimination" of foreigners acquired a doctrinal form on which his new ethnocratic state was planned.³ In politics, xenophobia could assume very extreme forms directed against Hungarians and Russians, but antisemitism remained its ideological focus. However, before becoming the trademark of the new nationalist orientation, the label of antisemitism was rejected by its leaders. To them, the term sounded "vulgar" and obsolete (because it meant anti-Jewish discrimination for racial or religious reasons). To be considered an "antisemite" was a discredit because it meant that you were associated with or taken for a supporter of A. C. Cuza, whom many people linked to vandalism, manifestations of crazed hatred and vulgar propaganda. In a violently antisemitic article

¹ E. Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României* (Bucharest, 1937), p. 142.

² Ibid., pp. 127–8.

³ N. Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocratie* (Bucharest, 1937), pp. 182–3.

published in 1931, Crainic declared categorically: "We have not been, we are not and shall not be antisemites, because there is no cruelty in our souls against so many needy people who are suffering as we do, although they do not have our blood."⁴ Similar declarations were often made by Goga and Nae Ionescu. Antagonism toward the Jews was justified by arguments other than those of "traditional" antisemitism; it was said to be built on much more solid foundations and not influenced by propaganda in other countries.

After 1933, the term enjoyed renewed popularity, however. To declare oneself an antisemite and openly praise antisemitism no longer dishonored an intellectual. Crainic did not hesitate to use antisemitism as a slogan of the new direction he represented; it became a guarantee of its validity: "Our spirit is healthy because it is antisemitic: antisemitic in theory and antisemitic in practice."⁵ Most of the new theorists continued to distance themselves from the "rowdy" antisemitism of A. C. Cuza, to redefine the term in order to endow it with different dimensions and meanings. Although sometimes only apparent in, or confined to wording, the change was more visible and more accentuated in two ways. Both were linked to the basic features of the new nationalism and the anti-liberal political doctrine.

The Romanianism of Crainic, Nae Ionescu and their disciples placed great emphasis on the Orthodox Christian element and therefore implied the exclusion of Jews from the ethnic and national spheres. And Judaism, examined in its metaphysical and religious essence, proved to be incompatible with the Romanian national spirit and very dangerous at best. Hence, it was incumbent upon the ethnocratic national state, the political expression of ethnocentrism, to exclude the Jews, in part or totally, and to ban their participation at the higher levels of the nation's life. Ethnicity and religion provided the favourite arguments. "Native," "nationalist," "metaphysical" and theological antisemitism prevailed against the economic and social arguments of Cuza's doctrine and Nazi-inspired racism.

Nichifor Crainic found in Christian theology his main argu-

⁴ N. Crainic, "In marginea unei sărbătoriri," *Gândirea*, 11 (1931), p. 458.

⁵ N. Crainic, *Lupta pentru spiritul nou. Germania și Italia în scrisul meu de la 1932 încoace* (Bucharest, 1941), p. 143.

ments for advocating the fight against Judaism and the elimination of Jews from Romania's social and intellectual life. His arguments were not new by any means; what was new was his polemical aggressiveness, unprecedented in Romanian theological exegesis.

His first objective was the "de-Judaization" of Jesus and the Bible itself. Christianity was not the creation of "any race." Christ was "primordial and absolute man." The Old Testament was "part and parcel of the Christian spiritual framework";⁶ a holy book, inspired by God, a preface to the Gospel, a fragment from the "revelation given through Jesus Christ."⁷ The aim of the Christian world must be the struggle against Judaism as represented by the Talmud:

The Talmud is the obscurantist organization of the most tremendous hatred against the Savior Jesus Christ and against Christians. Its spirit is the cruel spirit of Herod, the killer of 14,000 innocent babies, and the spirit of the crime on Golgotha. The Talmud is the total negation of Christianity on the part of a people that has decreed that it above all other peoples and that does not recognize God's salvation of any of them. . . .

The Talmud is the Wellspring of the worldwide Masonic action to discredit Christianity and the Marxist action to transform through violent means people into atheists.

As long as the Jews continue to isolate themselves from all other peoples in that fortress of diabolical hatred, there will be no peace between us and them. Henceforward, this road will blindly lead to the implementation of the prophetic words: Thou shalt destroy thyself, O Israel!⁸

Rabbinical aggression against the Christian world was taking the most unexpected "protean forms": Freemasonry, Freudianism, homosexuality, atheism, Marxism, Bolshevism, the civil war in Spain.⁹

From Nicolae Paulescu, whose successor he considered himself

to be,¹⁰ Crainic borrowed the image of a huge Christian defensive against Jewish aggression:

Europe today is not stirred by a simple social war, nor by an ideological war. Today Europe is stirred by the war of the Talmud against the Gospel of Christ. The democratic regime of the last century, its unlimited liberties in paroxysm after world peace, has given the Jewish people an insane courage and the messianic frenzy of the White Horse. . . . Since the French Revolution, Judaism has won success after success, and its progressive domination in the world is blinding it to its limitations. However, these excesses of an immoderate people will be the downfall of Judaism.¹¹

Unlike Crainic, Nae Ionescu formulated his Orthodox and ethnicist doctrine without drawing the "Judaic spirit" into the argument. He even acquired the reputation of being a "philosemit" and an expert on problems of Judaism. It was a reputation of which he was still proud in 1933, when he demanded the removal of Jews from politics: "And who had respected Jewishness to the extent of trying to learn the language, as I have."¹²

Before 1930 he gave lectures on the subject even at a Zionist club and published articles on Judaism and Zionism. Mihail Sebastian, who, as a disciple and co-worker, was familiar with his activity, actually believed that the antisemitic views Ionescu advocated in 1934 illustrated a recent radical change.¹³ Mircea Eliade had the same impression when writing his memoirs,¹⁴ as do present-day researchers studying the literary history of those years.¹⁵

Nae Ionescu's interest in Judaism was real. He felt attracted to

¹⁰ N. Crainic, "Nicolae Paulescu, fondatorul nationalismului creștin," in *Ortodoxie și etnocație*, pp. 147–58.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 164.

¹² N. Ionescu, "Să un cuvint de pace," *Cuvântul*, no. 3076, 17 Nov. 1933.

¹³ M. Sebastian, *Cum am devenit huligan* (Bucharest, 1935), pp. 71–100.

¹⁴ M. Eliade, *Mémoire I: Les promesses de l'équinoxe* (Paris, 1980), pp. 396–7.

¹⁵ D. Grăsou, *Mihail Sebastian sau ironia unui destin* (Bucharest, 1986), pp. 58–63; M. Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade. The Romanian Roots, 1907–1945*, vol. I, p. 119.

Jewish mysticism. What was new in 1934 was merely the less roundabout and more "politicized" assertion of several ideas he had previously formulated in a laconic and ambiguous way. His rejection of antisemitic agitation praised by Sebastian actually proved to have stemmed from Ionescu's disbelief in the efficiency of Cuza's antisemitism, as well as his passion for Jewish metaphysics in order to determine the exact location of the evil undermining Christian civilization.

In a series of articles entitled "The Crisis of Judaism," published in 1926, Nae Ionescu discovered that at the root of the detested Cartesian spirit, at the foundation of modern culture, there was the "monumental architecture of Spinoza," and, penetrating more deeply, the Jewish spirit, "a strange and unknown element" that had fatally deflected the evolution of European culture. All the consequences of this evolution, suggested Nae Ionescu, among them "arithmetic individualism and scientific nominalism, as well as free analysis, democracy, socialism and economic and political liberalism," were derived from the primary sources of Spinoza and the Kabbalah:

This shows how vast the problem of the roles of Judaism can be in the make-up of the modern European spirit. . . . After all, it is but normal that we wish to know how European consciousness has been falsified in the last 400 years.¹⁶

The essence of Ionescu's ideas about Judaism can be found in these articles, which constantly underline the qualities of Judaism in order to highlight its danger. This emphasis was an implicit criticism of the "old" antisemitism, which saw only the disruptive and negative character of Judaism:

In its own way, the Jewish offensive is constructive. . . . Judaism has not only been a simple opposition to Christianity, but also the defense of a doctrine of its own, which believes it is called upon to regenerate the world.¹⁷

According to Ionescu, the crisis of Judaism, which became evident only after the French Revolution, was of a metaphysical nature and generated by the attempt to merge the nation with religion, an impossible, futile aim. This prevented the Jews from accepting Christianity and constituted the true source of Jewish suffering:

I believe that the crisis of Judaism is permanent. . . . The story of the wandering Jew is not only a story; it is the genuine expression of the unrest of *this race which has not found its way*. Judaism has two possibilities: perpetual suffering or death. *Tertium non datur.*¹⁸

The confirmation of Nae Ionescu's metamorphosis into a theoretician of antisemitism appeared in 1934, in unexpected circumstances as a preface to Sebastian's novel *De două mii de ani* (For Two Thousand Years).

Mihail Sebastian (1907–1945) was the most important Jewish writer and essayist affiliated in spirit, although not politically, to the "young generation." He had been launched as a publicist by Nae Ionescu in *Cuvântul*. As a close friend of Mircea Eliade, to whom he was linked by strong bonds of spiritual affinity, he lived within the sphere of influence of his professor of logic. His novel *For Two Thousand Years* was his testimony on Judaism as a dramatic intellectual experience and on his condition as a Jew in Romania in the early 1930s. Sebastian had asked Nae Ionescu for a preface as far back as 1931. When it came, the writer was flabbergasted, but, true to his agreement with his former mentor, he published it nevertheless.¹⁹

In this preface Nae Ionescu discusses the entire "drama of Judaism" in theological terms. He believed that this was the only way to provide a thorough explanation of "the suffering" of the Jew and of his conflict with "the others." In his usual apodictic style, Nae Ionescu repeated all the anti-Jewish dogmas of

¹⁸ N. Ionescu, "Criza judaismului: Alte perspective," *Cuvântul*, no. 514, 24 July 1926.

¹⁹ One year after the publication of his novel, Sebastian printed his essay *Cum am devenit huligan* (How I Became a Hooligan), which dealt with the reaction to his book and Nae Ionescu's preface.

¹⁶ N. Ionescu, "Criza judaismului," *Cuvântul*, no. 509, 18 July 1926.
¹⁷ N. Ionescu, "Criza judaismului," *Cuvântul*, no. 512, 22 July 1926.

Christian theology regarding the eternal guilt of the Jews. These were accepted as axiomatic. The Jews considered themselves the people chosen by God "to rule the world." Their mission had ended when Jesus the Messiah appeared. By not acknowledging him, they were in an insoluble dilemma:

Therefore, the Jews either admit that the Messiah has come in the shape of Christ, and then, from that moment, they cease to be the chosen people (unless they want to be punished for the gravest sin, that of pride), or they question the authenticity of Christ the Messiah, and then they deny their function as the chosen people, as God's instrument for the salvation of the world, not only against their mission, but even directly against God.²⁰

Jesus, whom the Jews considered "an impostor," yet who was recognized by other peoples as the son of God, had created "a new perception of the world, a new spiritual structure," a "Christian order of the world" that was opposed to the Jewish one. Judaism and Christianity were two irreconcilable "formative principles of the world," and the Jews inevitably became "a threat to the Christian order." Coexistence between the two religions was therefore impossible: "Christians and Jews, two bodies alien to one another, which cannot fuse into a synthesis, between whom there can only be peace... if one of them disappears."²¹ Here (and not within Judaism itself, as he had asserted in 1926) lay the ancient source of Jewish suffering:

Judah suffers. Why? Because Judah lives in the midst of peoples who cannot but be hostile to him even if they wish not to be; because, refusing to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah, continuing to hold himself apart, rightly or wrongly, in his capacity as the chosen people, he owes it to himself to fulfill the role which devolves on him, that of the Christian values.

Judah suffers because he gave birth to Christ, because he

²⁰ N. Ionescu, "Prefață," in M. Sebastian, *De două mii de ani* (Bucharest, 1934), p. xxv.

²¹ Ibid., p. xxviii.

saw and did not believe. This would not have been too serious a matter. But others believed; we did. Judah suffers—because he is Judah.²²

The persecutions about which the Jews were complaining and the "general feeling of hatred and contempt of the peoples for the Jews" were nothing more than a consequence of the insoluble conflict they themselves had created. These were defensive reactions against a human group representing "a permanent menace to the order of the others, to the spiritual, social or economic structure of their own system."²³ As a secondary phenomenon, derived from the basic conflict, antisemitism became legitimate and eternal.

To the hero of the novel *For Two Thousand Years*, Josef Hechter (the author's real name), and to "the Jew" in general—"the original being"—Nae Ionescu delivered a dismal final message on behalf of Christianity:

You are sick, Josef Hechter. You are substantially sick because you have to suffer; and because your suffering is bottled up. Everybody is suffering, Josef Hechter. We Christians also are suffering. But we have a way out, because we can save ourselves. I know you are hoping, hoping that he for whom you wait will come. The Messiah, on his white horse, and then you will rule the earth. You are hoping, Josef Hechter. It is the only thing left to you.

But I cannot do anything for you. Because I know: the Messiah will not come. The Messiah has come, Josef Hechter, and you did not recognize him. All you were asked to do in exchange for all the good things God gave you was to be vigilant. And you were not vigilant. Or you did not see, because pride closed your eyes.

... Josef Hechter, don't you feel the grip of the cold and darkness?²⁴

Nae Ionescu's preface to the novel provoked a vehement

²² Ibid., idem.

²³ Ibid., p. xvii.

²⁴ Ibid., p. xxxii.

polemic. One of its features was a tense theological disputation over the guilt of the Jews and the possibility of their salvation as conducted in the press by four of the professor's disciples: Gheorghe Racoveanu, Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu and Constantin Noica.

Drawn into a purely theological exegesis, Eliade reproached his master with having transferred the discussion from the philosophy of history to Christian theology. He contested the validity of a theologically justified antisemitism. The dogmas of the Church, he maintained, did not confirm the eternal damnation of the Jews:²⁵

What could the meaning of "antisemitism" be at the level of Christian theology? The impossibility of salvation, the *certainity* of the Jews' damnation. But this the Church does not say anywhere. . . . Because nobody can interfere with God's freedom. God can save as he wishes to, he can save anybody, even if that anybody is outside the community of Christian love.²⁶

From the Christian point of view, said Eliade, the fate of the Jews remained open-ended. God's judgement was not definitive:

But a Christian, a Christian theologian cannot commit the sin of despair, cannot affirm the universality of Israel's destiny of suffering. All he can say as a Christian and an Orthodox [Christian] is that Divine Grace is free to save or not to save the Jews.

In another polemical intervention, Eliade declared that only Judas was damned for all eternity, not the Jewish people:

Does our Church say anywhere that the Jews cannot be saved because *they are Jews*? No. . . .

And the sin of Judas is and remains the sin of Judas, not the sin of Israel, and not the sin of the Jews.²⁶

²⁵ M. Eliade, "Judaism și antisemitism," *Vremea*, no. 347, 22 July 1934.

²⁶ M. Eliade, "Crestinătatea față de judaism," *Vremea*, no. 349, 5 July 1934.

Racoveanu was more dogmatic. Quoting several passages from the writings of the Church Fathers, he stubbornly maintained that the salvation of the Jews was impossible. His conclusion, and sentence, was summed up in the words: "Hence, the devils and the Jews are not saved. That is the teaching of the Church."²⁷

Vulcănescu and Noica joined the theological dispute, siding with Eliade against the dogmatic intransigence of their colleague.²⁸

The gravity with which the "secular" elite of the new generation could argue for or against the divine salvation of the Jews can only be explained by the mystical atmosphere prevailing during those years.²⁹

The "Judaic Spirit"

The definition of the Judaic spirit was a constant preoccupation of the new antisemitism. The purpose was to highlight its incompatibility with the Christian and ethnic spirit, its destructiveness and poisonous effects.

Nichifor Crainic simply repeated the widespread descriptions of the international character of Jewish organizations dominating the world via freemasonry and banks.³⁰ Nae Ionescu claimed to be competent and objective in his views on Judaism. Unlike the opinions he had aired on the essence of Judaism in 1926–1928, the arguments that he voiced after 1933 were directed toward practical political conclusions that could prove applicable in Romania.

Although the Jewish spirit had achieved great success in cultural and artistic fields, as well as in philosophy and metaphysics, Ionescu claimed that the Jewish spirit lacked the

²⁷ G. Racoveanu, "O problemă teologică eronată rezolvată. . . sau ce n-a înțeles d. Mircea Eliade," *Credința*, 195 (1934); "Crestinism, judaism și . . . îndrăzneală," *Credința*, 216–8 (1934); "Pentru lămurirea lui Mircea Vulcănescu, nou bogoslov," *Credința*, 227 (1934); "D. Braniște, harul și . . . sutarul," *Credința*, 253 (1934).

²⁸ M. Vulcănescu, "O problemă teologică eronată rezolvată? Sau ce nu a spus d. Gheorghe Racoveanu," *Credința*, 225 (1934); C. Noica, "Crestini, marxiști și teologi," *Credința*, 231 (1934).

²⁹ Sebastian made brief and ironic comments on the exegetic affectation of the polemic in *Cum am devenit huligan*, pp. 131–3.

³⁰ N. Crainic, *Lupta pentru spiritul nou*, p. 44.

dimension of space, which is an allusion to their "nomadism," lack of a country with definite borders. He considered the aptitude for politics also an "art" that required a sense of "space" (i.e., to "organize" a country), and therefore the Jews were inept at politics as well:

The fact that the Jews have no political sense is correlated to the tragic, admirable and exasperating need of that people to maintain itself in the strict limits of the spirit, a cold, frozen, transparent spirit, which, even when it burns, burns like ice, not like fire, transfigured, bloodless. . . .

These qualities enable one to create a culture, and the Jews have fully demonstrated this, but they will not lead to political creativity because politics is, first and foremost, a feeling for the plastic forms of life, space.³¹

The removal of Jews from Romania's political life, as was demanded by Ionescu, thus also acquired an objective and universal justification. The complex nature of Jews—trapped as they were between the two opposite trends of remaining within Jewish tradition and integrating into the local ambience—and their specific ethnic characteristics created new sources of conflict with the nations among whom they had settled. Hostility and violent defensive reactions produced their conceited isolation and superiority complex. They were "the bearers of the capitalist spirit." Their wealth and privilege stimulated the justified hatred of other peoples. The essence of the "Jewish ethos" was not derived from the Bible; it came from the Talmud, which had encouraged the Jews' separation from the other nations. The talmudic spirit had produced rationalism and an exceptional gift for handling money: "There is no difference between the talmudist and the gold-grabbing usurer and money-lender. They are one and the same thing."³²

Zionism, a solution invented by Jews to overcome their destiny, was an "altogether confused" attempt, "a suicide," alien

to "Jewish reality." The Jewish spirit was not geared to building a Jewish state because "life in the Diaspora is the natural state of the Jews."³³

Emil Cioran was the only one among the leading figures of the "young generation" to share Nae Ionescu's concern with defining the "Jewish spirit"; he also adopted some of his theses. He was later joined by the writer and journalist Nicolae Davidescu.

Before Cioran nobody had formulated all the charges against Judaism and the "diabolical" features of Jews in general with such sharpness and plasticity. Cioran presented them as axiomatic truths and developed them, as he himself admitted twenty years later, with a "fury" born of "love-hate" (*la rage d'un amour-haine*).³⁴ According to Cioran, the miracle of Jewish survival, overcoming the world's refusal to accept the Jews, was due to their religious frenzy and prophetism. However, living exclusively in the religious dimension, the Jews were condemned to fail at fulfilling their role in history:

Their only way out is an apocalyptic solution. An essentially prophetic nation, only by prophecy will it save itself. At whatever end of a road, they will always project an earthly paradise, which they will reach at their own ruin.

No other people has been so hungry for land. Nevertheless, its monstrous strength consists in having experienced its attachment to the land in a religious way. It has been preoccupied with its fate to such an extent that this concern has become its religion. Jewish messianism and Jewish religion are one and the same thing. Perhaps its fate is so infernal because the only explanation for it is heavenly revenge.³⁵

The Jews were not pursuing "universal salvation." They were obsessed with the destiny of their own people. That was why their suffering lacked transcendence. It had not generated any durable universal sentiment, such as the idea of renunciation:

³¹ Ibid., pp. xxviii–xxx.

³² E. Cioran, *La tentation d'exister* (Paris, 1956), p. 84.

³³ E. Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României*, pp. 21–2.

³⁴ N. Ionescu, "Transcendentanism și politică," *Cuvântul*, no. 3088, 28 Dec. 1933.

³⁵ N. Ionescu, "Prefață," op. cit. (note 20), pp. xxi–xxii.

Jewish attachment to the world explains why in their entire thinking—and more especially in their entire suffering, in the entire course of their awful cursed existence—they have not conceived, and have failed deeply and persistently to feel, the temptation of renunciation. They have been linked to their own fate to such an extent, and so immersed in their mission, that they have never drawn the inevitable conclusion from their suffering. That is why Judaism gives no elevated feeling to the soul; it places too much of the world in heaven, and too much of heaven in the world. The perception of life as vanity (Job, Solomon, Jeremiah) is pure lyricism, deeply rooted in the souls of those who praised it, but it is absent in the collective awareness of the Jews. Their dominant feeling, and this explains the ambiguity or complexity of Jewish psychology, has always been a strange fear, which has, instead of dislocating them from the world, irrevocably integrated them within it.³⁶

Cioran added another element to the idea put forward by Nae Ionescu regarding the Jews' inability to fulfill themselves politically—the absolute and unbearable singularity of the ethnic temperament. This, he said, explained the Jews' unique drama and the hostility of others to a people with seemingly inhuman traits:

The race theory appears to have been born solely to express the feeling that an abyss separates every non-Jew from the Jews. The chasm is produced not by antisemitism, nor by any concept. It is the product of the manifest or secret antagonism characterizing two essentially different beings. The Jew is not our *fellow being*, our neighbor. However intimate we may become with him, a precipice divides us, whether we want it or not. It is as if he were descended from a different species of ape than we are and had been condemned from the beginning to a sterile tragedy, to everlasting cheated hopes. We cannot approach him as a *human* because the Jew is first a *Jew* and then a *man*. The phenomenon occurs in his consciousness as

well as ours. The problem of Judaism is just as complicated as that of the existence of God. To speak of their vampirism and aggressiveness means to spotlight a characteristic aspect, without, however, in any way diminishing the mystery of Jewish nature. This race, whose inner fire is fed by hatred, has given unique and unacceptable examples of love. Those who are acquainted with Hasidic mysticism and with the lives of some of the rabbis belonging to that sect cannot but tremble before examples of love that defy the laws of life, examples that are inhuman in their rarity and very often much ahead of Christianity. Such cases, which must signify great atonement, can appear only in a condemned people. With the Jews, holiness has a purely national character: it has to save a people from destruction through compensation.³⁷

The “Jewish question” had no solution, as it was “a curse of history.” National solutions were not efficient, as had been demonstrated in Spain—several centuries before, and in the modern Germany-of-that-day: “How much less threatening has the Jewish calamity become?”³⁸ As adversaries of the “national self-awareness” movements, the Jews inevitably became “traitors” at critical historical moments, the “mortal enemy of every other nationalism,” a barrier that had to be removed. Their alienation from nature and the land had atrophied their “cosmic sensibility”; they had been left only with “the obscurities of the ghetto, with their abominable gloom and their disgusting ironies.”

When mixing with other peoples, the Jews pervert “their rhythm of life.” The Jews were a “catalyst.” In small proportions, they constituted “the dose of poison needed by every organism.” As internationalists, they had introduced into socialism the materialist vision, “an essential attribute of their spirit.”³⁹ Cioran’s essay was not in line with a traditional “unmasking” of the destructive Jewish spirit. It sounded more like a bitter eulogy to an adversary he detested because of that enemy’s

³⁷ Ibid., p. 130.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 132-4.

exceptional, unique power and quality, "the most intelligent, most gifted and most insolent people."⁴⁰ Now and again the intensity of his rejection of the Jew as a human being unlike any other reached the threshold of a visceral reaction: "The Jews are unique in every way. Bent by a curse for which only God is responsible, they are matchless. If I were a Jew, I would commit suicide immediately."⁴¹

During those years Mircea Eliade, wishing to justify ideological or political antisemitism, was less concerned with the definition of the "Jewish spirit." Like Benedetto Croce in his brief profascist phase,⁴² Eliade applied himself to "the Masonic mentality" in the intellectual sphere, characterized by defective thinking habits and abstract criteria in the judgement of history. Marxism, too, was a model of Masonic thinking, a "conjugation of the abstract with the coarse."⁴³ One of the features of Jewish sensitivity was the inferiority complex (not a superiority complex, as Nae Ionescu had maintained) that the Jews were converting into a source of spiritual achievement without, however, freeing themselves from the obsession that they were a persecuted people:

Everybody knows from his own experience how sensitive real Jews are, how vain and intransigent (in everyday life, this Jewish intransigence, so productive in spiritual achievements, is an expression of an inferiority complex; a really strong and self-confident person is not intransigent). You know how difficult it is to be objective when dealing with an intelligent Jew. He suffers when any allusion is made or any doubt is expressed. He always thinks that he is faced with an antisemite and is always ready for another persecution. That is how the history of the Jewish people is made, that is how the Jewish defensive spirit functions. We must see things as they are. Jewish inferiority complexes have been produced mostly by the history of the Christian world. . . .

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 131-2.

⁴² P. Villa Finzi, "Italian Fascism and the Intellectuals," in S. J. Woolf (ed.), *The Nature of Fascism* (London, 1968), p. 231.
⁴³ M. Eliade, "Mentalitatea francmasonică," *Vremea*, no. 323, 28 Jan. 1933.

The Jews have the right to act because it is their destiny to demonstrate their existence by making the most tragic human efforts. They may consider themselves persecuted because this helps them to survive.⁴⁴

Violently negative references to the "Jewish spirit," noted by his friends, were made by Eliade in private outbursts, but not in writing.⁴⁵

The ravages and danger of the "Jewish spirit" remained the constant subjects of the profascist publicists and writers of the "young generation" and those contributors to the periodicals of Nichifor Crainic or pro-Guardist papers such as *Vremea* (after 1934), *Iconar*, *Sfarmă Piatră* and others. With the exception of the poet and journalist Nicolae Davidescu, those studying the "Jewish spirit" were, as a rule, not writers of standing but very young men at the start of their literary careers (Vintilă Horia, Horia Stămătu, Mircea Streinu) or people like Nicolae Roșu, eager to establish themselves as ideologists of profascist nationalism but as yet lacking intellectual authority.

In the volume *Primejdia judeacă* (The Jewish Threat) published in 1939 (some chapters had appeared in *Vremea* in 1936), Davidescu explicitly defined the principal impediment to the reestablishment of Romanianism to its natural rights. After several chapters presenting the essence of Judaism, in which the domineering and totalitarian character of the Jews was demonstrated, Davidescu revealed the means and spheres of intellectual life through which the "Judaization" of Europe, and particularly of Romania, was being carried out. It had begun with religious education (Bible reading) and was propagated by the press, literature, ideology and politics. Marxism, Communism, the class struggle, internationalism and humanism were all "veiled facets" of Judaization, which had already reached an advanced stage.⁴⁶

In Davidescu's view, the dangerous character of Judaism was

⁴⁴ M. Eliade, "Românismul și complexele de inferioritate," *Vremea*, no. 386, 5 May 1935.

⁴⁵ Sebastian's Diary, entry dated 20 Sept. 1939. See above, chapter 2, note 90.

⁴⁶ N. Davidescu, *Primejdia judeacă* (Bucharest, 1939), p. 151.

rooted in religion and a domineering ethnic psychology, paradoxically linked with "the elimination of everything that is mythical, mystic, dark and impulsive in instinctive life" and an "antimilitarist, pacifist and internationalist" spirit. This, discovered Davidescu, was the essential explanation of antisemitism everywhere: "a specific Jewish trait unacceptable to the rest of the world," which necessarily implied "the destruction of the other aspects of national specifics."⁴⁷

Davidescu frequently fought the "Jewish spirit" on behalf of the "Aryan spirit" and "Aryan society." He often invoked these arguments in the obviously Nazi-inspired endeavor to "Aryanize" Romanian culture.

Nicolae Roșu, author of the "doctrinal" volumes *Dialectica naționalismului* (The Dialectics of Nationalism, 1936) and *Orientările în urmă* (The Century's Directions, 1937), was a specialist in the "Jewish spirit," which he perseveringly exposed in order to prove its obnoxiousness. With a partially updated bibliography and language adjusted to the new nationalist phase, he carried forward Cuza's theses from *Nationalism in Art*, on "Semitism" and its principal components (fanaticism, arrogance, moral anarchism, rabbinism, materialism, Communism, Freudianism, etc.) in order to develop a radical, racist antisemitism from the "philosophical and religious viewpoints."⁴⁸

The original contributions by Davidescu, Roșu and other writers of the 1935–1940 period to the analysis of the "Jewish spirit" did not take a theoretical direction. They distinguished themselves by their practical conclusions: extreme measures of combatting Judaism in all its forms and adhesion to the Nazi program. This was accompanied by an escalation of verbal violence. The language became more concretely threatening than it had been before.

The articles by Vintilă Horia about the attempts of "Jewish writing" to destroy the European spirit are a good example. In 1935 they concluded with an apologia of Hitler, Mussolini and Salazar, and in 1941 with an enthusiastic endorsement of the advance of the German and Italian armies signifying "the

supreme effort of the European people to throw off the trouble-some yoke of Judaism."⁴⁹

The same tone can be found in an article by the poet Horia Stamatu printed in 1938. His subject was "the invisible power of the people of treason, now in confusion on all fronts" and "the Asiatic hordes of those thirsting for Christian blood and clamoring in the name of peace for the mass murder of the fascists." The quintessence of evil was represented by Jewish Bolshevik leaders like Trotsky and Yagoda (the KGB chief):

Because Yagoda (which in translation is Judah) is the people of Israel. . . . Stalin's mission on this earth is one thing, the mission of Judah and his successors is another. If the two had been the same, Trotsky would not have been expelled. The socialist idea is no more than a weapon invented by *yids* to infiltrate into the leadership of nations. . . . Stalin is a poor ignorant barbarian compared to these apocalyptic beasts.⁵⁰

The Critique of Traditional Antisemitism

Despite the proliferation of commentaries on the "Jewish spirit" and the "Semitic race," these arguments did not carry much weight in the justification of ideological antisemitism in Romania. The main arguments continued to be of a *national* nature: the right of ethnic Romanians to be the exclusive "masters" of the country, to "reconquer" the economic and social positions "seized" by the Jews. Ethnocracy, which was advocated by all, provided the political solution for the exercise of that right. As seen from this perspective, the new ideologists felt they had made a qualitative leap in their approach to the "Jewish question." Like the founders of the Iron Guard, they considered themselves as having surpassed Cuza's antisemitism.

The new nationalists regarded Cuzism as outspoken but politically inefficient antisemitism, in the words of Nichifor

⁴⁷ "Distrugătorii spiritualității," *Poruncă Vremii*, no. 157, 14 July 1935 (signed "V. V. Caffangioglu"). Other pro-Nazi and pro-fascist articles, signed "Vintilă Horia," in: *Sfarmă Piatră*, no. 71, 8 April 1937; no. 96, 23 Sept. 1937; no. 30 Sept. 1937.

⁴⁸ N. Roșu, *Orientările în urmă* (Bucharest, 1937), pp. 127–59.

⁴⁹ H. Stamatu, "Herschel Iagoda," *Vremea*, no. 532, 3 April 1938.

Crainic "a hybrid mixture of nationalism and Marxist democracy." The idea of an antisemitic party, "in competition with a multitude of democratic that is, pro-Jewish, parties" was "a venerable anachronism."⁵¹ And Nae Ionescu noted the "inefficiency" of "aggressive and violent" antisemitism that employed "primitive and inefficient methods."⁵²

The young ideologists were more concerned with moving the "Jewish question" into a different political setting. Initially, up to 1923, they did not even give it any priority. In 1929, Mihai Polihroniade, one of the first ideologists of the new, Legionary Right, assigned only a transitional role to Cuzism; up to the emergence of the "new nationalism," he declared, it had simply filled an ideological vacuum:

In the absence of a nationalist doctrine or movement, Romanian youth threw itself body and soul into the arms of antisemitism. Antisemitism had the merit of destroying every Communist trend in our universities and of creating an atmosphere favoring the development of a healthy nationalism.⁵³

After 1927, said Polihroniade, Cuzist antisemitism went bankrupt because it had no "overall view" and was "unilateral and dangerous."⁵⁴ It was in 1933 that Polihroniade spelled out clearly what separated "the Romanian Right" from Cuzism and why:

To believe that one can resolve the multiple problems of a modern state, of the Romanian state . . . on the basis of a simplistic formula and the cry "Down with the *yids*" is not only a mistake, but childish. . . . The solution [of the Jewish question] can only come from an organic and coherent nationalist doctrine that will pose and resolve the Semite problem within the framework of an overall state policy;

⁵¹ N. Crainic, "Spiritul autohton," *Gândirea*, 4 (1938), p. 168.

⁵² N. Ionescu, "Între 'agresivitatea' antisemita și pasivitatea floșemita,"

Cuadru, no. 3085, 26 Nov. 1933.

⁵³ M. Polihroniade, "Criza naționalismului," *Acțiune și reacțiune*, 1 (1929), p. 23.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

however, today the Semite problem is neither the gravest nor . . . the most urgent question Romania has to face.⁵⁵

Emil Cioran repeatedly pointed to the weaknesses of the "old" antisemitic nationalism, and it was he who gave the most pertinent definition of how it differed from the new nationalist spirit:

The inglorious fate of A. C. Cuza can be explained only by the writhings of an apolitical whose fanaticism, which did not go beyond antisemitism, could never become the fate of Romania. If we had had no Jews, A. C. Cuza would never had thought of it [Romania's destiny]. A. C. Cuza's example shows us what nationalism should *not* be. Antisemitism is a particular aspect of nationalism, and not the principal one.⁵⁶

In his *Romania's Transfiguration*, Cioran returned to the question, but from a different perspective:

The Jewish invasion during the last decades of Romanian development has transformed antisemitism into the essential feature of our nationalism. Unintelligible in other parts of the world, this fact has found its legitimacy in this country, but it must not be exaggerated. If Romania had not had a single Jew, would its existence be less miserable? Would its historical level (the only one that counts) have been higher? There would have been less corruption, that is obvious, but from this to [a glorious] history is a long way. At most, the Jews have delayed the solemn hour of Romania; they are not by any means the cause of our misery, our age-old misery. A nationalism which does not see this is false, and much too one-sided to be durable. A healthy national organism always verifies itself in the struggle against Jews, especially when they brazenly invade a people in great numbers. But antisemitism resolves neither the

⁵⁵ M. Polihroniade, "Dreapta românească," *Axa*, no. 5, 22 Jan. 1933. In the same spirit, his article: "Naționalism și cuzism," *Axa*, no. 5, 22 Jan. 1933.

⁵⁶ E. Cioran, "Conștiința politică a studentimii," *Vremea*, no. 463, 15 Nov. 1936.

national nor the social problems of a people. These are questions of *purification*, no more. The constitutional vices of that people remain the same. The narrowness of the vision of Romanian nationalism comes from the fact that it is derived from antisemitism. A peripheral problem becomes the source of movement and vision.⁵⁷

A new and paradoxical situation developed at the end of 1937, when Cuza, regarded as a "precursor" belonging to the past, came to power in the government led by Goga and legislated an antisemitic program very similar to the one advocated by the Iron Guard. This baffled the Iron Guard, which now had to redefine its political identity and ideas, especially because the antisemitic slogan dominated its other watchwords.

A redefinition of the essential difference was attempted by a recent convert to the cause, the philosopher Constantin Noica, the last intellectual of the "young generation" to adhere to the Legionary ideology:

Indeed, the coming to power of Mr. A. C. Cuza (rather than of Mr. Octavian Goga) has made many people ask themselves: why have a Legionary movement if others carry out its program? . . .

What did Cuzism discover? It discovered a parasite in Romanian society. It was a beneficiary and also a falsifier of our national life, therefore it had to be removed. Whatever its appearance, in various forms, at different levels, with different weapons, it had to be exposed, fought, annihilated and, if possible, altogether removed from the Romanian community. Was that movement right? Now we shall see, after the measures it takes. We shall see if it was right, and to what extent.

What is it that Legionarism discovers? As far as we can understand, from our position, it discovers a parasite *within the being of the Romanian*. Legionarism will certainly strike a blow at the scoundrel from abroad as well. But that is a Cuzist remnant in its doctrine. The remarkable thing, though, is that

it knows how to discover the scoundrel within and fight against him. . . . The other parties, too, have learned to become antisemitic. What we would like to see, however, is a party that poses the challenge, only poses it, of setting up a corps of 10,000 people with an exemplary moral stance.⁵⁸

Without a doubt, the intellectuals that were attached, in those years, to the Legionary movement tried to imbue it with a more lofty ideological basis in order to integrate (and to conceal) antisemitism with a coherent nationalist ideology. In this way they responded to the Legionnaires' need for a legitimate, particular antisemitism to cope with the challenge from rival political groups who were carrying out "their" extreme antisemitic program.

Models of Right-Wing Dictatorship and Their Solution of the "Jewish Question" in Romania

The right-wing nationalist theories of the 1930s, first circulated in the previous decade,⁵⁹ grew into a well-articulated ideology, a discourse about a certain type of Romanian state, philosophically and socially substantiated and "deduced" from the particular features of Romanian history and the autochthonous "ethnic spirit." An appropriate solution for the "Jewish question" in Romania was inextricably linked to this new model of Romanian society, which could guarantee the end of the Jewish presence in the country's social structures and facilitate its development on a strict ethnic basis.

⁵⁶C. Noica, "Între parazitul din afara și parazitul dinăuntru," *Vremea*, no. 523, 30 Jan. 1938. Noica also spoke of this qualitative distinction in a lecture on the development of the Legionary movement: "it is not enough to say: 'Down with the Yids and those who have become strangers.' You yourself must become a person capable of opposing the strangers and the estranged. We need an education in politics that is different from the usual one: a harsh, military, youthful education. And then Codreanu separates himself from the Cuzists and founds his Legion." See: "Limpeziri pentru o Românie legionară," *Buna Vestire*, no. 29, 11 Oct. 1940.

⁵⁷Z. Ornea, *Traditionalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea* (Bucharest, 1980), pp. 418–67.

⁵⁸E. Cioran, *Schimbarea la sfârșit a României*, pp. 128–9.

The nationalist intellectuals' passionate concern to conceive models of a Romanian ethnocratic or corporatist state led, in the late 1930s and in those political circumstances, to an open commitment to the Legionary political purposes and activities, justified by a fascist ideology and a native myth of Romanian rebirth through Orthodox Christianity.

As long as Romania maintained a parliamentary system, the intellectuals of the New Right considered themselves the opposition and fighting power against the majority parties; *real power*, they believed, was in the hands of the Jews, exercised through financial manipulation, the economy and the press. The political instrument of Jewish domination was democracy; thus its removal would signify the end of Jewish rule in Romania. Like Octavian Goga before them, Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu, followed by many other writers, focused their attack on the Jewish presence in the press, which they saw as an important bastion of the powers that be. Nae Ionescu adduced ethnic arguments in order to delegitimize Jewish participation in Romanian political life. He justified the measure he proposed—"removal of all Jews from positions of political leadership" (actually only in the press)—by maintaining that "the Jews have neither the right nor the capacity to influence the country's public life."⁶⁰ Freedom of the press was one of the "distortions of individualism"; only the authorized members of the nation were entitled to speak in its name.⁶¹

As outlined by Crainic, Nae Ionescu and their disciples, among the plans for an ethnocratic corporate state was their clearly stated urgent priority of blocking Jewish access to important positions in the new state's economic, political and cultural structure.

Ethnocracy, toward which Romania is striving today, is implicitly xenophobic and antisemitic because its domination in culture, in the life of the state and in social life demands the reduction of the influence of foreigners, and in the most

⁶⁰ N. Ionescu, "Între 'agresivitatea' antisemita și pasivitatea filosemită," *Cuvântul*, no. 3085, 26 Feb. 1938.

⁶¹ N. Ionescu, "Funcția națională a presei," *Cuvântul*, no. 3169, 11 March 1938.

moderate way according to the criterion of numerical proportion.⁶²

The "Program of the Ethnocratic State," as attached to the exposition of the doctrine of *Orthodoxy and Ethnocracy* placed the new political system on a clearly antisemitic basis: "The Jews are a permanent menace to any national state."⁶³ The other prerogatives concerning the exclusion of Jews from state offices, cultural establishments and the press, were derived from that postulation.

Emil Cioran constructed a coherent theory of Romanian antisemitism in direct relation to the development of nationalism. In this he was sometimes inspired by Nae Ionescu's articles. The origins of nationalist antisemitism were rooted not in economic competition but in Jewish opposition to the prospects of a "consolidated" national state, which would replace a democracy that was favourable only to Jews:

The Jews in this country have been against all endeavors of national and political consolidation. This is the source of militant antisemitism, though not of sentimental antisemitism. They have always criticized Romania, but viewed any attempt at consolidation, with the exception of a convenient democracy, as reactionary, barbarian etc. In fact, no press has been more reactionary than the Jewish press, which has always enjoyed a paradise in the pestilential atmosphere of Romanian democracy, with its admirable intentions and miserable results. I particularly criticize postwar Jewry. Has it not opposed every effort to renew Romania? The Jews turned some fools and degenerate individuals, who succeeded in discrediting an already corrupt democracy, into their tools of domination, thereby irreparably insulting the entire country. We Romanians can only save ourselves by adopting a different political form. The Jews have resisted with all the means available to their subterranean imperialism, cynicism and centuries-old experience. What we must understand once and

⁶² N. Grănică, *Ortodoxie și etnocratie*, p. 125.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 284.

for all is that the Jews are not interested in living in a consolidated and self-aware Romania.⁶⁴

An unusual note in the new rhetoric of Romanian nationalism was Cioran's insistent emphasis on Jewish superiority. Because of his exceptional qualities, the Jewish enemy was almost invincible and could not be assimilated:

How could we, a miserable people, assimilate the most indomitable ethnic phenomenon of history? How can a people whose record includes victorious struggles against the most brilliant peoples in history be assimilated by a nation that saw the light only in the darkness of the Hungarians, Turks or Greeks? Jewish vitality is so aggressive and Jewish greed so persistent that our tolerance of this diligent and exploiting people would lead to our certain bankruptcy... What does the Romanian people know in comparison to the Jewish people? I am convinced that if we were to give Jews absolute liberty they would change even the country's name within less than a year. When all is said and done we have to acknowledge, albeit sadly, that antisemitism is the greatest tribute paid to Jews.⁶⁵

For quite some time, Mircea Eliade's attitude toward the "Jewish question" in Romania remained ambiguous. Contradictory pronouncements seemed to stem from concern not to resort to stereotypes and clichés and to avoid clear-cut statements. The measure of his antisemitism came to light gradually. There was no detailed theory, but signs of a doctrine that was never presented in a coherent way.

Eliade's nationalist fervor, fired by the "Legionary revolution," seems to have led to a revision of the "problem." Like Nae Ionescu, Eliade had "pro-semitic" antecedents, which he sometimes mentioned quite proudly, like a man who had suffered because of them.⁶⁶ He repeatedly voiced his indignation that three great Jewish scholars, Moses Gaster, H. Tiktin and Lazar Săineanu, had been expelled from Romania.

⁶⁴ E. Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României*, pp. 132-3.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 143-4.

⁶⁶ M. Eliade, "Judaism și antisemitism," *Vremea*, no. 347, 22 July 1934.

There was a time when, in the highly nationalistic circles in which he was moving, Eliade sought to profess a creative nationalism, which would assert itself through spiritual values, rather than xenophobia. The "metamorphosis" began almost imperceptibly. It was heralded by the ostentatious display of Romanianism, despite its attendant connotations of Iron Guard and chauvinism that were still discredited among the intellectual elite.⁶⁷ His disgust with the excessive number of Jews in the local councils of Transylvania was, in his view, legitimate; it had nothing to do with antisemitism:

I am indignant to see twenty-six foreign councillors at [the town of] Sighetul Marmației (as opposed to seven Romanians) not because I am a chauvinist or an antisemite, but because a feeling of social justice, however weak, is alive in my heart.⁶⁸

In the polemic concerning Nae Ionescu's preface to Sebastian's novel (1934), Eliade assumed the role of objective arbiter, equidistant from the opposing camps. Analyzing terminology, he found that the notion "antisemite" had suffered from devaluation; like the term "democrat," it had become a worn-out stereotype:

As you see, this term has acquired so many circumstantial and parasitic meanings that it has become very vague, almost impractical. Just like "philosemite" or "Judaized" . . . How comfortable to be an antisemite! You don't have to judge any more according to person or country. Once you have decided to be an antisemite, everything can be explained, everything goes smoothly: it's always the fault of the *yids*, the *yids* never created anything, the *yids* are degenerate, etc. . . . And how comfortable it is to be a democrat; you can be calm and certain of yourself until you die. Antisemitism? A legend, nonsense, or a political sham, or, simpler still, a gang of vagabonds, hooligans. . . . It is much more difficult, more dramatic and—

⁶⁷ M. Eliade, "Compromiterea romanismului," *Vremea*, no. 329, 11 March 1934.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

why not admit it?—practically speaking, much more inefficient to try to think for yourself.⁶⁸

Thinking for himself, but in direct relation to the political evolution of the master and also of the “young generation,” Eliade found that there was a “theoretical antisemitism,” “an antisemitic doctrine,” justified by “a certain philosophy of history,” represented in Romanian culture by Eminescu, Vasile Conta and B.P. Hasdeu. It was an “economic and moral” antisemitism, hence “peripheral” because it was not based on any metaphysics.⁷⁰

One year later he regarded the Jewish problem from the perspective of the “national revolution” and the role of intellectuals in that revolution. Intellectual elites created values and ideas that became the roots of great social change and revolutions. Eliade discovered that one such “intellectual idea” adopted by politicians was the *numerus clausus*.⁷¹ Unfortunately, observed Eliade, in Romania ideas and ideals (nationalism, ethnicity, organic state, peasant state, mysticism, popular myth, race, Orthodoxy) were made cheap counters “in the political market.”⁷²

To the fanatical and alarmist calls of others, sprung from what he believed to be an unjustified inferiority complex, Eliade responded with moderation. The problem of the “minorities” could be solved by administrative measures:

Our “proverbial” tolerance is a sign of strength, not of weakness. . . . I don’t understand why we are shouting: Danger! Where is the danger? That there are too many members of the minorities in commanding positions? We shall remove them by competition, by our own strength, and, if need be, by administrative laws—but it is a far cry from this to a threat to “Romanianism.” . . . We do not need intransigence and intolerance. They are alien to our structure.⁷³

⁶⁸ M. Eliade, “Judaism și antisemitism,” op. cit.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ M. Eliade, “Cum încep revoluțiile . . .,” *Vremea*, no. 380, 17 March 1935.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ M. Eliade, “Românismul și complexele de inferioritate,” *Vremea*, no. 386, 5 May 1935.

By the end of 1935 there was a change of tone. “Intellectual” inhibitions were abandoned for the sake of adhesion to the “Romanian Messianism” embodied in Codreanu’s movement.⁷⁴

The integration of Eliade’s Romanianism with the Legion’s ultranationalist mystical language had become complete:

The phenomenon of Romanian “Rebirth,” which I noted a few years ago, is in its full tide of development. The dignity of Romanians is becoming more and more robust. Their disgust and despair when looking at the condition of Romania has been replaced by a revolutionary fervor that puts the accent first and foremost on *Romanianism*.

Very many young people now believe in the exceptional destiny of Romania, in the decisive role our people is called upon to play in history in the days to come. Some persons have even started to talk of Romanian imperialism, and Professor Nae Ionescu has intervened here, too, with his formidable vision, his precise logic, formulating with passion and clarity what was latent in so many young minds.⁷⁵

In 1937, Eliade accused Romania’s ruling class of being totally indifferent to and blinded by the expansion of the foreign element to the detriment of the Romanians. The ethnic threat came from the Jews, Hungarians and Slavs, but not from the Germans (Swabians), “our only sincere allies who counterbalance the Hungarian elements.” In the journalistic style of Nae Ionescu, Eliade criticized liberal politicians and political leaders, “blind pilots” who had brought Romania, suffocated by the surrounding ethnic minorities, to the brink of disaster. In the mold of Eminescu’s *Doina*, Eliade painted an apocalyptic picture of foreign invasion, with insistent emphasis on the Jews:

Since the war, Jews have occupied the villages of the Maramureș and Bukovina, and gained the absolute majority in all the towns and cities of Bessarabia. . . . And if you tell them [the political leaders] that in the Bucegi you no longer hear

⁷⁴ M. Eliade, “Popor fără misiune?” *Vremea*, no. 416, 1 Dec. 1935.

⁷⁵ M. Eliade, “Destinuri românești,” *Vremea*, no. 430, 22 March 1936.

Romanian, that in the Maramures, Bukovina and Bessarabia they speak Yiddish, that the Romanian villages are dying and the face of the towns is changing, they believe you are in the pay of the Germans or assure you that they have passed laws for the protection of the national labor.⁷⁶

Here Eliade revealed an extremist xenophobia, in addition to adopting some clichés from the Iron Guard's political language. Romanian democracy had nullified "every attempt made for national reawakening"; he accused politicians of "treason," "crime" and "assaults against our nation"; he made threatening allusions to "the great battle" in the making, to "the great final victory."

In his new stance as a nationalist ideologist, Mircea Eliade no longer feared the possibility of being accused of right-wing extremism: "I know very well that the Jews will shout that I am an antisemite, and the democrats that I am a hooligan or fascist." Accusations on the part of the Jews he accepted with chivalry, as coming from a powerful adversary who knew how to defend his gains:

It would be absurd to expect that the Jews resign themselves to being a minority with certain rights and very many obligations—after having tasted the honey of power and won so many commanding posts. For the time being, the Jews are fighting with might and maintain their positions whilst waiting to take the offensive and, as far as I am concerned, I understand their struggle and admire their vitality, tenacity and genius.⁷⁷

Praise for Moses Gaster, and regret about his expulsion were now placed in a different context. This injustice became proof of a mistaken, non-selective policy of expulsion:

I do not know whether the Jewish banker or leaseholder was expelled in the period between 1870 and 1916, but great Jewish scholars, Gaster, Săineanu and Tiktin, were forced to leave. All three have won European renown. During the years in which

⁷⁶ M. Eliade, "Piloii orbi," *Vremea*, no. 505, 19 Sept. 1936.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

we accepted all kinds of Galician merchants we drove out three outstanding men of high European standing.⁷⁸

The eulogy of Gaster, resumed after the death of the scholar, revealed significant new accents. Gaster was a great man of learning and a consistent Jewish nationalist, who lived like "a conformist Jew, a rabbi, a Zionist." He was a "torchbearer of the Israeliite faith and mentor of Jewish nationalism." The image suggested by the generous portrait painted by Eliade is that of a *foreign* scholar who was also "interested" in the Romanian people's folklore and literature.⁷⁹

Mircea Eliade always seemed to be in search of a moral justification for his political allegiance.⁸⁰ In 1937 the man who, a few years before, had signed a protest against the persecution of Jews in Germany, reflected on the contrast between anti-Christian Communist barbarism and Nazi antisemitism; the latter, Eliade thought, was kept within legal and civilized limits, "without any acts of savagery." "Whatever I am told about Hitlerite terrorism, I cannot forget that in the very center of Berlin there stands a synagogue, solemn and untainted—unlike any church in Russia."⁸¹

Different from other intellectuals who sided with the Iron Guard, Eliade emphasized the other values promoted by the movement: the Christian spirit, spiritualism, messianism, moral

⁷⁸ M. Eliade, "Doctoral Gaster," *Vremea*, no. 442, 21 June 1936.

⁷⁹ M. Eliade, "Moartea doctorului Gaster," *Revista Fundatilor Regale*, 5 (1939), pp. 395–9.

⁸⁰ There is no proof of his formal affiliation to the Iron Guard. Like his biographers Mircea Handoca and Mac Linscott Ricketts (see below, note 85), Mircea Eliade denied that he was a member of the organization. (See M. Handoca, "Memorile lui Mircea Eliade," *Revista de istorie și teorie literară*, 1–2 (1987), p. 196). Nevertheless, an item in the paper *Cruciața Românișmului* issued in 1936 asserts the opposite: "We learn that Mr. Mircea Eliade, who is a member of the dissolved Iron Guard group, has been ordered by his spiritual chief, Corneliu Codreanu, to stop writing for certain papers of which the latter disapproves. We now ask Mr. Eliade if it is true that he has become the serf of an illiterate who tells him where to write and where not?" (See: "Pentru Mircea Eliade", *Cruciața Românișmului*, no. 64, 7 March 1936). That item should be considered with prudence. *Cruciața Românișmului* was the publication of an extreme right-wing group bearing the same name, an adversary of the Iron Guard (see pp. 164–5).

⁸¹ M. Eliade, "Meditație asupra arderii catedralelor . . .," *Vremea*, no. 474, 7 Feb. 1937.

regeneration, the new man—implying, one might say, that the antisemitism of the Iron Guard was not a central element. Eliade did not mention the problem that obsessed the Legion in any of his articles exalting the Legionary spirit. The only, but unequivocal, expression of his support for the Iron Guard's antisemitic program appeared in the aforementioned declaration printed in *Buna Vestire* (Why I Believe in the Victory of the Legionary Movement):

Can the Romanian nation end its life in the saddest decay witnessed by history, undermined by misery and syphilis, conquered by Jews and torn to pieces by foreigners, demoralized, betrayed, sold for a few hundred million lei?⁸²

Eliade's "Manifesto," written in the same spirit and the same language as his articles in *Vremea*, was published three days before the elections and bore an evidently "electoral" stamp. Seized with the fever of Legionary missionarism, Mircea Eliade was deeply involved in the election campaign.⁸³ Now he could no longer disregard the sacred slogan of the struggle against the Jewish "conquest," although his antisemitism remained within the limits of the ideological tradition of Eminescu and Iorga. By dint of his enthusiasm for the Iron Guard, he attempted to transfer this tradition to it despite the fact that it maintained its own antisemitic myth.

Like Robert Brasillach in France, Mircea Eliade did not search out antisemitic "metaphysics." The profascist mysticism of these two men did not create an anti-Jewish mystique; it was an antisemitism of reason.⁸⁴ The nature of the Jewish question was demographic ("invasion") and social; there were too many Jews in the important spheres of social life.⁸⁵

⁸² M. Eliade, "De ce cred în biruința Mișcării Legionare," *Buna Vestire*, no. 244, 17 Dec. 1937.

⁸³ Sebastian's Diary, 7 Dec. 1937 (see above, chapter 2, note 90).

⁸⁴ A. Brassie, *Robert Brasillach* (Paris, 1987), pp. 185–9.

⁸⁵ After writing the present volume, I learned of the recent publication of a comprehensive monograph on the Romanian period of Mircea Eliade's intellectual biography by Mac Linscott Ricketts: *Mircea Eliade: The Romanian Roots, 1907–1945*, 2 volumes (New York, 1988). The author gives a detailed analysis of Mircea Eliade's texts which I have examined, his political ideas, his

"In 1934, when the novel *For Two Thousand Years* was published," Mihail Sebastian noted with irony, "the ideas preoccupying Romanian intellectuals with great verve were two: antisemitism and dictatorship."⁸⁶ The same "ideas" remained at the center of debate until the end of the 1930s. Enamored of doctrine, Nicolae Roșu summed up the essence of the new nationalism as a return to traditional Romanian values and thus the exclusion of the Jews from Romanian history.⁸⁷ On the whole the new current now claimed to be part of traditional

national ideology, and his attitude to antisemitism and fascism. As regards Eliade's relations with the Iron Guard, this competent biographer notes: "Between January 1937 and the imposition of the royal dictatorship in February 1938, Eliade gave open and enthusiastic support, through his periodical writing, to the Legionary Movement" (vol. II, p. 882); and also: "It seemed to Eliade that the Legion was the fulfilment of all his hopes for the young generation, the proof that he had not been mistaken in 1927 when he had characterized his generation as one centered on spiritual concerns. If the Legion were to succeed in winning the allegiance of the whole nation—as it seemed, in 1937, on its way to doing—it would mean the appearance of the Christian 'new man,' the fulfilment of Romania's holy mission. In his newfound enthusiasm for the Legion, which for years he had classed as just another right-wing political extremist group, Eliade lost his sense of perspective and overlooked the flaws in its doctrines and practices" (vol. II, p. 925).

As to Mircea Eliade's antisemitic attitudes, Mac Linscott Ricketts's conclusion are, in general, different from mine (see vol. I, pp. 129–33, vol. II, pp. 727–39, 907–12). Surprising and not very plausible is the doubt cast on Eliade's paternity of the article "Why I Believe in the Victory of the Legionary Movement," stemming from a statement made by Eliade to the American researcher in 1981: "Eliade told me in 1981 that he had been asked to contribute an article to the series, but had declined. Soon afterward he was surprised to see an article which he had not written appearing under his name in the paper" (vol. II, pp. 928–9). Eliade repeated his declaration in a talk with a young coworker, Dr. Adriana Berger (see: "Cîndatul destin al unei scriitori a lui Mircea Eliade către Al. Mirodan," *Minimum*, 18 [1988]). However, an examination of the text (the basic ideas, style, wordings found in previous articles written by Eliade) leaves no room for doubt. Moreover, Eliade had plenty of opportunities to issue a denial in writing, yet never did so. A few days after the publication of that article, an eloquent passage from it was reprinted, with his signature, on the front page of the *Buna Vestire* (no. 253, 1 Jan. 1938). Mihail Sebastian, who was shocked when he read the article, mentioned not even the slightest disavowal on the part of his friend at their subsequent meetings. Nor is there in his memoirs (including the volume released after his death: see below, note 137) any reference concerning the "real" author of this article, which, in retrospect, he might have considered to be discreditable. His late and discrete repudiation remains inexplicable.

⁸⁶ M. Sebastian, *Cum am devenit huligan*, p. 11.

⁸⁷ N. Roșu, *Didactică naționalismului* (Bucharest, 1936), p. ix.

Romanian national thinking of the previous 100 years.⁸⁸ Declarations as to the new antisemitism's direct descendants from Eminescu's ideology became commonplace. The poet was considered to have been "the prophetic doctrinaire of authoritarian nationalism."⁸⁹ His vision was translated into fact by the young Legionnaires.⁹⁰

There was little novelty in the domain of antisemitic "ideas." What was new was the aggressive character of the language, even in cultural publications, an obsessive repetition of the "theses" in various texts: polemics, essays, studies, syntheses of national history. One of the leitmotifs was the inevitable link between Romanian nationalism and antisemitism, a fatalism enforced by reality: "Romanian nationalism has a pronouncedly antisemitic trend because the Jew is both the beneficiary and the symbol of Romanian imbalance."⁹¹

Nicolae Davidescu also upheld the principles of a totalitarian national state whose *raison d'être* was to fight "the totalitarianism of the *yids* of the Diaspora" and whose task was "the detoxification of the nation from the Jewish poison."⁹² In the late 1930s, when victory seemed secure, Nichifor Crainic triumphantly announced the fulfillment of the totalitarian state's essential mission: "the purification of Romanian culture of alien elements."⁹³

At that stage, especially in the intellectual circles under discussion, antisemitism was linked to another "idea": *right-wing dictatorship*. The models were first fascist and then Nazi. From 1933 current and insistent discussions of this issue were carried on in the nationalist press. But they also appeared in traditional cultural periodicals like *Convorbiri literare* which represented "the old regime" and were considered liberal.

⁸⁸ *Inter alia*, N. Davidescu, "Hitlerism sau românism," *Vremea*, no. 444, 15 July 1936; B. Theodorescu, "Dogmatica antisemitesmului român," *Vremea*, no. 566, 4 Dec. 1938; B. Theodorescu, "Istoria antisemitesmului român," *Vremea*, no. 567, 11 Dec. 1938.

⁸⁹ N. Crainic, "O nouă misiune," *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, 9 (1940), p. 486.

⁹⁰ H. Stamatu, "Actualitatea lui Eminescu," *Buna Vestire*, no. 258, 9 Jan. 1938.

⁹¹ N. C. Angelescu, "Ereii în România," *Vremea*, no. 512, 7 Nov. 1937.

⁹² N. Davidescu, *Primejdia judeică*, pp. 161–2.

⁹³ N. Crainic, "O nouă misiune," *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, 9 (1940), p. 485.

However, Romanian nationalist ideology did not have to imitate foreign models of dictatorship; it had its own doctrinal tradition of questioning liberalism and Western-style society; it had its own, "organic," patriarchal models, believed to be better suited to the structure of Romanian society.

For over ten years Nae Ionescu had been happy to note that "democracy was closing shop" and that "the artificial, false and dissolute regime of democracy" had to be replaced by "the corporate state," "a Romanian state with a peasant character," developed from the organic concept of Nicolae Iorga.⁹⁴ Great intellectuals, by their very essence aristocrats, must be enemies of democracy: "The great cultural personalities, the great creative spirits were never democrats; they were not democratic by temperament, nor in politics."⁹⁵ "In order to be able to live, Romania needs an anti-democratic revolution," wrote Crainic in 1932.⁹⁶ A few years later, he put forward his doctrine and program of the ethnocratic state.⁹⁷

The idea of dictatorship was taken up with the aggressiveness of his age and of the political circumstances by Emil Cioran:
*The totalitarian state is the only armor capable of defending Romania from bankruptcy.*⁹⁸

The national revolution, which would finish off democracy, was an unfettering of irrational forces, of fanaticism and violence, the imperialist fulfillment of the national destiny. All means are legitimate when a people opens a road for itself in the world. Terror, crime, bestiality and perfidy are base and immoral only in decadence, when they defend a vacuum of content; if, on the other hand, they help in the ascension of a people, they are virtues. All triumphs are moral. . . .

Romania needs exaltation reaching fanaticism. A fanatical Romania is a transfigured Romania. The fanaticization of Romania is the transfiguration of Romania.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ N. Ionescu, *Roză vînturilor* (Bucharest, 1937), pp. 287, 372–5.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 370.

⁹⁶ N. Crainic, "Spre stînga sau spre dreapta," *Axa*, no. 1, 20 Oct. 1932.

⁹⁷ N. Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocratie* (Bucharest, 1937).

⁹⁸ E. Cioran, "Despre o altă Românie," *Vremea*, no. 376, 17 Feb. 1935.

⁹⁹ E. Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României*, pp. 41, 46.

Every revolution is heroic, by which I understand the whole range of heroism starting with brutality and ending in sacrifice. . . . The more intellectual a person is, the less capable he becomes of heroism. . . .

Dictatorship is *ante portas*. Those who pin their hopes on deserters and fainthearts are wrong. Those who lack the courage to support the tension of the dictatorial regime and do not feel called upon to intensify it must see the future as a hallucinating void. The stages of our destiny have never succeeded each other at greater speed than today.¹⁰⁰

The Third Reich, rather than Fascist Italy, became the ideal model of dictatorship resulting from a national revolution. Although they had to confront a politically heterogeneous public opinion hostile to Nazism,¹⁰¹ the leaders of the new nationalists constantly expressed their admiration for Nazi Germany and, although with certain reservations, for Nazism in their writings. Nae Ionescu was an early sympathizer of the "German revolution."¹⁰² Hitler's Reich and Mussolini's Italy, he observed in a polemic with Iorga in 1938, were not dictatorships, but the felicitous products of an exalted meeting of the masses with the leader.¹⁰³ Crainic was tireless, for ten years, in voicing enthusiasm for the Nazi and fascist regimes. In 1941 he collected all his articles on the subject in the volume *Lupta pentru spiritul nou* (The Fight for the New Spirit). Like Octavian Goga, he had met Mussolini and Alfred Rosenberg¹⁰⁴ and, despite doctrinal differences, praised Nazism:

I am closely watching the work of Hitler's government in Germany. Profoundly sympathetic to us through numerous affinities of emotion and conception, this work is admirable because it asserts the idea of race as the axis of a people's

¹⁰⁰ E. Cioran, "In preajma dictaturii," *Vremea*, no. 476, 21 Feb. 1937.

¹⁰¹ For a bibliography, see Leon Volovici, "Romanian Intellectuals—Jewish Intellectua during the Dictatorship of Antonescu," *Romanian Jewish Studies*, 1 (Spring 1987), note 29.

¹⁰² N. Ionescu, op. cit., pp. 137–41.

¹⁰³ N. Ionescu, "Dictatura și democrație: Pe marginea unei conferințe a lui Iorga," *Cuvântul*, no. 3126, 27 Jan. 1938.

¹⁰⁴ N. Crainic, *Lupta pentru spiritul nou*, p. 15 (see note 5, above).

development, because it asserts the great and new "totalitarian" social idea instead of the criminal Marxism which tears societies to pieces and murders people. . . . It has struck the death blow at Judaic Marxism, the wellspring of the universal hatred of men against their fellow men.¹⁰⁵

Emil Cioran extolled the frenzy of the unfettered barbarian instincts produced by Nazism, but not the ideas and spiritual level of the new culture.¹⁰⁶ Nazism was "a new life style."¹⁰⁷ The Nazi cult of force and the national messianic myth justified every action, including political assassination.¹⁰⁸

Mircea Eliade avoided declaring his sympathy with Nazism in public. It was only in his heated disputes with friends that he revealed his preference for a pro-German policy.¹⁰⁹ Ideologically, however, he preferred Salazar's regime, "a Christian and totalitarian state" resulting from a spiritual, moral and political revolution, a dictatorship as the "instrument of the moral and intellectual perfection of the young generations."¹¹⁰

For Nichifor Crainic, and a long line of other extreme right-wing writers, not all of whom were Legionnaires, the greatest merit of Hitler's regime remained the decision to apply a radical antisemitic policy, unprecedented in Europe, and to make antisemitism a basic component of the new regime and of Nazi ideology. Crainic's praise for Hitler was motivated, above all, by his distinction as the champion of antisemitism. Crainic wrote in 1933 that it was Hitler who had proclaimed "the fight for the extermination of Jewish Marxism."¹¹¹ In 1938 and 1939 Crainic looked on with wonder at the way Germany was gradually advancing toward the practical settlement of the "Jewish question":

Germany, whose nationalism has such troubling repercussions

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁰⁶ E. Cioran, "Despre o altă Românie," *Vremea*, no. 376, 17 Feb. 1936.

¹⁰⁷ E. Cioran, "Germania și Franța," *Vremea*, Christmas 1933.

¹⁰⁸ E. Cioran, "Revolta sătărilor," *Vremea*, no. 349, 5 Aug. 1934.

¹⁰⁹ Sebastian's Diary, 20 Sept. 1939. See above, chapter 2, note 90.

¹¹⁰ M. Eliade, *Salazar și revoluția din Portugalia* (Bucharest, 1942), p. 214.

¹¹¹ N. Crainic, *Lupta pentru spiritul nou*, p. 38.

in Central Europe, has nevertheless done something for Europe no other great power has been able to do: it has brought antisemitism from theory down to practical solutions. . . .

The perspective is opening up widely toward a unanimous European consensus in solving the Jewish problem. We are not just hallucinating when, having realized the significance of convergent trends in almost all states, we see the coming solution of this problem in the evacuation of the Judaic spirit from Europe, which has been sickened by it for so long. . . . Adolf Hitler has destroyed a myth under whose terror the contemporary world has been living: the myth of Jewish omnipotence on the earth. . . . With a courage worthy of the great trailblazers of history, the *Führer* has localized the Jewish question in the framework of the German state and taken the measures he has thought fit, without any consideration whatsoever for international repercussions. . . .

For the peoples devastated by the tentacular monster of Judaism, such as, particularly, the people of Central Europe, Adolf Hitler is the greatest benefactor because he has destroyed the myth of terror, has given an example of courage, has provided one and all with the method of solution and opened the prospects of a European continent cleansed of Jewish leprosy.¹¹²

Antisemitism and the "Guardist Conversion" of the "Young Generation"

Thus far we have dealt only with the intellectual leaders of the period who formulated and imposed the principal trends on that generation. However, the attraction of the Legionary movement and its spirit for many young intellectuals was, first of all, part of the enamoredness with fascism and right-wing dictatorship among many European intellectuals. However, fascism went deeper than mere politics and transient circumstance.¹¹³ To those young intellectuals fascism meant not only dictatorship, but also the

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 143-7.

¹¹³ See: Z. Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche. L'idéologie fasciste en France* (Paris, 1983), pp. 294-7; A. Hamilton, *The Appeal of Fascism* (London, 1971), pp. xv-xxiii.

implementation of a radical spiritual and artistic revolution, a new scale of moral values, a "new man," a society cleansed of bourgeois corruption and philistinism, and the ethnic state, an ideal form for the reestablishment of spiritual unity and creativity.¹¹⁴

Some of the younger men found these values in fascism. Others derived their views from the same sources as fascist ideology, although their evolution in the direction of fascism was not compulsory. This is borne out by the fact that not all who were consistent in their thinking arrived at one of the profascist philosophies. In this respect, the poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga was a remarkable example. Fed by the same sources and influenced by the Orthodoxist ambience dominated by Nichifor Crainic, Blaga's evolution with regard to the philosophy of culture and the definition of the ethnic spirit was original in that it lacked any affinity to fascist "creativity" and mysticism.¹¹⁵

Ideologists of the new right, like Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu, saw the Legionary movement as the legitimate framework to promote their ethnicist doctrine. The "young generation" found in the same movement the resources of irrationalism, Orthodox Christian mysticism, the fulfillment of the idea of the nation's moral regeneration (starting with Kogălniceanu and Bălcescu, and continuing with Eminescu, Iorga and Pârvan), United by "a spiritual rebellion" and by their opposition to existing social structures, the young nationalist intellectuals considered the Legion the best vehicle for these ideas and unhesitatingly identified with its political orientation. But from the *spiritual* point of view, the Iron Guard did not satisfy them, and sometimes they attributed, with all the conviction and dedication of which they were capable, their own aspirations to the movement, although the organization represented them only in a rudimentary and "earthly" form.

¹¹⁴ G. L. Mosse, "Fascism and the Intellectuals," in S. J. Woolf (ed.), *The Nature of Fascism* (London, 1968), pp. 207-10.

¹¹⁵ The writer's nephew, Corneliu Blaga, commented on Blaga's withdrawal from the extremist nationalist circles. Nevertheless, the poet accepted the post of undersecretary of state of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Octavian Goga's government. See: I. Oprîsan, *Lucian Blaga printre contemporani: Dialoguri adevarate* (Bucharest, 1987), pp. 117-19, 125.

In Mircea Eliade's opinion, the frenzy of the Iron Guard contained a mystical and spiritual essence. Eliade "rediscovered" the myth of regeneration, awareness of historic mission, a "new man" and a new meaning of life in the new, Legionary aristocracy and the rigors of fascist discipline:

We are those lucky enough to carry on the most significant transformation experienced by modern Romania: *the fashioning of a new aristocracy*. . . . A new man, who, having discovered obedience, has also found his own will, his own fate. Discipline and obedience have given him a new dignity and boundless trust in himself, in the Leader and in the major destiny of his nation. . . .

Legionarism has brought back to Romania the happiness and teaching of the open, honest struggle. . . . The promotion of manliness and the offensive spirit, [as well as] aristocratic European values, has led to another transformation of the soul of Romania's young generation. It has created awareness of an historic mission, the feeling that we were born in order to carry out a unique revolution in the history of the nation. The Legionnaire does not live at random. His life has a precise and major meaning: the Christian revolution, the salvation of the Romanian nation. . . .

Replacing aristocracy of the blood, the Legion creates a new aristocracy: that of the spirit.¹¹⁶

Constantin Noica's attraction to the Legionary movement, which he declared only after Codreanu's assassination, had the same spiritual motivation, springing from the revelation of a martyrdom announcing the rebirth of a nation. In a long series of articles that appeared in the newspaper *Buna Vestire*, Noica transformed the Legion into an object of mystic ecstasy. The young philosopher became a Christian preacher who, in the apostolic style, revealed the transcendental significance of Codreanu's death, sanctified the Legion and its martyrs, and paid homage to Horia Sima, its new leader:

Those who do not believe that nations have a soul do not see, do
¹¹⁶ M. Eliade, "Noua aristocrație legionară," *Vremea*, no. 522, 22 Jan. 1938.

not feel this extraordinary beginning represented by the Legionary movement.¹¹⁷

The Legion was not in step with the rest of Romania, nor is it today. Those who dare to tell the Legionnaires that they are not suffering have not even seen that what the Legion has brought into our world is suffering. At a time when everybody was living in beatitude the Legion was suffering. It alone understood that the Union did not finish anything, that Romanian fulfillment was still to come.¹¹⁸

We are not living under the rule of the Law, but of grace. Why are some of the biblical words so strikingly suited to our great Romanian adventure? Because it is an adventure of the spirit. . . . But for the biblical words, we would keep silent. So great is our hope. So great is our faith.¹¹⁹

Heidegger at Freiburg and Robert Brasillach in Paris were at that time voicing essentially the same mystical and nationalist ideas, attributing the same sacred finality to Nazism or fascism.¹²⁰ The Romanians, however, embossed their message of fascism with a strong Christian mark of asceticism and sacrifice, expressing the despair and demands of a people treated unjustly by fate and history.

On the other hand, Nae Ionescu and the representatives of the "young generation" (Eliade, Noica, Ernest Bernea), opposed the inclination of some ideologists to cultivate, in the name of the Iron Guard, contempt for intellectuals. They sought to integrate the intelligentsia with the demands of the movement. Ernest

¹¹⁷ C. Noica, "Sufletul cetății," *Buna Vestire*, no. 14, 24 Sept. 1940.

¹¹⁸ C. Noica, "Nu suntem contemporani," *Buna Vestire*, no. 18, 28 Sept. 1940.

¹¹⁹ C. Noica, "Sunetul sub har," *Buna Vestire*, no. 23, 4 Oct. 1940. Other pro-Legionary articles by Noica, published in *Buna Vestire*: "Credere," no. 1, 8 Sept. 1940; "Fiji înfricoșători de buni," no. 2, 10 Sept. 1940; "Ești necinstit sufletește . . ." no. 3, 11 Sept. 1940; "Cumplita lor călătorie," no. 4, 12 Sept. 1940; "Să viață fără de moarte," no. 7, 15 Sept. 1940; "Anul I, ziua întâi," no. 8, 17 Sept. 1940; "Pentru cel care nu învelege," no. 9, 18 Sept. 1940; "Terusalime . . . Ierusalime . . ." no. 10, 19 Sept. 1940; "10001," no. 11, 20 Sept. 1940; "Apelul Axei," no. 9, 29 Sept. 1940; "Electra sau femeia legionară," no. 21, 2 Oct. 1940; "Întîlnirea de la 6 Octombrie," no. 25, 6 Oct. 1940.

¹²⁰ On Brasillach's mystical fascism, see: A. Brassie, op. cit. (note 84); on Heidegger: R. Wolin, "Recherches récentes sur la relation de Martin Heidegger au national socialisme," *Les Temps Modernes*, 495 (Oct. 1987).

Berneu spoke of the "new" intellectual who integrated with the new sense of history and, like the new-type politicians, became a guide. "In this way, the first intellectual among us is the Captain," he concluded.¹²¹

The "young generation" insisted on the profoundly spiritual character of the Legion, convinced as they were that it was only within its ranks that they could fulfill themselves and be part of "history in the making."

The essentially fascist feature predominant with Emil Cioran was a cult of revolution and dictatorship as forms of the paroxysmal unfettering of the nation's energies. The Legionary movement was the primary instrument of its progress:

The nationalist phenomenon experienced by Romania today, which leads us to the most essential moment of our history, if it will not reveal us as being *different*, means that this country is initiated in its essence. That is why our nationalists should not be blamed with regard to their program. It is not their fault that they are good or bad; their involvement in the nation's development absolves them of all responsibility. This explains the lack of *theoretical awareness* of these nationalists. They are instruments of our history, a history they are experiencing and making instinctively, without suffering the tragedy of the immeasurable distance separating vision from reality. . . .

Romanian nationalism is such a primordial outburst that I would employ geological terms to describe this human phenomenon.¹²²

The attempt by Mircea Eliade, as of Constantin Noica, to spiritualize the Legionary movement and to blur or embellish its violent aspects—terrorism, crime, extreme antisemitism—is similar to the efforts made at the time by Heidegger to emphasize the spiritual aspects and distance himself from biological and racial Nazism.¹²³ The result really was a "spiritualized," priestly image of the Iron Guard and considerable enhancement of its

¹²¹ E. Bernea, "Intelectualul și nouă naționalism," *Cuvântul studențesc*, no. 2, 15 Feb. 1936.

¹²² E. Cioran, "În preajma dictaturii," *Vremea*, no. 476, 21 Feb. 1937.

¹²³ L. Ferry and A. Renaut, *Heidegger et les Modernes* (Paris, 1988), pp. 104–5.

intellectual prestige. Thus the young philosophers also entered into an inevitable relation of complicity with the movement's true aims.

The mystical atmosphere created by the Iron Guard, noted by many Romanian and foreign contemporaries, also had a strong impact on intellectual and artistic circles, where, as among the "rank and file" Legionnaires, the cult of the "Captain," that is, C.Z. Codreanu, assumed exalted mystical forms. In his diary, Mihail Sebastian described with great dismay the growing symptoms of this "psychosis" among his close friends.

Another lucid and penetrating witness to this phenomenon was the very young (born 1912) poet and nonconformist essayist Eugen Ionescu (no relation to Nae Ionescu), who would later become the celebrated French playwright Eugène Ionesco. Untouched by the fascist and pro-Nazi fervor of his friends, he noted in his diary their rapid transformation into converts to the extremist totalitarian ideology. In his book *Present passé, passé présent*, published in France in the 1960s, he projected the forms of the "fascization" and "Guardist conversion" in intellectual circles into the dimensions of a terrifying nightmare.¹²⁴ In his theater, the fascist "contamination" of many Romanian intellectuals produced the metaphor of a fantastic transformation of the heroes into *rhinos*.¹²⁵

The phenomenon also affected intellectuals outside the circle of the "young generation," among them prestigious sympathizers and supporters who had previously stopped short of political commitment. In December 1937, *Buna Vestire* interviewed pro-Iron Guard cultural personalities. They listed the Romanianism, religiosity and antisemitism of the organization as factors justifying their support of the movement.

The arguments of the linguist and scholar Sextil Pușcariu were significant:

I have been watching the Legionary movement with the

¹²⁴ E. Ionesco, *Present passé, passé présent* (Paris, 1968), pp. 167–8. See also: M. Sora, "O primăvară agitată," *Dialog* (Ditzibach), 1–2 (1988).

¹²⁵ From the same angle of "rhinocerization," see the sociological analysis of the Iron Guard by A. Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation* (Munich, 1986).

greatest sympathy ever since the students of the University at Cluj demanded . . . that our universities be reconquered for Romanianism and, above all, be free from the Jewish invaders. My sympathy for the Legionnaires increased when I saw their deep and sincere religiosity.¹²⁶

In his 1938 diary, the important writer and cleric Gala Galaction described the forms that the cult of Codreanu had assumed especially among theologians. The "Captain" was, as he himself wanted to be, compared to Jesus and the apostles:

Friday, 3 June 1938 . . .

Early this morning, in the secrecy of the confessional, a flood of high praise, of disclosures of admiration and exaltation, and details almost equaling those of the Roman martyrs and the lives of the Orthodox saints! How the hero has been and is being kept in a waterless well, like St. John the Baptist in the cistern of Oscar Wilde's Salome! How in his armpit he keeps a piece of bread, which is his food for several days (he will not eat anything else, because he is afraid of being poisoned), how he preaches only peace, forgiveness, reconciliation and how, like St. Paul, he is ready to give his blood, as a libation, on the altar of Legionary nationalism! What is the answer to all this hagiological data!¹²⁷

Not only ordinary clerics admired the Legion. Sympathy for it reached the highest levels of the Church's hierarchy. A French observer noted in 1936: "[The Metropolitan] Miron Cristea does not hide his feelings. . . . He is not without sympathy for the Iron Guard and many young theologians are following him."¹²⁸

In his memoirs Eugène Ionesco remarked that an antisemitic thrust was one of the first symptoms of the fascist metamorphosis. The mirage of the Iron Guard was heralded by an obsession with

¹²⁶ "De ce cred în izbindă Misiunii Legionare—răspunsul prof. univ. Sextil Puscariu," *Buna Vestire*, no. 235, 7 Dec. 1937.

¹²⁷ Gala Galaction, *Jurnal*, vol. II (Bucharest, 1977), p. 260.

¹²⁸ Quoted by C. Durandin, "Orthodoxie et roumanité. Le débat de l'entre deux guerres," *Romanian Studies* (Leiden), V (1980–1986), p. 123.

the presence of Jews. *C'est ainsi qu'ils commencent tous.* ("All of them start this way.")¹²⁹

Was the Iron Guard's extreme antisemitism adopted by conformist intellectual supporters because of loyalty to a political movement that disallowed reserve and doubt, or because it expressed their own belief, which could only be harnessed by joining the Legion? I am inclined to accept both reasons. Perhaps an analysis of their ideas confirms this, although, quite naturally, not to an equal degree in each particular case. In most cases, the Guard's political and propaganda successes stimulated the open, public expression of antisemitic views that had thus far been voiced only in closed circles and private letters.

Over and above outside influences and conformist attitudes, there exists a basic ideological justification. The model of an ethnocratic, patriarchal Romanian society, based on an Orthodox Christian spirit, excluded the presence of the Jewish element and denied it equal opportunities of development and affirmation. The Jew was unacceptable not only because he was a "foreigner" with a different religion; he was identified with all the "vices": political (democracy, liberalism), social (corruption, social inequality, poverty), moral and cultural (cosmopolitanism, poisonous foreign influences) and spiritual (rationalism, individualism, Marxism). All the "poisons" that had provoked the deep crisis in Romanian society emanated from the Jew.

Legionarism lent the struggle against the Jews a mystical and missionary halo which also influenced some intellectuals. The young philosopher Constantin Noica even believed that antisemitism was a kind of prophetic "revelation" of the movement's founders:

In 1923 the students and their despair were not understood, they were not in step with the rest of Romania. It is only now that the other world discovers 1923; it is only now that it discovers antisemitism; it is only now that it discovers corruption; but, above all, it is only now that it discovers the disaster.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ E. Ionesco, op. cit., p. 119.

¹³⁰ C. Noica, "Nu suntem contemporani," *Buna Vestire*, no. 18, 28 Sept. 1940.

Although he was not a fanatic, Noica was seduced by Legionary missionarism and viewed the Guard's antisemitism as a historic necessity of the time, imposed by the effort to save the nation; he pitied his Jewish friends because of their (fatal) inability to be part of it:

And if there is something we regret as far as our Jewish friends are concerned, it is not so much the fact that they will have to suffer because of the Legionary movement. If you are hurt unjustly (and we know very well that they will be hurt unjustly), you suffer less, said a philosopher, than the one who hurts you. What we regret is that they are forbidden to see and to understand all that is good and truthful in Legionarism. We regret their suffering at not participating in any way, with not even a hope, with not even an illusion, in Romania's tomorrow.¹³¹

The antisemitism of some protagonists of the "young generation" was not exactly the same as that of the Iron Guard, but the Legionary leaders were quite "tolerant" in this respect, particularly in the case of prestigious intellectuals. They were satisfied with "moderate" forms of antisemitism if they were coupled with total support for their organization.

For the intellectuals in its ranks, the Legionary movement heralded the fateful hour when all "intellectualist" and "humanitarian" criteria would have to be abandoned. Antisemitism, too, has become a sacred imperative.

The "Young Generation"—Epilogue

The Legionary and antisemitic crisis of the "young generation" ended with the last official banning of the movement in January 1941, after it had failed in its attempt to remove General Antonescu from power.

Nae Ionescu had died one year before. The intellectual evolution of his disciples assumed different directions after the war, but none of these men tried to justify his own Legionary

¹³¹ C. Noica, "Între parazitul din afara și parazitul dinăuntru," *Vremea*, no. 523, 30 Jan. 1938.

phase, and even less the antisemitic manifestations that had been part of it. Under the Communist regime, some of them, such as Nichifor Crainic, Mircea Vulcănescu, Radu Gyr, paid for the political orientation of their youth with jail sentences. Noica was also jailed, though this was not connected with his political past. Others evaded trial by leaving the country.

Mircea Eliade, who died in 1986, became a celebrated scholar and an international authority on the history of religions. He also remained active as a Romanian writer. In the last twenty years, a cult of the great scholar, the original exegete of myths and of religion, has developed in Romania and in academic and artistic circles in Western Europe and the United States. In his frequent statements about himself he referred to politics only tangentially, and then from a philosophical perspective. *Salazar and the Revolution in Portugal* (1942) was his last political volume.

In his memoirs, printed during his lifetime in France and the United States, Eliade gives detailed descriptions of the intellectual atmosphere in the 1930s, of the stages in his development as an intellectual and writer, of the ideas that dominated his generation; however, there is no mention whatsoever of his own Legionary phase. A determined effort to rewrite the past, to wipe out what he may have thought to be a disreputable episode, produced an almost magical selective amnesia.

In the first volume of his memoirs, *Les promesses de l'équinoxe*,¹³² he takes a neutral stance in describing Nae Ionescu's increasingly close relations with the Iron Guard and the episode of the preface to Sebastian's novel, recalling "the political tensions of the years 1935–1939" without any reference to his own involvement. His own and his generation's philosophical and social ideas are completely removed from their fascist or Legionary context. No thought, no regret, no pang of conscience disturbs a youth retold in almost mythical and saintly terms. The references to Jewish friends, such as Sebastian, Ion Călugăru and others are full of warmth and sympathy.

There was only one shadow, from Jerusalem, that troubled the

¹³² M. Eliade, *Mémoire I, 1907–1937: Les promesses de l'équinoxe* (Paris, 1980); English translation: *Autobiography*, vol. I (San Francisco, 1981).

scholar's serenity. In his diary entry, dated October 9, 1984, he speaks of a meeting with an Israeli sculptor who had come to ask him for a few pages on the symbolism and function of a Bridge of Peace the artist wanted to build at the entrance to Jerusalem.¹³³ Eliade agreed to write them, but was obviously uneasy:

I accepted, but pointed out that many people in Israel have suspected and labelled me. My name might serve those opposing the project as a pretext. He told me he knew that, but the scientists supporting him had advised him to ignore it. I am afraid he is mistaken. And I would regret that. Not so much because the campaign against me could be resumed; rather because the project might be discredited.¹³⁴

The next day, October 10, 1984, reading a Romanian novel brought him back to the same mysterious biographical chapter:

I kept thinking what I would have suffered if I had stayed at home as a professor and writer. If that *felix culpa* had not intervened: my adoration of Nae Ionescu and all the ill-fated consequences (then, in 1939–1940) of this connection.¹³⁵

It is as if an oath of silence envelops his by no means secret relations with the Legionary movement and its "ill-fated consequences."

¹³³ M. Eliade, "Jurnal 1984," *Agora*, 1 (1987), p. 63.

¹³⁴ Of the "many" in Israel who "calumniéd" him, we know only one: the author of a "Mircea Eliade File" ("Dosarul Mircea Eliade"), *Toldot*, 1 (Jan.–March 1972). The article is not signed. It was probably written by the review's editor, Theodor Lavi. Of the same generation as Eliade, Theodor Lavi (Loewenstein), a Ph.D. in education, was a Zionist activist in Bucharest and historian of the Jewish community of Romania. In *Toldot* he printed so far unpublished excerpts from Sebastian's Diary dealing with the "Guardist conversion" and Mircea Eliade's antisemitic outbursts, and repeated the label applied by the Communist leader Lucretiu Pătrășcanu to the young Eliade: "a well-known chief of the Guardist school." The commentary is tough and indiscriminate, like an indictment, but the excerpts from Sebastian's diary, which I have verified, are transcribed exactly. This "File" was used and commented upon by Alfonso M. di Nola, "Mircea Eliade e l'antisemitismo," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israele*, vol. XLIII, 1–2 (1977) and Radu Ioanid, "Mircea Eliade e il fascismo," *La critica sociologica*, 84 (1988).

¹³⁵ M. Eliade, "Jurnal 1984."

Replying to Claude-Henri Rocquet, who asked him in 1978 to comment on his novel *Huliganii*, published in 1935, a literary image of the "rebellious" generation with many references to young Legionnaires, Eliade voiced the same ambiguous affinity, if not identity, with the heroes of his book: "I believed that these young people were *hooligans* in the true sense of the word, people who were preparing a spiritual, cultural and if not a political, at least real, concrete revolution."¹³⁶ During the same dialogue with Rocquet, in which he gave a detailed account of the Romanian period of his intellectual biography, Eliade omitted the years of his decisive and public support for the Iron Guard and resumed his autobiography with 1940, the year he left Romania.

The veil of silence is lifted in the second volume of his memoirs, *Les moissons du solstice*, which appeared after Eliade's death.¹³⁷ However, here, too, the chapter dealing with political involvement is related exclusively to the fatal and mysterious links with Nae Ionescu, whom he followed under all political circumstances. The unexpected death of his teacher had freed him from his sacred relationship and led to "a felicitous change." All responsibility for his political metamorphoses is placed on the shoulders of his master and explained by the unconditional devotion of the disciple:

Nae Ionescu's death had affected me profoundly: I had lost my Maestro, my guide; spiritually I had been "orphaned." But in a certain sense his death had liberated me from our immediate past: that is, from the ideas, hopes, and decisions of the professor in the last few years, with which, out of devotion, I had made common cause.¹³⁸

As he himself put it, identification with Nae Ionescu's attitudes, more emphatic and "sacral" for Eliade than others, characterized all those grouped round their teacher: "Directly or

¹³⁶ M. Eliade, *L'épreuve du Labyrinthe: Entretiens avec Claude-Henri Roquet* (Paris, 1978), pp. 86–7.

¹³⁷ M. Eliade, *Mémoire II, 1937–1960: Les moissons du solstice* (Paris, 1988); English translation: *Autobiography, II: 1937–1960: Exile's Odyssey* (Chicago, 1988).

¹³⁸ M. Eliade, *Autobiography*, II, p. 6.

indirectly, all of us—his disciples and fellow workers—were united with the professor's political concepts and options.¹³⁹ His arrest and internment in July 1938 in the Miercurea Ciuc camp together with Nae Ionescu and other Legionary leaders is also explained as the result of his loyalty to the professor and “his generation.” So is his refusal to sign a declaration dissociating himself from the Legionary movement.¹⁴⁰ There is no reference whatsoever to his articles exalting the Legionary spirit, to his own political commitment during the 1937 electoral campaign and the statements he made during that period in the Legionary newspapers *Buna Vestire*.

In his memoirs, Eliade writes about the Iron Guard in a detached, neutral and “objective” way, but his perception of the movement's spirit remains unchanged. Half a century after the events, the Legion is still seen as an essentially ethical and religious—not political—movement, with the aim of creating “the new man.” Its founder, Codreanu, believed in the need for sacrifice, in the purification and strengthening of the movement through the persecutions suffered by its members.¹⁴¹ The portrait he draws of Codreanu is that of a martyr, an advocate of non-violence, the leader of a movement with the configuration of a mystic sect.¹⁴² This image, cleansed of all political contingencies, obviously leaves no room for any allusion to the Guard's radical antisemitism. The only critical remark he makes is consigned to a note referring to the post-Codreanu era when, under the leadership of Horia Sima, “Legionary terrorists committed numerous horrible crimes.”¹⁴³ Thus they have destroyed, notes Eliade, “the religious meaning of ‘sacrifice’ held by the Legionnaires executed under Carol, and irreparably discredited the Iron Guard, considered from then on as a terrorist and pro-Nazi movement.”¹⁴⁴

The murky chapter of his biography is constantly clouded by mystery, thereby avoiding moral judgement. The idea of guilt is

suggested merely as a mystical presumption, a “fatal” and as yet unclear “error.”¹⁴⁵

“The terror of history,” a crucial concept in Mircea Eliade's thinking, explains decisive events and personal “cataclysms.” The assassination of the historian Nicolae Iorga by the Legionnaires, as well as “Romania's unfortunate history” are interpreted in the same fateful way.¹⁴⁶ The forms of defense Eliade recommends to the Romanian spiritual elite in confronting “the terror of history” and in passing through periods of crisis are the “methods of camouflage” and “occultation”¹⁴⁷ and survival through religious experience and spiritual creation.¹⁴⁸ To Eliade, this is an intellectual credo as well as a strategy to avoid problems of conscience and “occult” moral responsibility. Here, too, he followed the path chosen by Heidegger: total refusal to judge or criticize his own political involvements. The observation Karl Jaspers made about the philosopher of Freiburg also applies to Eliade:

He does not perceive the depth of his former error. That is why he does not experience a true transformation, but rather plays a game of projections and occultations.¹⁴⁹

Some recent studies about Eliade's work seek to discover, *inter alia*, the Romanian roots in his vision of the history and morphology of religions in the books he published in the West after the war.¹⁵⁰ Ivan Strenski has demonstrated the eminently “right-wing” character of Eliade's conception of myths. Eliade,

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 6, 15, 62.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 85, 96, 102.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁴⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Notizen zu Heidegger* (Munich, 1978), p. 218. Quoted by V. Farias, *Heidegger et le nazisme* (Paris, 1987), p. 290.

¹⁵⁰ On the continuity and evolution of Eliade's thinking, see: A. Marino, *La hermeneutique de Mircea Eliade* (Paris, 1981); I. Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History* (New York, 1987); R. Scagno, “Mircea Eliade e la cultura romena interbellica,” *Buletinul Bibliotecii Române* (Freiburg), XIV (1987-1988); R. Scagno, “L'ermeneutica creativa di Mircea Eliade e la cultura italiana,” in M. Mincu and R. Scagno (eds), *Mircea Eliade e Italia* (Milan, 1987); M. Linscott Ricketts, op. cit. (note 85).

declares the American researcher, "universalized" a hermeneutics of the myth and a religious view based on "nostalgia for the archaic, cosmic and telluric." It springs from Nae Ionescu's irrationalism and radical traditionalism and the Orthodox mysticism promoted by the Iron Guard:

His thinking about myth, in particular, is a species of this right-wing political thinking, though for some time now it has been given us in a universalized and least avowedly apolitical form. Both Eliade's religious vision and the political vision that influenced him share the same framework of a common human project, even if they render it in different "codes."¹⁵¹

Strenski quite rightly emphasizes the affinities of Romanian fascist ideologists with the representatives of the "young generation" guided by Nae Ionescu.¹⁵² The relationship between the movement and the young philosophers, including Mircea Eliade, are, however, seen in the light of an inevitably simplified determinism.

Actually, there was a two-way movement of ideas between the "autochthonist" intellectuals and the Iron Guard. The Orthodox spirituality and the right-wing sociopolitical ideas of Nae Ionescu and of Eliade were not produced by the Guard, but their absorption by a youth movement with a fascist and religious structure certainly made them more potent.

As to Eliade, the elements of his approach to interpreting religion, the myth and the sacred were, on the whole, formulated several years before without any relation to a concrete political context. From the very outset, his orientation was marked by the lectures on the philosophy of culture and religion given by his mentor, a right-wing ideologist who, up to 1933, had no links with the Legionary movement. It was part of the trends in European thought exploring the irrational, the myth and the sacred, which were perceived as "anti-positivist" sources of spiritual and artistic creation. In Romanian intellectual life, too, the radical

right-wing movements politicized those sources and discredited them for a long time to come.¹⁵³

Strenski's interpretation touches on the complex problem concerning the possibility of finding a direct link between philosophical discourse and adherence to a political movement, a question posed anew, and with great acuity, in recent years in judging the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and Nazi ideology.

As to the Romanian philosophers of the "young generation," certain patterns of their thinking were "rediscovered" in the Legionary spirit, but not borrowed from it. Legionarism highlighted them because of their political coherence and the possibility of transforming them into a nationwide spiritual revolution.

After a long eclipse, Constantin Noica (died in 1987), the most important postwar Romanian philosopher, also became the object of a cult similar to that formerly focused first on Nae Ionescu and then on Eliade. The formative effects on young thinkers were striking.¹⁵⁴ To Noica's disciples, the stamp of Heidegger is a sign of the depth and validity of his thinking. Others, though, point to persistently anachronistic patterns of reasoning and to a fanatical contestation of Western culture in Heidegger's spirit.¹⁵⁵

In his volume *Sentimentul românesc al finței* (The Romanian Feeling for Being), Noica set out from a semantic philosophical analysis of the Romanian language in order to establish an ethno-metaphysical system applied solely to the Romanian spirit. He and his work are the focus of the ongoing confrontation of ideas

¹⁵³ On Eliade's political involvement, see also: R. Ioanid, "Mircea Eliade și il fascism," *La critica sociologica*, 84 (1988); V. Eisekenasy, "Din nou despre o tinerete legionară: Mircea Eliade," *Minimum*, 20 (1988); S. Cain, "Mircea Eliade, the Iron Guard, and Romanian Anti-Semitism," *Midstream* 8 (Nov. 1989).

¹⁵⁴ Two books that resonated in Romanian cultural life confirm Noica's exceptional influence and the intellectual reactions to it: G. Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de la Păliniș* (Bucharest, 1983); *Epistolari*, published by G. Liiceanu (Bucharest, 1987). See also: S. Alexandrescu, "The challenge of power," *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4629, Jan. 19-25, 1990.

¹⁵⁵ Mariana Sora to Gabriel Liiceanu, in *Epistolari*, pp. 192-206; S. Damian, "Mersul pe nisip," *Dialog* (Ditzendorf), 3-4 (1988).

¹⁵¹ I. Strenski, op. cit., p. 10.
¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 97, 100-01.

in Romania concerning national identity, the place and specificity of Romanian culture, and the relationship between intellectuals and political power. A recent sociological analysis of Constantin Noica's "school of philosophy" also explains the current ambiguities produced by the unadmitted pro-Iron Guard political commitment:

Noica's refusal to speak openly about the determinants of his marginality (on purpose, one assumes), to clarify the degree of his commitment to Fascism and his eventual regrets, contributed to his protean quality and to the ambivalence with which he is regarded by a wide variety of people.¹⁵⁶

To his disciples, he made some elliptical, almost esoteric confessions about "errors" committed in his youth due to excessive bonds with "the ethos".¹⁵⁷ From the brief period of his political commitment he deduced a philosophy of not being directly involved in "contingency" and "history" and advised young people to adopt the model of Heidegger's thinking rather than Adorno's "commitment":

It has taken me a long time to understand what Julien Benda says in *La trahison des clercs*, something which revolted all of us when we were young: "C'est une trahison de practiser avec le siècle." ["It is treason to be in alliance with the century in which one lives."] But poor Julien Benda was right, because not everything that happens during the century is history. . . . I would ask your friend: why does he talk to me about Adorno and commitment—a commitment that can become ridiculous insignificance and contingency (fighting a dead Ottoman empire!)—how can he talk to me about Adorno, who pushes you into contingency, and set him against Heidegger, [who] by himself, has shifted history out of its place, saving the word from its degrading condition!¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ K. Verdery, "The 'School' of Philosopher Constantin Noica," (Johns Hopkins University, 1989). I consulted the manuscript and am quoting it, with thanks, with the consent of the author.

¹⁵⁷ G. Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de la Pălinis*, p. 84.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 202.

His own, negative experience as a young man, when he "foolishly" lost his independence, is offered as an example of the imprudence in setting foot in public life, which is "full of traps set by pure ethics."¹⁵⁹

Like Eugène Ionesco, Emil Cioran left the Romanian cultural venue and made a name for himself as a French moralist and philosopher. He did not discuss the Romanian chapter of his intellectual biography in detail but, unlike Eliade, he took the opportunity (in a conversation with François Bondy) of repudiating the Iron Guard and of denying that he had belonged to it:

The Iron Guard, to which, by the way, I did not belong, was a very strange phenomenon. Its leader, Codreanu, was actually a Slav, rather like a Ukrainian *hetman*. Most of the Guard's killers were uprooted Macedonians; the organization was above all an expression of Romania's periphery. One says about cancer that it is not one disease, but a complex of diseases; the Iron Guard was a complex of movements, and more of a lunatic sect than a party. They talked less about a *national awakening* than about the splendor of death. As a rule, the Romanians are skeptics, they don't expect much from their destiny. Therefore the Guard was generally disdained by intellectuals, but psychologically the situation was different. There was a kind of madness in this thoroughly fatalistic people. And the bored intellectuals with their diplomas of whom I have been speaking, who went to the dogs in the villages, naturally were glad to join. In a way, the Iron Guard was considered to be a remedy for all evil, including boredom, and even the clap.¹⁶⁰

In one of his essays on the Jewish spirit (*Un peuple de solitaire*), he tried to find a definition for an ethnic destiny for which there seems to be no explanation. The whole essay is "an exercise of admiration" for a people that defies divine and human logic. The subtle structure of this text also comprises a response to pages he wrote twenty years before and is a kind of *mea culpa*:

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 205–6.

¹⁶⁰ F. Bondy, *Gespreche mit . . . E. M. Cioran* (Vienna, 1972), p. 113.

And yet, have I always been just toward them? At the age of twenty I loved them so much that I regretted not belonging to them; some time later, unable to forgive them for having played a leading part in the course of time, I detested them with a rage of love-hate. The brilliance of their omnipresence increased my awareness of the obscurity of my country, which, I knew, was destined to be strangled and even to disappear whilst they, and I knew just as well, would survive everything, come what may. Moreover, at the time I only felt a bookish pity for their past sufferings and did not foresee those awaiting them.¹⁶¹

How can we explain this regrettable silence about these intellectuals' controversial pasts and political records? Perhaps we are mistaken to search for only one explanation. In the first years after World War II, an honest recognition of their links with the Iron Guard could have meant, in Western Europe or the United States, total exclusion from any literary or scientific career. In the following decades, having achieved significant literary celebrity and a new moral and intellectual profile in accordance with Western values and exigencies, they no longer found the intellectual courage for a complete and lucid confession regarding their pasts and their pro-Iron Guard orientation, including the antisemitic element.

In their case, however, this very human weakness did not remain without moral and intellectual consequences. This moral ambiguity also ultimately affected the credibility of their philosophy and outlook on life. And for the new generation of intellectuals this was compounded, for they view the sin of not confessing a past, compromising political involvement—whether to the right or to the left—as an even graver culpability than the involvement itself.

The "Founding Fathers" in the 1930s

As we have seen, for short periods after 1930 the principal ideologists of Romanian nationalism gained positions of political power. Now they were afforded the opportunity of translating their ideological stands into practical programs. The proponents of militant nationalism had become prestigious politicians—leaders of parties, government ministers or prime ministers. Their brief opportunities to shape practical politics were test cases for the nationalist doctrines they had advocated throughout their lives, as well as for the new balance of forces and new trends that had developed within the nationalist front.

The most prestigious of these men was Nicolae Iorga, who served as prime minister in 1931–1932. Until the end of his life, he exerted considerable influence on public opinion, even though he never had the backing of an important political party. Iorga remained loyal to the national idea and the traditional organic doctrine he had been supporting for several decades. The new currents gaining ground in Romania did not alter his belief and, despite a considerable decline in his popularity among young people, he preferred this to concessions that might undermine the foundations of his beliefs. Although not a supporter of Western-type democracy, Iorga rejected the principle of dictatorship and remained a categoric adversary of Nazism, which he opposed because of its totalitarian character and its "Lebensraum

¹⁶¹ E. Cioran, *La tentation d'exister* (Paris, 1965), p. 84.

heresy.¹¹ Until his last days, he described himself as a representative of "the old bourgeois morality,"¹² as a constructive nationalist and as an advocate of "organic" reforms in the spirit of tradition and of freedom of thought.

His political break with A. C. Cuza was final. Iorga fought Cuza in parliament for his antisemitic instigations and lumped him, along with Octavian Goga, among "the chieftains of the Hitlerite right" in Romania.¹³ His moderation and his refusal to make antisemitic statements became more evident in the early 1930s. After a trip to the United States in 1930, he noted in his memoirs and in newspaper articles the warmth with which Romanian-born Jews had welcomed him.¹⁴ Pleasantly surprised by the attachment of these Jews to their former homeland, Iorga readily acknowledged the contribution of Jews, "people like ourselves," to the development of the Romanian state.¹⁵ As prime minister he pursued a pragmatic policy of tolerance toward the minorities, including the Jews.

As an ideologist, however, he remained as xenophobic as ever. When the "Jewish question" again became acute and obsessive in Romania, Iorga found several opportunities to voice his ideas: at the summer courses he gave at Vălenii de Munte, in his paper *Neamul Românesc*, and at the congresses of The Cultural League, of which he served as president.

According to Iorga, the Jews had remained just as they were half a century before: the same, and "obviously too numerous," a foreign population. According to his estimate, there were one and a half million Jews, twice as many as the true figure.¹⁶ From the economic and social viewpoints, they continued to be parasites and graspers. To the Romanians, the Jews were "oppressors," "aliens," "intruders," "a complete economic state in the vital

organs of a stupidly hospitable historical society."¹⁷ Their "organizational activities for conquest" were once again historically demonstrated.¹⁸ Iorga made a qualitative distinction between the "Spanish" and "Galician" Jews, the latter considered of "Khazar" origin. All the innkeepers and leaseholders who had ruined the peasants were "Galicians."¹⁹

In his direct contacts with "the mass" of Jews in Romania, Iorga was just as xenophobic. When he came upon them in their close-knit groups in the towns of Moldavia or in the streets of Bucharest—especially when they appeared in the traditional religious dress of the Galicians—he was instinctively provoked to feelings of rejection and indignation.²⁰

Iorga also worried about the threat of increasing Jewish domination, as in recent years Jews had "infiltrated" fields that had formerly been the exclusive preserves of the Romanians:
 Even in the independent professions, even in education, in science, in literature, as lawyers, medical doctors, architects, as teachers, more and more of them, as philologists, philosophers, journalists and critics, they are simply kicking us out from our own country. For a long time now, with the exception of one or two cases, they have made no contribution and no restitution from their great wealth to our ever growing needs. Aware of their increasing power, they are throttling our churches, replacing us in the shops, occupying our places and, what is even more damaging, falsifying our souls and degrading our morals with the journalistic and literary opium delighting us.²¹

In order to confront this danger, Iorga proposed a constructive mobilization of the Romanians to reconquer through hard work and economic competition the social zones that were now dominated by Jewish elements:

We have to organize for the war of consciousness and labor. Let us unite where we still stand. Let us begin to reconquer by daily

¹ N. Iorga, "Marea conurperie a ideilor," *Neamul Românesc*, no. 61, 17 March 1940.

² "Declaratiile d-lui prof. N. Iorga către ziарul olandez *Telegraaf*," *Neamul Românesc*, no. 34, 16 Feb. 1938.

³ N. Iorga, *Memori* (Bucharest, 1939), vol. VII, p. 326.

⁴ N. Iorga, op. cit., vol. V, pp. 379, 381.

⁵ Quoted by W. Filderman, *Pro Domo Mea* (Bucharest, 1937), pp. 15, 20,

21.

⁶ N. Iorga, "Români și ne-români—români, minoritari și evrei" (II), *Neamul Românesc*, no. 213, 1 Oct. 1935.

⁷ N. Iorga, *Iudaica* (Bucharest, 1938), p. 12.

⁸ N. Iorga, "Români și ne-români . . ." (I), *Neamul Românesc*, no. 211, 24 Sept. 1935; *Iudaica*, pp. 12-17.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ N. Iorga, "O invazie de indezirabili," *Neamul Românesc*, no. 163, 30 July 1938.

¹¹ N. Iorga, *Iudaica*, pp. 17-18.

efforts and perfect understanding, by breaking off relations with those who want to replace us. Let us win back what we have lost. Let them be among themselves and for themselves; that's what they wanted. And we among ourselves; that's what we should want!¹²

Sometimes Iorga made brief, ambiguous references to the possible emigration of Jews—"voluntary," "sensibly organized"—in order to reduce the overcrowding in "the ghetto."¹³ In the speeches he made before the December 1937 elections, Iorga raised the tone of his attacks against "the oppressors" and again invoked the symbol and image of antisemitic propaganda: "The Romanian is no longer a human being. He is cattle, urged on by the whip of the Jew."¹⁴ Traditional antisemitic slogans, many of them taken from the editor's speeches, dominated the front pages of *Neamul Românesc* in 1938–1940. However, by then, his antisemitism, merely verbal and intermittent, had become anachronistic. Iorga remained consistent in rejecting Nazism as well as opposing the Iron Guard, which he fought unflinchingly in his writings through every available political means. In March 1932 he signed the decree banning the Iron Guard.¹⁵ He was disgusted with the assassinations organized by the Legion, by "the savagery" of "the student gangs."¹⁶ He ridiculed the mysticism and fanaticism of the movement and treated its leader with such contempt that he became the object of the Legion's "sacred" hatred. Nevertheless, before the conflict came to a head, the leaders of the Iron Guard continued to claim that they belonged to the nationalist school of the historian. In his memoirs, Codreanu numbered Iorga among the ideologists who inspired him with nationalism and awareness of "the threat of the yids"; Vasile Marin called Iorga "the authoritative teacher of us all."¹⁷

¹² Ibid., p. 19.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 9, 18.

¹⁴ "Magistratul discurs al d-lui prof. Nicolae Iorga," *Porunca Vremii*, no. 907, 2 Nov. 1937.

¹⁵ N. Iorga, *Memorii*, vol. VI, p. 358.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ V. Marin, *Creș de generație* (Bucharest, 1937), p. 84.

In December 1937, Iorga drew the attention of King Carol II to the alarming trend in Romanian political life: "I'm saying that under [the surface] of party politics what I hear throughout the country like a clatter of hoofs is the movement to the right."

"They are your sons," replied the king. "Bastards," Iorga corrected him.¹⁸

Two years later Codreanu was killed by order of the king. Then the "bastards" murdered "their father," who had repudiated them and refused to acknowledge their fanaticism as the fruit of "the seed" he had planted several decades before.

A. C. Cuza began his political career as an associate of Iorga and ended it as a partner of Octavian Goga. In 1935, his National Christian Defense League (L.A.N.C.) merged with Goga's National Agrarian Party to form the extreme right-wing National Christian Party. The two men were joined by Nichifor Crainic, who became the new party's vice-president. With its clear-cut pro-Nazi orientation, the National Christian Party was the only serious competition to the Iron Guard in its bid for German support. Both Cuza and Goga held talks with Hitler, and Alfred Rosenberg became the spiritual, political and financial patron of both.¹⁹

After 1930, Cuza continued his struggle for the promulgation of anti-Jewish laws with his characteristic consistency and singleness of mind. Although conditionally loyal to the parliamentary system, he became an early and radical advocate of an alliance with Hitler because the programs of both men included the elimination of Jews from Europe. Cuza was the first Romanian politician to praise Hitler in Romania's parliament, three years before the electoral victory of the National Socialist Party.²⁰

¹⁸ N. Iorga, *Memorii*, vol. VII, p. 437.

¹⁹ G. T. Pop, *Caracterul antinational și antipopular al activității Partidului Național Creștin* (Cluj, 1978), p. 89; P. A. Shapiro, "Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: The National Christian Party in Power, December 1937–February 1938," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 1 (Spring 1974), pp. 51–4, 69.

²⁰ "Problema jidănească și Adolf Hitler. Discurs din 12 Dec. 1930," in A. C. Cuza, *Îndrumări de politică externă. Discursuri parlamentare rostite în anii 1920–1936* (Bucharest, 1941).

In the Parliamentary session of December 10, 1931, Cuza made another, and at the time daring, declaration, to which he adhered to the end:

I will not hide from you. I will tell you that my entire sympathy goes out to Hitler's movement in Germany, which, I believe, will succeed, bringing about a great change in the relations between peoples, and will rebuild Aryan and Christian culture against the international domination of the *yids*. Yes! and I will say to you now that there exists the closest link and the most perfect solidarity between the program of L.A.N.C. and the program of Hitler's National Socialist Party.²¹

Hitler's rise to power increased the political credit of Cuza and sharpened the aggressiveness of his declaration. In keeping with the Nazi spirit, he organized para-military units of "Lancers," which sometimes clashed openly with the Legionary Guards.²² Romania's alliance with Nazi Germany was a Cuzist "dogma" because Germany was the only state that defended world civilization against "the Communist Marxist anarchy of the *yids*."²³ As for Nazi ideology, Cuza was interested only in its antisemitic ideas, from which he proudly deduced that he was a precursor of Hitler.²⁴

Although politically active at an advanced age, Cuza was no longer "creative" in developing his doctrine. He prefaced a new Romanian translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*²⁵ and reissued some of his earlier writings and pamphlets popularizing the L.A.N.C. program. The neo-nationalist, young intellectuals believed that the new realities had made Cuza obsolete and openly fought him politically. On the other hand, the constellation of political life toward the extreme right consolidated his prestige as a veteran militant against the "Jewish threat." The traditional cultural institutions began recognizing his

"contribution." In 1936, the Romanian Academy elected Cuza to its membership with the support of Iorga. Homage was also paid him by prestigious traditional cultural publications. In 1937, Cuza was feted throughout the country for his fifty years of political activity, with the highest Church, political and cultural bodies in attendance. "A. C. Cuza," declared Goga at a festive session, "has vanquished all. After fifty years, he has become our most topical thinker."²⁶

As a member of the government presided over by Goga, Cuza had the satisfaction of witnessing the institution of the first discriminatory decrees against the Jews in the history of Romania. He also led the Romanian delegation to the Frankfurt International Antisemitic Congress organized by the Nazis in March 1941 and was welcomed there by Alfred Rosenberg.²⁷ The dramatic changes that occurred after 1938 (the royal dictatorship, the "national Legionary" government, Antonescu's military dictatorship) did not cloud his aura. In every new government he was given some honorary function and was recognized as "the spiritual father of the present national state."²⁸

In 1934, Alfred Rosenberg and his assistant, Arno Schickendantz, stated in a report that the only political personality in Romania capable of leading a large-scale antisemitic movement was "the former minister and poet Octavian Goga."²⁹ However, despite several attempts, Goga did not succeed in organizing such a movement; nevertheless, his entire political activity (he had abandoned his literary career) confirmed the expectations of the Nazi leaders. His ambition to become a "Romanian *Führer*," also noted by Iorga,³⁰ increased German sympathy toward him.

In the 1937 elections, the party led by Goga received only 9.15 percent of the votes. Nevertheless, the king, who wanted to

²¹ A. C. Cuza, op. cit., p. 69.

²² N. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and Others* (Stanford, 1970), p. 289.

²³ A. C. Cuza, op. cit., p. 140.

²⁴ "Doctrina cuzistă și hitlerismul. Expozeul politic și apelul d-lui A. C. Cuza," *Cuvântul*, no. 2872, 25 April 1933; see also: A. C. Cuza, op. cit., p. 147.

²⁵ *Tainele Protocoalelor Înțelepăitor Sionului* (Bucharest, 1933).

²⁶ "Sărbătorirea prof. A. C. Cuza," *Curientul*, no. 3304, 13 April 1937.

²⁷ "București-Frankfurt," *Porunca Vremii*, no. 994, 6 April 1941.

²⁸ N. Crainic, "Cronica măruntă," *Gândirea*, 10 (1942); see also: "Un biruitor: A. C. Cuza," *Convorbiri literare*, 5-6 (1942).

²⁹ P. A. Shapiro, op. cit. (note 19), p. 54.

³⁰ N. Iorga, *Memorii*, vol. VII, p. 273.

great progress, called upon Goga to form the next government. Within the brief span of its existence, from December 27, 1937, to February 11, 1938, Goga's government, which included Cuza as minister without portfolio, passed the first general antisemitic laws.

"We have proclaimed the Jewish problem to be a problem of the state," declared the new prime minister. The entire gamut of nationalist demagogry was now reduced to anti-Jewish measures. Among the first were the banning of "Jewish" newspapers, the revision and withdrawal of citizenship from many Jews, and a program for the "Romanization" of enterprises.³¹ In his interviews to foreign journalists, Goga announced his intention of expelling the 500,000 Jews who had entered the country "fraudulently" after World War I. "These are purely local ideas," declared Goga, while denying any Nazi influence.³² When Jérôme and Jean Tharaud interviewed him in January 1938, Goga held forth on the successive waves of Jewish "invasions" that had flooded Romania, thus justifying the proposed expulsion. Replying to the "humanitarian" question as to what would happen to the people forced to leave Romania ("But what can one do with all those poor devils?"), the Romanian prime minister suggested the following possibility:

Well! . . . couldn't one send them somewhere . . . far away . . . to an island which they couldn't leave any more? . . . Warships of all the nations would cruise around it. . . . Madagascar, for instance. . . . As Hitler told me the other day when I visited him: "I am really sorry to have sent you our Jews, but I am really glad not to have them any longer myself."³³

In March 1938, only two months before his unexpected death, Goga had the honor of being invited to be present at Hitler's

³¹ "Manifestul guvernului către țără," and "Cuvântarea primului ministru la radio," *Universul*, no. 37, 7 Feb. 1938; see also J. Ancel (ed.), *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, 1986), vol. I, pp. 183–213.

³² E. L. Easterman, "500,000 Jews Must Go—Rumanian Premier Interviewed," *Daily Herald*, 8 Jan. 1938.

³³ Jérôme and Jean Tharaud, "M. Octavian Goga nous parle de sa politique antisémite," *Paris-Soir*, 10 Jan. 1938.

triumphant entry into Vienna, the city in which the young poet had admired the antisemitic speeches of Mayor Karl Lueger.

Corporatism and Antisemitism

Mihai Manoilescu, an economist and politician, was originally an advocate of neo-liberalism, then a convert to fascism and, finally, overtly pro-Nazi. With books published in France and Germany, Manoilescu was well known abroad as a Romanian sociologist.³⁴ A reputed "technocrat," he made a name for himself in politics, was elected to parliament in 1926, and advocated a policy of national protectionism.³⁵ After 1932, in the new political context, and influenced by the effects of the economic crisis in Romania, Manoilescu became an apologist of corporatism. In 1932, he founded the Nationalist Corporatist League, which did not score any significant successes. He was, however, a member of several governments.

"Integral and pure" corporatism, as theorized in detail by Manoilescu, was a universal doctrine of the society and state designed to replace the individualistic liberalism of the nineteenth century. Ethnically structured, corporatism was "a means of integrating all the spiritual, moral and material forces of the nation." It was "integral" because, in addition to economic corporations, it also included the nation's cultural and social corporations and "pure" because these corporations were the only legitimate basis of supreme public power and legislation. Italian Fascism was merely one specific form of corporatism.³⁶ Manoilescu's evolution toward support for Nazism and the Iron Guard was very rapid. His study *Secoul Corporatismului* (The Century of Corporatism) appeared in 1934. That year he delivered a lecture praising "the military spirit" of the young

³⁴ P. C. Schmitter, "Reflections on Mihai Manoilescu and the Political Consequences of Delayed-Dependent Development on the Periphery of Western Europe," in K. Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860–1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley, 1978).

³⁵ M. Manoilescu, *Théorie du protectionisme et de l'échange international* (Paris, 1929).

³⁶ M. Manoilescu, *Secoul corporatismului: Teoria corporatismului integral și pur* (Bucharest, 1934), pp. 6–11.

nationalist generation, proposing collaboration with it and advocating the achievement of a "synthesis": "The rationalist thinking that we contribute, we wish to combine with your power of understanding the primary and permanent realities of this people."³⁷

After only two years, Manoilescu discovered the "universal" value of *the single party*, to which he dedicated a volume published in 1936 in Paris, "a fundamental institution of the regime," a new sociological phenomenon typical of our century: "The biological necessity which orders every people to organize its life *in its entirety* implies the idea of *singularity* in the political body of supreme power."³⁸

His theory of the single party was based on the theses of Alfred Rosenberg and Carl Schmitt (*Deutsches Reich*) and also on quotations from Mussolini, Hitler, Goebbels and Salazar. The Legionary movement was given as an example of the single party, since it was led according to religious, ethnic and national principles, organized in the military spirit, and obeyed an elite and supreme leader.³⁹ Nevertheless, there was no full political identification with the Iron Guard. The Legionnaires had certain reservations about this "old-type" politician, of whose recent "conversion" they were not fully convinced.⁴⁰

In the review *Lumea Nouă* (The New World), edited by Manoilescu, and in his next volume, *Rostul și destinul burgheziei românești* (The Meaning and the Destiny of the Romanian Bourgeoisie), published in 1940, Manoilescu displayed a most radical renewal of his political language. Instead of economic theories, he expounded the foundations of the "new traditionalism" and return to "ancestral truths" concerning "hierarchy, union and love among brothers of the same blood and creed." The national revolutions in Italy and Germany heralded the end of bourgeois nationalism and the start of the era of "totalitarian nationalism." Explaining its inevitable and universal character,

Manoilescu again resorted to the arguments of Alfred Rosenberg (*Europe's Crisis and Rebirth*) and quotations from Hitler's speeches. It was in this spirit that he also indicted intellectuals: "the most unstable, most opportunistic and . . . spineless part of a nation."⁴¹ The amorality of intellectuals and the inferiority of their souls were due to the structure of bourgeois society. Their only chance of redemption was a fascist or National-Socialist type of regime, but that depended on the extent to which intellectuals would integrate with the new elite.

The new variant of Manoilescu's doctrine gave priority to economic nationalism, that is, the "Romanization" of the country's economy and industry by a systematic program carried out on "the external front" (against the economic interests of other countries) and "internal front" (against alien elements and "Jewish power").⁴² Jewish capitalists in Romania were explicitly identified with foreign capital:

whenever we speak of *foreign capital* we also mean *internal Jewish capital*, and by *Romanization* we also mean the transfer of an enterprise with foreign capital into the hands of Romanians and the almost identical transfer into Romanian hands of enterprise with Jewish capital; in other words, we shall make no difference between *the foreigners from abroad and the Jews at home*.⁴³

The "technique of Romanization" set forth by Manoilescu is seen only in the fight against "Jewish power" through the legal expropriation of Jewish industrialists and businessmen. Careful not to arouse the disapproval of the German Reich, Manoilescu emphasized that "the German people of Romania" were not among the allogeneous elements that had to be eliminated by Romanization:

We Romanians would display a lack of historical feeling and an

³⁷ *Tendințele tinerei generații: Două conferințe de Mircea Vulcănescu și Mihai Manoilescu* (Bucharest, 1934), p. 30.

³⁸ M. Manoilescu, *Le parti uniques* (Paris, 1936). p. xiii.

³⁹ P. C. Schmittier, op. cit., p. 131.

⁴⁰ A. Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael"* in "Rumänen. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation" (Munich, 1936), pp. 181–2.

⁴¹ M. Manoilescu, *Rostul și destinul burgheziei românești* (Bucharest, 1940), p. 245.

⁴² Ibid., p. 258.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 260.

incapacity to understand the permanent geopolitical facts if we were to seek and challenge the altogether particular rights the German community naturally has in this country.”⁴⁴

Writing in *Lumea nouă*, one of Manoilescu’s disciples, Christian Petrescu, paid special attention to antisemitism as “an ideal on the defensive” but an essential component of the corporatist doctrine. Unlike Nazi antisemitism, which was praised but still considered “too” racist, Romanian antisemitism was derived from the nationalist and “profoundly Christian” concept; it was directed more against the Jewish mentality and less against “the race.”⁴⁵

The two academics who were early adherents to the Legionary movement were the professor of philosophy Traian Brăileanu and the historian Ion Găvănescu. Brăileanu especially was a typical example of the intellectuals who were engaged in the sociological and historical justification of the Iron Guard’s radicalism and extreme antisemitism. Both men eventually became authorized representatives of the movement (Brăileanu was a minister in the “national Legionary” government of 1940). Both placed special emphasis on the need for strong measures against the Jews, as an absolutely necessary step before the ideals of Romanian nationalism could be fulfilled.

Traian Brăileanu was among the first in Romania to put forward a theory of races (“in the social meaning”) and elites, on the basis of which he demonstrated the impossibility of integrating Jews with other nations.⁴⁶ In 1928, Brăileanu had spoken of the need to establish a military monarchy; in 1930, having adjusted his sociological and political ideas, he pleaded for the model of a Legionary state. His review *Insemnări sociologice* (Sociological Notes) of 1935 was entirely dedicated to the support of the Legionary program. Contributors included Leon Topa, Vasile Bănciă and Barbu Slușanschi. Despite the “scientific” aspect of the articles, the language used by Brăileanu and his colleagues did not differ from that of the Legionary propaganda:

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 267.

⁴⁵ C. Petrescu, “Antisemitismul, un ideal în defensivă,” *Lumea nouă*, 5–6 (1940).

⁴⁶ T. Brăileanu, *Politica* (Czernovitz, 1928), pp. 99, 151–3.

the “Internationale of the *yids*,” the “Communist masonic hydra,” the “Jewish dictatorship” could only be fought by securing the victory of the Legion. The “practical” solution of the Jewish question depended on “the complete, biological and spiritual separation from the Jews.”⁴⁷ Later, as a minister in the “national Legionary” government (1940–1941), Brăileanu gave a lecture in which he advocated the consolidation of the Legionary elite.⁴⁸

Initially a nationalist influenced by Cuza and the Christian doctrine, the historian Găvănescu became a supporter of the Iron Guard from its inception. He then advocated Nazism, “which secures peace in the world by destroying Bolshevism and eliminating the Jews from the life of the peoples.”⁴⁹

A Contradictory Conversion: Panait Istrati

Panait Istrati, the author of novels and short stories featuring Danube outlaws and the picturesque, multinational ambience of Romanian ports, had been famous throughout Europe since 1924. Launched into French literature by Romain Rolland as “a Gorky of the Balkans,” he was a passionate left-wing journalist who wrote for papers printed in Romania and France, but always maintained the stance of an independent fighter, unaffiliated with any political movement.⁵⁰

Profoundly disillusioned by a visit he paid to the Soviet Union, he made a resounding statement (*Vers l’autre flamme*, 1929) denouncing the corruption and abuses of the Stalinist regime. This earned him violent attacks from all the left-wing papers in Europe. Up to that time, Istrati had been the favorite target of the extreme right in Romania because of his political views and

⁴⁷ T. Brăileanu, *Sociologia și Artă politică* (Czernovitz, 1937). See also L. Topa, “Judaism și nationalism,” *Insemnări sociologice*, 4 (1935).

⁴⁸ T. Brăileanu, “Problema elitelor în statul național legionar,” *Universul*, 11 Jan., 1941. On Brăileanu’s nationalism see: A. Mihu, “Problematica națiunii române în sociologia interbelică,” in S. Ștefănescu (ed.) *Națiunea română* (Bucharest, 1984).

⁴⁹ I. Găvănescu, *Imperativul momentului istoric* (Jassy, 1928); and *De la Kant la Hitler: Spire pacea lumii* (Bucharest, 1942).

⁵⁰ On Panait Istrati see: M. Iorgulescu, *Spre alt Istrati* (Bucharest, 1986); *Cahiers Panait Istrati*. Revue annuelle éditée par l’Association des Amis de Panait Istrati.

particularly because of his remarkable and unusually courageous condemnation of antisemitic manifestations. He had altogether special relations with the Jewish world: friends who left their marks on his life and work and a preference to describe Jewish characters and settings with great sympathy and solidarity. For this he was branded as an author who "had sold himself to the *yids*." Touching declarations of affection for Jews were frequent throughout his agitated life.⁵¹

Having "reneged" on Communism, Istrati was completely isolated after 1930. In his political impasse, he was attacked from opposite directions. Eventually, his anti-Communism, voiced in his singularly passionate style, aroused the interest of the right-wing press, and in the last year of his life (1935) he found himself in the incredible role of a leading contributor to the *Cruciada Românmului* (The Crusade of Romanianism). Like the movement of the same name, this publication was directed by Mihai Stellescu, a former deputy of Corneliu Codreanu, from whom he had parted in 1933 to establish his own, dissident nationalist movement. Nevertheless, in his last role as a journalist, Panait Istrati continued to maintain his independent stance.

While exposing "red fascism" and "Communist banditry," Istrati never ceased to express his opposition to antisemitism. He ridiculed "antisemitic and antiforeign" Romanianism and "our barbaric, idiotic tricolored chauvinism."⁵² However, his polemic with left-wing Jewish writers in France and Romania became an ambiguous anti-intellectual diatribe. In the heat of the clash, Istrati eventually employed the current vocabulary of the extreme right, including its antisemitic clichés:

Those intellectuals are almost always journalists. And among them there are always and everywhere plenty of Jews. Moreover, those Jews are evil people, criminals. They exasperate the native born. They propagate and justify antisemitism.⁵³

⁵¹ S. Schaffermann, "Ebrei în viața și opera lui Panait Istrati," *Shevet România*, 2 (1977); D. Seidmann, *L'existence juive dans l'œuvre de Panait Istrati* (Paris, 1984).

⁵² Panait Istrati, *Cruciada mea sau a noastră* (Bucharest, 1936), p. 94. See also: "La Croisade du Roumanisme: Ecrits politiques 1934-1935," *Cahiers Panait Istrati*, 6 (1989).

⁵³ Ibid., p. 96.

Unlike the Jews of Switzerland, observed Istrati in another article, the Jews of Romania were ferocious occupants of Romanian souls that had been born putrid; allies of all institutional demagogues, democrats who, for a pottage of lentils or the golden calf, had shut their eyes and renounced the desperate struggle of the citizens' most sacred rights.⁵⁴

But in the same articles in which he denounced "the Jewish-democratic press" and the "infamy of the Jewish national trusts," Istrati declared his sympathy for "all oppressed Jews" and repudiated antisemitism: "I can be an ardent anti-Communist, because I know why. But I cannot be an antisemite, because I don't know why I should be."⁵⁵

The ease with which Panait Istrati, whose very character was alien to any idea of ethnic discrimination, could also be infected by the language of the antisemites, strikingly illustrates the Romanian intellectual atmosphere of those years.

From Pacifism to Nazism: A Case Study

The atmosphere of violent antisemitism that was predominant after 1935 saw the astonishing entry of Ion Alexandru Brătescu-Voinești, a writer of the old generation whose works were "classics" of Romanian prose, into extremist journalism. His case was typical in that it illustrated the evolution of the sublimation of the antisemitic aspect of Romanian nationalism within the brief span of a few years.

Born in 1868, Brătescu-Voinești belonged to the immediate post-Eminescu generation and was involved in the development of Romanian culture for half a century (he died in 1946). A recognized prose writer and a member of the Academy, he published short stories featuring provincial life and intellectuals unable to adjust to their mediocre, sordid environment. Linked to conservative intellectual and political circles, Brătescu-Voinești

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 99, 105.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 96, 106.

did not make any unusual public statements, apart from a series of pacifist articles, later published in book form in 1919. He was the embodiment of traditional Romanian common sense and wisdom. Yet within a few short years Brătescu-Voinești covered all the stages of Romanian antisemitism, from its "popular" and traditional variant to radical political and ideological antisemitism. A self-declared descendant of Eminescu's nationalism and an unreserved admirer of A. C. Cuza, Brătescu-Voinești proudly assumed the epithet "hooligan," praised Nazism and stood by Antonescu during the war, supporting racist legislation and the deportation of Jews.⁵⁶

A clash with the democratic press, brarded as "Jewish," provoked him to take sides in the daily *Universul* in April 1937. Brătescu-Voinești's contributions became weekly features banner-headlined "Hooliganism?" (Hooliganism?). They also appeared in other publications and were collected in the volumes *Hooliganism* (1938), *Strigătă de alarmă în chestia evreiască* (Alarm Signals in the Jewish Question, 1940) and *Germanofobia* (Germanyophobia, 1940). Many antisemitic articles at least as violent as those in these volumes were not printed in books as a result of political considerations but were further evidence of Brătescu-Voinești's positions.

Brătescu-Voinești justified his descent from "the ivory tower" by extolling his sharp awareness of the impending danger. He was "convinced that not only the Romanian people, but the whole of mankind, is facing a great threat": the Jewish nation was determined "to conquer the world by violence."⁵⁷

In his collection of arguments purporting to demonstrate the gravity of the threat to the Romanians and other peoples, Brătescu-Voinești succeeded in gathering all stereotypes, old and new, in the form of a "popular," glib and didactic Cuzism that could be understood by one and all. Like his idol Cuza (who symbolized "our nation's instinct of conservation"⁵⁸), Brătescu-Voinești began by discussing the parasitic and sterile character

and their principal aim: world conquest and the enslavement of all peoples, as exemplified by Russia, which had become "a colony of Israel."⁵⁹ The Jewish character was explained with an analogy to the life of parasitic insects. A historical survey spotlighted Jewish cunning, exploitation and destruction. The instruments employed by the Jews in their quest to subjugate others included Freemasonry, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, and secret rabbinical plots. In Romania, Jewish domination was an accomplished fact. This was the cause of Eminescu's tragic life.⁶⁰ Nazism, explained in the same popular way, was admired for the sole reason that it had initiated "the country's disinfection" of Jews, "an act of heroism deserving every respect and the greatest admiration," and proving that "a people can live without Jews and live a better life without them."⁶¹

Brătescu-Voinești defined himself politically as "a man of the right,"⁶² opposed to democracy, "a term which has no real meaning."⁶³ In their search for respectability, the established ideologists of the right obviously welcomed the unexpected comradeship of Brătescu-Voinești to their ranks. Nichifor Crainic was especially enthusiastic about the writer's evolution "from pacifism to hooliganism."⁶⁴

The "Judaization" of Romanian Literature and the "Jewish Specific"

The penetration of Jews into Romanian culture posed a grave problem for the nationalist ideologists: the prospect of cultural and spiritual "Judaization." The threat of the perversion of the "Romanian soul" by contamination with the "Semitic microbe" had preoccupied the first doctrinaires of nationalism in the early twentieth century. At that time it was regarded as a possible

⁵⁶ I. A. Brătescu-Voinești, "Tot opinie de huligan," *Universul*, no. 257, 21 Sept. 1938.

⁵⁷ I. A. Brătescu-Voinești, *Hooliganism*, p. 229.

⁵⁸ I. A. Brătescu-Voinești, "Hitlerism," *Universul*, no. 156, 9 June 1937.

⁵⁹ I. A. Brătescu-Voinești, "Om de dreapta," *Universul*, no. 104, 15 April 1937.

⁶⁰ I. A. Brătescu-Voinești, "Democrație," *Universul*, no. 99, 10 April 1937.

⁶¹ N. Crainic, "De la pacifism la hooliganism," *Sfârmă Piatră*, no. 129, 1 July 1938.

⁵⁶ J. Ancel, op. cit. (note 31), vol. IV, pp. 491–5.

⁵⁷ I. A. Brătescu-Voinești, *Hooliganism* (Bucharest, 1938), p. 38.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

threat, as yet unsubstantiated by reality. However, after World War I, and particularly in the 1930s, the Jewish presence in the press and in general cultural activities was extremely visible and many Jews became prominent in these fields.⁶⁵ The challenge to their presence from the ultranationalistic camp went hand in hand with negating the legitimacy of their prominence in Romanian culture and demonstrating their adverse influence. By way of examples, Goga lectured at the Academy about the Judaization of Romanian literature.⁶⁶ In his publications, Iorga endorsed campaigns against "pornographic" literature of "Jewish" or "pro-Jewish" origin.

The detailed and "scientific" study of the "Judaization" of Romanian literature was undertaken by ideologists who did not enjoy any great prestige in Romanian literary life. The greatest specialists in the field were Nicolae Roșu and Nicolae Davidescu. Both made large incursions into cultural history in order to demonstrate the change in modern culture due to Semitic influence before eventually discussing the "Jewish specific" in Romanian literature. Roșu analyzed the work of all Jewish writers in Romania who bore "the mark of Semitism."⁶⁷ Romania's literary life was seen as a clash between Jewish modernism and the indigenous tradition, a battle that would be won thanks to "the vigorous ethnic reaction" promoted by the writers gathered around *Gândirea*.⁶⁸

According to the poet Radu Gyr, avant-garde literature was evolving entirely under the aegis of the Jewish spirit.⁶⁹ In general, modernism confirmed that cultural "Judaization" had reached an advanced stage; that the Jewish spirit had penetrated the very substance of native Romanian writers. Roșu discovered this metamorphosis in the studies of Eugen Lovinescu and in the work of the great poet Tudor Arghezi.⁷⁰ Davidescu viewed

"E. Luca, "Contribuția evreilor la dezvoltarea literaturii române," *Shevet România*, 1-3 (1978); A. Mirodan, *Dicționar neconvențional al scriitorilor evrei de limbă română* (Tel Aviv, 1986).

⁶⁵ N. Iorga, *Memorii*, vol. VII, p. 414.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 205.

⁶⁷ N. Roșu, *Orientări în viață* (Bucharest, 1937), chapters entitled: "Sub pecetea semitismului" and "Inaderența evreilor la spiritul românesc."

⁶⁸ R. Gyr, "Curentele de avangardă," *Convorbiri literare*, 3 (1940).

⁶⁹ N. Roșu, op. cit., pp. 209-11.

Arghezi as "a Jewish literary embodiment of Romanian origin,"⁷¹ the priest Gala Galaction, an important prose writer, "through his own tendency, by his proclaimed ideology and action, [was] actually a Jewish rabbi."⁷²

This is how Davidescu summed up the disastrous effects of Jewish influence on the Romanian "spirit":

Jewish interests are slipped into our minds under the pretext of being Romanian; an alien way of thinking and feeling is substituted as our own; we are faced by interdictions alien to the national interest, to the diametrically opposed interests of Romanianism; and virtually monstrous attitudes contrary to those we should have are forced upon us.⁷³

The natural conclusion was the need to eliminate Jews from Romanian culture: "we believe they should be forbidden to use the Romanian language in writing, both in the press and in literature."⁷⁴

The penetration of negative stereotypes into the definition of the "Jewish face" in the writings of those who were ostensibly champions of modernism and supporters of a non-xenophobic concept of the national specific was especially interesting. Their outstanding representatives were Eugen Lovinescu and George Călinescu, the most important Romanian literary critics between the two world wars.

From 1919 onward most of the Jewish writers had gathered around Lovinescu. It would be difficult to imagine how they could have made any headway in Romanian literary life without Lovinescu's support and authoritative interpretations. It was he who "launched" them as Romanian writers. In his *Memoirs*, Lovinescu dedicated a chapter (in volume II, published in 1932) to descriptions of the Jewish writers he had known. He began with the discovery of certain "elements of Jewish psychology" shared by all and of those that separated them from others. Quite

⁷¹ N. Davidescu, *Primeră judecăță* (Bucharest, 1939), p. 71.

⁷² Ibid., p. 71.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 82.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

often the distinctive notes observed by Lovinescu were similar to those found in the repertoire of the men who specialized in the exposure of the "Jewish spirit":

however, the true Semitic spirit manifests itself by revolutionism, avantgardism, absence of discipline, and egalitarianism. The absence of a spirit of authority and the resulting spirit of negation are the most evident features of Jewish psychology, which have become essential characteristics of our journalism, a considerable part of which has a Jewish structure.⁷⁵

Other characteristic traits ("a hypertrophied feeling of moral independence, of personal dignity, replete with suspected traps set for their personal integrity") were explained by a "millenary existence of oppression, persecution, and humiliation in the midst of other nations."⁷⁶

Lovinescu did not use these "ethnic traits," deduced from the writings of his colleagues or their psychology, as an indictment; he accepted them in the esthetic perspective as marks of a literature "Romanian in its expression, but Jewish in the coloring of its soul." The critic recorded it as such and believed its existence was justified.⁷⁷

It is interesting to note that Lovinescu admitted to having been influenced in his youth by xenophobic nationalism and the heritage of a "latent hostility" toward Jews, but eventually his nationalism eschewed all "racial exclusivism."⁷⁸ At a time when the antisemitic trend gained momentum in intellectual circles, the "nationalist" Lovinescu was fully entitled to pride himself as representing the opposite drift:

My liberalism has pushed the absence of racial prejudice in artistic matters so far as to enable all those who were not prized by us to accuse us of being of pro-Semitic or Masonic association. This is, perhaps, the first time that a critic, who is

an independent and a nationalist in all his actions, has placed his authority at the service of Jewish writers whenever it seemed to him that he was thereby serving Romanian literature.⁷⁹

In his *Memoirs*, the portraits of Jewish writers were constructed as particular manifestations of unchangeable traits of the "race." The insisted reference to them sometimes contained an "antisemitic" connotation; it may have been unintentional but obviously was "a reflex" in the characterization of Jewish intellectuals. The exceptions recorded by Lovinescu confirmed "the rule." The timid and delicate poet Ilarie Voronca was described as being in "flagrant contradiction with the soul of the familiar Jewish journalist—indiscreet, arrogant, confidence-seeking, who wants to violently enter one's mind from the first moment."⁸⁰ As this chapter of his memoirs aroused some controversy, Lovinescu reproached his Jewish reviewers for displaying "that intolerant solidarity of the race."⁸¹

Taking the same esthetic perspective, but with more emphasis on ethnic and "racial" aspects in literature, Călinescu included Jewish writers in his monumental history of Romanian literature. It was written in the 1930s but was published in 1941. More so than Lovinescu's critical studies, Călinescu's portraits of Jewish writers were illustrations of the "Jewish specific" derived from an examination of their work but related to a stereotype of traits that determined the author's perspective in his writing and psychology.

For instance, Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a highly important personality in Romanian criticism, was seen by Călinescu as combining in his activity "the gifts and flaws of the Jew"; "an instigator, with a subversive spirit, standing above the limited ideals of one nation," he, "like many Jews," was "incapable of contemplating ideas."⁸² "Like almost all Jewish writers," Felix Aderca was "obsessed with humanitarianism, pacifism and all the other

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 295.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 313.

⁷⁷ E. Lovinescu, "Antisemitismul meu," *Adam*, 50 (1932).

⁷⁸ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent* (Bucharest, 1941), p. 484.

⁷⁹ E. Lovinescu, *Scrieri*, vol. II (Bucharest, 1970), p. 294.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 292.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 294.

aspects of internationalism." His novels would justify a general conclusion about "the antinational fanaticism of the Jews (who are Jewish nationalists)" as the source of antagonism between Jews and Romanians: "They [the Jewish writers] have the attitude of a nomadic people, who regard all other peoples with indifference and contempt."⁸³

The hero of Sebastian's novel *For Two Thousand Years*, when faced with antisemitic manifestations, noted Călinescu, "illust[ates] the exaggerated sensitivity of the Jew, his pleasure in feeling himself a victim, his congenital incapacity to conceive of a struggle with all its risks."⁸⁴ Călinescu was engaged in a permanent dispute with the "irreducible" mentality of Jewish writers. He offered his criticism, however, within the framework of a dialogue, actually implying that a certain specific of the literature written by Jews had the right to exist and was not unacceptable in national literature. Some of his "antisemitic" assertions seem to serve as a compensation for the critic's temerity in allotting so much space to Jewish writers found to be in fundamental synthesis, at a time when the Romanian state was applying the harshest measures of anti-Jewish repression.

In the final chapter of his work, dealing with the national specific, Călinescu voiced a view that was opposed to the Romanianism and ethnicism of *Gândirea*'s program. Ethnic traits, "the intimate fibers of the native soul," were deduced *a posteriori* from the work of the artists, specificity being an indication of every ethnic Romanian. A small admixture of foreign elements in national creation was nevertheless welcome: "an alien can enrich our soul." This included the contribution of the Jews, but with the proviso of their "flaws."

Present in all literatures, including our own, in a natural proportion, the Jews remain a factor outside the racial circle, being a bridge and a link between the national and the universal. A fair mind, which does not confound political problems with the ideal world of creativity, cannot but acknowledge their contribution. . . . In literature they are always well-informed, peddlers of the latest novelties, anti-

⁸³ Ibid., p. 708.
⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 877.

classicist, modernist, excited by problems. They compensate for the inertia of tradition and cause it to be reexamined. Their sincere humanitarianism modifies a spirit of conservatism which can degenerate into dullness, giving it the direction of a Christian overview. These qualities are linked to their typical irritating flaws: total indifference to creation as an aim, exaggerated "existentialism," the negation of criticism (which we, a constructive race, need), a humanitarianism going so far as to negate our national rights and traits. Because of this tactlessness, in our country, as elsewhere else, the Jews periodically become the target of all thunderbolts.⁸⁵

Călinescu, too, became such a target. The right-wing press attacked his *History* with a violence that was unprecedented in Romanian cultural life. The inquisitorial aggressiveness was provoked, above all, by the inclusion of Jewish writers in Călinescu's work.

Literary Stereotypes—Old and New

In the introduction to the interview carried out by the Tharauds with Prime Minister Goga (see above), the interviewers regretted that the antisemitism of the journalist and politician had not "woken" the poet as well. The observation can be extended to other writers who also maintained strong antisemitic views yet did not leave any trace of it in their literary work. On the other hand, Romanian literature did not lack a tradition of negative Jewish stereotypes. Vasile Alecsandri, one of the founders of modern Romanian literature, was a prominent example.

At the level of good literature, these stereotypes did not have a distinguished "career." They were found only in second-rate, tendentious books and in volumes recalling the peasant uprising of 1907.⁸⁶ The only serious writer who featured these clichés was the novelist Ionel Teodoreanu. He displayed a gallery of miserable human specimens of dubious character and behavior

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 888.
⁸⁶ I. BercoVICI, *Rumanian Topics. Cultural and Political Trends in Rumanian Jewry between 1918-1941* (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1975), p. 89; D. Litani, "Rumanian Literature," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. XIV, pp. 418-20.

alien to their environment in contrast to the bright and rich soul of native Romanian characters.⁸⁷

The explanation for the scarce cultivation of antisemitic literary subjects appears to reside in the internal evolution of Romanian literature. In creative activity, the period between the two world wars was one of the most productive and most highly varied. After the fulfillment of the national ideal (the union of all territories inhabited by Romanians), the literature concentrated on esthetic finalities. The ideological and national theses of the preceding stage were replaced by a literature that was now appreciated above all for its artistic value. Generally speaking, the projection of a negative image of Jews through literature was not thought of as compatible to esthetic exigency. The authoritative critics of those years would not have approved antisemitic tendentiousness.

On the other hand, the right-wing press of the period, particularly after 1930, produced an overabundance of antisemitic texts, cartoons and anecdotes, some of which even found their way into school manuals. These added up to a rich subculture with the sole aim of antisemitic propaganda. The most virulent newspaper was *Porunca Vremii*. Every issue carried antisemitic caricatures and quatrains on "eternal" themes or topical subjects. A long series, with poems by Radu Barda and drawings by Petre Lazar, was also published as a volume, entitled *Iuda*, in 1937. The caricatures were a collection of old stereotypes (Jewish exploiters of peasant labor, innkeepers, etc.) and more recent stock figures (the Jewish "democratic" and "Communist" journalist and the agent of Bolshevik Russia). The verses and illustrations were extremely violent. The Jew was represented as a dragon, monster, devil or spider. Some Romanians were often branded as "traitors" who had sold themselves to the "dragon." Sometimes they were named or pictured; for instance, the novelist Mihail Sadoveanu and democratic politicians. The hero resisting the monster took the shape of a Romanian peasant, of the "apostle" Iorga driving the Jewish merchants out of the temple, an archangel with the features of Codreanu, or the form of a huge, victorious swastika. Jokes and funny stories were

generally overshadowed by terrifying images and threatening suggestions about the forthcoming bloody "judgement."

The Iron Guard popularized "Legionary" songs and poems in which the antisemitic subjects appear in mystical, somber tonalities. Legionnaires were called to battle through the invocation of the demonic powers of an enemy that must be fought. One of the leitmotifs was the "Jewish invasion" of an idyllic fairy-tale country "of golden fields and enchanted sky." The invaders were "hordes alien to our laws and customs," hyenas of death," "an accursed nation," or "Jewish cohorts as famished as flocks of ravens."⁸⁸ The Jew (Judah) was frequently pictured as a dragon or a serpent sucking Romanian blood. In the anthem of the Archangel Michael League, the call to join the decisive battle went as follows:

The country calls on us, O Christian brothers,
To fight and free it from the many leeches,
Perversions that are sprawling in palaces,
The *yids* who're robbing us of our riches.⁸⁹

Only one writer of note, the novelist and playwright Victor Papilian, who was also a well-known medical scholar, produced literature on the subject of the Jewish threat. He did so in the pages of *Gândirea* and in the new spirit of antisemitism imparted to the review by its editor, Nichifor Crainic. Papilian replaced the traditional stereotype with the hyperbolic projection of a frenzied, fanatic Jew who designs to rule the world. Goldenfun Zanweil, a Jew in his novel *Ura* (Hated), dreams in a trance of a universal system blending the theories of Marx, Freud and Einstein and reveals that: "Our mission on earth is to destroy!" Obsessed by the crosses populating the cosmos, the hero streaks into outer space to gather and burn all crosses.⁹⁰

The young scholar in the short story "Aici, rîul ne judecă" (Here the River Judges Us) is another exalted mystic. The son of ⁸⁸ *Cinetei legionare* (Bucharest, 1937), p. 39; V. Militaru, "Ceasu cel mare," *Porunca Vremii*, no. 984, 8 Feb. 1938.
⁸⁹ "Imnul Legiunii Arhanghelului Mihail," reprinted in *Cărțicica de cîntec* (1951), p. 1.
⁹⁰ V. Papilian, "Ura," *Gândirea*, 2 (1935).

the innkeeper Itzhok on the banks of the Siret, he is a practitioner of the occult sciences. Mystic ecstasy and the words of the prophet Ezra reveal to him that Romania actually belongs to the Jews: "Yes father . . . we are the native-born inhabitants of this land . . . and of the entire land of the Danube, whose real name is Danubius. . . . Danubius comes from Dan, from the victorious tribe of Dan."⁹¹ Eventually the visionary pretender to the land of Romania is swallowed by the waters of the Siret, on whose bed stands a monastery.

In another fantastic short story, "Risul" (Laughter), the miraculous birth of a new human species, "the beings of peace," on the banks of the Ganges, is prevented by the Jewish Communist Fainsilber who murders the new couple that is being formed from clay. The story is an obvious parable on the "new man" of the Legionary fascist type who stands in conflict with his mortal enemy—the Jew.⁹²

The 'Romanization' of Intellectual Life and Symptoms of "Benign" Antisemitism

By 1937, even before the government led by Octavian Goga came to power, excluding Jewish intellectuals from professional associations had become a general process. This was followed by measures to prevent qualified Jews from entering any of the "free" professions.

Two years before, the Bar Association of Bucharest had undergone "Romanization"; indeed, lawyers were heading the struggle for the Romanization of the professions in general.⁹³ The provisions of the law, constitutional guarantees, as well as the opposition of numerous magistrates, were all unable to halt the nationalist enthusiasm of the militants led by Istrate Micescu, a future minister of the Interior. The formula adopted by the Union of Lawyers of Romania became the model that was copied by other associations: the law was replaced by "heroic decisions."⁹⁴

The Romanian Federation of Intellectual Professionals (law-

⁹¹ V. Papilian, "Aci, riu ne judecă," *Gândirea*, 3 (1939).

⁹² V. Papilian, *Vecinul* (Bucharest, 1938).

⁹³ M. Coulon, *Des graves événements dans le Barreau roumain* (Paris, 1937).

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

yers, engineers, physicians, architects, teachers and artists) met in congress on May 16, 1937. It adopted a motion excluding Jews from its associations, withdrawing their rights to the free exercise of their professions and demanding a revision of the definition of citizenship. Mihai Manoilescu was one of the outstanding participants at the congress.⁹⁵ With few exceptions, Jews were no longer admitted to institutions of higher learning after 1937.

The process of "Romanization" continued after the demise of the Goga-Cuza government; during the Antonescu dictatorship, it became harsher and more extensive.⁹⁶ These measures were in keeping with the orientations of the extreme nationalist ideologists and enjoyed their support. However, what was the reaction of the leading intellectuals who did not belong to that current? Many of them appeared to be "anesthetized" and even to have found an accommodation with the new reality and state of mind that had now become dominant. This phenomenon became so obvious that "established" nationalists were ironically drawing attention to the "inflation" of late-arrival nationalists.⁹⁷

Sometimes adjustments to the new situation were also manifest in public declarations that betrayed a certain conformist haste. A typical example was furnished by the poet and playwright Victor Eftimiu, a reputed and successful writer who was president of the Romanian P.E.N. Club. "We are witnessing a revolutionary time," exclaimed Eftimiu after the first political declarations of Prime Minister Goga and alluded to his preference for an eventual "totalitarian xenophobic" government that would also include Corneliu Codreanu and Alexandru Vaida-Voevod:

A government of the entire allied right would really mean the regime that is expected by a great part of Romanian public opinion because Mr. A. C. Cuza's unflinching and exclusivist antisemitism would have been joined by the Iron Guard's⁹⁸

⁹⁵ "Lupta pentru romanizarea României: Confederația asociațiilor de profesioniști intelectuali din România," *Frontul*, 18 May 1937. See also: *Buna Vestire*, 14 May 1937; *Tara*, 16 May 1937; *Ordinea*, 18 May 1937; *Neamul Românesc*, 18 May and 20 May 1937; *Tara noastră*, 19 May 1937.

⁹⁶ J. Ancel, op. cit. (note 31), vol. I, pp. 437-54, 499-504; vol. II, pp. 9-11; vol. III, pp. 76-7, 129.

⁹⁷ R. Gyr, "Atenție la marșul saltimbancilor," *Porunca Vremii*, 19 May 1937.

youthful concern for social justice and Mr. Al. Vaida-Voevod's *bonhomie*.⁹⁸

Until then an adversary of antisemitism, Victor Eftimiu suddenly discovered that the Romanians of Moldavia were "overwhelmed by the invasion of Galician Jews" and that several regions of Romania had been "invaded by men with sidecurls." The idea of "collaboration" with the Iron Guard stimulated him to adopt fully the Guard's vocabulary: the Jews were "grasping"; the bread and milk of the children of peasants and workers was being taken away by "the yids." In the spirit and language of the Legion, the former democrat demanded punishment of the "stoolpigeons":

And speaking of the fire and sword, let us also throw into the fire the rotten stuff that has become the tool of foreigners, and not only the foreigner who has no reason to love a country that does not belong to him.⁹⁹

Observers of Romanian political and intellectual life after World War I noted a powerful democratic and antifascist current represented by prestigious men, particularly in journalism, cultural life and the universities. Although not quite as consistent, there were frequent public statements against antisemitism.¹⁰⁰ For this reason several Jewish writers, like Sebastian and Emil Dorian, recorded with stupefaction in their diaries of 1936–1939, and later during World War II, the ambiguous passivity of their colleagues with regard to anti-Jewish measures and the at best feeble manifestations of open solidarity with persecuted Jewish intellectuals. During friendly conversations they noted with consternation the shocking antisemitic outbursts of several intellectuals well known for their anti-xenophobic attitudes. For Sebastian, the most striking

⁹⁸ V. Eftimiu, "Momentul politic: De la partidele democratice la legionari," *Tempo*, 22 Jan. 1938.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ A rich collection of antifascist articles appears in G. Ivașcu and A. Tănăsescu (eds.), *Cumpăna cuvințului* (Bucharest, 1977), and I. Ardeleanu (ed.), *Cuvântul liber* (Bucharest, 1982).

were the reactions of his friend Camil Petrescu, one of the most important Romanian writers of the interwar period. His surprising remarks became more numerous in 1936 and subsequently, providing a strong contrast to the public attitude of the writer who had maintained a reputation of consistent rejection of extreme nationalism.¹⁰¹

Similar reactions of either justification of anti-Jewish decrees or their placid acceptance were recorded by both Sebastian and Dorian at the time of the Goga-Cuza government. Their number increased during the period of Antonescu's dictatorship. Dorian was especially intrigued by the fact that his Romanian friends did not seem to perceive the grave moral prejudice produced by the discriminatory measures applied to the Jews. After the adoption of the Nazi-inspired law on "the juridical status of Jews" on

August 8, 1940, Dorian noted:

Many Gentiles do not understand the feeling of human degradation the Jew experiences now that he is a pariah in Romanian society. They view this reaction as parading a sensitivity entirely out of place today. What you are still permitted to do is important; not what is forbidden. Lovinescu tells me that the new law is "liberal and equitable." Right from the shoulder and without a trace of embarrassment.¹⁰²

Such reactions were often accompanied by friendly manifestations of assistance or compassion signifying a clear distinction between continued decency and a careful adjustment of one's belief to a new reality. Antonescu's dictatorial regime increased the degree of intellectual duplicity and brought it into the open. Having accepted important cultural or political functions, intellectuals with a democratic tradition who had so far been proud of their "pro-Jewish" reputation now found themselves in a situation in which they had to sign decrees excluding Jews from Romanian cultural life and to supervise and police their strict application.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Mihail Sebastian's Diary, 25 June 1936. See above, chapter 2, note 90.

¹⁰² E. Dorian, *The Quality of Witness* (Philadelphia, 1982), p. 112.

¹⁰³ L. Volovici, "Romanian Intellectuals—Jewish Intellectuals during the Dictatorship of Antonescu," *Romanian Jewish Studies*, 1 (Spring 1987).

This development (which is beyond the time period covered by this study) was due to Antonescu's policy of drawing intellectuals to his side. Even men not attached to the dictator's political orientation responded positively, particularly because Antonescu had so firmly rid himself of his Legionary allies and had excluded them from sharing in his power. While accepting the dictator's overall policy, these intellectuals also participated in, or tacitly approved, the severe anti-Jewish measures, even though the measures contradicted their former democratic beliefs.

5

Conclusions

Tradition and Renewal

In 1938 *Vremea* printed a long article entitled *Dogmatica antisemismului român* (The ideology of Romanian Antisemitism). It was the first in a series dealing with the history of antisemitism in Romania. The following is from the introduction:

Romanian antisemitism is 100 years old. To fight the Jew means to be on the right road of the Romanian people's normal development. Antisemitism has warmed the soul of Romania's intellectual elite. Antisemitism is the most vital problem of Romanian prosperity. . . . We have said that there is no important Romanian, no creative scholar in Romanian culture who has not taken part in and not felt the need for the struggle against the Jew. Our greatest poet is Eminescu. He embodies the loftiest thinking, he is the finest poet, and outstanding political ideologist, the perfect journalist. And Eminescu was an antisemite. Before him we had Alecsandri, a poet of the most perfect form, who also was an antisemite. Although Romanian culture has produced a wide range of lawyers, it did not create prestigious jurists. We have only one, Simion Bărnuțiu. Antisemitism was the basis of his juridical concept. In economics there is only one brilliant ideologist . . . Ion Ghica. His theory is based on antisemitism. In philosophy we had several brilliant professors, but the only true philosopher is Vasile Conta. His thinking is at one with antisemitism. History has been the scientific field with the most numerous celebrated men. As a historian and nationalist, N. Iorga was an antisemite.

mite. To remove antisemitism from his concept would signify the destruction of his entire political science. Grigorescu was the greatest Romanian painter. Who surpassed him in portraying the *yid*? And B. Hasdeu was the scholar with the largest horizon, a many-sided creator, the author of innumerable books, a philosopher, historian, philologist, politician, journalist and, above all, a great Romanian. This great encyclopedist saw that our nation could only rise by cleansing itself of the Jewish element. . . . Can one possibly say that these intellectuals are unimportant and that their antisemitism did not exist? . . . This is a part of nationalism, and it is deeply rooted in the soul of all Romanian ideologists.¹

Barbu Theodorescu, the author of this essay, was a researcher in Nicolae Iorga's entourage, the scientific secretary and authorized bibliographer of the great historian. His summing up of the relationship between Romanian nationalism and antisemitism is relevant because it is typical and generally accepted. This is how the history of Romanian nationalism appeared in the traditional cultural milieu of the late 1930s. The same judgement can be found in very many other surveys and was also shared by foreign researchers who were interested in Romanian nationalism.² All interwar ideologists of antisemitism, ranging from the "moderates" to the extremists and "revolutionaries," invoked and tendentiously interpreted and distorted the *antisemitic tradition* of Romanian nationalism. The fact was noted—and criticized—by the adversaries of the "reactionary" nationalist current in Romanian culture.³

Both views are simplistic because they reduce a complex phenomenon, nationalism, to a single element. However, distortion is facilitated by an obvious and undeniable fact: the great weight of, and sometimes obsession with, the "Jewish question" and the "Jewish threat" in Romanian nationalist thinking and in the works of leading Romanian cultural personalities.

¹ B. Theodorescu, "Dogmatica antisemitanului român," *Vremea*, no. 566,

⁴ Dec. 1938.

² See, for example: H. Schuster, *Die Judenfrage in Rumänien* (Leipzig, 1939).

³ E. Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne* (Bucharest, 1925), vol. II: "Forțele reacționare."

After World War II, Romanian historiography took the opposite direction. Antisemitism became a disgrace, and every effort was made to "exonerate" the great personalities of the past, either by excising the texts or passages that could be called "antisemitic", or by reinterpreting them in the "Marxist" or "neo-Marxist" perspective, which made it possible to offer a social, class-based explanation for what so far had "appeared" to be a xenophobic or antisemitic attitude. At the center of these surveys or revisionisms is the poet Mihai Eminescu.

However these two attitudes are justified, there remains the difficult fact of the exceptional importance of *tradition* and the utilization of tradition in the development of antisemitic ideology in Romania.

The powerful and persistent association of the formation of Romanian national awareness in modern times with hostility toward the Jews as one of its inevitable components has, as we have seen, a historical explanation. The two decisive elements that crystallized into the national idea—the achievement of state independence in 1877 and the creation of Greater Romania by the unification of all the provinces inhabited by Romanians in 1918—were associated in the collective mind with an acute conflict with the Jewish population, which was unjustly identified as an adversary of these fundamental national ideals. In both situations, the granting of civil rights had not been an aim of the Romanian political agenda but a condition (and in Romanian eyes, blackmail) imposed from abroad, resulting from "foreign intervention" and "the plotting" of "occult" and "all-powerful" international Jewish organizations.

In both these decisive historical periods, the Jewish population comprised a high proportion of persons who had settled on Romanian territory relatively recently or, as after 1918, were obliged by the new national borders to live within the frontiers of the Romanian state. A great part of this population was alien with respect to religion, customs and appearance; moreover, they did not know the Romanian language.

In the case of the Romanians, the people's predisposition to xenophobia, usually more emphatic in patriarchal, rural popu-

lations, had been greatly accentuated by a long experience of invasion, a threat that was never far from their minds. "Because of the competition of alien groups . . . foreigners and aliens are repugnant to the Romanians," wrote the literary historian G. Călinescu.⁴ The Romanians' tolerant spirit, frequently mentioned by Romanian historians and politicians, and still used as a propaganda slogan, did also apply to the Jews. In the course of time, it manifested itself as an acceptance of a foreign community, even of a different religion, but not as mixing with it. Accepting foreigners as equals before the law was an idea that all social strata, including the intellectuals, found difficult to receive. Resistance to assimilation and to the acceptance of Jews on the part of the host society, concurred with the resistance of the Jews, motivated by religious or ethnic reasons, to the same.

The ideology of Romanian nationalism transformed the village, the only zone ethnically and culturally dominated by Romanian tradition, into the *hearth of its genesis*. The "foreign" culture of the towns was in contradistinction to the *authentic* rural culture and its exceptionally rich folklore. The nationalist ideologists resorted to folk creation and village values to substantiate their concept of the national specific. The national spirit became equated with the rural spirit. In a rural civilization the Jew came to represent the town, "foreign countries," and the modernization that brought with it drastic changes and dangers. Intermediaries between feudal landowners and peasants, money-lenders and industrialists, Jews appeared as prototypes of the exploiters, and even as the inventors of forms of exploitation. Antagonism to Jews, conceptualized in the language of modern antisemitism, entered the "genetic cell" of modern nationalism and influenced its evolution.

developed in historiography and all forms of culture and the arts, and transformed into a political and social doctrine, became the basis on which the Romanian public spirit and culture were developed.

"The spirit ruling Romanian thinking and action before the Great War," wrote the philosopher Rădulescu-Motru in 1935

undoubtedly was nationalism. It was in this spirit that the soldiers were educated who fought for the union of the nation; it was in this spirit that the schools and all our cultural personalities were working. The perfect and eternal order justified by [this spirit] was the juridical order of national sovereignty.⁵

The creators and banner bearers of this cultural ethnocentrism were historians, writers and poets, and they consolidated and increased their prestige by identifying with the national myth. They represented *tradition*, and felt called upon to shield it from the cultural effects of social renewal.

Identified with the national myth, the intellectuals, too, became the object of a cult, which also assumed the form of a myth.⁶ Its vigor derived from the important role played by scholars in the romantic period of the 1848 revolution and at the time of the creation of the sovereign Romanian state. It maintained its power in the twentieth century, becoming a feature of the Romanian mentality: the cult of the poet and scholar, an embodiment of patriotism and of the nation's creative genius.

To the extent that xenophobia, hostility to Jews or a theorized form of antisemitism became part of the nationalism of these spiritual guides of the nation, their influence was overwhelming in this respect as well. Every new extremist national movement claimed, rightly or wrongly, to descend from the great predecessors, who became "the precursors" of the new current. Any real possibility of using their texts or passages of their writing to

⁵ C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Românismul: Catehismul unei noi spiritualități* (Bucharest, 1936), p. 20.

⁶ A. Zub, "History and Myth in Romanian Society in the Modern Period," *International Journal of Romanian Studies*, 2 (1987).

The National Myth and the Myth of the Intellectual

Due to the historical and geopolitical circumstances outlined above, nationalism, shaped into a *national myth*, justified by and

⁴ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent* (Bucharest, 1941), p. 887.

justify a slogan, a political program or an antisemitic theory had enormous propagandistic and educational impact. The entire nationalist press, as well as ideological studies and other publications that appeared between the two world wars were full of quotations from Eminescu, Alecsandri, Hasdeu, Conta and Iorga, inserted in order to justify antisemitism and highlight the serious nature of the "Jewish threat." After 1937, these authoritative names were used in official texts to justify discriminatory laws. The anti-Jewish pronouncements of the above-mentioned personalities were quoted by government representatives. They shaped public opinion, and became part of the patriotic education that was inculcated in several generations of schoolchildren.

Another feature of the myth of the intellectual in the romantic period, which continued to maintain itself in the years under review, was the direct involvement of writers, poets and scholars in politics. The fact that a great poet like Goga or an internationally famous historian like Iorga became prime ministers, ministers of the Interior and party leaders astonished Western politicians. In Romania, however, this was considered a natural continuation of an accepted tradition. Even when their political attitudes and behavior were questionable, and sometimes also discredited their supporters, established intellectuals entered "professional" politics with an impressive "symbolical capital," which included the prestige of their work, as well as the reputation of their militant patriotism. Their impact on public opinion was considerable, no matter what their political efficiency.

None of the important nationalist doctrinaires was backed by a powerful party, and none of the historical parties wanted them as their ideologists. The Liberals, Conservatives and National Peasants were government parties interested in gaining power, not in the purity and radicalism of national political ideas. They preferred pragmatic programs and thus their antisemitism was also pragmatic and not unduly "noisy."

Although the above-mentioned spiritual guides did not enjoy political prestige equal to their intellectual value, their *educational influence* on the intellectual environment that produced political leaders was extremely decisive. The speeches of Ion Antonescu and vice-premier Mihai Antonescu, justifying their

chauvinistic policies and the struggle against the "Jewish element," demonstrate that these political and military leaders, too, were products of the "teachers" and "apostles" of Romanian nationalism. Intellectual antisemitism furnished the anti-Jewish discrimination and antagonism promoted by the politicians with ideological arguments.

Critical reaction to the negative effects of overemphasizing the national myth (chauvinist demagogy, the mystification of history, idolatry, the persistence of stereotypes, xenophobia, superiority complex) also has its roots in Romanian culture, but the fundamental coordinates of the myth were only partially modified by it in the public awareness. That particular line in Romanian intellectual evolution is illustrated by great personalities and distinguished by a *critical spirit*; however, going as it did "against the current," it was labelled unpatriotic, too rationalistic and ultimately rejected because it questioned the validity of the *myth*. "The myths of a nation," wrote Emil Cioran in 1935, "are its vital truths. They might not coincide with *the truth*; this is of no importance. The supreme sincerity of a nation toward itself manifests itself in the rejection of self-criticism, in vitalization through its own illusions. And, does a nation seek the truth? A nation seeks *power*."¹⁷

The concrete forms of the national myth changed from one stage to the next. Some of them were seriously discredited by political developments. This also happened in the decade under review. On the other hand, the magic power of the myth impeded the rethinking of its basic concepts. Its disastrous political consequences were attributed to certain politicians, to external factors, foreigners, the Jews, to "the terror of history" and fate. When a particular intellectual commitment derived from service to the myth became obviously discredited, the result was evasion, mystification, and smooth "readjustment" to the new shape of the national myth.

Tenets of Antisemitism

"In a country where everybody is nationalistic, nationalism does not set a movement apart either as extremist or as especially

¹⁷ E. Cioran, "Din mărturisirele unui naționalist," *Gândirea* 3 (1935).

right-wing," wrote the historian Eugen Weber.⁸

In Romania, extremist nationalism meant first and foremost antisemitism. Although one could not govern by "down with the yids" alone, one could build nationalist doctrines whose principal axis was the idea of fighting the "Jewish threat." Particularly after World War I, ideological antisemitism tended to "emancipate" itself. It developed in independent theories and sought justification in all spheres of social life, culture, history, science and religion. It became an idea that preoccupied intellectual life, provoked discussions and polemics, and even created events.

The identification of Jews with the "Bolshevik threat" assumed an important place in these doctrines. The trials of Communists in Romania, news of mass executions in the Soviet Union and, most of all, the possibility of losing Bessarabia to the USSR exacerbated the not unjustified fear of Communism and "the Russians." Transferring the implicit danger to the shoulders of the Jews—a concrete, "internal" presence of "the enemy"—greatly increased the propaganda value of the threat.

While the extremist movements continued to focus their antisemitic programs on the idea of Jewish economic domination and the menace of an "invasion" and demographic expansion, the ideologists of the "new nationalism" in the 1930s shifted the emphasis to ethnic, spiritual, cultural and metaphysical arguments when seeking to define the "Jewish threat."

The new phase in Romanian nationalism was also characterized by its pronounced *spiritualization*. Rădulescu-Motru noted that Romanianism now defined itself by "realities of the soul,"⁹ by components of the "national spirit" and Orthodox faith. With the ideologists of nationalism, these mutations also led to a spiritualization of their antisemitic theses. The mutations led to old arguments cloaked in modern language, especially elements in Christian theology used to combat Judaism and give divine approval to persecutions.

More so than in previous decades, Jews were held responsible for everything that was considered alien, morally perverted and

⁸ E. Weber, "Romania," in H. Rogger and E. Weber (eds), *The European Right* (Berkeley, 1986), p. 567.

⁹ C. Rădulescu-Motru, op. cit., p. 54.

culturally decadent. The struggle against modernism waged in the name of tradition and the national specific was frequently fought on the antisemitic battleground.

Without being "Jewish," the original avant-garde movement in Romania had comprised a considerable number of Jewish artists. (After leaving Romania, some became internationally famous, among them the poets Tristan Tzara and Benjamin Fondane, and the painters Marcel Iancu and Victor Brauner.) The most efficient means of discrediting that trend was to reveal its "Jewish" or "pro-Jewish" character.

Racist arguments on behalf of the struggle against Jews became more numerous in the late 1930s, but their frequency was for the most part confined to the periphery of intellectual life. The racist vocabulary was often no more than a mimicry of the fashionable Nazi terminology and, in the absence of a solid Romanian tradition in this field, did not add up to a coherent doctrine. Quite frequently the "racial" terms were only "trendy" synonyms for the old and consecrated notions of ethnicity, Romanianism and national character. The antisemitic laws for the protection of the "purity of blood" did not have the support of any serious Romanian ideological tradition.

The basic preoccupation remained the integration of antisemitism with a radical nationalist ideology that would give theoretical justification to the planned ethnocratic state, demonstrate the noxiousness of the Jewish presence in Romanian society and prove the justice of the political programs for the removal of the Jews via "Romanization," or at least their partial or total expulsion within the framework of a coordinated pan-European action.

It is not easy to establish the principal external sources that influenced Romanian antisemitic ideology. However, their identification is not always significant, as Romanian ideologists actually preferred the specifically Romanian character of their antisemitism.

Men like A. C. Cuza and his disciples, who transformed antisemitism into an independent doctrine, were eclectic: all sources were useful if, whatever the arguments, they reinforced radical antisemitism. In the case of the neo-nationalists, the "integral" French nationalism of Charles Maurras and Maurice

Barrès was the most influential. The effects on the crystallization of antisemitic theses, however, were not in direct relation to the assimilation of these sources. The language and radicalism of Romanian antisemitism indicate that Austrian and German journalists and the essays of *Je suis partout* had a more direct impact.

The pro-Nazi fervor of intellectuals like Emil Cioran, Nichifor Crainic and Octavian Goga did not reflect a profound "Nazification" of their thinking. Nazi influence manifested itself mainly in the exacerbation of the antisemitic discourse, in liberation from "rationalistic" inhibitions and the remnants of a humanistic intellectual education.

Antisemitism in Romanian Intellectual Life

Judged by the intensity and coherence of the antisemitic ideas they promoted, nationalistic Romanian intellectuals of the interwar period can be divided into two major categories:

(1) Extremist ideologists with fanatic, maniac anti-Jewish phobias like A. C. Cuza and N. C. Paulescu, or the mystic missionary type created by C. Z. Codreanu. Obsession with the elimination of Jews was constant, assumed doctrinal forms and fuelled political activity. Under favorable circumstances, particularly in the 1930s, their rhetoric did not avoid the idea of extermination. Even a "liberal" like A. C. Cuza declared as far back as 1923: "Before dying, I would like to see the blood of the yids in the mud."¹⁰

(2) Doctrinaires of nationalism supporting a "rational" antisemitism motivated by ethnic, social or other arguments. This was the most representative, widespread and influential category. Its leader and role model was the historian Nicolae Iorga, despite his well-known oscillations and contradictions. The ideology he consolidated with the heritage of his illustrious nineteenth-century predecessors acquired several forms, which he rejected when it became extremist and cultivated violence.

All these men agreed that Romania had a grave "Jewish problem" with social, demographic, cultural and spiritual aspects. The Jews were a foreign population that had seized the

¹⁰ Quoted in *Egalitatea*, 14 Dec. 1923.

Romanians' positions in the economy, commerce and industry; had given towns and cities a non-Romanian character; and had influenced the native culture in a negative way. Where they did not "compete" with ethnic Romanians, Jews could be tolerated; and Jews who "served" Romanian culture and science were accepted and respected. It was in this spirit that Octavian Goga and Nichifor Crainic initially expressed themselves. However, after 1935, they crossed over to the first category and advocated extreme solutions, such as the expulsion of the Jews. The writer Brătescu-Voinesăti was a unique case: he became a synthesis of both categories.

As regards nationalist ideas, the second category also included Nae Ionescu, who did not want Romanization carried out by the repressive elimination of Jews, but rather by the creation of a state structure that separated the ethnic groups and thus would exclude the possibility of Jews "interfering" with the social, political and cultural life of ethnic Romanians. Nae Ionescu particularly distinguished himself by placing antagonism toward the Jews on the theological level, thereby introducing the old anti-Jewish Christian prejudices as a legitimate theme into Romanian philosophy and metaphysics. The second category also included, to various degrees and in different forms, some of the leaders of the "young generation" who tended to deviate towards the first category when the "Guardist conversion" reached its peak.

More complicated was Mircea Eliade's case. Far from expressing any antisemitic attitude up to the 1930s, he underwent a rapid change at the time of his enthusiastic adoption of the ideology and mystical spirit of the Iron Guard. His political and intellectual involvement provoked a reevaluation of his ideas on nationalism; antisemitism became ideologically (and patriotically) justified, together with the entire Legionary ideology, as part of the great Romanian nationalist tradition. Eliade's dramatic reorientation had a marked influence on many young Romanian intellectuals and students due to his fame and popularity.

What was the weight carried by the doctrinaires of antisemitic nationalism in Romanian intellectual life?

The endeavor to answer this question at the conclusion of my research leads to a paradoxical observation: without being the majority, without sometimes having the prestige enjoyed by many intellectuals not belonging to this movement, the antisemites dominated the political and national debates of the 1930s. They succeeded in transforming the "Jewish question," which had become the most important political topic, into an acute theme of intellectual life. Its discussion in the examination of Romanian national character became inevitable. Antisemitic ideologists set the tone and created the atmosphere in the "Romanization" campaigns carried out within the professional organizations and artists' associations.

The narrow political platform of these ideologists sometimes led to the false conclusion that the extremist nationalistic currents, particularly those of A. C. Cuza and the Iron Guard, represented only "marginal" developments that had no significance in Romanian intellectual life. The falsity of this position, which still has its supporters, became strikingly evident in the most critical phases of official antisemitic policies after 1937 and during World War II. Passive approval and indifference were calmly justified by the prestigious intellectual nationalist tradition and reinforced by the endorsement of the Church and other institutions of traditional culture. In the context of nationalist teaching every anti-Jewish measure appeared reasonable and justified. The fragility of the political position of the spiritual mentors was compensated for by the depth of their influence in the make-up of the nationalist mentality.

The blurred public reaction of the democratic, antifascist, left-wing intellectuals to the amplitude and gravity of the planned or applied anti-Jewish measures, to the steps taken to eliminate Jewish intellectuals from Romania's cultural life, and their muted solidarity with the victims remains a subject to be pondered and somewhat of an "enigma." In addition to the explanation derived from the well-known sociopolitical circumstances, such as the Legionary terror and dictatorship, the answer to this enigma should also be sought in the stratification of the Romanian intelligentsia of the period with regard to their attitude to Jews and their perception of the "Jewish question."

There was a large category of intellectuals whose attitude was

antisemitic because they accepted a long-standing tradition. Theirs was a passive, almost "obvious," "natural" identification with the authoritative representatives of Romanian nationalism in the past and in their own time. In intellectual circles, conformism was also nurtured by the association of antisemitic attitudes with the prevailing role model of the "good," patriotic, nationalist Romanian.

The adversaries of antisemitism included intellectuals of various orientations. Some of them represented great values in Romanian culture and science. Among them were men who supported and theorized about a non-chauvinistic and non-antisemitic nationalism in which there was no room for the "Jewish question." This category comprised eminent cultural personalities such as Rădulescu-Motru, Garabet Ibrăileanu, Lucian Blaga, Dimitrie Gusti, Petre Andrei, Mihai Ralea, Alexandru Rosetti and P. P. Negulescu; great writers such as Mihail Sadoveanu, Tudor Arghezi and Gala Galaction, and the literary critics Eugen Lovinescu, George Călinescu, Pompiliu Constantinescu, Perpessicius, and Serban Cioculescu. At that time, the same category included left-wing, antifascist and pro-Communist intellectuals; the best-known were N. D. Cocea and Tudor Teodorescu-Braniste; the writers Geo Bogza, Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Ion Vinea, and the linguist Iorgu Iordan.

Respected and influential in the early 1930s, they lost ground after 1935 and were almost totally silenced after 1937, especially following the banning of the principal democratic dailies. When Jews were excluded from the intellectual associations and the Goga-Cuza government issued its anti-Jewish decrees, these personalities had practically vanished from public life.

The grave events of 1940—retrocession of Bessarabia and

Northern Bukovina to the USSR following a Soviet ultimatum,

and then of Northern Transylvania to Hungary, imposed by Nazi

Germany—relegated anti-Jewish discrimination to secondary

importance in intellectual circles as well. Hopes for reestablish-

ment of the borders of Greater Romania and the removal of the

"Bolshevik threat" linked to General Antonescu's rise to power

explain the adhesion of many democratic intellectuals to the new

dictatorial regime. These men remained passive while racist

legislation was enacted, when they heard of the massacre of Jews

in Bessarabia and Bukovina, and the deportation of the survivors of the mass murder. There were, however, numerous personal interventions to prevent the deportation of Jewish intellectuals to the camps in Transnistria.

Between the two world wars, few of Romania's intellectuals were extremist antisemites, but attachment to a certain idea of national awareness, with a sometimes latent perception of the Jew as an alien, and in certain circumstances as even dangerous, characterized most of them. For this reason there were few intellectuals who, in the most critical days, adopted the rejection of anti-Jewish discrimination as a cause of their own that they would willingly defend in public. In the 1930s, a "Dreyfus affair" was unimaginable in Romania.

Biographical Sketches *

Achterian, Haig (1903–1943), aesthetician and theater director, linked to the Iron Guard.

Alecsandri, Vasile (1821–1890), important writer and politician. Participated in the 1848 revolution and involved in the main political and cultural events of the country; considered the first great national poet and the founder of Romanian drama.

Andrei, Petre (1891–1940), known sociologist and politician on the left wing of the National Peasant Party. Opposed to the Iron Guard, he committed suicide as a result of Legionary death threats.

Arghezi, Tudor (1880–1967), great Romanian poet. In spite of political vacillation, he was primarily identified with the left-wing and democratic-intellectual circles. Under the Communist regime, his work was banned until 1954.

Bălcescu, Nicolae (1819–1852), historian, one of the leaders and main ideologues of the 1848 revolution. A non-xenophobic nationalist with a romantic conception of history, he became, after his death, a symbol of Romanian national rebirth.

Bâncilă, Vasile (1897–1979), theologian and philosopher, member of the *Gândirea* school, supporter of a Christian-mystical approach to Romanian spirituality.

Bărnuțiu, Simion (1808–1864), thinker and politician, leading figure in the 1848 revolution in Transylvania.

Bernea, Ernest (1912–), sociologist and aesthetician, linked to the Iron Guard. **Blaga, Lucian** (1895–1961), great poet and philosopher, theoretician of Romanian ethnical character in culture (*The Miorita Space*, 1936; *Trilogy of the Knowledge*, 1943; *The Trilogy of Culture*, 1944). Closed to the nationalist, traditionalist school of *Gândirea*, he rejected its mystical Orthodoxy and ultranationalistic ideology. Isolated and persecuted by the Communist authorities until the last years of his life.

Bogdan-Duica, Gheorghe (1866–1934), historian of Romanian culture, supporter of national-antisemitic policy.

*This list contains only the names of important Romanian intellectuals mentioned in this book.

Bogza, Geo (1908–), important writer and journalist, active in avant-garde literary circles and left-wing intellectual publications.

Bollac, Cezar (1813–1881), poet and journalist; participated in the 1848 revolution in Wallachia and continued in liberal-xenophobic journalism.

Brăileanu, Traian (1882–1947), sociologist and extreme right-wing politician.

Brănișteanu, Beno (1874–1947), well-known journalist; for five decades, political columnist at the important democratic newspaper *Adevărul*.

Brătescu-Voinesti, Ioan Alexandru (1868–1946), well-known writer, promoter of traditionalist literature, active in the most prestigious literary circles ("Junimea" and "Viața Românească"); member of the Romanian Academy and active in parliamentary political life. After 1937, published many profascist antisemitic articles and pamphlets.

Călinescu, George (1899–1965), one of the most important Romanian literary critics, author of a monumental history of Romanian literature (1941), vehemently attacked by right-wing circles, especially for including many Jewish writers in his work.

Caragiale, Ion Luca (1852–1912), the most important Romanian playwright and satirist.

Carp, Petre (1837–1918), a well-known politician and cultural personality; leader of the Conservative Party (1907–1912) and Romanian prime minister (1910–1912).

Cioculescu, Serban (1902–1988), critic and literary historian.

Cioran, Emil (1911–), essayist and philosopher; belonged to the "young generation" intellectual group, influenced by Nae Ionescu's mystical thinking and right-wing ideology. In 1941, he settled in France and is known as a French philosopher (*Tentation d'exister. Exercises d'admiration*).

Cocea, N. D. (1880–1949), writer and journalist; founder of left-wing and antifascist political and cultural journals between 1910 and 1940.

Comarnescu, Petru (1905–1970), art critic, close to the "young generation" intellectuals.

Conta, Vasile (1845–1882), prestigious materialist philosopher (*The Theory of Fatalism, Theory of Universal Undulation*). As a member of the Romanian National Assembly, he delivered a famous antisemitic discourse (1879).

Costa-Foru, Constantin C. (1856–1935), lawyer and journalist; belonged to the democratic antifascist circles.

Crainic, Nichifor (1889–1972), theologian, poet and leading right-wing theoretician of traditionalism and mystical Orthodoxy, expressed first in his review *Gândirea* (1926–1944); promoter of an ethnocratic fascist state.

Cuza, Alexandru C. (1857–1944), politician and professor of law, founder of extreme-right and profascist antisemitic political parties (1923, 1935); the most prolific Romanian antisemitic author.

Dăvidescu, Niculae (1888–1954), poet and publicist; in the 1930s, ideologist of the cultural "Jewish danger".

Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin (1855–1920), sociologist and aesthetician. A Russian Jew and a political refugee in Romania since 1875, he became the theoretician and one of the founders of the Romanian socialist movement.

Dorian, Emil (1893–1956), writer and physician, author of novels on the condition of the Jew in Romania. His diary (1937–1944) appeared posthumously in English translation (*The Quality of Witness*, Philadelphia, 1982).

Eftimiu, Victor (1889–1972), playwright and poet.

Ellade, Mircea (1907–1986), historian of religions and writer; disciple of Nae Ionescu and leader of the "young generation" intellectual group in the 1930s.

Since 1956, professor of the history of religion at the University of Chicago (*Patterns of Comparative Religion*, 1949; *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, 1949; *Yoga, Myth and Reality*, 1963; *A History of Religious Ideas*, 1978–1985; *Autobiography*, 1988).

Eminescu, Mihai (1850–1889), the most important Romanian romantic poet. Studied philosophy in Vienna (1889–1892) and Berlin (1892–1894). As a journalist at the conservative *Timpul* (1897–1893), he also published sociological essays, propounding a conservative national ideology. His poetry and his nationalist political thinking had an overwhelming influence on Romanian culture.

Galaction, Gala (1879–1961), writer and theologian; close to socialist intellectual circles, supporter of the Zionist movement in Romania and a constant defender of the Jews against antisemitic attacks.

Gaster, Moses (1856–1939), rabbi and humanist scholar; author of important studies on Romanian and comparative folklore and on Jewish mysticism. Expelled from Romania in 1885, he settled in England, continuing his activity on folklore and Hebrew studies. In 1929, was elected honorary member of the Romanian Academy.

Găvănescu, Ioan (1859–1951), historian, linked to extreme right-wing political parties in the interwar period.

Ghica, Ion (1817–1897), writer, economist and statesman; involved in the 1848 revolution and the ensuing political events; Romanian prime minister (1866–1867, 1870–1871).

Goga, Octavian (1881–1938), important poet and politician; leading figure in Romanian political life in Transylvania, founder of an ultranationalist, pro-Nazi political party (1935); prime minister (1937–1938).

Gusti, Dimitrie (1880–1955), sociologist and philosopher, founder of the Romanian new sociological school.

Gyr, Radu (1905–?), poet and journalist; active in the Iron Guard.

Hasdeu, Bogdan Petriceicu (1838–1907), prominent scholar and writer, founder of Romanian philology and modern historical research.

Heliade-Rădulescu, Ioan (1802–1872), writer, linguist and politician; founded the first Romanian newspaper in Wallachia (1829) and other cultural institutions to promote Romanian nationalism; a leading participant in the 1848 revolution in Wallachia.

Horia, Vintilă (1915–), writer; linked with the extreme-right movements. Lives and publishes in exile.

Ibrăileanu, Garabet (1871–1936), literary critic and historian of ideas, leading ideologist of the *Viața Românească* literary society and review (1906–1933).

Ionesco (Ionescu), Eugène (1912–), writer and essayist; based in Paris since 1945, a well-known playwright, elected to the Académie Française in 1970.

Ionescu, Nae (1890–1940), philosopher and logician, theoretician of mystical irrationalism (*History of Logic, Metaphysic*). In political life, promoter of a peasant ethnocratic state; after 1933, supporter of the Iron Guard. He had considerable influence on the "young generation" intellectuals.

Iordan, Iorgu (1888–1986), prominent linguist; involved in antifascist public activities.



Iorga, Nicolae (1871–1940), the most important and prodigious Romanian historian, author of voluminous histories of the Romanian people, Romanian literature, culture, etc.; founder of newspapers and cultural reviews. His active political life included the founding of political parties and high political offices. He was prime minister in 1881. As a political opponent of the Iron Guard, he was murdered by its members in 1940. His nationalist ideology strongly influenced Romanian intellectual life.

Istrati, Panait (1884–1935), prose writer; well known for his novels and stories written in French (*Oncle Anghel*, 1924; *Kira Kiralina*, 1924; *Présentation des Haïdoucs*, 1925; *Nerranzu la*, 1927; *Les chardons du Baragan*, 1928), usually romantic descriptions of a multi-ethnic population in Romanian ports and villages. Active in the Romanian socialist movement, until the break with him provoked by his critical reports on the Soviet Union (*Vers l'autre flamme*, 1929).

Kogălniceanu, Mihai (1817–1891), historian and statesman; one of the founders of Romanian historiography and national ideology. Played a prominent role in the 1848 revolution in Moldavia, in the union of the Romanian principalities (1859) and in the Romanian declaration of independence (1877).

Lovinescu, Eugen (1881–1943), a foremost literary critic, considered a great authority; promoter of a modernist and urban literature, opposed to nationalist and traditionalist tendencies; historian of Romanian civilization as an evolutionary process following the Western pattern.

Maiorescu, Titu (1840–1917), aesthetician, philosopher and statesman; prime minister (1912–1914); founder of the literary and cultural society "Junimea" (1863), promoter of a rationalist and critical orientation in Romanian culture. He made an important contribution to the modernization of Romanian culture and literature.

Manoilescu, Mihai (1891–1950), economist and politician; theoretician of a neoliberal economy and of a fascist-model corporative state.

Negruzzi, Constantin (1808–1868), writer and politician; creator of the Romanian historical short story.

Negulescu, Petru P. (1872–1951), philosopher; sustaining a philosophy based on natural sciences and on the idea of progress; adversary of fascism and racism.

Noica, Constantin (1909–1987), philosopher; belonged to the "young generation" philosophical circle; after World War II, developed an autochthonous philosophy of Romanian spirituality based on a metaphysical approach to the Romanian language resources.

Papilian, Victor (1888–1956), writer and medical scholar.

Paraschivescu, Miron Radu (1911–1971), poet and journalist, contributed to left-wing interwar publications.

Pârvan, Vasile (1882–1927), archaeologist and historian; promoter of a philosophy of history based on ethnic and spiritual values.

Paulescu, Nicolae (1869–1931), professor and distinguished researcher of physiology; also involved in right-wing and ultra-antisemitic political activities in association with A. C. Cuza.

Perpessicius (1891–1971), critic and literary historian.

Petrescu, Camil (1894–1957), prose writer and playwright, author of philosophical and cultural essays; a central figure in interwar intellectual life.

Polihroniade, Mihai (1906–1939), journalist and right-wing politician, leading figure among the young intellectuals of the Iron Guard.

Popovici, Aurel C. (1863–1917), politician and publicist; one of the ideologues of the Romanian national movement in Transylvania; author of political and social essays on Romanian ethnic character and history.

Pușcariu, Sextil (1877–1948), linguist and philologist; author of important studies on the Romanian language and chief editor of the academic dictionary of the Romanian language.

Rădulescu-Motru, Constantin (1868–1957), prominent philosopher and sociologist; founder of the Romanian Society for Philosophy; promoter of an original conception of "energetical personalism" in human development; theoretician of a conservative-agrarian state, based on the spirit of "Romanianism," a non-xenophobic concept of national spirituality to which he dedicated special studies.

Rahoveanu, Gheorghe (?–1967), theologian and publicist; contributed to right-wing journals.

Ralea, Mihai (1896–1964), aesthetician, philosopher and politician of democratic, antifascist orientation; an outstanding figure in the "Viața Românească" circle.

Rosetti, Alexandru (1895–), linguist and philologist; director of King Carol II Foundation for Literature and Art and the review *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*.

Rosu, Niclae (1903–), literary critic and ideologue of extreme right-wing nationalism.

Russo, Alecu (1819–1859), writer and essayist (in French); one of the outstanding intellectuals of the 1848 generation.

Sadoveanu, Mihail (1880–1961), writer, the most important author of novels and stories inspired by national history and tradition.

Sebastian, Mihail (1907–1945), author of novels, comedies and critical essays; intellectually close to the "young generation" and Nae Ionescu, separated from them by his constant attachment to democracy and opposition to fascism. One of his novels (*For Two Thousand Years*, 1934) and the polemical essay *How I Became a Hooligan* (1935) referred to antisemitism and the condition of the Jewish intellectual in Romania.

Şeicaru, Pamfil (1894–1965), well-known right-wing journalist, founder of the newspaper *Curentul*.

Slavici, Ioan (1848–1925), writer and publicist, a friend of M. Eminescu; author of novels on rural life in Transylvania, one of the first important Romanian novelists, initiator of "popular realism."

Stamatu, Horia (1912–1989), poet and journalist, published in right-wing and pro-Iron Guard journals. After 1945 lived in West Germany.

Stirea, Constantin (1865–1936), statesman and writer; promoter of "poporanist" (populist) ideology; leader of the National Peasant Party.

Teodoreanu, Ionel (1897–1954), writer, author of very popular novels in the interwar period, full of lyrical evocation of traditional Romanian life and the world of adolescents.

Teodorescu-Branigă, Tudor (1899–1969), journalist and writer; known as a long-time contributor to the left-wing and antifascist press (*Adevărul*, *Dimineata*, *Fața*, *Cuvântul liber*).

Vinea, Ion (1895–1964), poet and journalist, active in modernist and avant-gardist groups; contributed to left-wing journals (*Fața*).

Vulcănescu, Mircea (1906–1952), sociologist and philosopher; leading figure in the “young generation” group; author of studies on Romanian spirituality and tradition. Died in prison under Romanian Communist regime.

Zeletin, Stefan (1882–1934), sociologist and economist, promoter and theoretician of a modern Romanian liberal-capitalist economy; author of studies on the development of the Romanian bourgeoisie and “neoliberalism.”

Zissu, Abram Leib (1888–1956), writer and essayist; leader of the Zionist organization; arrived in Israel in 1956.

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