

BACKGROUND AND PRECURSORS TO THE HOLOCAUST
Roots of Romanian Antisemitism
The League of National Christian Defense and Iron Guard Antisemitism
The Antisemitic Policies of the Goga Government and of the Royal Dictatorship

The Roots of Romanian Antisemitism

The roots of Romanian antisemitism are intertwined with the origins of the modern Romanian state and the emergence of the rich national cultural tradition that accompanied unification of the principalities, independence, and the creation of Greater Romania. The antisemitism that manifested itself in Romania between the two world wars grew directly from seeds sown at the major turning points of the country's development starting in the mid-nineteenth century. For reasons that may have differed from person to person or group to group, strong antisemitic currents were present in various forms and with varying intensity in the political, cultural and spiritual life of Romanian society for most of the century that preceded the accession to power of the National Christian Party in 1937, the installation of the Royal Dictatorship in 1938, and the Antonescu-Iron Guard National Legionary State in 1940—that is, for most of the century that culminated in the Holocaust.

The antisemitic actions of that succession of governments drew inspiration from antisemitic themes that had entered the Romanian lexicon of ideas long before the 1930s and long before the Nazi rise to influence and then power in Germany. While each of these three governing configurations mixed the essential elements of widespread antisemitic concepts somewhat differently—leaning more or less heavily on certain themes, perhaps adding to native concepts notions adapted from non-Romanian antisemitic expression, and advocating sometimes greater and sometimes lesser violence to accomplish their goals—they all represented essential continuity with Romanian antisemitic ideas that had their origins in the pre-World War I era. It is true that politicians with radical antisemitic views achieved greater legitimacy in the public eye after Hitler's accession to power in Germany. But what was novel under the National Christian Party, during the Royal Dictatorship, and especially when control passed to the Iron Guard and Antonescu, was not the nature of the antisemitism they espoused, but the fact that antisemitism

had passed from the realm of verbal expression and occasional outbursts of antisemitic violence by private groups or individuals to the realm of government policy and state action.

The antisemitic policies of the National Christian Party government, the Royal Dictatorship and the National Legionary state set the stage for far worse that was yet to come under the wartime regime of Ion Antonescu. Antonescu wanted to eliminate the Jews of Romania through “Romanianization” (*Românizare*; the deprivation of property and livelihood), deportation, and finally murder. This change was supported—or at least accepted—by the majority of the country’s political, cultural, and religious elite. And little wonder. Even this adjustment in policy was within a framework of fundamental continuity with ideas that had been an integral part of the political, intellectual, and spiritual discourse from the nineteenth-century struggle for creation of an independent Romanian state to the establishment of Greater Romania, which Antonescu and his acolytes were seeking to reestablish.

The Jewish Community of Greater Romania

The Jewish community of Greater Romania was diverse and numerous, with roots in the histories and civilizations of the Regat, of Habsburg Austria, of prewar Hungary, and of the Czarist Empire. According to the national census of 1930, there were 756,930 Jews, or 4.2 percent of the total population, in the country at that time, and there was undoubtedly some increase during the decade that followed. Jews constituted 13.6 percent of the urban population of approximately 3,632,000, and just 1.6 percent of the rural population of approximately 14,421,000. Over two thirds of the country’s Jews lived in cities and towns, less than one third in rural areas. The Jewish population was not spread evenly across the country, as the following table demonstrates:

Jews as a Percentage of Population, by Province and Urban/Rural Area, 1930¹

	Population		Jews as % of Total	Jews as % # of Urban	Jews as % of Rural
	Total	Jews			
Romania	18,057,028	756,930	4.0	13.6	1.6
Oltenia	1,513,175	3,523	0.2	1.6	<0.1
Muntenia	4,029,008	94,216	2.1	7.8	<0.1
Dobrogea	815,475	4,031	0.5	1.8	<0.1
Moldavia	2,433,596	162,268	6.5	23.1	1.2

¹ See Institutul Central de Statistică, *Recensământul General al Populației României din 29 Decembrie 1930*, 10 vols. (Bucharest, 1938-1940), vol. 9: pp. 440-443. For a summary presentation of the statistics, see Sabin Manuilă and D.C. Georgescu, *Populația României* (Bucharest: Institutului Central de Statistică, 1938).

Bessarabia	2,864,402	206,958	7.2	26.8	4.3
Bukovina	853,009	93,101	10.8	30.0	3.9
Transylvania	3,217,988	81,503	2.4	8.6	1.3
Banat	939,958	14,043	1.2	5.8	0.2
Cris.-Mara.	1,390,417	97,287	6.4	16.7	3.8

While sharing many common interests and concerns in the new state, the Jewish population was composed of several distinct communities, differentiated by the political history of the region in which they lived, the degree to which they had been assimilated to Romanian language and culture, the degree and visibility of their adherence to Jewish tradition and religious practice, and other factors. Unfortunately, virtually every segment of Romania’s Jewish population was viewed with antagonism by the Romanian elites that had succeeded in 1918-20 in bringing all Romanians under a single state authority for the first time in the modern era.

The Jews of the Regat, assimilated in Walachia but less so in Moldavia, were perceived unfavorably for all the reasons that had fostered the growth of Romanian antisemitism in the decades leading up to the Great War—political, economic, cultural and religious—and because foreign support for their struggle to obtain citizenship had led to a widespread sentiment that Jews, with the help of outside powers, were seeking to limit the sovereignty of the Romanian state. The Jews of Transylvania and Crișana-Maramureș, the majority of whom spoke either Hungarian or Yiddish, were viewed as “foreign” not only because they were not Christian, but because their cultural identity and political loyalty in post-1867 Austria-Hungary had been cast clearly with the Magyar majority in Hungary. Constituting 5 percent of Ausgleich Hungary’s population, the Jews had been counted as “Hungarians” in Hungary’s prewar cultural identity census, thus allowing the Hungarians to claim majority status in their state. These Jews were perceived by Romanians to be sympathetic, or potentially sympathetic, to Hungarian revisionist claims. The Jews of Bukovina, culturally aligned with the Germans in the Habsburg monarchy or speaking Yiddish, were also stigmatized by Romanians as “foreigners” who had lived well in a region of historical Moldavia pared off by the Habsburgs in 1775 and only returned to Romania in 1918. Finally, the Jews of Bessarabia—numerous, principally Yiddish and Russian-speaking, and more of a presence in the countryside than in other regions of the country—served as the model of the stereotypical foreign Jew against which antisemites in the Regat had been agitating for decades.

In this atmosphere it is not surprising that antisemitism was common coinage in the newly expanded Romanian state created in the aftermath of World War I. Antisemitism manifested itself in three forms—political, cultural/intellectual, and popular.

Antisemitic Precursors

In a parliamentary speech he delivered as leader of the National Christian Party in December 1935 and later published as a pamphlet entitled *România a Românilor* (Romania for the Romanians), Octavian Goga, poet and a political and spiritual leader of the struggle of Transylvanian Romanians for political rights before World War I, repudiated the Romanian press

...because it is not produced by Romanians. People who do not have burial plots in Romanian cemeteries think that they can direct our soul, the ethereal impulse of our thought; they imagine that any moral manifestation of ours is their patrimony and grasp it with their filthy hands; they have transformed their printing presses, quite simply, into a tool for the ruination of Romanian society.

His attack on the Jews was greeted enthusiastically by National Christian Party members of the Chamber of Deputies. Goga, who as Prime Minister three years later would initiate decree-laws that deprived tens of thousands of Jews of their citizenship and other rights, was not satisfied. He wanted to link the stance of his party to the “noblest spirits” of Romanian tradition. Later in the speech, citing the peasantry as the foundation of the Romanian “race,” he added:

I might say that for decades before the war the entirety of Romanian ideology was constituted on this basis: we have to establish a *national* state. Who represents our race? The peasants...There is no monopoly in this way of thinking; it is the result of all the fibers of our intellectual thought from before the war.

At this point, Goga was interrupted by Pamfil Șeicaru, who was editor of *Curentul* and who certainly understood the national slogans and mood of the day. Șeicaru shouted out: “Beginning with Eminescu, from 1876.” Then a National Liberal Party parliamentarian broke in to add “Kogalniceanu.” And Goga concluded:

...I could say, without exaggeration, that the entire 19th century constitutes one current of logical thinking along this line.²

Clearly it was not just Goga who identified the antecedents of Romanian antisemitism in the intellectual, cultural and political patrimony of the country. There was a general sense, expressed on that particular day in Parliament, that aspiring to an exclusionist, race-based *Romania a Românilor* was part of the national inheritance passed down from the founders of modern Romania and its culture. Goga concluded his speech with a call to recognize the instinct of “differentiation based on race” and “differentiation based on religion”; and to recognize that the “organic entity” of the Romanian people and Romanian soul cannot absorb foreigners and is being unjustly assaulted by an invasion of “foreigners”—Goga’s shorthand for Jews.

Was this, indeed, Greater Romania’s inheritance? There are sufficient examples that can be cited in the political, cultural and religious spheres to support the notion that antisemitism must be dealt with as an integral part of the sweep of Romanian history.

One of the issues that evoked an enormous outpouring of antisemitic sentiment of every sort from the mid-nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth was the juridical status of Jews in the new Romanian state. The leadership of the 1848 uprisings in Walachia and Moldavia had called for the emancipation of the Jews and political equality.³ However, after the uprisings were crushed and as the status of the principalities became the subject of diplomatic negotiations among the European Powers, improvement of the juridical status of Jews in the principalities became an issue of international interest. With no action to improve the status of Jews forthcoming from within the principalities during the period of European guardianship that followed the Crimean War, the Powers pressed the issue, gently at first and then more insistently,

² All citations are from Octavian Goga, *România a Românilor* (Sibiu: Tipografia Săteanului, 1936).

³ See Article 27 of “Dorințele partidei naționale în Moldova” and Article 21 of the “Proclamația de la Islaz,” cited in Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România, 1866-1919: De la excludere la emancipare* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), pp. 52-54. (French edition appeared in 1978.)

as the principalities sought first unification and ultimately independence. This external pressure caused extreme resentment among a Romanian elite seeking to establish Romanian self-determination and sovereignty, and reinforced in the minds of many questions that still persisted a century later about the loyalties and motivations of Romanian Jews seeking full citizenship and equal rights in the Romanian state.

Thus, in the Convention of Paris (August 19, 1858), which set the terms on which the European Powers would accept the unification of Walachia and Moldavia, Article 46 opened the door to, but did not require, the eventual grant of full juridical rights to the Jews:

Moldavians and Walachians will all be equal before the law, in tax status and will have equal access to public functions in both Principalities....Moldavians and Walachians of all Christian rites will have equal political rights. The benefit of these rights may be extended to other cults (religions) through legislation.

Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza took important steps in this direction during his six years on the throne of the United Principalities. Article 26 of the Communal Law of May 31, 1864, granted certain rights, including the right to vote in municipal elections, to certain categories of Jews who fulfilled specific conditions. The Civil Code he proposed in 1864, which came into effect a year later, allowed for granting citizenship to Jews under certain very limited conditions. No Jews actually received citizenship under Cuza, however, and there was a general sense in his last twenty-four months in power, as internal as well as external opposition to his rule grew, that the reforms he inaugurated would not last. Nevertheless, these improvements in the situation of the Jews sharpened opposition to his rule among the political and cultural elite and hastened the coup that removed Cuza from power in early 1866.⁴

A real explosion of openly expressed antisemitism occurred as the prospect of achieving national independence became more certain. During discussions of the new Constitution of 1866, Romanian leaders began to portray Jews as a principal obstacle to Romanian independence, prosperity, and culture. Later, the extended debate over the acceptance or rejection of the

⁴ On the period of Russian domination of the principalities and of European guardianship following the Crimean War, see Barbara Jelavich, *Russia and the Formation of the Romanian National State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), chapters 1 and 2; and Iancu, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-65.

requirement levied in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, which granted Romania independence on condition that citizenship be granted to Jews, further radicalized these views.

When the majority Conservative/minority Liberal government charged with drafting a new constitution presented a draft text that included the language, “Religion cannot be an obstacle to obtaining citizenship,” the drafting committee in Parliament immediately modified it by adding the sentence, “Regarding Jews long established in Romania, a special law will regulate their gradual admission to naturalized status.” As Parliament met to consider this new text, street demonstrations against the provision in any form took place outside the building, followed by a destructive rampage through the Jewish quarter of Bucharest.

Ion Brătianu, Minister of Finance in the Government that had proposed the original text, but whose Liberal Party was generally unsympathetic to citizenship rights for Jews and would lead the opposition to any such measure for the next half century, immediately attacked the already weakened proposal, declaring in the parliamentary session of June 19, 1866, “...we have stated that the Government does not intend to hand the country over to the Jews, nor to grant them rights that affect or damage in the slightest way the interests of Romania.” The following day he labeled the Jews a “social plague” (*plagă socială*) for Romania, that

...pure and simply because of their large number threaten, as everyone acknowledges, our nationality....Only [strong] administrative measures can save us from this calamity and prevent this foreign underclass from invading our country.⁵

Two days later, a revised text that specifically excluded Jews from acquiring Romanian citizenship was introduced as Article 7 of the new constitution:

The status of Romanian citizen is acquired, maintained, and forfeited in accordance with rules established through civil legislation. Only foreign individuals who are of the Christian rite may acquire Romanian citizenship.

⁵ *Monitorul Oficial*, June 19 and 20, 1866.

By the end of the year the harsh restrictions of Article 94 of the Organic Law, imposed on the principalities by Russian occupiers in the 1830s, were reinstated.

Brătianu's antisemitic language sharpened from that point on, as his influence in succeeding governments grew. As Minister of Interior in 1867, Brătianu issued a series of Circulars to prefects across the country ordering them to enforce harsh exclusionary measures against the Jews, restricting their right to live in rural areas, expelling them from certain livelihoods, and exposing them to physical expulsion from Romania. Protests from abroad, from foreign governments seeking to guide Romania toward independence as well as from Jewish organizations, further intensified Brătianu's antisemitic rhetoric.⁶ Setting the tone for many of his countrymen, who looked to him for national leadership, Brătianu responded to a parliamentary question from P.P. Carp about these policies by laying blame on Romanians who hired Jews for creating a situation in which "they have latched on to our land so tightly that we will never be able to get rid of them," and laying blame on the Jews for bringing down the wrath of the great powers of Europe on Romania and serving as tools in the hands of the nation's enemies:

...Jews, even when they commit crimes, are better treated than others....Not because Jews have greater morality than Christians, at least when it comes to fraud, but because whenever you lay a hand on a Jew, all Israelites, not only in Romania but abroad as well, come screaming....[I]f you lay a hand on a Jew, even one caught in a crime, a Consul comes to you and says, "This is my subject." Whether he is or is not a foreign subject, a Consul always appears to say he is....This is what the enemies of our nation are doing today; they are taking the Jews and using them to attack us.⁷

Two years later he summarized his view in a single sentence:

⁶ See Iancu, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-80.

⁷ Parliamentary Speech of April 30, 1868, in *Din Scrierile și Cuvântările lui Ion C. Brătianu*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Carol Gobl, 1903), pp. 441, 445-446.

The goal of the Jews is nothing less than to put an end to our national existence.⁸

Brătianu was not the only 1848 revolutionary to adopt such extreme views as Romania moved toward independence. Thus we find Cezar Bolliac labeling the Jews “a real parasite” and complaining that while Jews are the same everywhere, nowhere is the Jewish problem more severe than in Romania:

It is frightening, gentlemen, to see the spread, day by day, of this deadly congregation, but even more frightening to realize that nowhere has it sunk its roots in as deep as here.⁹

And Mihail Kogălniceanu, whose antisemitism was recalled during Goga’s speech in Parliament in 1935, as government minister in 1869 resumed the process of expelling the Jews from Romanian villages to deprive them of their livelihood. When foreign governments protested, Kogalniceanu responded angrily that Romania’s treatment of Jews living there was no one else’s business.¹⁰

Lesser political figures echoed the national leadership. Parliamentary Deputy I. C. Codrescu of Bârlad, for example, published one of his parliamentary speeches in its entirety in a pamphlet entitled *Cotropirea judovească în România* (The Kike Conquest of Romania). He attacked the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* and painted Jews as anti-national elements undermining Romanian character both in the countryside and in urban areas:

The term Romanian Jew is an insult hurled at our nation....Whatever the Jew is, Jew he will remain....Must we really resign ourselves to permanently seeing an enemy population such as this among us? Gentlemen, the growth of this element has always proven so dangerous for all countries that no people has

⁸ *Monitorul Oficial*, January 4, 1870.

⁹ *Monitorul Oficial*, December 20, 1870.

¹⁰ See Iancu, *op. cit.*, 1996, pp. 105-109.

hesitated to take the most energetic steps, and often the most crude, to get rid of them.¹¹

Antisemitic expression was not limited to Romania's founding political elite. It was also widespread among the cultural and intellectual elite of the country; that is, among people trained to understand the importance of universal values, people who, through their genius, were establishing the cultural values of the nation. In 1866, as Brătianu, Bolliac, and others were establishing the antisemitic themes that would resonate for a century in the political sphere, philologist Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu wrote that Jews bring hatred upon themselves and provoke economic ruin because they are characterized by three "hideous" traits: "the tendency to gain without work, the absence of any sense of dignity, and hatred of all other peoples."¹²

When the European powers stipulated in Articles 43 and 44 of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 that recognition of Romanian independence was to be conditioned on the grant of citizenship and political rights to Jews, the voices of the new country's cultural elite were as outraged as any in the political realm. The philosopher Vasile Conta, arguing that the real goal of the Jews was to drive Romanians out of Romania and establish a purely Jewish country there, declared in the Chamber of Deputies, "if we do not fight against the Jews, we will die as a nation."¹³ The poet Vasile Alecsandri added a vitriolic attack:

What is this new challenge, what is this new invasion?
Who are these invaders, where do they come from, what do they want?....They are an active, intelligent people, tireless in fulfilling their mission. They are adherents of the most indiscriminate religious fanaticism, the most exclusive (to themselves) of all the inhabitants of the earth, the most inassimilable to the other peoples of the earth....Their country is the Talmud! Their power is without

¹¹ Speech of December 16, 1869 in I.C. Codrescu, *Cotropirea judovească în România* (Bucharest: Noua Typographia a Laboratorului Români, 1870).

¹² *Industria Națională, industria străină și industria ovreească față cu principiul concurenței* (Bucharest: 1866), p. 30.

¹³ Speech of September 5, 1879, in Vasile Conta, *Opere Complete* (Bucharest, 1914), pp. 647, 660.

limit, because it is based on and supported by two other forces:
religious freemasonry and gold.¹⁴

The novelist and essayist Ioan Slavici, in his *Soll si Haben—Chestiunea Ovreilor din România* (Debit and Credit—The Jewish Question in Romania), characterized the Jews as a “disease” that is virtually impossible to get rid of and, tapping into the religious antisemitism that motivated the mass of the population more than the elite itself, described Judaism as “the denial of all religions” and the God of the Jews as “the denial of all Gods.” Blaming the Jews for Romania’s problems, he suggested expelling them, but was certain that no one would accept them. Thus, he concluded:

The solution that remains for us is, at a signal, to close the borders, to annihilate them, to throw them into the Danube right up to the very last of them, so that nothing remain of their seed!¹⁵

Thirty years later, a more mature Slavici, in a series of essays written in 1908 and entitled *Semitismul* (Semitism), had not mellowed in tone at all. Blaming the Jews themselves for their fate—a favorite tactic of antisemites—he called for the use of all resources against them, and again suggested that a violent solution would be acceptable:

The hatred that has welled up against these people is natural, and this hatred can easily be unleashed against all of them that have inherited wealth or acquired it themselves, and could lead at the end to a horrible shedding of blood.¹⁶

¹⁴ Speech in Senate, October 10, 1879, cited in Iancu, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

¹⁵ Ioan Slavici, *Soll si Haben—Chestiunea Ovreilor din România* (Bucharest, 1878). For anyone who has read Holocaust-related documents in the archival repositories of Romania, there is a chilling echo of Slavici’s language in the language of Romanian perpetrators of the Holocaust. Many Jews were drowned in the Dniester River during the forced deportations of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina to Transnistria in 1941. The river was the Dniester, not the Danube, but Antonescu’s intention to eliminate the entire Jewish community of the region, to the last individual, was the same.

¹⁶ Ioan Slavici, “Semitismul IV” (1908).

Thus from the earliest decades of the development of modern Romania, there was a strong antisemitic current in the country's political and intellectual life that was not on the fringes of society, but at its very heart. Moreover, the language used to discuss the Jews was extreme, even in those early years. Restrictions on where Jews could live, denial of citizenship, denial of livelihood, physical expulsion, blood-letting, talk of drownings in the Danube, assault on Jewish religious belief and practice, designation of Jews as foreign agents, enemies of the state and of the nation—the language of separation, de-humanization, and killing—appeared early on the Romanian scene.

In fact, the extreme antisemitic language introduced in those years echoed through the following decades, right up to, during and even following the Holocaust. Much has been written about the antisemitism of Mihai Eminescu. His opinions about the Jews were complex and not as extreme as sometimes stated. But it is important that it was credible for a large segment of the population in the 1930s when the name of the country's national poet was invoked repeatedly, as during Octavian Goga's 1935 parliamentary speech, as the forebear of rabid twentieth-century antisemitic extremism in Greater Romania.¹⁷ Eminescu was not alone among the cultural leaders who expressed antisemitic opinions during the period between the achievement of national independence and the establishment of Greater Romania. Historian Alexandru D. Xenopol declared at the turn of the century that only baptized Jews should be eligible for Romanian citizenship and that those who did not convert to Christianity should be physically removed from the country.¹⁸

Even Nicolae Iorga, maturing during this period, despite his genius and admirable accomplishments in scholarship and other fields, must be acknowledged to have been blind on the issue of antisemitism. A creature of the culture he came to epitomize, Iorga joined with A.C. Cuza in 1910 to establish the National Democratic Party, the first explicitly antisemitic political party in Romania. His early writing was steeped in blatantly antisemitic language. In a speech in the Chamber of Deputies in 1910, which he later republished in a pamphlet that included an introduction by A.C. Cuza entitled "The Nationalists and the Problem of the Kikes"

¹⁷ On Eminescu, see the excellent summary in Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1991), pp. 10-13; G. Ibraileanu, *Spiritul critic în cultura Românească*, 3rd. ed. (Bucharest, 1929), pp. 153-192; and for an Iron Guard perspective published after World War II, D. Murărașu, *Naționalismul lui Eminescu* (Madrid: Carpații, 1955), esp. pp. 183-202. In many respects, Eminescu's opinions were similar to those of nationalist poets in other European countries in this era.

¹⁸ See A.D. Xenopol, "La Question Israelite en Roumanie," *La Renaissance Latine*, October 15, 1902, pp. 165-192; and "Naționalism și Antisemitism," *Noua Revistă Română*, vol. 5, pp. 277-280.

(“*Naționalistii și Problema Jidovească*”), Iorga reacted to Jewish demands for citizenship rights by charging that “Jews from everywhere, the entirety of Kikedom” had lined up against Romania and that granting rights to Jews would so fundamentally change the character of the state that

Romania would no longer be Romania. Its entire mission would disappear, its future destiny could not be maintained.

Echoing the voices that decades earlier had charged the Jews with wanting to displace the Romanians from their lands, Iorga argued that the Jewish question was the most significant issue facing the Romanian nation, since its essence was

...the question of our rights in all areas and in the whole expanse of the territory to which we alone have ethnic and historical claim.¹⁹

In another speech published the same year, Iorga attacked Zionism as a movement intended not to create a homeland for Jews in Palestine, but aimed at expelling Romanians, so that Romania might become the Jewish homeland:

Zionism, represented by the newspaper *Adevarul*, is cultivating Jewish national sentiment, and it is cultivating it against us....Some non-Zionist Jews do not hate us, but the Zionist Jews all hate us and cannot forgive us for the fact that we are where we are and that, because there is not room for both them and us here, we do not depart for Zion, in order to leave this space for them.²⁰

After Iorga and A.C. Cuza parted ways in 1922—after a dozen years of political partnership—Iorga tempered his antisemitic language for a period, though never denying that he

¹⁹ N. Iorga, *Problema evreiască la Cameră* (Vălenii-de-Munte: Tipografia Neamul Românesc, 1910).

²⁰ Parliamentary speech “În chestia manifestatiilor studențești: Ce Represintă Adevarul,” December 17, 1909, published in N. Iorga, *Două Cuvântari în chestia muncitorilor/în chestia agitațiilor evreiești* (Vălenii-de-Munte : Tipografia Neamul Românesc, 1910), p. 48.

was antisemitic.²¹ Still, in 1937, with Nazi Germany threatening the peace of Europe, with extreme right-wing movements on the verge of power inside Romania, and with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country clearly in jeopardy, Iorga issued a call to arms against the Jews in his *Iudaica* (Judaica). It is difficult to understand his motivation. Perhaps he hoped to ride a wave of popular sentiment back to political prominence. It is possible that he wanted to deflect growing sympathy for extreme action against the Jews by directing Romanians to overcome the Jewish menace by competing with them. This would have been in keeping with the more moderate antisemitic stance Iorga had adopted following World War I and his criticism of the radical antisemitism of Cuza's League of National Christian Defense (*Liga Apărării Național Creștine*; LANC) and Corneliu Z. Codreanu's Iron Guard (*Garda de Fier*).²² Whatever his intention, however, *Iudaica* was not moderate in tone by objective standards. Writing in response to a series of articles on the history of Romanian Jewry by Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities, Iorga asserted that the country had no need for Jews, as could be seen in his beloved Vălenii-de-Munte, "a Romanian place without Jews" (*o localitate românească fără evrei*). He then dredged up all of the canards of Romanian antisemitism—national, economic, religious, moral, social, cultural, demographic, and political—of the previous ninety years to support the following assault on the Jews:

[The Jews] are at work to accumulate for themselves, as an invading nation, as much as they can. Even in the liberal professions, in education, in science, in literature, as lawyers, as doctors, as architects, as professors, more and more of them, with philologists, with philosophers, with journalists, with poets, with their critics, **they are quite simply throwing us out of our own country**....They are razing our churches, taking over our shops, occupying our jobs, and, what is even more devastating, **they are falsifying our soul, they are degrading our morality by means**

²¹ Iorga's relationship with A.C. Cuza preceded creation of the National Democratic Party. In 1906 Cuza was writing articles for Iorga's journal *Neamul Românesc*; see *Enciclopedia Cugetarea*, Bucharest: Georgescu Delafras, 1940. Iorga expressed his opinions about Cuza and his political activity in several of his books. See, for example, N. Iorga *Istoria Românilor—Întregitorii* (Bucharest, 1938), vol. 10: pp. 305, 460, 489-493; and N. Iorga, *Supt trei Regi*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest, 1932), p. 77. See also William O. Oldson, *The Historical and Nationalistic Thought of Nicolae Iorga* (Boulder: East European Quarterly/Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 84-88.

²² On Iorga's shifting attitudes, see Volovici, *op. cit.*, passim; and Oldson, *op. cit.*

of the journalistic and literary opiates with which they enchant us.

Instead of preferring to relieve the pressure, which through prudently organized emigrations would reduce their proportion in cities to a level that could be acceptable in a national setting, they seek to advance their banner at every moment and with whatever means lie at their disposal, and in order to hide their advance, they resort to changing their names in real life and to pseudonyms in literature.

We must organize ourselves for a war of conscience and work. Let us band together where we still are able to do it. Let us set out to regain through daily effort and with perfect understanding, by breaking ties with those who want to take our places, and let us reconquer what we have lost.

They with their own, for themselves, as they have wanted. We with our own, for ourselves, that's what we want!²³ (Note: Emphasis provided by Iorga)

These were not the words of Octavian Goga, who would become prime minister a few months after Iorga wrote *Iudaica*; nor of A.C. Cuza, whose entire raison d'être was antisemitism; nor of Corneliu Codreanu, although they captured some of the intense animosity of Codreanu's language. They were the words of a man recognized by many as the intellectual mentor of the nation.

Antisemitism in the Mainstream Political Parties of Greater Romania, 1919-37

With the Romanian political and intellectual elite steeped in antisemitic sentiment and producing antisemitic rhetoric uninterruptedly for decades, it was not surprising that the two principal political parties of Greater Romania, the National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Party, were indifferent, at best, to the situation of the country's Jewish minority. While neither party had openly antisemitic positions in their political platforms, neither did they take

²³ N. Iorga, *Iudaica* (Bucharest: Bucovina E. Torouțiu, 1937).

positions that were designed to ensure equal rights, equal status and security to the Jews. The granting of citizenship en masse to Jews, which was forced upon Romania as a condition for international recognition of its expanded post-World War I borders, angered broad strata of the leadership in both parties. Their anger at having lost the stranglehold on the citizenship issue that had been maintained since the Treaty of Berlin simmered throughout the interwar period and regularly emerged to the surface in parliamentary discourse and in the press.²⁴

Both the Liberals and those who presumed to represent the interests of the peasantry saw the Jews as adversaries in economic terms to their own aspirations and those of their constituents. In the minds of the Liberals, control of the country's industry and banking system had to be wrested away from the Jews. And despite the weight of evidence to the contrary, both the National Liberals and the National Peasantists, not to speak of more openly antisemitic political organizations, found it more convenient to place blame for the peasant uprising of 1907, the most traumatic internal crisis experienced since the country's independence, disproportionately on the Jewish leaseholders (*arendăși*) who represented Romanian landowners on many rural estates in Moldavia, rather than exploring the root causes of the unrest. This was Iorga's position, as well, and certainly colored the attitude of General Alexandru Averescu, who had put down the uprising with armed force in 1907 and served twice as Prime Minister after 1918.²⁵

Moreover, both the Liberal and the National Peasant parties included powerful figures who were intent on using opportunities that presented themselves to promote antisemitic policies whenever it was possible to do so, in particular in the economic and education spheres. While these parties were in power, Jews in different parts of the country were subjected to regular outbreaks of violence and received little effective protection. And the Jewish community found

²⁴ Antisemitic violence broke out in Bucharest and Braila immediately after the withdrawal of German troops in November 1918, and occurred in different localities with regularity throughout the interwar period; see, for example, Andrei Pippidi, *Despre statui și morminte* (Iasi, 2000). For a description of developments under National Liberal and National Peasantist governments, see chapter 6 in Carol Iancu, *Les juifs en Roumanie, 1919-1938: De l'emancipation a la marginalisation* (Paris-Louvain: E. Peeters, 1996).

²⁵ For a short analysis of the economic issue by one of Romania's leading interwar sociologists, see Stefan Zeletin, "Finanța și Antisemitismul," in his *Neoliberalismul* (1927; reprint, Bucharest: Nemira, 1997). For the classic discussion of the peasant uprising of 1907, see Radu Rosetti, *Pentru ce s-au răsculat țărani* (Bucharest: Atelierele grafice Socec, 1907); Rosetti, writing under the pseudonym Verax, had published four years earlier *La Roumanie et les Juifs* (Bucarest: I.V. SOCECU, 1903), a detailed study of the status of the Jews in Romania that focused attention on the direct contact between Jews and the Romanian peasantry and called for continued denial of citizenship rights to the Jews. For a modern analysis, see Philip G. Eidelberg, *The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt of 1907* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974).

itself regularly on the defensive, constantly battling in order not to lose rights recently obtained. When Romanian Jews appealed for help from Jewish communities and organizations abroad, or from foreign governments, this reinforced the position of those who sought to portray the Jews as anti-Romanian. Other political parties that led governments between 1918 and 1937, such as Alexandru Averescu's People's Party (1920-21, 1926-27), Iorga's National Democratic Party government of experts (1931-32), and the National Peasant Party governments led by Alexandru Vaida-Voievod (1932-33), were more openly antisemitic in their posture, stimulating public and governmental discussion of the possible introduction of *numerus clausus* (sometimes "*numerus valahicus*") legislation regarding Jews in higher education, the economy, and state administration. Still, while all of these governments may have condoned non-governmental antisemitic acts, none of them enacted or implemented antisemitic legislation.

This situation changed during the long National Liberal Party government headed by Gheorghe Tătărescu between 1933 and 1937. While it at times encouraged some movements of the Right, the Tătarescu government also sought to control the rise of right-wing extremist and violently antisemitic movements inside Romania—the Iron Guard and the League of National Christian Defense, in particular, as well as Vaida-Voievod's breakaway Romanian Front (*Frontul Românesc*). It sought as well to blunt the impact of other right-leaning movements sympathetic to Nazi Germany, including Gheorghe Brătianu's "Young Liberal" Party and Goga's National Agrarian Party. As the flavor of debate sharpened inside Romania, especially after the rise of the Nazi Party to power in Germany, the Tătărescu government introduced certain laws that, while not explicitly aimed at Jews, began the systematic process of stripping away the resources and rights of Jews.

The "Law for the Use of Romanian Personnel in Enterprises" (1934) called for at least 80 percent of the personnel in all economic, industrial, commercial, and civil enterprises to be Romanian and for at least half of the administrative board to be Romanian. It also required special approval of a committee appointed by the ministries of war, labor and industry for all hiring by industries involved in national security and defense affairs.²⁶ While not explicitly aimed at the Jews, the law had a much greater impact on them than other minorities, who frequently lived in compact ethnic areas where implementation of the law was impracticable. For

²⁶ "Lege pentru utilizarea personalului românesc în întreprinderi" (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1934).

the first time Jews were confronted with the possibility of a government-managed process that would deprive them of their jobs and professions. Some Jews who worked for the railroad system and the postal and telegraphic service were demoted or simply fired. Despite international protests, the law remained on the books. In its wake, professional schools began to deny admission to Jewish students, and some private professional associations, like the Bucharest Bar and then the National Bar Association (in May 1937), expelled their Jewish members. University campuses became centers of antisemitic sentiment and “action,” and street violence against Jews increased.

In December 1936, a parliamentary commission began consideration of a draft law to review the citizenship lists through which Romania’s national minorities, including the majority of Romanian Jews, had obtained Romanian citizenship. This sweeping draft did not become law, but the Tatarescu government issued a series of less ambitious decree-laws and administrative orders aimed at limiting or eliminating the presence of Jews in the liberal professions, finance and other branches of the economy.²⁷

This record of Romania’s mainstream political elite opened the door to the more radical antisemitic policies that would follow during the short-lived National Christian Party government, under the Royal Dictatorship, Antonescu and the Iron Guard. The National Christian Party government proved to be a watershed in Romanian interwar political development.

Antisemitism of the National Christian Party

The National Christian Party in Power, December 1937-February 1938

After its creation in 1935 as a nationalistic and virulently antisemitic party of the conservative Right,²⁸ the National Christian Party (*Partidul Național Creștin*; PNC) of Octavian Goga and Alexandru C. Cuza was unquestionably the leading competitor of the Iron Guard on the Right of the Romanian political spectrum. During the 1930s, the National Christian Party (and, before 1935, Goga’s National Agrarian Party) was the principal Romanian recipient of German National Socialist support, despite the closer ideological affinity of the Iron Guard

²⁷ On the Tătărescu government and the restrictive measures introduced in 1937, see Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-303.

²⁸ For useful definitions and distinctions between the “conservative Right,” “radical Right,” and “reactionary Right,” see Eugen Weber, “The Right,” in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right: A Historical Profile* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 1-28.

movement to Nazism.²⁹ And while the PNC's time in power was short, the antisemitic policies that Goga and Cuza pursued survived their precipitate fall from power and exerted considerable influence on the policies of the governments that followed. A significant number of PNC adherents served in the governments of the Royal Dictatorship and resurfaced again in the civilian bureaucracy of wartime dictator Ion Antonescu.³⁰

Octavian Goga (1881-1938) and Alexandru C. Cuza (1857-1944) both had long careers in Romanian politics. Goga's prestige rested on his status as a great nationalistic poet and on the reputation that he had acquired during World War I as an outspoken advocate of the integration of his native Transylvania into the Romanian state. Having fled from Transylvania to Romania in 1914, at war's end he became Minister of Public Education in the short-lived coalition government of the National and Peasant Parties, led by Alexandru Vaida-Voievod. After this he joined the People's Party of wartime hero General Alexandru Averescu and served in the Ministry of Interior, first as deputy and then as full minister, during Averescu's administrations of 1920-21 and 1926-27.³¹ In April 1932, Goga left the People's Party and founded the National Agrarian Party (*Partidul Național Agrar*). The new party's published platform (1932) was pro-monarchy and conservative, but also nationalistic and antisemitic.

The roots of Goga's antisemitism are clear. In prewar Vienna Goga had come under the influence of Karl Lueger, Vienna's Christian Social mayor. Convinced that the Jews were the most active "agents" of the policy of Magyarization in prewar Hungary, Goga found Lueger's sermons against "Judeo-Magyars" convincing and important. As Hungarian pressure for Transylvanian border revision grew in the 1930s, Goga drew on this experience of his youth and identified a suitable response to the renewed danger of "Magyarization." His response was antisemitism and a reliance on Romania's youth, part of which was already coalescing into

²⁹ Armin Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail – o contribuție la problema fascismului internațional*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), pp. 314-319 (original in German: *Die Legion Erzengel Michael in Rumänien—Soziale Bewegung und politische Organization* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1986). Also addressed in Paul A. Shapiro, "German Foreign Policy and the Romanian National Christian Party," manuscript, 1971.

³⁰ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970), pp. 328-29.

³¹ In 1907, while a subject of Austria-Hungary, Goga won the Herescu-Nasturel Prize, joining the ranks of only two prior recipients, Mihai Eminescu and Gheorghe Cosbuc. At the outbreak of World War I, he resigned from the National Party of Transylvania and fled to Romania. See V. Curticăpeanu, "L'Action d'Octavian Goga pour l'unité politique roumaine," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, IV:3-4 (July-December 1938). In conflict with Iuliu Maniu since the outbreak of the war, Goga participated in the Averescu Government's dismantling of Transylvanian regional autonomy plans in 1919 and remained at odds with Maniu thereafter, over issues that included attitude toward King Carol II, democratic versus authoritarian rule, attitude toward Germany, organization of the peasantry.

violence-prone antisemitic movements, to move from word to deed and eradicate the Jewish (and “Hungaro-Semitic”) threat. Goga’s *Mustul care Fierbe* (New Wine in Ferment), a collection of essays published in 1927, captured his increasingly extremist position. Goga saw the situation as one of war between Romanians and Jews, and called for the defense of “racial purity,” “prerogatives of the blood,” and “the organic truths of the race.” He warned that developments were “pushing the traditional patience of the people to its extreme limits,” and praised a coming “purifying storm” in which the youth would save the nation from “parasites.” He called for a “national offensive” to save the Romanian nation.³² Harking back to pre-World War I rhetoric about a Jewish “invasion” of Romania, Goga described the Jews as “impure secretions” of Galicia, who were threatening the very existence of the Romanian state.³³

The political influence of Alexandru C. Cuza, professor of Political Economy and Finance at the University of Iasi, was very localized if measured by the votes he received in parliamentary elections. Electoral support for Cuza never expanded far beyond the North Moldavian districts surrounding his native Iași and, after World War I, the heavily Jewish districts of Bessarabia. Cuza’s career in politics, however, was remarkable for its longevity and consistency, which provided a native Romanian foundation for the development of more radical and more dangerous antisemitic movements than that of Cuza himself. Cuza’s entire political philosophy was built around a single issue, resting on a set of antisemitic convictions that he pursued steadfastly throughout his career.

First elected to the National Chamber of Deputies in 1892, Cuza maintained his seat there, with a single hiatus between 1927 and 1931, until the beginning of the Royal Dictatorship in 1938, at which point he became a member of the Crown Council. Between 1895 and 1923, Cuza helped establish six different political movements. In 1897 he joined with A.D. Xenopol, whose views have been cited earlier, to found the Romanian League against Alcoholism (*Liga*

³² On the National Agrarian Party’s platform of 1932, International Reference Library, *Politics and Political Parties in Roumania* (London: International Reference Library, 1936), p. 433. The platform called for, among other things, an increase in royal prerogatives, a reduction in the size and powers of the Parliament, greater censorship of the press (which Goga saw as excessively “Judaized”), and agricultural modernization. On the evolution of Goga’s thinking regarding the Jews, see Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la Istoria României: Problema Evreiască, 1933-44* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001), vol. 1, Part 1: pp. 30-33; Volovici, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-44; and Paul A. Shapiro, “Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: The National Christian Party in Power, December 1937- February 1938,” in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* (Pittsburgh), 8:1 (Spring 1974), pp.45- 88. See Octavian Goga, *Mustul care fierbe* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1927), pp. 55, 88, 89, 140 et passim. On Lueger’s influence, see Nagy-Talavera, *op. cit.*, pp. 19 and 28.

³³ Octavian Goga, “Primejdia străinilor,” in *Mustul care fierbe*, pp. 395-398.

Română contra Alcoolismului), a platform that he used to charge the Jews with breeding alcoholism among Romanians as a means of increasing Romanian mortality rates.³⁴ In 1910 he joined with Iorga to found the National Democratic Party, which advocated extreme measures, including violence, to reduce the influence of the Jews. When the two men parted ways following the creation of Greater Romania, Cuza founded the Christian National Democratic Party (1919) and then, together with N.C. Paulescu, the National Christian Union (1922). The National Christian Union adopted the swastika as its official symbol in 1922, before the Nazis. Finally, in 1923, Cuza established the League of National Christian Defense (*Liga Apărării Național Creștine*; LANC).³⁵

Cuza was a prolific author of antisemitic tracts, which he did his best to disguise as analytical or scholarly work, and for some of which he plagiarized broadly from foreign propagators of antisemitism.³⁶ Some of these publications began as extended parliamentary speeches, which Cuza carefully edited for subsequent publication. The titles are indicative of the content: *Despre Poporație—Statistica, Teoria și Politica Ei* (About Population—Its Statistics, Theory and Politics); *Scăderea Poporației Creștine și Înmulțirea Jidanilor* (The Decline of the Christian Population and the Multiplication of the Kikes); *Jidanii în Război* (The Kikes in the War); *Naționalitatea în Artă—Expunerea Doctrinei Naționaliste* (Nationality in Art—A Statement of Nationalist Doctrine); *Jidanii în Presă* (The Kikes in the Press); *Numerus Clausus*.³⁷

Every such work, to which Cuza added hundreds of political pamphlets, newspaper articles, introductions and reviews, consisted of a condemnation of the Jews as the origin of whatever problem was being discussed. Cuza professed an insistent, violent, racist and religious antisemitism. Influenced by Chamberlain, Drumont, Mommsen, Renan and Gobinau, he sought

³⁴ A.C. Cuza, *Ce-i Alcoolismul?* (Iasi: Tipografia Nationala, 1897), and *Lupta Împotriva Alcoolismului în România* (Iasi: Tipografia Nationala, 1897).

³⁵ On Cuza's political career, see Ancel, *Contribuții*, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-30; Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-194; and Shapiro, "Prelude...", *loc. cit.* For a sympathetic description by another notable figure in interwar Romania, see Pamfil Șeicaru, *Un junimist antisemit—A.C. Cuza* (Madrid: Carpații, 1956).

³⁶ See E.M. Socor, *O Rușine universitară - Plagiatul d-lui A.C. Cuza*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest, 1923).

³⁷ See, for example, A.C. Cuza, *Țăranii și Clasele Dirigente* (Iași: Tipografia Națională, 1895); *Despre Poporație—Statistica, Teoria și Politica Ei* (1899; 2nd ed., Bucharest: Imp. Independența, 1929); *Scăderea Poporației Creștine și Înmulțirea Jidanilor* (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia Neamul Românesc, 1910); *Jidanii în Război* (Bucharest: Institutul Grafic Steaua, 1923); *Naționalitatea în Artă—Expunerea Doctrinei Naționaliste* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1908); *Jidanii în Presă* (Vălenii de Munte: Neamul Românesc, 1911); *Numerus Clausus* (Bucharest: Editura LANC, 1924); *Plagiatul populației, O calomnie 'Moro judaico' sau cum lucrează Cahalul împotriva goimilor, după Talmud* (1911).

inspiration wherever he could find support for his obsessive hatred, whether the source was foreign or Romanian. His arguments ranged from the economic and cultural, which were common in Romanian antisemitic parlance before World War I, to racial antisemitism, which Cuza enunciated very clearly as early as the 1890s and which remained a constant theme after that. In 1893 in his *Meseriașul Român* (The Romanian Craftsman), Cuza described the Jews as “an alien race” that was destroying the Romanian race. Fifteen years later, in *Naționalitatea în Artă*, he wrote of the Jews’ “racial inferiority” and the danger of “race mixing.” By 1930 he was identifying his movement with the racial antisemitism of Adolf Hitler, and he welcomed Hitler’s rise to power three years later as an opportunity to end the international “domination” of the Jews.³⁸

The parliamentary platform of the League of National Christian Defense called for the complete elimination of the Jews: “the sole possible solution to the Kike problem is the elimination of the Kikes.” To accomplish this, the platform proposed withdrawing political rights and revoking the right of Jews to be considered “natives”; revoking name-changes; reviewing all grants of citizenship and revoking any made without proper documentation; expulsion of all Jews who had entered the country after 1914; expulsion of Jews from rural areas and cession of their lands to ethnic Romanians; expropriation by the state of Jewish-owned land and industrial plants in the petroleum industry; exclusion of Jews from public offices or jobs; gradual expropriation of Jewish urban property; introduction of a *numerus clausus* in all areas of education and economic activity; and stricter laws and harsher enforcement of infractions of the law relating to counterfeiting, contraband, usury, pornography, and white slave traffic. Cuza clearly drew his parliamentary program from all the themes of traditional Romanian political antisemitism, though he considered the *numerus clausus* simply as an interim step leading to enforcement of a *numerus nullus*.³⁹ He added the racial element in a series of 10 theses on “nationality,” “religion” and “action.” The Jewish nation, he wrote,

...is a bastard and degenerate nation, sterile, without its own
land and not constituting a complete, productive social

³⁸ A.C. Cuza, *Meseriașul Român* (Iași, 1893), p. vi; “Problema jidăneasca și Adolf Hitler,” speech delivered on December 12, 1930, în *Îndrumări de politică externă—Discursuri parlamentare rostite în anii 1920-1936* (Bucharest, 1941); and “Doctrina cuzistă și hitlerismul,” *Cuvântul*, April 25, 1933.

³⁹ A.C. Cuza, *Numerus clausus*, *op. cit.*

organism,...thus living from its beginnings until today superimposed on other nations, exploiting their productive labor, and thus a parasite nation.⁴⁰

The League adopted as its banner the Romanian tricolor with a black swastika in a yellow circle in the center of the flag.

After World War I, Cuza also wove into his antisemitic litany traditional Christian antisemitic themes (and canards) and new interpretations based on Christian theology and philosophy.⁴¹ He was influenced in this direction by Nicolae C. Paulescu (1869-1931), a professor of physiology at the Medical Faculty in Bucharest and world-renowned specialist in biochemistry and physiology. Paulescu was also self-trained in philosophy, which he sharpened into an antisemitic weapon, and, like Cuza, authored pseudo-scientific works that served as vehicles for racial and religious hatred. Paulescu served as co-publisher and wrote regular articles for *Apărarea Națională*, Cuza's newspaper starting in 1922. He wrote articles and books that sought to merge theology, medicine, and science into "philosophical physiology" ("*fiziologia filozofică*"), which was in reality simply a route through which he could express an obsessive antisemitism that made his views very appealing to Cuza. Paulescu found the origins of Jewish perfidy in the Talmud, which he determined was a tool for the extermination of other nations, and the kehillah, which he argued secretly plotted the disasters that afflicted the rest of mankind. While he could not have anticipated the Nazi death camps, Paulescu's condemnation of the Jews was so total that he even went so far as to raise the possibility of "exterminating" the "infesting evil parasites" in the way "bedbugs are killed." "Can we perhaps exterminate them in the way bedbugs are killed?" Paulescu suggested in his *Fiziologia filozofică—Talmudul, Cahalul, Francmasoneria*. "That would be the simplest, easiest, and fastest way to get rid of them."⁴² Interestingly, not only was Cuza influenced by Paulescu, but the young Corneliu Zelea

⁴⁰ A.C. Cuza, *Doctrina naționalistă creștină—Cuzismul, definiții, teze, antiteze, sinteza*, (Iasi, 1928), pp. 12-17.

⁴¹ See A.C. Cuza, *Învățătura lui Isus—Judaismul ori teologia creștină* (Iasi, 1925); and *Doctrina cuzistă—Lupta pentru credința și problema învățământului religios cu ilustrații din Thora* (Iasi, 1928). Cuza's argument that it is possible to separate the New Testament from the Old is also addressed in Șeicaru, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18. Efforts, especially by Jewish writers, to counter the impact of such arguments, as in Horia Carp, *Străinii în Biblie și Talmud* (Bucharest, 1924) and I. Ludo, *În jurul unei obsesii—Precizările unui evreu pentru Românii de bună credință* (Bucharest: Adam, 1936) had little effect.

⁴² See, for example, *Fiziologia filozofică—Talmudul, Cahalul, Francmasoneria* (Bucharest, 1913); *Fiziologia filozofică—Sinagoga și biserica față de pacificarea omenirii*, 2 vols. (Bucharest: Apărarea Națională, 1923); *Complot jidano-francmasonic împotriva neamului Românesc* (Bucharest: Apărarea Națională, 1924); *Degenerarea rasei*

Codreanu, future founder of the Iron Guard, specifically acknowledged the powerful impact of Paulescu's ideas on his development.⁴³

Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972) was another theoretician of religion whose work had an important influence on Cuza and on the younger generation that would assume the radical antisemitic banner in the interwar period. Crainic was Professor at the Faculty of Theology, University of Bucharest, which became a hotbed of antisemitism among university students.⁴⁴ Crainic advocated creation of a Romanian spirit that was "antisemitic in theory and antisemitic in practice."⁴⁵ He applied his theological and rhetorical skills to breaking the Judeo-Christian relationship by arguing that the Old Testament was not Jewish, that Jesus had not been Jewish, and that the Talmud, which he saw as the incarnation of modern Jewry, was, first and foremost, a weapon to combat the Christian Gospel and to destroy Christians.⁴⁶

Crainic's influence on his generation was substantial, as he was able to tap into the appeal of the mysticism and nationalism of Romanian Orthodox Christianity and use it to sway intellectual, student, and ordinary Christian citizen alike in favor of the racist, antisemitic movements that he saw as essential to secure the existence of Romania and the Romanian nation.⁴⁷ The Romanian Orthodox Church itself had strong antisemitic leanings, both in its senior hierarchy and among local clergy. Patriarch Miron Cristea did not speak out against

jidovești (Bucharest, 1928); and *Tălmăcirea apocalipsului, soarta viitoare a jidănimii* (Bucharest, n.d.). The quoted phrases are from *Complot jidano-francmasonic*, p. 31 and *Fiziologia filozofică-Talmudul...*, p. 11, 55. Paulescu's influence was substantial. For a similar approach, arguing that Jews must be treated as a disease, see J.D. Protopopescu, *Pericolul Ovreesc* (Bucharest: Atelierele Grafice Steaua, 1922).

⁴³ Corneliu Z. Codreanu, *For My Legionaries—The Iron Guard* (1st ed. *Pentru Legionari*, Sibiu, 1936; English ed., Madrid: Libertatea, 1976), pp. 36-37.

⁴⁴ It was here that Viorel Trifa, leader of the Student Movement of the Iron Guard, leader of the demonstration that ignited the Iron Guard rebellion in January 1941, and later Romanian Orthodox Archbishop of the United States, received his training. Despite his high ecclesiastical position, Trifa was denaturalized and deported from the United States because of his Iron Guard past. For a sympathetic rendition of Trifa's life, see Gerald J. Bobango, *Religion and Politics: Bishop Valerian Trifa and his Times* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1981). On his deportation, see *The Washington Post*, August 15, 1984.

⁴⁵ See "Problema evreească" in Nichifor Crainic, *Lupta pentru spiritul nou—Germania și Italia în scrisul meu dela 1932 încoace* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1941), pp. 142-145.

⁴⁶ This issue had preoccupied Crainic early in his career and grew in intensity as it took on greater political significance. For an early statement, see Nichifor Crainic, "Problema biblică," in *Icoanele vremii* (Bucharest, 1919), pp. 203-207. For later statements and development of the centrality of this religious-based argument, see Nichifor Crainic, *Punctele cardinale în haos* (Bucharest, 1936) and *Ortodoxie și etnocrație* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1937).

⁴⁷ On Crainic's influence, see Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci—Extrema dreaptă Românească* (Bucharest: Fundației Culturale Române, 1995). See also Volovici, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-99. For an early expression of the separation of the Jewish Old Testament from the Christian New Testament, see Iacov, Metropolitan of Moldavia, *Înfruntarea jidovilor asupra legii și a obiceurilor lor, cu dovedirea din Sfânta și Dumnezeiasca Scriptură atât din cea veche, cât și din cea nouă* (Iasi: Macarie, 1803). For an argument on the same point 135 years later, presented in the journal of the Theology Faculty where Crainic taught, see Pr. I. Popescu Malaiesti, "Iudeii și Români," *Raze de Lumină* 10: 1-4 (Bucharest: Facultatea de Teologie, 1938), pp. 5-63.

antisemitism. To the contrary, he demonized the Jews and called for their departure from Romania:

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....[Y]ou have sufficient qualities and opportunities to look for, find and acquire 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.⁴⁸

As a political player loyal to King Carol, the Patriarch did try to limit the influence of the Iron Guard on local clergy. Thus, in March 1937, at the request of the Tatarescu government, the Patriarch assembled the Holy Synod of the Church and issued a decision that forbade local clergy from joining Iron Guard “nests” (*cuiburi*), allowing political demonstrations or symbols in their churches, or addressing politics in their sermons.⁴⁹ When Cristea became the first prime minister of the Royal Dictatorship in 1938, his government tried to subdue the antisemitic violence that had been unleashed under Goga and Cuza, but did not alter the antisemitic legislation they had introduced (see below). Thus Crainic’s philosophy fit well within the theological-political stance of the Church.

Crainic had a long association with Cuza. He served as secretary general of the League of National Christian Defense and then, after its merger with Goga’s National Agrarian Party, fulfilled the same function for the National Christian Party. After the brief government of the National Christian Party fell from power, Crainic became minister of National Propaganda in the pro-Nazi government of Ion Gigurtu (July 4-September 3, 1940), the last government of the Royal Dictatorship and the first in which a number of Iron Guard ministers participated. Days

⁴⁸ See Cristea’s attacks on the Jews in *Apărarea Națională*, August 24, 1937, and *Curentul*, August 19, 1937. The quotation is from *Curentul*, August 19, 1937, as cited in Volovici, *op. cit.*, p. 55. See Cuza’s enthusiastic reaction in *Apărarea Națională*, August 24, 1937. On Miron Cristea, see Ancel, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-168.

⁴⁹ Iancu, *Les juifs en Roumanie*, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

later, Crainic hailed the arrival of the National Legionary state as a passage from “death to resurrection.”⁵⁰

In addition to playing a traditional political role, the League of National Christian Defense organized militant student groups, led initially by Codreanu, and blue-shirted paramilitary units called *Lăncieri* that disrupted university life, terrorized the country’s Jews, and contributed to the street violence that became increasingly prevalent as the interwar years progressed. The League’s electoral strength in the 1920s never exceeded 4.76 percent of the vote. It fell to less than the 2 percent required by law for parliamentary representation in the 1927 and 1928 elections after Codreanu had broken away from the League to found his own movement, the Iron Guard. But, by the 1933 elections the League had recovered to 4.47 percent of the vote, and Cuza’s party acquired nine seats in the Chamber of Deputies. While the party was an influential voice of uncompromising antisemitism and was feared on the streets, it was losing influence to the youthful Iron Guard, and the likelihood that it would achieve political power was remote.

With encouragement from the royal palace, Crainic appears to have played a critical role in organizing the merger of the National Agrarian Party and the League of National Christian Defense to form the National Christian Party (PNC). The merger took place on July 16, 1935. Cuza, 78 years old, was elected “supreme chief” of the new party, while Goga, at 53, became its president and de facto leader. Crainic became secretary general. The new party pooled the parliamentary seats of the separate Goga and Cuza parties, giving the PNC a total of eighteen seats. The League’s swastika was adopted as the official symbol of the new party. Goga’s newspaper *Țara Noastră* (Our Country) became the official party newspaper. Goga and Cuza were quick to associate the PNC with international fascist causes and retained the *Lăncieri* as their paramilitary force. Between 1935 and 1937, the *Lăncieri* were responsible for Jew-baiting and brutality that rivaled that perpetrated by the Iron Guard. Clashes between the *Lăncieri* and Iron Guard units were not unusual and were often bloody.⁵¹ Imitating Hitler and Mussolini, Goga

⁵⁰ See Crainic’s praise of Cuza’s work in Nichifor Crainic, “Naționalitatea în Artă,” *Gîndirea*, March 1935; and his effusive welcome of the National Legionary state in “Revoluția legionară,” *Gîndirea*, October 1940.

⁵¹ While the analyses by the authors reflect the political era in which these books were written, on the activity of the National Christian Party, see Florea Nedelcu, *Viața politică din România în preajma instaurării dictaturii regale* (Cluj: Dacia, 1973) and Gheorghe T. Pop, *Caracterul antinațional și antipopular al activității Partidului Național Creștin* (Cluj: Dacia, 1978). On Crainic’s role in the merger, see Nedelcu, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92. On other factors leading to the merger, see Shapiro, “Prelude...,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 50-54. On PNC violence, see Nagy-Talavera, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-296; and microfilmed Siguranta and police files in United States Holocaust Memorial Museum/Romanian

and Cuza organized massive displays of disciplined manpower in an effort to establish a claim to power. They assembled 200,000 blue-shirted men in Bucharest on November 8, 1936, on the occasion of a PNC congress.⁵²

The platform of the PNC included the antisemitic positions that had been in the platforms of Goga and Cuza's pre-merger parties. They were pro-monarchy, but advocated modifications to the 1923 Constitution to ensure ethnic Romanian domination in all areas of national life. They sought to guarantee the "national character" of the press and all cultural activity. The numerus clausus was to be imposed on the Jews. They wanted to expel Jews if they or their ancestors had entered the country "by fraud" or "after the signing of the peace treaty." In addition to the numerus clausus, Jews who remained in the country were to be excluded from all public offices and the civil service.⁵³ Unlike the Iron Guard, Goga and Cuza did not call for regime change, but they were anxious to assume the reins of government in order to implement the antisemitic measures they had advocated for decades.

Goga and Cuza wanted to establish closer relations with Germany, but not at the risk of the country's borders. They had been actively courted by elements of the Nazi regime. As early as 1934, Alfred Rosenberg and Arno Schickedanz of the Nazi Party's *Aussenpolitisches Amt* settled on Goga as the most promising leader of any future *Volksbewegung* in Romania:

A basically sound antisemitic tendency existed in [Romania]. But in spite of repeated efforts this tendency had never risen above the limitations of a club because of scientific [academic] doctrinaire leadership. What was lacking was the guiding leadership of a political personality. After manifold,

Information (Intelligence) Service (henceforth: USHMM/SRI), RG25.004M, esp. roll 97, files 560 and 566; roll 106, files 1153 and 1154; and roll 107, files 1157 and 1159.

⁵² The PNC leadership made a nationwide call (*chemare*) for its adherents to descend on Bucharest, hoping to assemble 500,000 men in order "demonstrate to the country and the whole world our unmatched power in the country, and thus our right to govern." The appeal to the "soldiers of the swastika" called for the assembly to be peaceful, but noted that those who did not come would be considered deserters (See the poster issued by the PNC organization of Neamt County in USHMM/SRI, RG25.004M.) Goga claimed later that 200,000 adherents had participated. The German Minister to Romania, Fabricius, estimated the number at between 100,000 and 120,000; see Shapiro, "Prelude...", *loc. cit.*, p. 51.

⁵³ Using the standard that they proposed, Goga and Cuza estimated that more than one quarter of Romania's Jews would have been expelled under these guidelines. On the platform, see International Reference Library, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-177; and Cristian Sandache, *Doctrina național-creștină în România* (Bucharest: Paideia, 1997).

groping trials, the Bureau believed to have found such a personality--the former minister and poet, Octavian Goga.

From 1934 on, Goga was their principal Romanian client, and they provided him with both material and advisory assistance.⁵⁴

The king's objections to German involvement in Romania's domestic politics kept the PNC far from the reins of power until 1937. The December elections of that year, however, resulted in a dramatic change of the party's fortunes. Precipitated by the expiration of the four-year term of the Parliament elected in December 1933, the elections represented the first and last time in interwar Romania that the party that organized the elections did not secure a parliamentary majority.⁵⁵ The National Peasant Party, Iron Guard, and Gheorghe Brătianu's "Young Liberal" Party concluded an "electoral non-aggression pact" to combat governmental manipulation of the elections, but in the process the National Peasant Party and the Young Liberals eliminated themselves from suitability to govern in the king's eyes. The election campaign was marked by violent armed clashes between the PNC's *Lăncieri* and the Iron Guard.⁵⁶ The *Aussenpolitisches Amt* tried to arrange an alliance between the PNC and the Iron Guard, but failed.⁵⁷ Codreanu saw the PNC as simply a different face of the established regime, and instructed his followers not to vote for PNC candidates under any circumstances, even in districts where no Iron Guard candidate was running.

The PNC ran an independent list of candidates in the elections. The German minister in Bucharest gave them little chance of success, and recommended to the German Foreign Ministry that Germany not endorse any right-wing party, but count on the victory of Tătărescu's Liberal

⁵⁴ Alfred Rosenberg's *Aussenpolitisches Amt* (APA) of the NSDAP claimed to have been the decisive force for uniting Goga and Cuza, hoping to create a pro-German political party that might be acceptable to King Carol; see "Short Activity Report of the APA of the NSDAP, 1935," (IMT Document 003-PS), Office of the United States Chief Council for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington, 1946), vol. 3, p. 15. The quoted passage is from "Brief Report on the Activities of the APA of the NSDAP from 1933 to 1943," (IMT Document 007-PS), *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 36. Rosenberg devised many plans to filter German funds to Goga and the PNC. In 1934 he tried to manipulate a Romanian-German clearing agreement to provide 700,000 RM. He passed funds to the PNC through Radu Lecca, a Bucharest correspondent of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, who later served the Antonescu regime as chief of the Government's Commissariat for Jewish Affairs. A number of payments are clearly documented, as are shipments of swastika badges and campaign literature printed in Germany. Figures for the total aid provided are thus far not available.

⁵⁵ A useful analysis from this perspective is Matei Dogan, *Analiza statistică a 'democrației parlamentare' din România* (Bucharest: Partidului Social-Democrat, 1946).

⁵⁶ Nagy-Talavera, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

⁵⁷ "Brief Report on the Activities of the APA of the NSDAP from 1933 to 1943," *loc. cit.*, p.36.

Party, which was “increasingly antisemitic, increasingly willing to deal with Germany [and prepared] to protect the German minority.”⁵⁸ When voting took place on December 20, 1937, the PNC received only 9.15 percent of the vote, barely more than the combined 8.56 percent of the vote Goga and Cuza, running separately, had attracted in 1933. Significant support for the party existed only in Northern Moldavia and Bessarabia—Cuza’s traditional base. In all other parts of Romania the Iron Guard was clearly the dominant party of the political Right.⁵⁹

Despite this poor showing in the elections, within a matter of days Octavian Goga was prime minister. Because the Liberal Party failed to achieve a parliamentary majority even while organizing the elections, and because of his strained relations with the leadership of the National Peasant Party, King Carol’s choices were actually limited. He feared that the Iron Guard might try to topple him from the throne, or move the country abruptly closer to Germany and Italy diplomatically, or simply bring chaos.

In the PNC’s favor, the party leadership did not appear to constitute a threat to the king’s authority. With limited popular support, the PNC might prove a pliant tool for Carol’s achievement of his own authoritarian goals. The appointment of Goga might appease the Nazis without undermining Romania’s security arrangements with Britain and France, to which the king gave great significance. Carol might have been trying to steal the thunder of the more threatening Iron Guard by calling on the right-wing, conservative, but vociferously antisemitic PNC. The king may have viewed summoning Goga and Cuza to govern as simply an interim step toward new elections or a calculated maneuver to demonstrate that parliamentary democracy could no longer function in Romania. Whatever the king’s motivation, a nominally National Christian Party government took office on December 28, 1937. Cuza became minister without portfolio; his son Gheorghe became minister of Labor. To limit the freedom of action of the PNC leadership both at home and abroad, the king appointed ministers of his own choosing who were not PNC members to key security, military, and diplomatic positions in the new government. In

⁵⁸ Fabricius Report to German Foreign Ministry, July 6, 1937, Captured German Documents, U.S. National Archives (henceforth: NARA) Microcopy no. T-120, series 1986, frame 440810-821.

⁵⁹ The results for parties that achieved the 2 percent minimum for representation in the Chamber of Deputies, were as follows: Government bloc 35.92 percent/152 seats; National Peasant Party 20.40 percent/86 seats; Legionary movement 15.58 percent/66 seats; PNC 9.15 percent/39 seats; Magyar Party 4.43 percent/19 seats; National Liberal Party (Gh. Brătianu) 3.89 percent/16 seats; Radical Peasant Party (G. Iunian) 2.25 percent/9 seats. For a statistical analysis of the 1937 election, especially relating to the respective strength of the PNC and the Iron Guard in different counties, see Shapiro, “Prelude...,” *loc. cit.* See also C. Enescu, “Semnificația Alegerilor din Decembrie 1937 în evoluția politică a neamului Românesc,” *Sociologie Românească*, 2:11-12 (November-December 1937), pp. 512-526.

spite of these precautions, the appointment of the PNC government was greeted with alarm in Western Europe because Goga was considered to be a “declared disciple and worshipper of the brown-shirted Messiah of Nazi Germany.”⁶⁰

However limited their power, Goga and Cuza lost little time in seeking to implement their antisemitic platform. In his inaugural proclamation, Prime Minister Goga declared:

Romania for the Romanians! That is the birth certificate of the new cabinet. We believe in the rebirth of the Romanian nation with its Christian Church. We believe that it is a sacred duty to impress the stamp of our ethnic domination in all areas of political life.⁶¹

Governing through decree-laws, without parliamentary sanction, the PNC directed its first administrative measures against the Jewish minority. Jewish journalists were deprived of their press privileges. Newspapers considered by the government to be Jewish owned or dominated, including *Dimineața*, *Adevărul*, and *Lupta* as well as Jewish provincial newspapers that appeared in Yiddish and Hebrew, were shut down. Jews on public payrolls were fired, and all state aid to Jewish institutions was withdrawn. Accused of poisoning the peasantry and prostituting young Romanian Christian girls, Jews were declared unfit to hold liquor licenses or to employ non-Jewish female servants under the age of forty. Yiddish, long used as a language of public administration in Bessarabia and Northern Moldavia, was declared unacceptable. (A decree to ban all Jewish lawyers from the bar was drafted, but not promulgated.) Certain Jewish real properties, such as the land and buildings of the Jewish Center (*Cămin evreiesc*) in Cernăuți, were taken over by the state.⁶²

Most significantly, in accordance with the PNC platform of 1935, the government announced Decree-law no. 169 of January 22, 1938, calling for the review of the citizenship status of Jews. The law in effect invalidated citizenship granted to Jews after the beginning of

⁶⁰ On the King’s motivation to call the PNC to govern, see Shapiro, “Prelude...,” *loc. cit.* The quote is from A.L. Easterman, *King Carol, Hitler and Lupescu* (London, 1942), p. 101.

⁶¹ As cited in Jerome et Jean Tharaud, *L’Envoyé de l’archange* (Paris : Librairie Plon, 1939), p. 186.

⁶² On the PNC government’s antisemitic decrees and ordinances, their effects, and the reactions they evoked inside Romania and abroad, see Ancel, *Contribuții...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-84; Iancu, *Les juifs en Roumanie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-13; and Shapiro, “Prelude...,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 72-74. Once it had been seized, the Jewish Center was turned over to the Metropolitan Church of Bukovina.

World War I. It required that within forty days of the publication of citizenship lists all Jews, however long their families had resided in Romania, submit their citizenship papers, along with specified supporting materials, for “verification.” Jews who did not comply or whose supporting materials were considered deficient would be declared “foreigners.” In addition to loss of political rights, this would also mean the loss of employment or professional rights for many Jews, and potential deportation at the pleasure of the government.⁶³

These antisemitic measures were intended by Goga and Cuza to increase the PNC’s popularity before new elections were held and to reassure their patrons in Berlin that they could move Romania closer to Germany, the king’s preemption of the government’s foreign policy, defense and security functions notwithstanding. They also had a dramatic impact on Romanian Jews. Many lost their jobs almost overnight. Some Jews who lived in rural areas found themselves deprived of a way to make a living and had to move to a town or city, leaving any real or unmovable property behind. All experienced the insecurity of not knowing where the government’s fist would strike next and whether any documentation would satisfy the overseers of the citizenship review. While the PNC government was ousted from power before the review process was completed, Decree-law no. 169 remained in force under the Royal Dictatorship. When final statistics were tallied, of the 203,423 family requests for review submitted, 73,253 Romanian Jewish families—a total of 225,222 Jews—lost their citizenship as a result of the National Christian Party’s initiative.⁶⁴

The consequences were disastrous not only for the Jews, but for the new government and country as well. Romanian Jews declared an economic boycott, withdrew their bank deposits, sold their stocks, and organized a tariff and tax strike. Jews outside Romania brought the situation before their respective governments and the League of Nations. France and Britain both used the opportunity that the anti-Jewish measures provided to express their dissatisfaction with a government they perceived to be tilting toward Nazism and Nazi Germany. By the end of January, the Quay d’Orsay had let it be known that France would consider herself relieved from

⁶³ For the government’s referat and the text of the decree, see Lya Benjamin, ed., *Evreii din Romania între anii 1940-1944*, vol. 1, *Legislația Antievreiască* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1993), pp. 25-32.

⁶⁴ See Ancel, *Contribuții...*, *op. cit.*, p. 81; and the official report *Studiu asupra problemei evreiești în Romania, 1942*, from which his statistics are drawn, in Jean Ancel, ed., *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986), vol. 10: no. 107, p. 255. Iancu provides slightly different statistics in Iancu, *Les juifs en Roumanie*, *op. cit.*, p. 312. An official tabulation presented under the Royal Dictatorship appeared in *Monitorul Oficial*, November 24, 1939, cited in part in Benjamin, *Legislația Antievreiască*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-36.

her alliance obligations to Romania, which included a border guarantee, military training assistance, and armaments credits, unless the antisemitic measures were repealed. On January 22, the British government informed the Romanians that King Carol's state visit to Great Britain scheduled for March 21 would be postponed indefinitely. The British minister to Bucharest, Reginald Hoare, told the king's confidant Constantin Argetoianu that Britain wanted the immediate removal of the Goga government.⁶⁵

In the face of growing economic chaos and diplomatic pressure from Romania's allies, the situation of the PNC government deteriorated rapidly. Having hoped to assume the lead position on the Romanian Right, Goga and Cuza appeared to be losing ground to the Iron Guard in spite of Interior Minister Armand Călinescu's efforts to suppress Codreanu's movement. Neither Italy nor Germany extended full support either. After an Iron Guard delegation to Rome was welcomed by huge crowds and with full official honors, Goga's protest led Italian Foreign Minister Ciano to conclude that the PNC government was one of transition, "a sort of von Papen government" that would soon yield to a Codreanu take-over.⁶⁶ When Goga used his New Year's message to Hitler to seek a German guarantee of Romania's boundaries, Hitler's Presidential Chancellery did not permit the message to be published in Germany and offered no guarantee.⁶⁷ Fearing that Germany, too, might prefer the Iron Guard, Goga charged that 17,000 kilograms of printed material had been shipped to the Iron Guard via the German Foreign Ministry (*Auswartiges Amt*) and demanded that German support for the Iron Guard be terminated.⁶⁸

Internal harmony within the PNC also deteriorated. Cuza wanted radical action against the Jews and rapid movement toward adherence to the Axis. In addition, he sought a free hand to utilize the *Lăncieri* in street actions against the Jews and against the Iron Guard. Cuza was furious when Goga, seeking to schedule a new set of elections, opposed the terror campaign that resulted. Cuza also objected when Goga first made exceptions to antisemitic decrees for personal

⁶⁵ Shapiro, "Prelude..." *loc. cit.*, pp. 73-75.

⁶⁶ *Ciano's Hidden Diary, 1937-1938*, trans. Andreas Mayor (New York, 1953), p. 62, entry of January 7, 1938.

⁶⁷ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, series D (Washington, 1957-66), vol. 5 (henceforth: *DGFP*), document 157, Memorandum of the Presidential Chancellery, January 1, 1938.

⁶⁸ Heinburg of Foreign Ministry to War Ministry, Abteilung Ausland, January 3, 1938; and Foreign Ministry to Presidential Chancellery and Reich Chancellery, January 5, 1938; in *Captured German Documents*, NARA Microcopy no. T-120, series 1945, frame 435399-400 and 435408. Also *DGFP*, document 164, Chief of Reich Chancellery to Foreign Minister, January 18, 1938.

friends and then sought to delay parts of the antisemitic campaign until after the elections.⁶⁹ As for rapid movement toward adherence to the Axis, Goga had been given little power for initiative in foreign affairs and was in no position to satisfy Cuza's demands. Protesting Foreign Minister Micescu's visit to the League of Nations, Cuza and his son refused to take part in the reception arranged to welcome the foreign minister home from his first diplomatic journey.⁷⁰

When the electoral campaign opened on February 6 for the parliamentary elections scheduled for March 2, violence of such alarming proportions broke out that there was fear, including among German diplomats on the scene, that the situation would degenerate into total chaos. On the first day of the campaign fierce clashes took place between Iron Guard units on the one hand and Cuzist *Lăncieri* and Călinescu's government security forces and police on the other.⁷¹ Codreanu reported that two Iron Guard men were killed, 52 wounded, and 450 arrested.⁷² Goga was stunned. Through intermediaries that are not yet conclusively identified, he reached an agreement with Codreanu to end the violence. On February 8 they announced that while both the PNC and the Iron Guard would present lists of candidates for the scheduled elections, the Iron Guard had agreed to abstain from participation in the electoral campaign.⁷³ This collaboration by Goga with the leader of a movement that King Carol correctly thought was trying to remove him from the throne was more than the king could tolerate. He summoned Goga on February 10 and demanded his resignation. On February 11 he declared the Constitution of 1923 invalid. Four days later he outlawed political parties, and on February 20 he promulgated a new constitution establishing a royal dictatorship.

As Romania's entanglement with Nazi Germany grew more intimate, the National Christian Party government of December 1937-February 1938 was hailed in both countries as the initiator of their collaboration and the regime responsible for the rise to prominence of wartime

⁶⁹ Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu—Die Deutsch-Rumanische Beziehungen, 1938-1944* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1954), p. 16; and Fabricius to Foreign Ministry, February 12, 1938, in Captured German Documents, NARA Microcopy no. T-120, series 1988, frame 440988-997.

⁷⁰ ISISP, *Studii privind politica externă a României* (Bucharest, 1969), p. 201.

⁷¹ Fabricius to Foreign Ministry, February 9, 1938, in Captured German Documents, NARA Microcopy no. T-120, series 1988, frame 440972-975.

⁷² Nagy-Talavera, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

⁷³ On Goga's anger and his own claim to have served as intermediary, see the account by Michel Sturdza, future Iron Guard foreign minister in the National Legionary state, in Michel Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe* (Boston: Western Islands, 1968), pp. 104-105. On the Goga-Codreanu agreement, see Weber, "Romania," *loc. cit.*, p. 551; Fabricius to Foreign Ministry, February 9, 1938, in Captured German Documents, NARA Microcopy no. T-120, series 1988, frame 440972-975; and Shapiro, "Prelude..." pp. 83-84. Codreanu's order to the Iron Guard to cease electoral activity is in a Manifesto dated February 8, 1937, in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulări și Manifeste* (Colecția Omul Nou, 1951), pp. 232-233.

dictator Ion Antonescu. In 1943 Alfred Rosenberg wrote, “Antonescu today appears in practice as executor of the heritage bequeathed to him by Goga.”⁷⁴ Antonescu stated, “Romania fulfills today the dreams and the ideals of A.C. Cuza and Octavian Goga, setting out to solve the Jewish Question [according to] the Nazi program.”⁷⁵ This continuity of purpose regarding the Jews was understandable and part of a progression in Romanian thought that Goga, Cuza, and Antonescu could trace back nearly 100 years. Adherents of the PNC reappeared as part of the wartime regime’s civilian bureaucracy after Antonescu ended his brief cooperation with Codreanu’s successors and crushed the Iron Guard uprising of January 1941.⁷⁶

Antisemitism of the Iron Guard

Octavian Goga and A.C. Cuza were clearly the products of the traditional political regime established in the mid-nineteenth century and inherited by Greater Romania after World War I. They functioned within it, conceived their political strategies based on it, rose to power through it, and clung to it as their power evaporated. The same could not be said of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and the movement he founded, the Iron Guard. The PNC was pro-monarchy and pro-Carol; the Iron Guard was not. The leadership of the PNC sought to maintain relations of equality, if not cordiality, with the political leadership of other political parties; the Iron Guard did not and defined itself differently, not as a party, but as a “movement.” The PNC wanted to retain parliamentary government, even if it was to be reshaped and organized along more elitist and corporatist lines; the Iron Guard sought to overturn the parliamentary regime. Goga and Cuza valued their relationships with the national cultural and religious establishment at the top of Romania’s social pyramid; the Legion was anti-establishment, embracing youthful “action,” peasantist populism, and mystical religiosity as exemplified by the (often illiterate) local clergy. The PNC officially embraced the *numerus clausus*; the Iron Guard rejected it as not sufficiently radical to solve the “Jewish problem.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ “Brief Report on the Activities of the APA of the NSDAP from 1933 to 1943,” *loc. cit.*, p. 40.

⁷⁵ *Blood Bath in Rumania* (New York: The Record, 1942), p. 33.

⁷⁶ Nagy-Talavera, *op. cit.*, p. 328-329.

⁷⁷ Numerous scholarly studies of the Iron Guard exist, and an abundance of ideological, historical, and memorial literature has been left by Iron Guard leaders, members, sympathizers and exiles. Among the more important scholarly analyses are Armin Heinen, *Die Legion Erzengel Michael in Rumanien—Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986); Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel—Fascist Ideology in Romania* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990); Francisco Viegas, *La Mistica del Ultranacionalismo—Historia de la Guardia de Hierro* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 1989); Eugen Weber, “The Men of the Archangel,” in

Son of a long-time associate of A.C. Cuza, Codreanu became a law student at the University of Iasi, where he imbibed the raw antisemitism and pseudo-scientific theory that Cuza and N.C. Paulescu professed. He became politically active at the university under Cuza's protection, becoming president of the Law Students Association and, inspired by articles in *Apărarea Națională*, which Cuza and Paulescu had founded in 1922, founded the Association of Christian Students that same year with the purpose of "defending our fatherland against Jewish invasion." The leaders of the Association embraced the principles of "anti-democracy," "discipline," and "leadership."⁷⁸

At the founding of the League of National Christian Defense in March 1923, Cuza entrusted the youthful Codreanu with the task of organizing the League on a nationwide basis, which he set out to do through the organization of a youth corps outside the traditional political model. Cuza had first organized student paramilitary units in 1922, when he was one of the chairmen of the short-lived National Christian Union, but they were clearly subordinated to the Union's senior leadership. It did not take long for conflict to develop between Cuza and Codreanu. Cuza wanted to run the League along the lines of a traditional political party, albeit an extremist and sometimes violent one, and to press within the parliamentary system for specific antisemitic goals. Codreanu, on the other hand, not only wanted more power for himself, in keeping with the "leadership" principle, but also sought to make the League a revolutionary "movement of moral rejuvenation," in which organized violence, not only against Jews but against the establishment, was an acceptable, even preferred, method of accomplishing the movement's goals. By 1927 relations between the two men had become so strained that Codreanu and his followers resigned from the League on June 24. They founded their own movement, first called the Legion of the Archangel Michael, then the Iron Guard.⁷⁹

George L. Mosse, ed., *International Fascism* (London and Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979), pp. 317-343; Eugen Weber, "Romania" in Rogger and Weber, eds., *op. cit.*; and Nagy-Talavera, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, *op. cit.*, pp. 45, 48.

⁷⁹ The relationship between the two men and the issues around which it developed and faltered are described in Codreanu's autobiographical statement of purpose, *Pentru Legionari* (For My Legionaries), first published in 1936. For Cuza's defense of the student movement before the resignation of Codreanu from the League of National Christian Defense, see *Mișcările studențești și cauzele lor—Declarație făcută înaintea comisiei de anchetă de A.C. Cuza* (Bucharest: Tipografia Deleormanul, 1925). The term Iron Guard is used to designate Codreanu's movement in this chapter, recognizing that the official name of the movement changed from time to time (e.g., Legion of the Archangel Michael, All for the Fatherland) and that the term "the Legionary movement" is also widely used by scholars.

Antisemitism was a central element of Iron Guard ideology. In 1937, Codreanu wrote in his Circular no. 119:

The historical mission of our generation is the resolution of the kike problem. All of our battles of the past 15 years have had this purpose, and all of our life's efforts from now on will have this purpose.⁸⁰

The antisemitism of the Iron Guard harkened back to the Romanian voices of antisemitic intolerance that had inspired Cuza and others in the decades before the Iron Guard appeared on the scene. In *Pentru Legionari*, Codreanu specifically acknowledged the inspiration he had received from Conta, Alecsandri, Kogălniceanu, Eminescu, Hașdeu, Xenopol and others, not to mention A.C. Cuza, Paulescu and more modern purveyors of antisemitism. All the traditional themes were absorbed by the Legion: refusal of citizenship rights; mass invasion of Jews from the East; Jewish over-population in Romania's cities; exploitation of the peasantry through alcohol, tobacco, and other vices; control of the press; de-nationalization of Romanian culture; outright service to Romania's enemies; and representation of foreign interests.

Guardist antisemitism also contained new elements, however. It was not directed against the Jews alone, but also against "Judaized" Romanians—especially politicians—who had been corrupted by Jews and were allowing the "takeover" of Romania by Jews. It embraced dictatorship as an organizational principle and violence as a tool to combat the Jewish menace—the "Judaic State"—which had organized itself around the Talmud and the Kehillah, and more recently in the form of Bolshevism and communism.⁸¹ And it glorified spiritual struggle and morality grounded in the mystical imagery of the Romanian Orthodox Church.⁸²

These three elements produced dramatic consequences. Beginning in 1923, Codreanu began identifying "traitors," Romanians who betrayed their people "for Judas's silver pieces,"

⁸⁰ Codreanu, *Circulări și Manifeste*, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

⁸¹ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 222-224.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 125-127, 213-214. The first passage relates how the saint's name day and an icon of the Archangel Michael, which Codreanu and his colleagues viewed while imprisoned in Vacaresti Monastery in 1923, provided inspiration for naming the new youth movement they planned—the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Sainly purity, the sword, and the battle against Satan were central concepts. The second passage, subtitled "Matter versus Spirit" by Codreanu, cited "moral strength," "unshaken faith," and "matter's subordination to the spirit" as the guarantors of victory over the "satanic forces coalesced with the purpose of destroying us."

with the intention of killing them. The fiercest punishment, argued Codreanu, “ought to fall first on the traitor, second on the enemy.”⁸³ The first list of “traitors” drawn up in 1923 included six cabinet ministers, headed by George Mârzescu, who had drafted the principal law through which Jews obtained citizenship following the promulgation of Romania’s new constitution that year. Over the next 18 years, Codreanu’s movement was responsible for vicious incidents of street violence, aimed mainly at Jews; the assassination of two incumbent prime ministers (Ion Duca in 1933 and Armand Călinescu in 1939); and the murders of numerous cabinet ministers and other local and national personalities in both the political and cultural spheres. With their battle against the established order integrally linked together with their “life and death” battle against the Jews, Iron Guard violence culminated on November 26-27, 1940, with the murder of sixty-four leading personalities and defenders of the interwar political order (including one former prime minister) at Jilava Prison; the murder of six additional police prefects the same night; the seizure from their homes, with the intention of killing them, of seven additional political and internal security leaders (including three former prime ministers); and the brutal murders of Nicolae Iorga, also a former prime minister, and former minister Virgil Madgearu of the National Peasant Party, also on the same night. The Iron Guard Rebellion of January 1941 also began as an assault on the established order, at this point personified by Ion Antonescu, but of course was again integrally related to street attacks on the Jews, for whom the “rebeliune” was a “pogrom” in which at least 120 Jews were murdered.⁸⁴

The Iron Guard was considered by King Carol to be a threat to his policies, his place on the throne, and possibly to the dynasty itself. The movement was declared illegal three times by three separate governments in the early 1930s, was aggressively surveilled by the Tătărescu government of 1933-1937, and was pursued relentlessly during the Royal Dictatorship. Codreanu himself was murdered in November 1938 while in custody of the state security police (*Siguranta*). The assassination of Armand Călinescu in September 1939 was followed by yet more arrests and the flight of some members of the movement to Germany. Following just six months of relative freedom of action during the government of Ion Gigurtu (July-September

⁸³ Ibid., p. 118.

⁸⁴ Comandantul Militar al Capitalei, *Asasinatale dela Jilava...Snagov și Strejnicul–26-27 Noemvrie 1940* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1941); Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri, *Pe Marginea Prăpastiei–21-23 Ianuarie 1941*, 2 vols. (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1942); and Matatias Carp, *Cartea Neagra: Suferințele Evreilor din România, 1940-1944*, vol. 1, *Legionarii și Rebeliunea* (Bucharest: Atelierele grafice Socec, 1946).

1940) and the National Legionary state (September 1940-January 1941), the movement was again outlawed following the Iron Guard Rebellion. Clearly, the tying together of antisemitism and anti-establishment ideology had its costs.

The mystical-religious component of Legionary antisemitism also went beyond the traditional antisemitic themes of the Church. The Iron Guard did not reject earlier ideas. It used the myths of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to propagandize village clergy; condemned rabbis, the Talmud and the Kehillah as satanic weapons for Jewish domination; and argued that the Old Testament was not of Jewish origin and that modern Jews (*Iudeii, Evreii, Jidani*) were not the descendants of the Biblical Hebrews. Codreanu emphasized the national-religious connection, charging the Jews with seeking to break the “spiritual link” between the Romanian people and God, so that the Jews could destroy the Romanian nation.⁸⁵ The language used by Legionary writers was replete with religious symbolism. The elite corps of the Legion was dubbed the “Brotherhood of the Cross” (*Frăție de Cruce*) Iron Guard members who were killed fighting for Franco in Spain were called “the crucified ones” (*Crucificații*)⁸⁶

Codreanu’s critics accused him of seeking to emulate Mussolini and Hitler. But in contrast to the fascist movements in Italy and Germany, which were areligious or anti-religious in nature, the Iron Guard “was a movement of religious rebirth or, perhaps more precisely, a movement of regeneration with religious overtones.”⁸⁷ This was, of course, for a purpose. In *Pentru Legionari*, Codreanu relates a supper with his followers in Văcărești Prison after their plot to kill “Judaized” Romanian political leaders was discovered. He says to his disciples, “I am compelled to bring you sad news. The betrayer has been identified. He is in our midst, sitting at the table with us.” The betrayer is identified, and Codreanu forgives him.⁸⁸ The language of sacrifice (*jertfă*), of gladly accepting death to save the nation, of crucifixion and of resurrection (*reînviere*) was used constantly by Iron Guard writers and by Codreanu himself. When the names of fallen Iron Guardists were read out at meetings and demonstrations, “present” (*prezent*) was the accepted refrain. And after Codreanu’s death, it was not uncommon for members of the

⁸⁵ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, *op. cit.*, p.106.

⁸⁶ See “La Icoana,” *Pământul Strămoșesc*, August 1, 1927, in Ion Moța, *Cranii de lemn—Articole 1922-1936*, 3rd ed. (Bucharest: Editura Totul Pentru Țară, 1937), pp. 19-22. On this elite group, see Gh. Istrate, *Frăția de Cruce* (1935; reprint, Colectia Omul Nou, 1952). Banica Dobre, *Crucificații* (1937; reprint, Colectia Omul Nou, 1951).

⁸⁷ Eugen Weber, “Romania,” *loc. cit.*, p. 534.

⁸⁸ Codreanu, *For My Legionaries*, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-27.

Legion to use the phrase “The Captain is with us!” (*Căpitanul e cu noi!*) or to refer to his “resurrection.”⁸⁹

The Legion’s combined call for spiritual renewal, immersion in the mystical, violent battle against Satan (i.e., the Jews), Romanian Orthodox faith, “leadership” by an appropriately anointed figure, and overthrow of the established (“Judaized”) order had immense appeal for the generation of young Romanian intellectuals that developed during the interwar period, just as traditional antisemitism had proved a magnet for the country’s nineteenth and early-twentieth-century elites. The Iron Guard appeared to offer an integrated, purposeful philosophy of life and of death. The new generation of intellectuals for whom antisemitism was an integral part of their Legionary “credo” (*crez*), however, were not pseudo-scholars of the Cuza or Paulescu type. They were the main protagonists of Romanian cultural and intellectual identity in the mid-twentieth century. Some of those who survived World War II, like Eliade and Cioran, living outside Romania, became internationally recognized intellectual icons after the Holocaust, hiding their past while demonstrating their genius. Others, like Crainic and Noica, faded into Romanian prison life, but saw the power of their thinking affect a post-Holocaust generation of Romanian youth that was also seeking, as they had done earlier, a destiny better than that offered by the country’s established (communist) order. Some lesser lights, like Vintilă Horia and Horia Stamatu, continued their affiliation with the Iron Guard in exile after the war, trying to maintain Legionary vitality and hoping for a final resurrection of the movement before their own days ended.

The Legion produced a number of theoreticians whose ideas were important within the movement but less so in Romanian society as a whole. Nicolae Roșu, Vasile Marin, and others wrote books praising the Legion’s new role on the Romanian scene, and especially the virtues of Codreanu.⁹⁰ None of these individuals had the ability to influence and impress that belonged to Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Nichifor Crainic, Emil Cioran, or Constantin Noica. These latter figures did not emerge from within the Iron Guard, but in the early 1930s discovered in the movement the appealing promise of a “national revolution.” These were the years when Greater

⁸⁹ For numerous examples of Codreanu’s use of related language, see Codreanu, *Circulări și Manifeste*, *op. cit.* See Corneliu Zelea Codreanu—*Douăzeci de ani dela moarte* (Madrid, Editura Carpații, 1958), p. 27. Also, the poem by Radu Gyr on p. 9: “Mormântul tău e numai Înviere/Prin tine luminăm de Veșnicie.” Ion Tolescu’s article in the same volume, pp. 175-182, draws an explicit parallel between Codreanu and Jesus, closing with a drawing of an unidentified figure carrying a cross on his back.

⁹⁰ Nicolae Roșu, *Orientări în Veac* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1937), and *Dialectica Naționalismului* (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1935); and Vasile Marin, *Crez de generație* (Bucharest: Editura Bucovina, 1937).

Romania's promise, so glittering in the aftermath of World War I, appeared to be slipping away. Disillusioned by the failure of the "restoration" of Carol II to the throne in 1930 to address the country's woes, the so-called young generation of philosophers and scholars turned to the Legionary movement in pursuit of a national "resurrection."⁹¹ Newspapers on the political Right, literary journals, and bookstores were filled with their writings. Their quest for philosophical, spiritual, and political renewal inclined them toward fascist doctrines, while their ethnic, nationalist, Romanian Orthodox focus impelled them toward the Legionary movement. Nae Ionescu joined first, and the others followed.⁹²

Whatever their attitudes toward Jews before they affiliated with the Iron Guard, these thinkers all adopted radical antisemitic language and incorporated the antisemitic orientation of the Iron Guard into the intellectual framework they called "Romanianism."⁹³ Nae Ionescu took the lead in definitively excluding the Jews from Romanian Christian society:

Christians and Jews, two bodies alien to one another, which cannot fuse into a synthesis, between which there can only be peace...if one of them disappears.⁹⁴

Cioran echoed the same sentiment of inevitable separation:

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

⁹¹ On the intellectual ferment on the Right in the 1930s, see Ornea, *op. cit.* and Volovici, *op. cit.* On the "young generation" in particular, see Ornea, pp. 146-220, and Volovici, pp. 70-94. On Iorga's political role in the early 1930s, see his *Doi ani de restaurație—Ce a fost, ce am vrut, ce am putut* (Vălenii de Munte: Tiparul Datina Românească, 1932). In the eyes of the "young generation," Iorga epitomized the values of the "old regime." He had been King Carol's tutor in the monarch's youth, and the Legion considered Carol an enemy. Iorga served as prime minister in the so-called "government of specialists" from mid-1931 to mid-1932, which declared the Iron Guard illegal. He also served on the Crown Council during the Royal Dictatorship from 1938 to 1940, again a period when the Iron Guard was outlawed.

⁹² Nae Ionescu used this phrase and dated his conversion to the Legion to fall 1933, just before it was banned by the National Liberal Party government of Ion G. Duca; see Ionescu's introduction to Marin, *Crez de generatie, op. cit.* For professions of Legionary faith of the others, see, for example, Mircea Eliade, see "De ce cred în biruința mișcării legionare," *Buna Vestire*, December 17, 1937; Emil Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României* (Bucharest, 1937); N. Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocrație* (Bucharest, 1937); C. Noica, "Între parazitul din afara și parazitul dinăuntru," *Vremea*, January 30, 1938.

⁹³ On "Romanianism" (*Românismul*) and the contribution made to it by each, see Volovici, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-94.

⁹⁴ Nae Ionescu, "Prefață" to Mihai Sebastian, *De două mii de ani* (Bucharest: Nationala-Ciornei, 1934), p. xxviii.

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.

...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 for all is that the Jews are not interested in living in a consolidated and self-aware Romania.⁹⁵

Noica did the same:

What we regret is that [the Jews] are forbidden to see and 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.⁹⁶

In 1936, Mircea Eliade returned to the language of the mid-nineteenth century to describe a Jewish invasion of the country and to excoriate the Romanian political class for permitting Romania to be overrun by Jews:

Since the war, Jews have occupied the villages of Maramures and Bukovina and gained the absolute majority in the towns and cities of Bessarabia... And if you tell them [the political leaders] that in the Bucegi you no longer hear 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 consider that you are in the pay of the Germans or

⁹⁵ Cioran, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-133. (English translation cited from Volovici, *op. cit.*, pp. 108, 119-20).

⁹⁶ Noica, "Între parazitul din afară...", *loc. cit.*

assure you that they have passed laws for the protection of national labor.⁹⁷

In his public declaration of support for the Iron Guard a year later, Eliade, too, made it clear that the relationship between Romanians and Jews was, in fact, a battle to the death:

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?⁹⁸

Iron Guard antisemitism, of course, was not limited to abstract consideration of the nature of Jews, Romanians, and their (non-)relationship. Legionary writers produced works intended to incite pogroms and crimes, and designed practical proposals of mass murder. In 1938, Alexandru Răzmeriță, a Romanian Orthodox priest, described a plan for the total elimination of the Jews in the cities and their deportation to forced labor camps in the countryside. Attempts to escape the work camps would be punished by execution.⁹⁹ Traian Herseni developed Legionary racial theory, which combined the “doctrine of inequality” with a “doctrine of the betterment of the human races.” Calling the racial purification of the Romanian people “a question of life and death,” Herseni argued for a eugenics program and the complete separation of inferior races from the ethnic group.¹⁰⁰

Weakened by Carol’s dissolution of political parties in February 1938 and decimated after the killing of Codreanu and the assassination of Prime Minister Armand Călinescu in reprisal in November 1938 and September 1939, respectively, the Iron Guard got its first opportunity to give practical implementation to its antisemitic ideology from inside government during the last few months of the Royal Dictatorship.

⁹⁷ M. Eliade, “Piloții orbi,” *Vremea*, September 19, 1936.

⁹⁸ Eliade, “De ce cred...,” *loc. cit.*

⁹⁹ Alexandru Răzmeriță, *Cum să ne apărăm de evrei – Un plan de eliminare totală* (Turnu Severin : Tipografia Minerva, 1938), pp. 65-69.

¹⁰⁰ Traian Herseni, “Mitul sîngelui,” *Cuvîntul*, November 23, 1940; and “Rasa și destinul național” *Cuvîntul*, January 16, 1941.

The Royal Dictatorship and the Jews

On February 13, 1938, Patriarch Miron Cristea, the first prime minister under the Royal Dictatorship, issued a position statement that could not have been encouraging to Jews. The Patriarch established the following goals:

...Repair of the historical injustices of all sorts done to the dominant Romanian element, without acts of injustice toward the long established national minorities...Reexamination of the acquisition of citizenship after the war and annulment of all naturalizations made fraudulently and contrary to the vital interests of the Romanians...This reexamination...will also promote broader economic participation by the Romanian element. The organization of the departure from the country of foreign elements that, recently established in the country, damage and weaken our Romanian ethnic national character. Romania will cooperate...with other states that have an excess of Jewish population, helping [the Jews] to find their own country....¹⁰¹

The new Constitution promulgated by King Carol one week later promised equal rights to Romanian citizens, regardless of ethnic origin or religion (Paragraph 5), but also called for “preference to the majority nation”; allowed for laws that could differentially limit those rights (e.g., Paragraphs 12 and 22, regarding education and press freedom); restricted civil and military service to Romanian citizens belonging to “the majority strata of society” (Paragraph 62); and effectively prevented Jews, with the exception of the Chief Rabbi, from serving in Parliament. Provisions regarding the granting of citizenship to people who were not “ethnic Romanians” returned to the terms of Article 11 of the 1877 Constitution, requiring a separate special law for each individual case.

This ambiguous, self-contradictory set of statements and provisions foreshadowed the inconsistency and uncertainty that would characterize the situation of Romania’s Jews during all

¹⁰¹ Lya Benjamin, ed., *Evreii din România între anii 1940-1944*, vol. 2, Problema evreiască în stenogramele Consiliului de Miniștri (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), p. 31.

but the last months of the Royal Dictatorship. In this matter as in others, Carol and his ministers were trying to balance between policies that might keep the increasingly assertive Nazi regime in Germany satisfied and policies that would enable Romania to retain a degree of credibility and its security arrangements with France and Britain. Carol was cracking down on the Iron Guard internally and resisting the Nazis diplomatically. A more aggressive stance toward the Jews might have provided some maneuvering room vis-à-vis the Germans, but Carol knew, based on the recent protests from Paris and London that Goga's policies had elicited, that clearly-defined new antisemitic policies would set off reactions there that he wanted to avoid.

As a result, no new antisemitic legislation appeared for well over two years of the "new regime." But the Royal Dictatorship continued to implement the "review of citizenship" called for by the PNC government's Decree-law No. 169, which remained in force. This resulted in 225,222 Romanian Jews being deprived of their citizenship. In many cases citizenship was lost not because the mandated procedures had not been followed when citizenship had been granted, but simply because the documentation available then had been lost or scattered, or because it was beyond the financial means of some families to assemble the necessary evidence. The law was implemented by local authorities that were more lenient toward the petitioners in some districts and more severe in others, thus introducing a high degree of anxiety and uncertainty into the process. Jews might be expelled from their positions in one administrative district, while in another district Jews who had lost their jobs or whose shops had been closed during the PNC regime were allowed to go back to work. Still, a large number of Jews were no longer able to earn a living when they lost their citizenship, and it was not unusual for state authorities at both the national and local levels to suggest to Jews that they might be better off emigrating "voluntarily."¹⁰²

While no new explicitly antisemitic laws were promulgated until August 1940, a series of administrative decisions and instructions gradually imposed greater separation and material hardship on the Jews. While in theory Jews were not excluded from the Front of National Rebirth (*Frontul Renașterii Naționale*), the only political "party" permitted in the newly declared Royal Dictatorship, in practice Jews could not gain admission. Responding to their requests was postponed, because it made little sense to admit Jews whose citizenship status was being

¹⁰² See, for example, the radio remark of Foreign Minister Grigore Gafencu on February 1, 1939, cited in Ancel, *Contribuții...*, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

reviewed, and in order not to unnecessarily strain relations with Germany over the Jewish issue. When the Front of National Rebirth gave way to the Party of the Nation (*Partidul Națiunii*) in June 1940, the situation became clearer. Members of the Iron Guard just released from prison were admissible into the new party; Jews were not. In September 1938, the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered that Jews who had lost their citizenship had to register as foreigners. Again, implementation of the order was inconsistent; but the humiliation was not. In Bukovina, Royal Resident Gheorghe Alexianu, who would later serve the Antonescu regime as governor of Transnistria, ordered Jews who had lost their citizenship to register and suggested that it would be appropriate for them to sell their property and businesses within fourteen days. He also banned the speaking of Yiddish in public, which made it more difficult for the Jews of the region to function professionally, survive commercially, or simply live normally.

Additional administrative measures reinforced the gradual “disengagement” to which Jews were subjected. Recipients of foreign university and professional degrees were required to seek recertification of their degrees in order to teach or practice their professions. Job applicants had to include documentation of their ethnic origin with their requests, encouraging the evaluators to make ethnicity part of their decision-making process. Because many Jews had been forced to study abroad to avoid becoming victims of Iron Guard and LANC youth group violence at Romanian universities and professional schools, this measure was especially damaging as well as demeaning for Jews. Restrictions were placed on Jewish participation in banking and accounting, pharmacies, publishing houses, and other fields of professional activity.¹⁰³

The Romanian government continued to hope that Jews would leave the country “voluntarily” as their conditions deteriorated. The government tried through diplomatic channels to encourage a cooperative effort for mass emigration of Jews from Romania, Poland, and other European countries.¹⁰⁴ As time passed, however, fewer and fewer Romanian Jews had the connections abroad or the resources necessary to emigrate. Moreover, the Evian Conference in July 1938 demonstrated just how few countries were prepared to receive even a modest number of Jews.

¹⁰³ On this period, see *ibid.*, pp. 111-120.

¹⁰⁴ See statement of December 31, 1938, by Foreign Minister Grigore Gafencu, cited in Benjamin, ed., *Problema evreiască în stenogramele Consiliului de Miniștri*, pp. 36-37.

Antisemitic violence during the first two years of the Royal Dictatorship was limited. The Iron Guard had been dissolved at the beginning of the new regime, as had the PNC's *Lancieri*. Interior Minister and later Prime Minister Armand Călinescu gave priority to preventing Legionary violence from upsetting the country's already difficult political situation. After Călinescu himself fell victim to Legionary assassins in September 1939, reprisals and arrests by the government took additional large numbers of Iron Guard members off the streets. Others found refuge in Nazi Germany.

This ambiguous but "survivable" situation for the Jews changed dramatically after the German defeat of France at the beginning of June 1940 and the Soviet ultimatum to Romania for the cession of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina at the end of the same month. With only Germany available as a possible shield against further territorial demands from Romania's neighbors, King Carol acted with a sense of urgency. The king called on Ion Gigurtu to serve as prime minister and help convert the authoritarian one-party state the king had installed two years earlier into a fascist-style dictatorship that would be acceptable to Nazi Germany. Gigurtu was an industrialist with strong German connections. He had served as minister of Industry and Commerce in the PNC government and was minister of Public Works and Communications in the government led by Gheorghe Tătărescu that was in place in June 1940. The king abolished the Front of National Rebirth and established the totalitarian Party of the Nation, with restricted access, in its place. He appointed three Iron Guard leaders, recently returned from their refuge in Germany, in addition to a group of former National Christian Party officials, to ministerial posts. Nichifor Crainic became minister of National Propaganda.

In the wake of the loss of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union, major incidents of antisemitic violence shook the relative physical security that Romanian Jews had enjoyed during much of the Royal Dictatorship. Romanian military units assaulted Jews throughout southern Bukovina following the spread of rumors that Jews had vilified Romanian troops as they withdrew from the ceded territories. Major assaults on Jews by military units and civilians took place in Dorohoi and Galati as well.¹⁰⁵

As part of its frantic effort to realign Romania's diplomatic position, the Gigurtu government quickly made it clear to the Nazi leadership in Berlin that it intended to change

¹⁰⁵ On antisemitic violence during this period, see Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-43; and Ancel, *Contribuții...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-227.

Romania's policies toward Jews to bring them closer to the German model. During a visit to Berlin in late July, Gigurtu assured both German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Hitler himself that Romania hoped to solve its Jewish problem "definitively" in the context of a German-led "total solution" for all of Europe. Gigurtu told Hitler that "he was determined to move ahead step by step with the process of eliminating the Jews."¹⁰⁶ On the delegation's return home, Foreign Minister Mihail Manoilescu, who had accompanied Gigurtu to Berlin, declared on July 30:

...Romanians cannot succeed in being masters of their own house, as they would like, unless the problem of the Jewish element in our country is resolved through categorical and decisive measures. In this regard we are determined to undertake serious and well planned measures, and to carry them out... In this way we will fulfill to a degree greater than ever before in our history the venerable slogan of Romanian nationalism: Romania for Romanians and only for Romanians.¹⁰⁷

The Gigurtu government began to consider concrete new actions against the Jews as soon as it assumed office.¹⁰⁸ Through a decree-law issued on August 9, 1940, it established a definition of Jews based on both religion (*rit*) and race (*sânge*), with either criterion sufficient to identify an individual as a Jew. Decree-law no. 2650 dramatically altered the juridical status of Jews, with little regard to whether they were Romanian citizens or not. Jews might be "Romanian citizens" (*cetățeni români*), but they could not achieve the status of "Romanians by blood" (*români de sânge*), and that distinction was sufficient basis to establish a regime of extensive legal discrimination. Jews were separated into three categories for the purpose of further regulating their status, but all of the categories were subjected to major restrictions on their political, civic, economic, and cultural activity. Jews were excluded from government office

¹⁰⁶ *DGFP*, document 233, Memorandum of Conversation between Gigurtu and German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, July 26, 1940; and document 234, Memorandum of Conversation between Gigurtu and Hitler, July 26, 1940.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Benjamin, *Problema evreiască în stenogramele Consiliului de Miniștri*, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁸ See the government's communique regarding "broad-ranging discussions" (*ample discutii*) of the principle elements of policies regarding "the solution of the Jewish problem" (*soluționarea problemei evreiești*), in *ibid.*, p. 49.

and other public functions, numerous professions, the boards of both public and private enterprises, and ownership of rural property or economic activity in rural areas. They were subjected to numerous additional restrictions that endangered their ability to earn a living. Jews could no longer adopt Romanian names, and, following the model of Germany's infamous Nuremberg Laws, conversion to Christianity provided little protection from the discriminatory measures aimed at Jews. The decree-law required the development of special regulations regarding education for Jews, from primary school through professional and post-graduate study.¹⁰⁹ A separate decree-law forbade intermarriage between Jews and "Romanians by blood."

In the few weeks that passed between the loss of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina—the beginning of the end of Greater Romania—and the establishment of the National Legionary State led by Ion Antonescu and Iron Guard leader Horia Sima in September 1940, the physical and economic security of Romanian Jews deteriorated rapidly. The day on which they would suffer the full cumulative fury of nearly a century of Romanian antisemitism was near.

Conclusion

With the benefit of history and hindsight, it should not have been a surprise that in the 1930s and 1940s large segments of the Romanian population accepted the antisemitism of the League of National Christian Defense, the National Christian Party, and the Iron Guard, and then either participated in or acquiesced to the murderous crimes committed by the Antonescu regime against the Jews. It should have been no surprise that the intellectual icon Mircea Eliade, who gained international acclaim for his spiritual study of eastern religions, had extreme right-wing roots in Greater Romania. Nor that Viorel Trifa, having become the Romanian Orthodox Archbishop of the United States, was stripped of his American citizenship in the 1970s because of his leadership role in the Iron Guard rebellion and antisemitic pogrom in Bucharest in January 1941. Nor that in France in 2003 it became impossible to honor an accomplished scientific figure of Romanian origin, N.C. Paulescu, because Paulescu had authored flagrantly antisemitic tracts in Romania in the 1920s. Nor that a staunchly xenophobic and antisemitic political party

¹⁰⁹ For the extensive discriminatory provisions of the "Decree-law on the Juridical Status of Jews Residing in Romania" (Decret-Lege Privitor la Starea Juridica a Locuitorilor Evrei din România), see the introduction (referat) presented by Minister of Justice Ion Gruia and the text of Decree-law no. 2650 in Benjamin, *Legislația Antievreiască*, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-50.

pretended to political power—and even the presidency of the country—in post-communist Romania.

The political and intellectual roots of these tragic realities stretch back to the emergence of modern Romania. For well over 100 years many of the country's most respected political and cultural leaders embraced antisemitism and with consistency and perseverance inserted it into the rich mixture of action and inspiration that came to constitute modern Romanian political culture and modern Romanian intellectual life. It was not possible during the communist era to undertake the difficult task of critically examining the pillars of Romanian consciousness who made antisemitism part of the Romanian mainstream. Much of the work required to understand fully the legacies left by these individuals still remains to be done.

Understanding the deep roots of antisemitism in Romanian politics and culture will make it easier to confront the factual record that is emerging regarding Romania's role in the Holocaust from the hundreds of thousands of Romanian Holocaust-era documents that are now available for research. The Holocaust did not arrive in Romania like a meteorite from outer space. Nor did it arrive from Nazi Germany. The rise of fascism and Nazism in Western Europe may have increased the confidence of Romanians with radical antisemitic views, and may have increased the chances that they might one day play a role in government. But their antisemitism was not dramatically altered by those developments. Hitler's rise did not substantially change Romanian antisemitic ideology. Hitler's rise opened the door to the possible implementation of antisemitic programs that had been discussed in principle for decades. The antisemitism of the National Christian Party and the Iron Guard, the genocidal regime of Ion Antonescu, and the lengthy history of Holocaust denial in Romania since World War II all rested firmly on the foundations of a century of antisemitism preached at the highest levels of Romanian political and intellectual life. The separation, expropriation, deportation, and murder of Jews were not new themes in the 1930s and 1940s. The Holocaust had deep Romanian roots and must be dealt with as an integral part of Romanian political and cultural history.