BRILL

Fascism 1 (2012) 65–90

FASCISM
JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE FASCIST STUDIES
brill.com/fasc

The Iron Guard and the 'Modern State'. Iron Guard Leaders Vasile Marin and Ion I. Moţa, and the 'New European Order'

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Abstract
Historians and literary scholars still working in a Cold War paradigm cast Romanian Fascism as a form of reactionary resistance to liberal modernity, and not as a competing modernizing discourse and drive. Nevertheless, in a 1933 programmatic article, the Legionnaire leader, ideologue, and 'martyr' Vasile Marin wrote that political concepts such as 'the Right,' 'the Left,' and 'extremism' lost their relevance in Romania, as well as in Europe. They had been replaced by a 'totalitarian view of the national life,' which was common to Fascism, National-Socialism, and the Legion. This new 'concept' would allow Romania to 'overcome, by absorbing them, the democratic and socialist experiences and would create the modern state,' – a 'totalitarian' state. The present article aims to consolidate the conceptual gains of 'new consensus' historiography, which views the Iron Guard as part of a global revolutionary movement that was spurred by the practice of a political religion promising a 'national rebirth' or a 'complete cultural' and anthropological 'renewal.' Far from militating for national autarchy and populist-agrarian conservatism, the two Legionnaire leaders discussed in my article sought to align Romania with the modernizing, industrializing drive of Western European Fascism.

Keywords
fascism; Romania; Nazi Germany; New European Order; anti-Semitism; Iron Guard; violence; modernization

Introduction

On March 9, 1937, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the leader of the Romanian fascist movement Legion of the Archangel Michael, wrote to philosopher Emil Cioran. In the letter, Codreanu thanks and congratulates Cioran for his 'remarkable book,' *The Transfiguration of Romania* (1936), a manifesto for national renewal:

DOI 10.1163/22116257-00201002

> I warmly congratulate you for having expressed in such magnificent words all the tremendous feelings that you are experiencing. You wish to see our people trade the rags they have been wearing for such a long time for new regalia. The people desire nothing else. And this is why you (and others like you) were born to this people, engendered from its very essence, to write about these things. All of us, fighters and writers, are driven not by petty impulses, but by the might of this Romanian volcano which is about to break its bonds and erupt toward the sky. A fighter for the magnificent future of this country sends his congratulations.[1]

For historians and literary scholars still prisoners of a Cold War paradigm a Cold War paradigm that presents Romanian fascism as a form of reactionary resistance to liberal modernity (and not as a competing modernizing discourse and drive), this letter is difficult to situate. According to this paradigm, Cioran 'saw himself as a revolutionary, not as a reactionary.' As such, he 'could hardly sympathize' with the 'Legion's traditionalism,' which was characterized by an 'Orthodox Christian orientation,' 'xenophobia,' and 'peasantism.'[2] Whereas Cioran 'dreamed an urban, industrial, and European country' when writing his *Transfiguration of Romania*, the Legionnaires 'favored a rural and autarchic Romania.' While Cioran embraced a 'pro-European, modernist stance' and delivered a 'critical judgment of Romania's past,' the Legionnaires were *passéistes*, backward-looking individuals. Cioran acknowledged the historic merits of democracy; he merely pointed out that objective social and economic developments (i.e., progress) required replacing democracy with a 'national collectivism' a dictatorial regime that would be able to 'put the squeeze on the country,' and unleash a Romania with the 'population of China and the destiny of France.' In contrast, the Legionnaires were purely and simply 'anti-democratic and anti-liberal' – in a bigoted, petty way. Finally, Cioran admired Hitler and Mussolini, as well as Lenin and the Soviet Union, while the Legionnaires were 'crudely anti-communist' and not as 'sensitive' as Cioran was to 'human suffering, to the misery and poverty of the masses.'[3] Cioran's relationship with the Legion is thus cast as a conflict between modernity

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1) Corneliu Zelea Codreanu to Cioran, in *Buna vestire de Duminică* 2, January 12, 1941, 9, quoted in Bogdan Aldea's translation of Marta Petreu. *An Infamous Past: E. M. Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005, 229-30. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

2) Keith Hitchins. 'Modernity and Angst between the World Wars: Emil Cioran and Yanko Yanev.' *The Identity of Romania*. Keith Hitchens. Bucharest: The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 2009, 197.

3) Petreu. *An Infamous Past*. 224-230. In the same vein, see: Sorin Antohi. *Civitas imaginalis: Istorie şi utopie în cultura română*. Bucharest: Litera, 1994, 222; Zigu Ornea. *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999, 122-130; Ilinca Zarifopol. *Searching for Cioran*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, 91-122.

(Cioran) and pre-modernity (the Legion) – as a conflict between violence justified by progress and violence as 'the absence of modernity.'[4]

Nevertheless, in a 1933 programmatic article, the Legionnaire leader, ideologue, and 'martyr' Vasile Marin wrote that such political concepts as 'the right,' 'the left,' and 'extremism' had died in Romania, as well as in Europe. They had been replaced by a 'totalitarian view of the national life,' which was common to fascism, National Socialism, and the Legion. This new 'concept' would allow Romania to 'overcome, by absorbing them, the democratic and socialist experiences and would create the modern state' – a 'totalitarian' state.[5] Codreanu's socially conscious letter and Marin's modernist enthusiasm highlight the relevance of the pioneering attempts of several scholars to place the Legion[6] within the framework of the 'new consensus.' This 'new consensus' defined fascism as a global revolutionary movement spurred by the practice ('living dangerously,' 'sacrificially') of a political religion that promised a 'national rebirth' or a 'complete cultural' and anthropological 'renewal.'[7]

The present article aims to consolidate the conceptual gains of 'new consensus' historiography by discussing the ideology of the two most important figures in the Legion after the 'Captain,' Corneliu Zelea Codreanu: the lawyer and publicist Ion I. Moţa (1902-1937), who was Codreanu's brother-in-law, and Vasile Marin (1904-1937), a lawyer, political machine builder, and ideologue with significant academic credentials.[8] Both Moţa and Marin died in January 1937, while fighting on Franco's side in Spain. Their deaths on the front for a 'Christian' cause, rather than as a result of engagement in the political assassination of Romanian officials (like other Legionnaire 'martyrs'), did more than merely illustrating the way in which the Legion's ideas were meant to be 'lived.' They also legitimated these ideas: exemplary Legionnaire lives reflected

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4) Mahmood Mamdani. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004, 4.

5) Vasile Marin. 'Extremismul de dreapta.' *Axa*, February 5, 1933 (reprinted in Vasile Marin. *Crez de generaţie*. Bucharest: Majadahonda, 1997, 179-184).

6) See especially Constantin Iordachi. *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the « Archangel Michael » in Inter-war Romania*. Trondheim: Studies on East European Cultures & Societies, 2004; and Traian Sandu. 'La génération fasciste en Roumanie: récrutement, doctrine, action.' *Histoire, Economie, Société*, n°3, 2003, 437-449; Ibid. 'Droite française, fascisme italien : influences croisées sur la Garde de Fer.' *Analele Universităţii Bucureşti*, 6 (2004), 61-77; Ibid. 'De l'antisémitisme au fascisme en Roumanie: naissance du Roumain nouveau régénéré par la révolution de droite.' *Analele Universităţii Bucureşti*, 10 (2008), 30-46.

7) See Roger Griffin. '"Consensus ? Quel consensus ?" Perspectives pour une meilleure Entente entre spécialistes francophones et anglophones du fascism.' *Vingtième siècle: Revue d'histoire*, n° 108 (2010), 53-70.

8) Nae Ionescu recognized in Vasile Marin an 'authority in Legionnaire doctrine,' in his foreword to Marin's *Crez de generaţie*, 13.

exemplary Legionnaire ideas.[9] In the second part of the article, I therefore examine two cultural diplomatic episodes involving Moţa, in order to analyze the way in which the ideological tenets analyzed in the first part motivated the Legion's leaders to steer their movement in the direction of Nazi Germany rather than in that of Fascist Italy. I argue that Marin and Moţa saw their movement as part of a fascist New European Order to be brought about by a wave of 'national revolutions.' The Legion was thus a national franchise of 'international fascism.'[10] Far from militating for national autarchy and populist-agrarian conservatism, the two Legionnaire leaders sought to align Romania with the modernizing, industrializing drive of Western European Fascism. Roger Griffin defined this form of Fascism as 'a genus of modern, revolutionary, "mass" politics which, while extremely heterogeneous in its social support and in the specific ideology promoted by its many permutations, draws its internal cohesion and driving force from a core myth that a period of perceived national decline and decadence is giving way to one of rebirth and renewal in a post-liberal new order.'[11]

'Which kind of revolution?'

Rejecting accusations of right-wing extremism, Marin argued that the Legion was the only socially conscious (i.e., liberal or progressive) alternative to the nineteenth-century liberal 'oligarchic' system, which was both unjust and obsolete. Taking his cue from Italian Fascism, National Socialism, and such French ideologues as the 'non-conformist' (anarcho-syndicalist turned '*maurrassien de gauche*' turned left-wing 'corporatist') Georges Valois,[12] Marin argued that the Legion was not an expression of the far right, but of the left

9) For the exemplarity of Marin's and Moţa's deaths, see Mircea Eliade. 'Ion Moţa şi Vasile Marin.' *Vremea* 24 January, 1937, 3; Nicolae Iorga. 'Doi băieţi viteji.' *Neamul Romanesc*, 19 January, 1937.

10) Richard Griffiths. *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Fascism*. London: Duckworth, 2000, 122-125.

11) Roger Griffin, ed. *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*. London: Arnold, 1998, 14. For a discussion of Griffin's pithy definition, see Stanley G. Payne. *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, 3-19. See also Roger Eatwell. 'Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism.' *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 4 (1992) 2, 161-194; Ruth Ben-Ghiat. *Fascist modernities: Italy, 1922–1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001; Emilio Gentile. *The struggle for modernity: nationalism, futurism and Fascism*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003; Claudia Koonz. *The Nazi Conscience*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2003; Wolfgang Schivelbusch. *Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006; Philip Nord. *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

12) Zeev Sternhell. *La droite révolutionnaire: Les origines françaises du fascisme 1885-1914*. Paris: Seuil, 1978, 360-371.

(or, more precisely, the revolutionary left): 'Soaked in dynamism, our movement is revolutionary. The Legion promotes the creative spirit in all the fields of public life and sincerely rejects conservatism. The Legion organizes the conquest of the future with the help of all the productive categories of the nation and does not represent a reaction toward the past [...] Like the Fascists and the National Socialists, we are closer to what is called the "Left" than to what is called the "Right".'[13]

Marin reinforced his argument by mounting a dual social and economic critique of the 'right' (i.e., classical nineteenth-century liberalism). Quoting Émile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society*, Marin argued that the liberal right was both unfair toward the working classes, whom the 'oligarchy' exploited and savagely repressed in case of revolt, and obsolete, unable to keep the pace with modern, 'corporatist' economic reality.[14] Whereas the nineteenth-century liberal state had been based on class and individual interests, the modern fascist and communist state defended the 'collective' interests of the entire nation. Condemning the Romanian liberal bourgeois state's bloody suppression of the revolts staged by miners (August 1929) and railway workers (February 15-16, 1933), Marin argued that liberal, right-wing philosophy had led to the deterioration and de-legitimation of the state by using it for private or class purposes – as a repressive tool against the working classes.[15] Representing the 'totality' of a nation, the state had to become a 'totalitarian state.' In other words, it should be a state that would 'severely' protect the interests and regulate the actions of an entire nation.[16]

By using these terms, the Legion clearly demonstrated its intention to destroy the organic, historically mediated (and thus elastic and reasonably tolerant) social ties and ways of life that had developed over time. This would be done in order to recast them into a more uniform, militarized way of life that would no longer be able to accommodate 'inefficiency,' idle pastimes, and political or 'racial' undesirables (e.g., communists, liberals, or Jews). As such, the Legion was the first Romanian political movement to seek to impose its own aims on the whole of Romanian society.[17] The increasingly sophisticated division of work spurred by modern economic development, with its emphasis on 'organized activities,' subordinated the individual to the 'collectivity,'

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13) Marin. 'Extremismul de dreapta.' In *Crez de generaţie*. 181.

14) Vasile Marin. *Fascismul. Organizarea constituţională a statului corporativ italian* (*1933*). Bucharest: Majadahonda, 1997, 15-16.

15) Ibid. 'Extremismul de dreapta.' In *Crez de generaţie*. 183; Ibid. 'Ciocoiaşul.' In *Crez de generaţie*. 159.

16) Ibid. 'Între democraţie şi statul totalitar.' In *Crez de generaţie*. 190-192.

17) 'We have to make sure that the entire Romania becomes Legionnaire. The new Legionnaire spirit must reign. The whole country must be ruled according to the will of the Legionnaires' (Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. *Cărticica şefului de cuib*. Point 43).

thereby relegating the individual to the status of a mere tool (or pawn) of the modern, collectivist, totalitarian state. The myth of a sovereign individual with intrinsic, natural rights, who could be pitted against the liberal, 'individual' state, which was obligated to protect those rights, would serve only the reactionary right/liberal oligarchy.[18] Totalitarian states rejected this political anthropomorphism in the name of a collective spiritualism. Like Cioran, Marin saw both the fascist and the Soviet enterprises as embodiments of the new state 'of the organized masses' – a modern, progressive expression of a 'realist and socialist order' that transcended the obsolete individualism of classical political economy.[19] The battle for the spoils of the liberal state would be fought between fascist corporatism and 'Leninist collectivism.' Although both were, as collectivist states, projects in modernization, fascist corporatism was preferable to 'Leninist collectivism,' as the former was predicated upon the harmony of national interests, and not upon class struggle.[20]

As a political expression of the entire nation, the state had to be cultural, and not civilizational. In this regard, Oswald Spengler influenced Marin in the same way that he had influenced Cioran, whose *Transfiguration of Romania* represented the flourishing of his own Spenglerian readings.[21] According to Marin, cultures were national and particularistic, while civilizations were international and depersonalized. It was therefore impossible to cast a national state's 'personality' into the legal, mechanical, international terms of nineteenth-century liberal political philosophy. A nation had to reject the international, impersonal, and uniform liberal-civilizational state in order to embrace the national and particularistic corporatist-cultural state, which was modern because it responded to modern challenges by representing modern realities. Culture healed social wounds by bringing the individual, who had been alienated by civilization, back into communion with a restored community.[22] Marin considered the Legion a modern revolution, as it called upon Romanians to reject the civilizational state – the 'imported state' that had been foisted upon them in the nineteenth century by the 'Freemason international' – in order to embrace the modern cultural state.[23]

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18) Marin. *Fascismul*. 15, 25.
19) Ibid. 15; Ibid. 'Între democraţie şi statul totalitar.' In *Crez de generaţie*. 191.
20) Ibid. *Fascismul*. 11, 14. Ibid. 'Extremismul de dreapta.' In *Crez de generaţie*. 182-84; Ibid. 'Între democraţie şi statul totalitar.' In *Crez de generatie*. 191-92.
21) Petreu. *An Infamous Past*. 78-93.
22) See Thomas P. Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-39: Parties, Ideology and Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, 33, 94, 214-15, 253-56.
23) Vasile Marin. 'Stat şi cultură' (*Revista mea*, January 1, 1936). In *Crez de generaţie*. 133-140; Ibid. 'De la formalismul democratic la naţionalismul constructiv' (*Axa*, October 1, 1933). In *Crez de generaţie*. 166-71; Ibid. 'Naţiunea împotriva statului de import' (*Axa*, February 5, 1933). In *Crez de generaţie*. 176-78.

Like those of Cioran, Moţa, Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, and other fascist revolutionaries, Marin's call for a cultural state reflected a craving for History.[24] Spengler's influence was decisive in this regard as well. For Spengler, History consisted of the rise and fall of major cultures, and he posited a strong connection between culture and the national state.[25] Similarly, Marin wrote that a nation could develop a major culture only through a state. Because Romanians did not have a strong state, they did not have a significant culture, which meant that they did not have a history. Far from celebrating the virtues of Romania's traditional 'minor' peasant culture, Marin considered such a culture as a sign that his compatriots were historical outcasts, subsisting on a biological level, but non-existent at a 'spiritual,' cultural (i.e., Historical) level. The villages – the peasant world – were not important in themselves, but only as a resource, as a sort of gene pool for creating the modern culturally and genetically enhanced *uber*-Romanian.[26] Like the rest of the population, Romania's villagers were treated by Marin as a kind of raw material – a dark, anonymous human soil that had to be molded and propelled into History by the Iron Guardist 'elite of the pure and intransigent ones.' Marin placed all of his hopes on the 'elite of our generation, the few, the chosen, the stubborn and the united,' who would be capable of making the 'crowds' adhere to the national revolution.[27]

The second way of missing History was 'civilizational,' which Marin also understood in Spenglerian terms. For Spengler, a culture decayed when it developed certain 'universal techniques,' which were universally valid but which had no national moorings. The best example of a country missing its modernity (e.g., of a country sliding out of History through the civilizational trapdoor) was Soviet Russia. Marin noted that, whereas czarist Russia had belonged to History by virtue of its culture, the Soviet Union was merely a civilized, technological desert. This decay had taken place because what had started as a potentially epoch-making national revolution had been hijacked by Jews and demoted to a 'mere' communist revolution (i.e., a sterile civilizational affair).[28] In the early 1930s, however, Marin noted with

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24) See Constantin Noica. 'Istoria românească şi România vie'. *Universul literar*, July 27, 1940. Reprinted in *Eseuri de duminică*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992, 53-56; Mircea Eliade. 'O revoluţie creştină.' *Buna Vestire*. June 27, 1937.

25) Petreu. *An Infamous Past*. 84-93.

26) Marin. 'Stat şi cultură' (*Revista mea*, January 1, 1936). In *Crez de generaţie*. 133-34. On eugenics as a way to modernize Romania, see Maria Bucur. *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002, 65; Marius Turda. '"To End the Degeneration of a Nation": Debates on Eugenic Sterilization in Inter-war Romania.' *Medical History* 53 (2009) 1, 77–104.

27) Marin. 'Naţiunea împotriva statului de import.' In *Crez de generaţie*. 178.

28) 'Behind all these movements with anarchical, internationalist character are precisely those beasts that have managed to ruin/compromise even one of the greatest acts of the social world:

satisfaction that, while fascism was becoming increasingly socialist, Soviet socialism under Stalin was becoming increasingly 'national', thus proving that modernity and political realism were forcing the convergence of the two systems.[29]

Anti-Semitism

An integral component of this fascist historic teleology, Marin's strident anti-Semitism was not a sign of any reactionary retreat to the past, but of a revolutionary eagerness to embrace History and to master modernity. Marin feared that Jewish heterogeneity might spoil the national unity required by the creation of a powerful state capable of fostering a strong culture that would propel Romania into History.[30] In this vision, the physical and the cultural nourished each other and, for Marin, History was the territory of the Nietzschean superman. Marin's anti-Semitism was not influenced solely by F. Nietzsche, however, but also by H. Stewart Chamberlain, Richard Wagner, and Arthur de Gobineau, authors whose anti-Christianity was virtually indistinguishable from their anti-Semitism.[31] The most famous Romanian to popularize this literature was A.C. Cuza, who founded the anti-Semitic National Christian Defense League (LANC) in 1923. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and his father Ion Zelea Codreanu, as well as Moţa, were LANC members in 1927, when Corneliu Zelea Codreanu broke with Cuza to found the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Cuza focused on the unity between pure race, blood, and religion. He wrote about the various ways in which the 'Judaic spirit' of the Old Testament corrupted the Aryan Christianity of the New and proposed eliminating the Old Testament from the Christian canon.[32]

From Chamberlain, Wagner, and Nietzsche, Marin borrowed the idea that the 'Jewish race' was characterized by a 'materialism' that corrupted the idealism of the superior Aryan race and that hampered its capacity to manifest its vitality through continual self-renewal.[33] He then grafted these ideas onto his

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the Russian revolution'. Marin, 'Pentru ce suntem antisemiţi?' *Cuvântul studenţesc*, March 18, 1924. In *Crez de generaţie*. 103.

29) Marin. 'Stat şi cultură.' 136-37.

30) For Cioran's similar misgivings expressed in his *Transfiguration of Romania*, see Petreu. *An Infamous Past*. 136.

31) Marin. 'Pentru ce suntem antisemiţi?' (*Cuvântul studenţesc*, March 18, 1924). In *Crez de generaţie*. 101-104.

32) See A. C. Cuza. *Naţionalitatea în artă*. Bucharest: Minerva, 1908; Leon Volovici. *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991, 22-30.

33) Marin. 'Pentru ce suntem antisemiţi?' In *Crez de generaţie*. 103.

concept of modernity, defined in 'spiritualistic,' 'idealistic' terms, contrasting with the reactionary and 'materialistic' politics. In diametric opposition to the feeble, tolerant, 'Jewish' materialism politics, the Spenglerian 'Legionnaire morality' aimed to create the 'Faustic,' Gnostic man as spirit liberated from matter: 'The man who wills, who submits to that *it must*, the man of boundless horizons, intolerant with himself and with the others, the man capable of practicing the will of the masters or, as Nietzsche would say, the man of the will to power [...] The direction of his activity is toward the distant and the future. To seek the soul imprisoned in matter in order to free it, giving it thus an immortal form of life, this is the Legionnaire morality.'[34]

In all of his writings, Marin celebrated the new, Legionnaire 'aristocracy of deed' (*fapta*), which had emerged from 'the Nietzschean principle of existence fecundating the spirit' of the new generation. This Nietzschean conception of humanity in turn led to a radical historicization of ethics, as well as to a belief in the 'ethical value of the force.'[35] Morality was sanctioned by the collective force, and right or wrong was judged according to collective interests and evolutionary laws.[36] This was the belief that justified the Legion's numerous political assassinations, otherwise contrary to a Christian 'slave morality.'[37] A fervent Nietzschean, Marin did not acknowledge the fact that Nietzsche saw Christianity as the embodiment of a putatively Jewish 'slave morality,' or that Chamberlain, Wagner, and Gobineau saw Christianity as the cultural expression of a particular race. For Marin, Eastern Orthodoxy helped to preserve the Romanian 'national being,' although it inhibited the development of a 'purely national conscience' that would be capable of freeing Romanians from their minor cultural status.[38] Like the Nazi ideologues and theologians who had hijacked Lutheranism for their political religion by purging it of dogmas, Codreanu, Marin, and other Legionnaire leaders saw Christian Orthodoxy as a cultural expression of the Romanian 'race' or 'nation,' – a quasi-tribal religion that somehow served as a mere stepping stone to the new political religion of the Legion. In Point 13, Paragraph 3 of the *Nest Leader's Manual* (*Cărticica şefului de cuib*), Codreanu evoked the 'Legionnaire faith' (*credinţa legionară*) and required that Legionnaire members of the Parliament 'preach

34) Vasile Marin. 'Note.' In *Crez de generaţie*, 56-57; see Roger Griffin. 'The Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimation of Totalitarian Regimes in Inter-War Europe.' *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3 (2002) 3, 24-43.

35) Vasile Marin. 'Crez de generaţie: Ideologia faptei' (*Axa*, January 22, 1933). In *Crez de generaţie*, 164-165.

36) For the roots of this philosophy, see Sternhell. *La droite révolutionnaire*, 24-25.

37) Iordachi. *Charisma, Politics and Violence*. 139.

38) Marin. 'Note,' *Crez de generaţie*, 57-58. With regard to the Nietzschean anthropology of fascism as opposed to the Christian anthropology of conservatism, see Payne. *A History of Fascism*, 16.

the new faith' in at least five or six departments (*judeţe*). For his part, Marin referred to Legionnaires as the 'pioneers of a new religion.'[39]

Marin's anti-Semitism was thus ideological, principled, and ontologically rooted in racism. Marin noted that the Iron Guard's actions were prompted by 'the conscience of a superiority of race – the same conscience that had caused the "*Civitas Romanus*," 2000 years before, to spit with disgust in the face of the wretched Jew crawling along the walls of the eternal city like a beast.'[40] The radical, ontological alterity of the Jews could not be bridged or transformed in any political or cultural way.[41] Racism was not a consequence, but a cause of economic anti-Semitism. Like Moţa, Marin rejected any right-wing corporatism or left-wing peasantism that failed to mandate racial purification. Marin argued that, because Romania's population included peasants of Hungarian, Bulgarian, Russian, and 'even Jewish' ethnic origin (he once noted sarcastically that 'in Bessarabia, there have even been Jews spotted plowing the land'), a purely social-economic solution to Romania's problems was impossible, given the overlap between social class and other ethnic distinctions that were of much greater importance.[42] Marin noted that Cuza's discriminatory measures that aimed to increase the number of Romanians in particular industries or professions were insufficient, as Jews were 'falsifying the sense' of Romanian national life, national culture, and national morality.[43]

Far from being 'defensive', contingent, and economic, Moţa's anti-Semitism was also principled, having roots in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Moţa had personally translated this book from a French version and published it in Romania, with numerous notes compiled from such anti-Semitic Western authors as the Catholic cleric Ernest Jouin, the editor of the *Revue internationale des Sociétés Secrètes* (which had been launched in 1912).[44] Moţa's anti-Semitism was rooted in his firm belief in an international Jewish-Freemasonic conspiracy the defeat of whom required international, apocalyptic opposition. Moţa's universal 'Jewish problem' obviously had local, Romanian, bearings.

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39) Marin. 'Răboj' (*Axa*, November 19, 1933), In *Crez de generaţie*, 110. See also Ilie Imbrescu. *Apostrofarea unui teolog. Biserica şi Mişcarea Legionară*. Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 1940, 208, 229-230. For the Nazi case, see Doris L. Bergen. *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996, 102-106. On political religion, see Emilio Gentile. 'Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation'. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 5 (2004) 3, 326-375, and Ibid. *Politics as Religion*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006, 140.

40) Marin. 'Pentru ce suntem antisemiţi?' In *Crez de generaţie*, 104.

41) Marin. 'Statul naţional în raport cu mişcarea naţională' (1936 speech). In *Crez de generaţie*, 76.

42) Ibid. 77.

43) Ibid. 76.

44) *'Protocoalele' înteleptilor Sionului, traduse direct din ruseşte în franţuzeşte şi precedate de o întroducere de Roger Lambelin, în româneşte de Ion I. Moţa, student*. Orăştie: Libertatea, 1923.

Nineteenth-century Romanian romantic nationalist writers had pitted the rural, noble, and archaic Romania against the new, modern, urbanized, capitalist, and cosmopolitan Romania, which was represented by Jews or other ethnic minorities (e.g., Ottoman Greeks, otherwise known as 'Fanarioţi') who disrupted the traditional way of life. Like Marin, however, Moţa complained that Jews constituted an obstacle to the modernization of Romania. Anything but a Romantic reactionary, Moţa claimed the benefits of modernization, industrialization, and the French Revolution for Romanians. He credited the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution with radical political and economic improvements in the life of all nations, a point he shared with Marin, who saw the French Revolution as a 'national revolution' with positive results for other European states.[45]

Moţa and Marin's understanding of the French Revolution as a 'national revolution' confirms George L. Mosse's thesis regarding the complex ways in which fascists appropriated the French Revolution as a harbinger of nationalism.[46] As argued by Moţa, the French Revolution had destroyed medieval feudalism and had aimed to bring about a 'regime of freedom.' This freedom could thrive only in a national state that would represent the national interest, and not class privilege. The Industrial Revolution, with its technological improvements and 'machinist' wonders, also had the potential to 'improve the material state of the entire nation.' Industrialization spurred cultural progress, which was 'the only goal of human existence.' Moţa complained that 'this great work of the previous century was, and still is, poisoned, falsified, and diverted from its true aims,' largely through 'the nefarious and destructive influence of the Judaic spirit.' The 'luminous' perspectives opened by the nineteenth century, the age of nation-building and machine-building, were 'falsified,' and its 'benefits' were stolen from the people. 'An infernal ghost penetrated everything: it was the Judaic spirit,' which Moţa argued was striving to establish 'Jewish international domination.' This 'Judaic penetration' was entirely responsible for the fact that Romania and other Christian nations had lost their traditional culture without acquiring a 'higher' one, without having had the opportunity to 'enhance their spiritual culture' through the application of technology. In Moţa's view (which differed from that of the nineteenth-century Romantic, *passeist* writer Mihail Eminescu, whose verses he quoted in the title of his article), industrialization had nothing to do with what he perceived to be the moral decay of Romanians. Liberalism offered nothing more than a failed, stunted modernization: 'If railways brought us better and more beautiful songs to replace those they extinguished, we would not

45) Marin. 'Statul naţional în raport cu mişcarea naţională.' In *Crez de generaţie*, 71-72.
46) George Lachmann Mosse. 'Fascism and the French Revolution.' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24 (1989) 1, 5-26.

have cursed them in our songs (*doine*), but we would have celebrated the railways with happy dances (*hore de bucurie*). This would have happened if the fruits of this productive advance had come into our possession.'[47]

Any notion that Moţa was mired in the past – that he was mounting anti-technological attacks similar to those of the German conservative revolutionary (as expressed in Friedrich Georg Jünger's *The Failure of Technology*) or of the French Catholic anti-fascist conservative Georges Bernanos – is thus unfounded. While paying tribute to the 'ancestral' virtues of such medieval figures as 'aprodul Purice',[48] Moţa was a modernizer who did not reject progress – just the Jews. In fact, Moţa liked to claim that his 'solution' to the 'Jewish question' was 'a scientific system based on sound principles.' This solution, the '*numerus clausus*', was only one step toward the 'true solution: *numerus nullus*.'[49] Initially circulated in the 1920s, during the revolts staged by ethnically Romanian students who were concerned about the number of ethnically Jewish students enrolled in the universities (these revolts launched the political careers of both Moţa and Codreanu), the idea of reducing or completely eliminating the Jews from all sectors of national life became Moţa's panacea. The new, 'Greater Romania' had to be 'one and indivisible in spirit and in territory,' and it had to belong only to Romanians, as defined in ethnic and not civic terms – with one exception. Moţa accepted the Transylvanian Saxons as full-fledged Romanian citizens, as their 'German cultural élan and their rebirth into an Aryan and Christian spirit is a legitimate ideal.'[50] Like Marin, Moţa considered that democracy and 'old-fashioned' liberalism had allowed Jews to destroy Romania under the cover, or 'fiction,' of Romanian citizenship. Since both the Jewish minority and democracy subverted the desired political unity that was expected to stem from ethnic unity, however, it followed that there could be no democratic solution to the 'Jewish question,' as such a solution would encourage factionalism. In order to get rid of democracy one had to get rid of the Jews, and vice versa.

It thus follows that, like Marin, Moţa could not accept corporatism as such, as corporatism offered no satisfactory solution to the 'Jewish question.' In 1933, Moţa rejected the corporatist doctrine of Mihail Manoilescu in the name of anti-Semitism. Manoilescu was a nationalist economist and politician, who was widely admired in fascist economic circles. Moţa nevertheless warned

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47) Ion I. Moţa. 'Ce ne daţi în locul 'cântecelor care pier'?' *Cuvântul studenţesc*, 4 martie 1924. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*. Sibiu: Editura Totul Pentru Ţară, 1936, 43-47.

48) Moţa. 'Ce ne daţi în locul "cântecelor care pier"?,' 'Răspuns unei întâmpinari?' *Pământul strămoşesc*, September 15, 1927. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*, 85-92.

49) Ion I. Moţa. 'Răspuns? La invitaţia dlui Prof. G. Bogdan-Duică.' *Pământul strămoşesc*, January 1, 1928. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*, 115-125.

50) Ion I. Moţa. 'Hitlerismul germanilor din România?' *Axa*, October 15, 1933. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*, 176-182.

that Manoilescu's ideas regarding the corporatist reorganization of the Romanian state could compromise the national rebirth. In 1933, Manoilescu's corporatism, like that of Mussolini at that time, had no place for anti-Semitism. According to Moţa, the first and foremost goal of the Romanian state should have been that of 'conserving the actual ethnic structure of the State, and even strengthening it by the superior, improved organization of the corporatist State.' A corporatist Romania, however, with guilds and professions dominated by Jews, was not to be desired. Only after a previous 'modification of the ethnic structure of the State' could corporatism hope to serve the interests of Romanians.[51] Whereas Manoilescu saw corporatism as offering a way to reform the political and economic life of Romania in order to solve its social problems, Moţa rejected Manoilescu's corporatism as a Marxist way of 'annexing the spiritual character to the material form.' In other words, he considered it a way of ensuring that spiritual matters would depend upon a material infrastructure. Postulating the autonomy of culture from material factors nevertheless did not prompt Moţa to consider the various cultural ways of escaping biological determinism. In the same breath, therefore, he advanced the argument that corporatism would be viable only after a 'previous and almost total ethnic purification' had taken place. This 'purification/cleansing' would be accomplished by a 'regime with great authority, and the purification would then be merely perfected and maintained through the instauration of the corporatist phase.' The only way to resolve Romania's problems was to work out clearly 'the necessary measures of ethnic purification and defense of the organic national ensemble – in other words, to determine the measures for the practical realization of the renewed Romanianism.'[52]

Moţa was confident that purging the Jews from all aspects of national life would usher in the 'great age of Romanian nation's ascension toward the pinnacle of its worldwide influence and brilliance.' Romania had a special role to play, as the whole of 'Christian civilization' was 'endangered by a Jewish-Freemasonic worldwide conspiracy,' which the 'old' and 'declining' Western world was unable to parry. The balance of power would then shift to the East: 'The center of saving ideas, of victorious vital forces will have to be or could be this Latin Orient of Europe.' In 1932, Moţa expressed his belief that the hidden 'energies' and 'saving sacrifice' of the Latin (Roman) Orient (i.e., of Romania) could help save European civilization. This obviously implied certain forms of international cooperation. Far from embracing isolationism, Moţa stated that

51) Ion I. Moţa. 'Faza precorporativă?' *Axa*, September 6, 1933. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*, 183-185.
52) Ion I. Moţa. 'Sub povara remanenţelor?' *Axa*, December 7, 1933. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*, 186-195.

the League of Nation's manifest aim of making any future wars impossible was 'Very noble, a very appealing idea, especially to the superior spirit of the Aryan, of the Christian lover of the ideal, of spiritual purifying distillation.' Like the rest of modernity, 'Aryan' international idealism had become corrupted by the Jewish-Freemasonic 'universal domination,' as indicated by the fact that 'there is so much talk about the United States of Europe.'[53] Moţa nevertheless made clear that the Legion's 'integral nationalist' revolution would open to Romania the same glorious path that had been taken by Germany and by Italy, two countries that rejected communism in the name of 'integral nationalism.'[54]

Between the Fascists and the Nazis

Moţa's participation at the fascist congress organized by the *Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma* (CAUR; Committees of Action for the Universality of Rome) in Montreux, Switzerland (December 16-17, 1934), together with his 1934-1936 correspondence with the German news service and propaganda agency *Welt-Dienst*, or *Service Mondial* (World Service), offer the opportunity to analyze what the Legionnaire leadership believed to be the Legion's role in the fascist New European Order. The relevant sets of documents have received only scant attention until now.[55] They indicate that the Legion strived to be recognized at the European level as the only legitimate and trustworthy Romanian embodiment of the 'national revolutionary' spirit – as the natural ally and supporter of a New European Order. In Moţa's vision, this Order would be a united anti-Semitic front, capable of successfully addressing the 'Jewish question.' In his Montreux speech, Moţa argued that this 'question' could be solved only if Nazis and Italian Fascists set aside their differences.

The fact that Moţa articulated this point of view in his speech at the 1934 CAUR congress is particularly salient, given that the Italian Fascist organizers of the meeting had carefully avoided inviting any NSDAP representatives. In his speech, Eugenio Coselschi (president of both the CAUR and the reunion) argued that his organization had invited only 'movements.' The NSDAP,

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53) Ion I. Moţa. 'Liga Naţiunilor. Idealul, viciile şi primejdia ei.' *Pământ strămoşesc*, November 1, 1932.

54) Ion I. Moţa. 'Stăpânirea furtunii?' *Pământ strămoşesc*, November 1, 1932. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*, 132-134.

55) For background information on Moţa's participation at the CAUR congress and the previous and subsequent Fascist/Iron Guardist dialogue and connections, see Armin Heinen. *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihail' miscare sociala si organizatie politica: O contributie la problema fascismului international*. Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2006, 300-302.

he argued, was already a party-state (like the Italian Fascists), thus having no need to make itself known at such meetings, which were organized for the benefit of fascist movements that had not yet seized power.[56] The congress was actually part of Mussolini's attempts to export fascism.[57] The years 1933-34 marked Mussolini's loudest attempts to distance himself from Nazi racism by repeatedly and publicly rejecting eugenics and the theory of an Aryan/German race.[58] Interested in a muscular cultural nationalism that would allow him to 'Italicize' his empire, Mussolini regarded Hitler's biological racism as a sign of sheer cultural backwardness: 'Thirty centuries of history allow us to look with supreme pity on certain doctrines preached beyond the Alps by the descendants of those who were illiterate when Rome had Caesar, Virgil, and Augustus.'[59] Mussolini had a number of close Jewish collaborators; hundreds of Jews had participated in the famous 1922 March on Rome that had brought Mussolini to power and, until the 1938 introduction of anti-Jewish legislation, 'the percentage of Jews in the Fascist party was higher than in Italian society as a whole.'[60]

Given this context, the Montreux congress had no place for the Nazis, as its Italian Fascist organizers were not concerned with anti-Semitic policies, but with 'discovering […] the basis of that spiritual, moral, political, and economic unity whose necessity and urgency for the salvation of Europe is recognized by everybody.'[61] The organizers were interested in fostering a New European Order based on fascist corporatism, and not on anti-Semitism.[62] In his

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56) 'In Italy, like in Germany, the Party is synonymous with the State; they are one and the same thing.' Comité d'action pour l'universalité de Rome. *Réunion de Montreux 16-17 decembre 1934-XIII*. Rome: Bureau de Presse des Comité's d'Action pour l'Universaliteé de Rome, 1935, 34.

57) For the Nazi-Fascist rivalry in Eastern Europe, see Jerzy W. Borejsza. 'Die Rivalität zwischen Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus in Ostmitteleuropa.' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 29 (1981) 4, 579-614. See also Marco Curzi. *L'Internazionale delle Camicie Nere: I CAUR, Comitati d'azione per l'universalità di Roma 1933-1939*. Milano: Mursia, 2005, 75-145; Stefano Santoro. *L'Italia e l'Europa Orientale: Diplomazia culturale e propaganda 1918-1943*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2005, 107-121.

58) Philip V. Cannistraro. 'Mussolini's Cultural Revolution: Fascist or Nationalist?' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 7 (1972) 3-4, 115-139; Aaron Gillette. *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*. London: Routledge, 2001, 35-49.

59) Boris Shub, Ed. *Hitler's Ten-Year War on the Jews*. New York: World Jewish Congress, 1943, 283.

60) See Stanley G. Payne. *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*. London: Routledge, 1996, 209, 240; Peter Egill Brownfeld. 'The Italian Holocaust: The Story of an Assimilated Jewish Community.' *The American Council for Judaism*, Fall 2003.

61) Eugenio Coselschi. *Réunion de Montreux*. 28.

62) Beate Scholz. *Italienischer Faschismus als 'Export'-Artikel (1927-1935): Ideologische und organisatorische Ansätze zur Verbreitung des Faschismus im Ausland*. PhD diss. University of Trier, 2001, 167-174; Benedetta Garzarelli. 'Fascismo e propaganda all'estero: Le origini della Direzione generale per la propaganda (1933-1934).' *Studi Storici*, 43 (2002) 2, 477-520; Arnd Bauerkämper. 'Transnational Fascism: Cross-Border Relations between Regimes and Movements in Europe, 1922-1939.' *East Central Europe*, 37 (2010) 214–246.

presidential address, Coselschi borrowed the words of the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes in order to impress upon the participants that Europe would never recover its pre-WWI 'serenity' as long as all those responsible remained unaware that the future should be conceived not 'in the restrained framework of nations, but in the larger one of continents.' Only 'Europe' – a 'new Europe,' a continent that would manage to 'renew' the 'inner/spiritual climate' of its nations – could hope to 'open for the entire world that age of serenity, mutual trust, and cohesion to which the entire universe aspires.'[63] 'Civilization' and 'progress' depended upon defending the 'West.'[64] The defense of the West, however, presupposed the identification of a 'unitary' principle that would put an end to 'the old Europe, that of democracy, of liberalism, of parliamentarianism, the Europe of 1789,' without succumbing to the lures of Bolshevism, which was an 'illusion' based on 'materialism and slavery.' The ancient, yet ever new palingenetic Rome – that 'marvelous Rome, which enjoys the miraculous privilege of dominating matter' (i.e., both plutocratic and Bolshevik materialisms) – would once again rise to the challenge. With the support of the participating organizations, who had previously confirmed their adherence to CAUR, it would become a 'universal beacon' for all people desiring peace and liberty.[65] The solution that Coselschi advertised in the name of Rome was fascist corporatism. The corporatist-unionist state would put an end to democratic parliamentarianism and liberal economics. According to Coselschi's argument, while the liberal political and economic system (which was based on the rights and interests of the individual) led to social unrest and national decay, fascist corporatism organized workers, owners, and liberal professions into unions that could be grouped in 'corporations' controlled by the state. Private and public interests would thus be in harmony with each other, and the common good would triumph.[66] Coselschi argued that this 'revolutionary' solution would incorporate all nations adopting it into a 'persistent and progressive rhythm,' while endowing the 'youth of all Europe' with a true 'revolutionary conscience.'[67] As a 'spiritual movement' aimed at the transfiguration of matter, Coselschi noted, the fascist revolution was defined by intransigency and the continuous strengthening of the revolutionary conscience. Both served to burn all the 'bridges that still link us to yesterday's world,' with its old, bourgeois weaknesses and vices. If Marin celebrated the new Legionnaire

63) Coselschi. *Réunion de Montreux*. 30-31.
64) Eduardo Gonzalez Calleja. 'Los Intellectuales Filosfascistas y La "Defensa de Occidente".' *Rivista de Estudios Politicas*, 81 (July-September 1993), 129-174.
65) Coselschi. *Réunion de Montreux*. 31-32.
66) See also, John P. Diggins. 'Flirtation with Fascism: American Pragmatic Liberals and Mussolini's Italy.' *The American Historical Review*, 71 (1966) 2, 487-506; Peter J. Williamson. *Varieties of Corporatism: A Conceptual Discussion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 83-103.
67) Coselschi. *Réunion de Montreux*. 36.

aristocracy of the 'deed' (*fapta*), Coselschi celebrated a new order ruled by a single law: 'The law of work, of its glorification, and of its reward; that law imposes the conscious solidarity and concord of all workers, of all producers.'[68]

This ideal could not be achieved without international solidarity among those fighting in the name of fascism. Coselschi pointed out that fascism was not international and 'free-Masonic' like Marxism, but national and nationalist. Fascism was also 'universal,' however, in that it could be adapted to different national contexts all over the world. Coselschi defined fascism as a movement whose goal was to rebuild a unitary, strong, and disciplined state on a new base of law and justice, of harmony between social classes, and of coordination and solidarity instead of competition between producers. Based on this definition, he argued that the 'universal' fascist idea could serve to reinforce the national idea by encouraging each people to honor its own traditions. In the name of this ideal, Coselschi concluded his discourse by calling for the unity of all Europe and voiced his conviction regarding the 'final victory' against 'brutal materialism.'[69]

The delegates to the congress supported Coselschi's optimism, and Moţa also started his speech by declaring that he had always been preoccupied by the problem of a 'new unity' and that everybody should 'do everything in their power to prevent the fascist world of tomorrow from being divided among different factions fighting each other.' Signaling his adherence to fascist internationalism, Moţa proclaimed, 'The problem of the universality of Rome has to concern us more than anything else'. He agreed that corporatism, 'such as Mussolini has conceived it,' had universal appeal and that it served as a common bond between all the fascist movements represented at the Montreux congress. Moţa asserted that, beyond corporatism, the unity of the international fascist movement could be further strengthened by finding common solutions to other common universal problems (e.g., 'the Jewish problem'). In the case of Romania, the 'Jewish problem' was 'very grave,' and it would certainly 'endanger the future unity of the Fascist world.'[70] Like Coselschi, Moţa stipulated that it would be necessary to adapt corporatism to local circumstances. In Romania's case, this adaptation should involve nothing less than the deportation of its Jews. At the same time, this local adaptation would require international solidarity and action, given that Mota saw the 'Jewish problem' as an international problem, which could only be resolved by an international solution. Moţa ultimately participated in a congress that aimed to export fascism as the only possibility for 're-establishing order and unity in

68) Ibid. 37-39.
69) Ibid. 40-42.
70) Moţa. *Réunion de Montreux*. 48-9.

Europe,'[71] with the goal of finding an outlet for the anti-Semitism of the Legion, sending an international signal of the Legion's commitment to racism, and trying to convince other European fascist leaders that one of the priorities of the universal fascist front should involve finding a solution to the 'Jewish problem.' The decline of 'Europe' could be resolved by addressing the 'Jewish problem' in the spirit of a new, fascist Europe. As Moţa reminded the participants, this Europe would rest upon the ideas of 'justice' and 'order.' Moţa therefore urged the congress to 'pronounce itself unequivocally' on the 'Jewish issue.'[72]

Moţa's appeal split the congress and catapulted the Romanian into the position of faction chief.[73] The Belgian Paul Hoornaert, the Irish general Eoin O'Duffy, the Portuguese Eça de Queiroz, and the Greek George S. Mercouris insisted that, in their countries, the Jewish population was either very small or professionally and civically very well assimilated, that Jews had performed their patriotic duty on the front in WWI, and that they were very productive citizens. The Austrian Rinaldini declared that the corporatist structure of the Austrian state was functioning satisfactorily, even with Jewish delegates. The Italians Bortolotto, Basile, and Coselschi reiterated Mussolini's declaration that, from the Italian Fascist point of view, 'there was no Jewish question in Italy, only an Italian question.'[74] On the other hand, Moţa had the support of the Belgian Somville, the Dutch Arnold Meijer, the Swiss Fonjallaz, and the Danish Clausen (whose argument was based on Alfred Rosenberg's theories). Therefore, the congress adopted a motion stating that the 'nefarious actions' of those Jews engaged in activities or political organizations that subverted patriotism and the 'Christian civilization' and were 'harmful' to the 'material and moral interests of their countries,' should be met with opposition of the most stern form. The motion nevertheless stated that 'the Congress declares that the Jewish question cannot be solved by a universal campaign of hate against Jews.'[75]

Moţa and the protocols of Zion

Moţa regarded this motion as a victory, and he used it to legitimize the Iron Guard as a pillar of a Pan-Aryan Union in his correspondence with Georg de Pottere, a former diplomat who had founded the private 'news' and

71) Arnold Meijer, leader of the Dutch 'Black Front' and a supporter of Moţa's motion at the Montreux congress, in *Réunion de Montreux*, 75.
72) Moţa. *Réunion de Montreux*. 81-2.
73) Cuzzi. *L'internazionale delle Camicie nere.* 143-145
74) *Réunion de Montreux*. 82-83.
75) *Réunion de Montreux*. 87.

propaganda agency *Welt-Dienst*, or *Service Mondial* in 1933, in cooperation with the retired colonel Ulrich Fleischhauer. Based in Erfurt, *Welt-Dienst* was dedicated to 'the resolution of the Jewish question' through a 'full Zionism' that included the establishment of a Jewish state in Madagascar.[76] Between 1933 and 1939, when Alfred Rosenberg took over *Welt-Dienst*, the agency received funding from various Nazi institutions, including Rosenberg's Foreign Office of the Nazi Party, Goebbels's Ministry of Propaganda, or Himmler's SS.[77] Like Moţa, Fleischhauer and de Pottere were obsessed with the idea of a Jewish international conspiracy, or 'underground,' which they did their best to counter with a 'Pan-Aryan Anti-Jewish Union,' holding secret annual congresses attended by delegates from as many as twenty-five countries.[78] In order to accomplish their highly secretive task, Fleischhauer and de Pottere used code names and secret addresses. Although Moţa signed his letters using his real name, he addressed his correspondent mostly as 'P.,' and 'Monsieur Farmer,' and only accidentally as '*Cher Monsieur de Pottere*.' The letters sent to Moţa were signed with cryptic initials (e.g., 'O.T.,' 'P.,' 'M.' or 'F.M.').

Between 1933 and 1935 (i.e., during most of the epistolary exchange between Moţa and *Welt-Dienst*), the German organization was involved in the famous Bern Trial that pitted a number of Swiss Jewish organizations against the Nazis, who were distributing the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Switzerland.[79] With financial support from Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda, *Welt-Dienst* supported those defending the authenticity of the *Protocols*, and therefore their right to distribute it. De Pottere asked Moţa to recommend an 'expert' who would testify to the authenticity of the *Protocols* (which Moţa had personally translated in Romanian and published in 1923). Second, de Pottere asked Moţa to unite with other nationalist and anti-Semitic groups in Romania, particularly with Cuza's LANC. Third, he asked Moţa for information about any possible Jewish origins or Masonic connections among Romanian cabinet members. Finally, he invited Moţa to participate at the *Welt-Dienst* congresses, and he requested Moţa's assistance in creating a *Welt-Dienst* distribution network in Romania.

Moţa was more than happy to help 'Monsieur Farmer' with the Berne trial, and he congratulated his 'friend' for his 'arduous work' on behalf of their common cause.[80] As a 'competent person,' Moţa recommended

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76) See Magnus Brechtken. *Madagaskar für die Juden: Antisemitische Idee und politische Praxis 1885-1945*. Munchen: Oldenbourg, 1998, 43-74.

77) Carmen Callil. *Bad Faith: A Forgotten History of Family, Fatherland, and Vichy France*. New York: Vintage, 2007, 509-511.

78) Callil. *Bad Faith*. 137-75 *passim*.

79) Michael Hagemeister. 'Russian Emigrés in the Bern Trial of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* 1933-1935).' *Cahiers Parisiens*, 5 (2009), 375-391.

80) Ion I. Moţa. *Corespondenţa cu 'Serviciul Mondial'* (*1934-1936*). Rome: Armatolii, 1954, letter of June 15, 1935, 19.

Ion C. Cătuneanu, a professor of Roman Law at the University of Cluj. At the beginning of the 1920s, under the influence of the anti-Semitism of *Action Française*, Cătuneanu had cooperated with Moţa to found the nationalist organization *Acţiunea Românească* (The Romanian Action), which merged with LANC in 1925. Furthermore, Cătuneanu had published articles supporting the authenticity of the *Protocols* and the importance of their Romanian translation.[81] Moţa recommended Cătuneanu as a man whose 'imposing bearing' and 'competence,' along with his wealth and desire to fight for 'our common cause' might impel him to take the trouble (to make the 'sacrifice,' as Moţa put it) to come and testify at the Bern process.[82] Immediately thereafter, de Pottere wrote to Cătuneanu and informed Moţa that Cătuneanu's presence was crucial, as Romania was not among the fifteen countries represented by 'experts' who would testify on behalf of the Nazis at the Bern trial. In addition, Romania's presence in that united front against 'Jewish imperialism' was very important, given that Romania was at the forefront of that fight.[83] The desire to unite all 'Aryans' in the common struggle against the 'Jewish international underground' presided over and explained all of the other topics of this correspondence. If the *Welt-Dienst* asked the Iron Guard to unite with Cuza's anti-Semitic party, therefore, it was precisely due to the necessity of matching the Jewish conspiratorial unity with a united Aryan front, setting aside what separated them for the sake of what united them – their common enemy, the Jews. Although Moţa shared this point of view, his letters show him struggling to impress upon de Pottere the fact that only the Iron Guard would be a reliable partner for this Pan-Aryan Union. Furthermore, the Montreux congress offered Moţa a good chance to explain to de Pottere why a union with Cuza's LANC would be impossible.

First, Moţa stated clearly that the Iron Guard was an anti-Semitic movement. Invited by de Pottere to attend the *Welt-Dienst* congress on August 25, 1934, Moţa answered that the Legion had only meager financial resources, depending upon the dues paid by its members. The organization therefore lacked the funds necessary for undertaking such a journey ('10-15 thousand Lei'), and neither Moţa nor any other Iron Guard representative would be able to participate in 'your (at our) reunion.'[84] Moţa went on to assure de Pottere that the 'Romanian anti-Semitic movement would not remain without a representative,' however, as Cuza would be participating. Moţa was convinced that Cuza would present the Jewish problem 'in the same manner as us.' The

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81) See also I. C. Cătuneanu. 'Provenienţa jidovească a Protocoalelor.' *Înfratirea românească. Revista naţională de ştiinţă şi chestiuni sociale*, 1 (1925) 7, 1-4, and 'Pieirea ta prin tine Israele.' *Înfratirea românească*, 2 (1925) 3, 2-4.

82) Moţa. *Corespondenţa cu 'Serviciul Mondial.'* Letter of February 5, 1934, 17.

83) Ibid. Letter of February 1, 1935, 29.

84) Ibid. 13.

differences between Cuza and the Legion involved the solution to the Jewish problem, which Cuza had otherwise helped to define. Moţa warned de Pottere that Cuza 'saw the solution in overly simple, mechanical terms, as a simple motion of the State mechanism (and even while maintaining democracy and the State resulted from the French Revolution).' In contrast, the Iron Guard rejected democracy and regarded 'as the only possible solution one intimately connected to an action aimed at the moral rebirth of our people, and to the total reform of our actual democratic state.'[85] Indeed, in 1928, Moţa wrote articles in which he took pains to distinguish between Cuza's 'correct' doctrine regarding 'Jewish economic parasitism,' and his claims that this issue could be resolved by instituting a system of quotas within the limits of an otherwise democratic state. As I have already indicated, Moţa attacked both Cuza's economic doctrine and Manoilescu's corporatism, seeing in both a form of materialism.[86] In a 1933 article, Moţa continued to claim that Cuza's 'highly competent' 'scientific conclusions' regarding the 'Jewish question' were correct, although only the Legion had conceived of a proper solution. Cuza sought to solve the 'Jewish problem' by applying the 'lukewarm method of democratic-parliamentarian reforms.' To Moţa, this method would be incapable of 'stirring the depths of the national soul in order to raise it to the decisive fight and the heroic world of the national and moral revolution, of a fighting nation that takes the way of no return and with only two exits: death or victory.' The Legion's 'solution' consisted of the 'military discipline' imposed by Codreanu (which, according to Moţa, had been 'systematically rejected' with 'humoristic charges' by 'our old professor' Cuza), and in an unprecedented 'total sacrificial spirit' and 'drive against the old world,' which were inspired by Codreanu. The result of this new type of political struggle, a 'cheerful sacrifice' for the sake of a final victory, would be palingenetic: 'The total renewal of not only the ethnic structure of the State, but also of its political organization, together with the spiritual renewal of the Romanian people's spirit in an heroic and moral sense.' Compared to Cuza's proposal, therefore, the Legion had proposed a total solution of the 'Jewish question' that would not only discriminate or eliminate Jews, but that would also mold a new spiritual structure for the Romanian people – a 'spirit' capable of fully embracing a non-liberal modernity and making its mark on History. The 'Legionnaire spirit,' Moţa proclaimed, 'proved to be the spirit of the future and the essence that would bring victory,' as confirmed by the success of the revolutions staged by Hitler and Mussolini (whose movement also shared the 'new'/'revolutionary spirit of the

85) Ibid. 13, 43.
86) Moţa. 'Da, sunt nelămurit.' *Pământ strămoşesc*, September 15, 1928. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*, 65-67.

"big breaks" [with the past] [...] the essence of Mussolini's and Hitler's triumphs').[87]

In other words, the Legion's break with Cuza's LANC was not due to the fact that the Legion was a Christian movement while LANC was racist. The divorce was prompted by the Legionnaire leadership's belief that LANC was too democratic, and a mere tool of survival for the nineteenth-century 'mechanical' ideas and politics that the Legion's vitalist reactionary modernism had rejected as 'old.' The impossibility of a union between the Legion (which represented what Moţa had called the 'the revolutionary Legionnaire Aryan spirit'; in other words, orderly revolution) and LANC did not stem from theological considerations since, as I have already indicated, Marin was heavily indebted to the racist unorthodox or anti-Christian literature promoted by Cuza. It stemmed from the fears of the Iron Guardist leadership that such a union would 'weaken' the Legion's fight and potential to achieve a definitive solution to the 'Jewish question.'[88] Moţa was ready to accept non-Christian allies as long as they recognized the existence of a 'Jewish question,' and as long as they conceived of its 'solution' in the same totalitarian terms as he (Mota), Marin and Codreanu did.

Reporting to de Pottere about the Montreux congress in a letter dated February 5, 1935, Moţa congratulated himself for having raised the Jewish question at Montreux, thereby forcing the delegates to face a problem that most of them had 'ignored.' According to this letter, the debate sparked by Moţa's speech was 'the essential work of this congress.' The Jewish question, which was 'essential for us,' (i.e., for the organizations of both Moţa and de Pottere), was of great importance for the 'creation of an anti-Jewish universal front.'[89] Mota informed de Pottere that, at Montreux, attempting to 'serve the anti-Semitic cause to the best of my abilities,'[90] he had insisted on reminding the organizers to invite German organizations, especially the *Service Mondial*, to any future reunions. Moţa believed that it would be easier to arrive at an 'Italian-German alliance' regarding the Jewish question if nobody insisted on relating anti-Semitism to racism, but would instead leave some room for 'spiritualist' considerations. In his own speech, Moţa had avoided imposing 'any unitary philosophical point of view regarding the essence of the problem (especially on the question of racism).' Although Moţa was a racist, he insisted that he did not see religion as merely a cultural expression of a certain race: 'As for myself, I confess, I am a racist, with some qualifications, including the fact that religion is not based on racial specificity, a specificity that religion can have in its

87) Moţa. 'Legiunea şi L.A.N.C.' *Axa*, October 1, 1933. Reprinted in *Cranii de lemn*, 146-166.
88) Ibid. 163. For other examples of 'Aryan' innate superiority, see pp. 70-71.
89) Moţa. *Corespondenta cu 'Serviciul Mondial.'* Letter from February 5, 1935, 15.
90) Ibid. Letter from June 15, 1935, 17.

external forms, in its ritual, but not in its content which is not of human essence but which came to us by revelation and not by the genius of the races.' Moţa believed that the racist point of view was valid only with respect to the distinctions between Jews and non-Jews: 'Excepting the Jews, the search for the purity of the national blood need not go beyond a certain level of moderation, as the assimilation of non-Jewish peoples is a true fact.' Mota also rejected 'forced de-assimilation,' which he considered 'unnatural.'[91]

De Pottere was satisfied with Moţa's anti-Semitic activity, and he reminded the Romanian Iron Guardist, 'The motto of our Pan-Aryan movement is "Union makes the Power". This union requires collaboration, reconciliation,' in other words, a common 'agenda.' Although de Pottere conceded that every country involved in the anti-Semitic fight had the right to preserve an 'absolute independence' with regard to their 'special interests' (or even with regard to the 'form' their common fight might take),[92] he agreed with Moţa that the 'Jewish question' had no 'democratic,' 'mechanical' solution, of the type that Moţa attributed to Cuza. On the contrary, de Pottere believed that only a national revolution would suffice for the task: 'This solution is intimately related to an action aimed at the rebirth of all our peoples, as well as the total reform of the democratic State.'

To prove his trust in and approval of Moţa, de Pottere sent him a copy of a long 'confidential' letter that he had recently sent to one of the leaders of LANC, Vasile Trifu. In a subsequent letter, de Pottere urged Moţa to contact Trifu and discuss the possibility of a union between the Iron Guard and LANC (presumably along the lines envisioned by Moţa and de Pottere).[93] De Pottere agreed with Moţa about the unproductive nature of the lukewarm anti-Semitism of the fascists gathered at Montreux. De Pottere denounced the fascist distinction between 'good Jews' and 'bad Jews,' arguing that such distinctions served only to falsify the 'problem' and to allow Jews to 'infiltrate' the movements that were supposed to solve the 'Jewish problem.' For this reason, de Pottere concluded that nothing good could come of an alliance with fascist leaders like Mussolini. De Pottere also agreed with Moţa that religion was not 'based on racial specificity,' as it had to do with the 'transcendent,' while 'race' and 'blood' had to do with matter. He also maintained that racial purity theories concerned only the distinction between Jews and non-Jews. De Pottere thereby soothed Moţa's Romanian nationalist pride by telling him that 'there is no Romanian or German race, there is only the Aryan race (divided in several nations), and the Jewish race.' This statement echoed a current debate

91) Ibid. 15-16.
92) Ibid. Letter of June 26, 1934, 26.
93) Ibid. Letter of September 11, 1934, 27; Letter of May 6, 1935, 32.

among German scholars who distinguished between a brutal 'mastery' and the more sophisticated 'leadership' role that Germany should assume towards Romania and other non-Jewish occupied or allied European nations.[94]

De Pottere congratulated Moţa for the manner in which he had addressed the 'Jewish question' at Montreux, admitting that he had also been aware of 'the feeble parts of the exaggerated racism.' Given the urgency of the situation, however, it was absolutely imperative for them to continue their insistence on raising this question in whatever way possible, as only the 'Jewish question' would require the 'frontist movement of regeneration,' thereby justifying their existence.[95]

Given that Rosenberg was also trying to promote the union of all the anti-Semitic, pro-German forces in Romania at the time, de Pottere may have urged Moţa to contact Trifu at the request of Rosenberg,[96] a veteran of the 'Jewish question,' who had lectured on the topic in 1918. The most prominent Nazi ideologue, Rosenberg would eventually take over the *Service Mondial* network in 1939, becoming Minister of the Occupied Eastern Territories in 1941. In 1942, he advanced the idea of organizing a pan-European anti-Jewish congress, in order to 'win over the "educated class" in the rest of Europe.'[97] De Pottere's insider trading clearly helped the Legion, as Cuza had participated at the *Welt-Dienst* congress and subsequently accused the Legion of Masonic complicities due to Moţa's participation at the 1934 Montreux congress. At stake was the ownership of the anti-Semitic brand in Romania. Since they had come into power, the Nazi leaders had preferred to negotiate with Cuza and to strengthen their influence in Romania by working directly with King Carol II. On the other hand, the dogmatic anti-Semite de Pottere had probably been financed by the Nazis to maintain unofficial contact with the leadership of the Legion, as well as with other potential collaborators. This relationship could also function as a bargaining chip within the context of the complex negotiations between the Nazis and Carol II, as indicated by the diplomatic scandal provoked by the participation of the German and the Italian ambassadors at the funerals of Moţa and Marin in Bucharest on February 13, 1937.[98]

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94) Mark Mazower. *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe*. London: Allen Lane, 2008, 246.
95) De Pottere. *Corespondenta cu 'Serviciul Mondial.'* Letter of February 1, 1935, 30-31.
96) Heinen. *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihail.'* 303-11.
97) Mark Mazower. *Hitler's Empire*. 356, 368-69; Timothy Mulligan. *The Politics of Illusion and Empire: German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1942-43*. New York: Praeger, 1988, 39-40.
98) Rebecca Haynes. *Romanian Policy towards Germany, 1936-40*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000, 32-33; Callil. *Bad Faith.* 499

Conclusion: Justifying Hitler's New European Order

The entire episode allows us to conclude that, even though historians have not discovered much evidence to support the idea that the Legion acted as a Nazi 'fifth column' in Romania, Moţa and other Iron Guardist leaders actively sought a German alliance. They did not recognize any incompatibility between their own manifest Christianity and the German brand of anti-Semitism. As Moţa argued, because the 'Jewish question' was a universal problem that would require a universal solution, it would be necessary to form a common international anti-Semitic front. Such a 'solution' would have to be 'total,' thus implying totalitarian politics, along with ethnic, social, and cultural engineering for the creation of a new State and a new humanity. Democratic political processes were entirely rejected as obsolete, and replaced with modern political religions capable of transforming the life of entire nations and molding them into a complete 'whole.' Despite national divisions existing within the 'Pan-Aryan' movement envisioned by de Pottere and contemplated by Moţa, there was also a fundamental racial unity. Moţa agreed that, after the 'Jewish question' would be solved, it might become possible to find a common economic model in the corporatist state. Moţa felt that the ideals of the Legion had been confirmed by the 'national' victories in Italy and Germany. If he had any reservations about any of the two European states, it was not about Nazi Germany, but about Mussolini's Italy, whose Fascism was not very keen on anti-Semitism.[99] Finally, national unity and the 'New European Order' were seen as the only solutions for the decline of the European civilization. As such, the new Aryan (i.e., national or European – in other words, racial) order was not so much the product of a new humanity as its harbinger – a precondition for obtaining a purer race and ushering in a national 'rebirth,' which would culminate with cohorts of ethnically enhanced human beings.

Appropriating the 'discourse and semiotics of Christian Orthodoxy'[100] and traditional Romanian peasant costumes, the Legion fashioned its own political religion – a 'new faith.' It thus effectively acted as purveyor of modernity, much like the Nazi Party in Germany, the Fascist Revolutionary Party in Italy, and the governments of Vichy in France, all of which combined stylized Christian or 'traditionalist' themes with a drive toward modernization. The 'revolutionary' character of the Legion was reinforced by the fact that, with

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99) Indeed, in 1936, Manoilescu would become president of the Romanian CAUR, an organization that refused to accept any representative of the Iron Guard, despite Codreanu's wish to have a member on the inside. See T. I. Armon. 'Fascismo italiano e Guardia di Ferro.' *Storia Contemporanea* 3 (1972), 505-548.

100) Iordachi. *Charisma, Politics and Violence*. 163.

the exception of a few months between September 5, 1940 and January 21, 1941, when they shared the power with Marshal Ion Antonescu, the Legion spent the 1920s and 1930s in opposition to – or being hunted by – the authorities. This situation only accentuated the Legion's Manichaean discourse of national renewal, juxtaposing the 'young' against the 'old' generation, the national revolutionary forces against the democratic-bourgeois reactionary forces, and the pure against the corrupt. The legion itself distinguished between an 'old,' stale, rhetorical nationalism (i.e., the liberal nationalism centered on the creation of a democratic national state) and the Legion's 'revolutionary nationalism,' which aimed to produce a nation strong enough to sustain a modern state. The Legion did not shun modernity; it welcomed it as a chance to build a truly national state – a state that would be the unhampered cultural expression of an ethnically pure nation. This would confirm their place within the family of European fascisms, defined by Robert Paxton as 'a system of authority and of management which promises to strengthen the unity, the energy, and the purity of a modern community.'[101]

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Alice Conklin, Patricia Lorcin, Abderrahmane Moussaoui and his TASI 2011 fellows at the University of Minnesota for their comments and suggestions.

[101] Robert Paxton. 'Les fascismes: essai d'histoire comparée.' *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 45 (January-March 1995), 7.