The Ultrationalist Newsroom: Orthodox “Ecumenism” in the Legionary Ecclesiastical Newspapers

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The present paper discusses the anti-Greek Catholic and anti-Jewish attitudes of some Orthodox clergy as reflected in the interwar legionary press. By making reference to several newspapers (Legiunea, Predania, Glasul Strămoșesc) the article sheds light on the political mobilization of the legionary Orthodox clergymen and intellectuals in support of the xenophobic agenda regarding other denominations (especially the Greek-Catholics) and religious groups (the Jews) in interwar Romania.

Keywords: *Orthodox Church, interwar Romania, anti-ecumenism, Iron Guard, newspapers, anti-modernism, fascist activism*

The aim of the present contribution will be to shed light on legionary Orthodox clergymen's anti-ecumenical activism through the lenses of their newspaper articles edited during the interwar period. Although there is an ever growing literature about the Romanian Orthodox Church's interactions with various Christian groups, the present contribution focuses entirely on the anti-Greek Catholic or anti-Jewish attitudes displayed by various legionary clergymen through their press articles.¹ Furthermore, by making use of three newspapers (*Legiunea*, *Predania*, and *Glasul Strămoșesc*) edited mostly by legionary Orthodox priests, the article provides the reader with an insight on how the legionary clergymen internalized the legionary message in the early stages at the beginning of the 1930s (*Legiunea*) or during the short-

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¹ For the Romanian Orthodox Church and its interwar ecumenism, see: Mihai Săsăujan, “Romanian Orthodox Theologians as Pioneers of the Ecumenical Dialogue between East and West: The Relevance and Topicality of their Position in Uniting Europe”, in: Thomas Bremer (ed.), *Religion and Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe. Encounters of Faiths*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan 2008, p. 152-155; Kaisamari Hintikka, “The Pride and Prejudice of Romanian Orthodox Ecumenism”, in: Jonathan Sutton, Wil van der Bercken (eds.), *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe*, Leuven, Peeters 2003, p. 455-463; Bryn Geffert, *Eastern Orthodox and Anglicans. Diplomacy, Theology, and the Politics of Interwar Ecumenism*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press 2010, p. 201-207.

lived National Legionary State (*Glasul Strămoșesc*). *Predania* presents as an exception in both the legionary newspapers and journals because of the approach of its editors.² By lambasting both the ethnic (especially the Jews) and denomination minorities (mostly the Greek-Catholics), these Orthodox clergymen emerged as carriers of the legionary message among the Orthodox priesthood, avidly read in Orthodox religious milieus. Although there were several attempts to map the relevance of journalism and newspapers for social mobilization and the spread of propaganda among various social strata by the legionary press, the study of ecclesiastical journals remains a road not taken in the Iron Guard's historiography.³

The paper will be shaped into four main sections. The first discusses the status of the Orthodox Church and the problematic relationship between the state and other religious denominations. I will argue that it was actually the signing of the Concordat with the Vatican (1927) by King Ferdinand I (1865-1927) that ignited the first spark and bred resentment towards democracy and the institutions of the liberal state among the Orthodox clergy.

Exacerbated by the economic recession (1930-1932), the constant inter-confessional tension in Transylvania among the Orthodox and the Uniate Church set off a huge debate regarding which denomination fit better with the Romanian nation. Launched in 1930 by a number of consecutive articles written by Nae Ionescu in *Cuvântul*, the argument with the Roman-Catholic intellectual Iosif Frollo (1886-1966) regarding which denomination (the Orthodox or the Uniate) better represented the Romanian ethnical specificity had a huge impact on the minds of Orthodox clergymen. This ongoing discussion led many Orthodox clergymen, disenchanted with the benefits of party-politics and democracy, to side with the fascist Iron Guard.⁴

² Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Der orthodoxe Klerus in Rumänien und die extreme Rechte in der Zwischenkriegszeit", in: Aleksandar Jakir, Marko Trogrlč (eds.), *Klerus und Nation in Südosteuropa vom 19. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang 2014, p. 187-214; Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth. Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press 2015, p. 28-32; Radu Harald Dinu, *Faschismus, Religion und Gewalt in Südosteuropa. Die Legion Erzengel Michael und die Ustaša in historischen Vergleich*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz 2013, p. 208-214.

³ The legionary press was previously analyzed by R. Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, p. 121-141; Valentin Săndulescu, "'Sămânța aruncată de diavol': Presa legionară și construirea imaginii inamicilor politici (1927-1937)", in: *Studia Universitatis Petru Maior. Historia* 7 (2007), p. 163; Carmen Escu Müller, *Evaluări ale opiniei publice românești asupra fascismului italian (1922-1945)*, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut 2016, p. 172-175.

⁴ For his articles debating with Nae Ionescu, see: Iosif Frollo, *Romînism și Catolicism*, Bucharest, Bucovina 1931.

The second part focuses on the impact of the Legionary movement in the ecclesiastical milieu in southern Transylvania through the eyes and articles of a fresh graduate of Sibiu's Orthodox Academy, Fr. Valeriu Beleuță (1909-1974). Together with several intellectuals from the village, he went on to publish a legionary newspaper entitled *Legiunea* [The Legion] with the sole purpose of drawing the Orthodox clergymen in southern Transylvania near to the rank and file of the Legionary movement. It shows the Orthodox anti-ecumenism that described the minds of the rural legionary priests in southern Transylvania during the early 1930s.

The next section deals with the theological Bucharest-based journal *Predania*, the first legionary academic journal of Orthodox Theology in interwar Romania. Counting among its contributors prodigious public figures such as Nae Ionescu (1890-1940), at that time the leading right-wing intellectual in the country affiliated with the Iron Guard, Fr. Grigore Cristescu (1895-1961), professor of Homiletics/Cathechesis at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest or Hierodeacon Firmilian Marin (1901-1972), this theological journal had a two-fold mission. Addressing and revitalizing the 1930 debate regarding the identification between Orthodoxy and nationalism according to legionary tenets of sacrifice for the fatherland, Nae Ionescu and his supporters intended to point out to the higher echelons of the Orthodox hierarchy that, as a paradox, not the King or the state are the true defenders and expressions of national sovereignty but rather the Iron Guard and its leader, Corneliu Codreanu (1899-1938). Therefore, through the pages of *Predania* some legionary intellectuals and theologians voiced their opinions about how the Orthodox Church should play an even more active role in society as the sole spiritual expression of the Romanian nation.

The last section of the article will address the change in rhetoric and the subsequent coordination of the legionary clergymen to the realities of the Iron Guard as a full-partner in the government led by General Ion Antonescu (6th of September 1940). By making reference to the articles of various Transylvanian legionary priests in *Glasul Strămoșesc*, the paper shows how the previous anti-ecumenic language of the legionary priests gave ground to a more amicable language towards Transylvanian Greek-Catholics. In the wake of the partition of Transylvania in late August 1940, the Transylvanian legionaries had to forge a sense of national unity encompassing all religious groups in Transylvania.

The Concordat Affair: The Gordian Knot for the Fascist Allegiance of Orthodox Clergymen?⁵

The link between confession and nationality was not a novelty in the 19th-century Balkan region, especially for the subjects of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the Ottoman Empire.⁶ In the case of Romanian Orthodoxy, it was not solely the intellectuals that tried to define the Romanian nation according to the principles of Eastern Christianity. The Orthodox Church itself turned into an important institution in the national building process and attempted to institutionalize its own project of building the Romanian nation.⁷ After 1918, the Church was prepared to play a major role in the main scene of the political debate by refashioning itself as the “national church” of the Romanian people. Especially after 1925, the Romanian Patriarchate was proclaimed, thus turning into an independent ecclesiastical entity. Through its clerical and schools apparatus, the Church became one of the most supportive actors in the state nationalist propaganda.⁸

The process of centralization of the Romanian Orthodox Church came with serious challenges for the newly emerged Orthodox Patriarchy, especially in terms of the unification of canon law coming from different perceptions regarding the Church, handling public funds for paying clergymen, especially those in the newly united provinces, or the intrusion of the state in the life of the Church.⁹ On the agenda of the Church, one would still find problems stemming from the legislative agenda regarding the functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church (46 articles) and the Statute on the organization of the Romanian Orthodox Church (178 articles), approved by the Romanian parliament on the 6th of May 1925. Although the law and the statute favored the Transylvanian idea of correlating clergymen (1/3) with laymen (2/3) in all the decisional assemblies and administrative structures of

⁵ Some of the ideas present in this section were taken from Ionuț Florin Biliuță, *The Archangel's Consecrated Servants. An Inquiry in the Relationship between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Iron Guard (1930-1941)*, Central European University 2013, p. 86-95.

⁶ See: Emanuel Turczysky, *Konfession und Nation. Zur Frühgeschichte der serbischen rumänischen Nationsbildung*, Düsseldorf, Schwamm 1976, p. 7; see also: Peter F. Sugar, “Nationalism and Religion in the Balkans since the 19th Century”, in: Peter F. Sugar (ed.), *East European Nationalism, Politics and Religion*, Aldershot, Ashgate 1999, p. 11.

⁷ Katherine Verdery, “National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania”, in: Ivo Banac, Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*, New Haven, Yale Center for International and Area Studies 1995, p. 105.

⁸ Lucian Leuștean, “‘For the glory of Romanians’: Orthodoxy and Nationalism in Greater Romania, 1918-1945”, in: *Nationalities Papers* 35 (9/2007), p. 720.

⁹ Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885 și 2000. Biserică, Națiune, Cultură*, Vol. 3, I. Bucharest, IBMBOR 2006, p. 211.

the Church and offered the bishops places in the Romanian Senate and high salaries, the state's interference in the internal affairs of the Church opened Pandora's box for future years.¹⁰

The 1923 Constitution stipulated in its 22nd article that the Romanian Orthodox Church was "a national Church" just as the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church of Transylvania was "a national Church," with the provision that the Orthodox Church was the "dominant Church in the Romanian State." The Greek-Catholic Church, although a national Church, was only "privileged in comparison with other denominations."¹¹ This refusal to inscribe the importance of the Orthodox Church into law revealed the asymmetrical relationship between state and *official* church.¹²

The position of the state with regards to the association between nationality and religious confession became manifest in 1927 on the occasion of the promulgation of the Concordat with the Vatican.¹³ Because of the large amounts of land properties and financial subventions granted to the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches,¹⁴ in the Romanian Parliament Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan († 1955) exposed the unfair financial treatment by the government to which the Orthodox Church in Transylvania was

¹⁰ The Transylvanian canonical idea was shaped in the 19th century by Metropolitan of Transylvania Andrei Șaguna (1808-1873). Bishop of Transylvania from 1847 and Metropolitan from 1864, under a Protestant influence he designed an «Organic Statute of the Romanian Orthodox Church from Transylvania» (28th of May 1869) which assured a strong collaboration between lay and clergymen in all levels of the church's activity. For Șaguna see: Keith Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality: Andrei Șaguna and the Rumanians of Transylvania, 1846-1873*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1977. See also: Johann Schneider, *Der Hermannstädter Metropolit Andrei von Șaguna. Reform und Erneuerung der orthodoxen Kirche in Siebenbürgen und Ungarn nach 1848*, Köln, Böhlau Verlag 2005, the Romanian translation Sibiu, Deisis 2008, p. 230-252.

¹¹ According to Miron Cristea, he is to be credited with the idea of the Constitutional statute of the Greek-Catholic Church. Elie Miron Cristea, *Note ascunse. Însemnări personale (1897-1937)*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia 1999, p. 74.

¹² See: Teodor V. Damșa, *Biserica Greco-Catolică din România în perspectivă istorică*, Timișoara. Editura de Vest 1994, p. 206-215; Anca Maria Șincan, "How Many Churches for One Nation? Theoretical Insights for a Discussion on the Concept of National Church", in: Carmen Andraș et al. (eds.), *Itineraries Beyond Borders of Cultures, Identities, and Disciplines*, Sibiu, Astra Museum 2012, p. 143-159.

¹³ For a brief summary of the debate before the signing of the Concordat with the Vatican, see Nicolae Colan, "Concordatul cu Vaticanul", in: *Revista Teologică* 14 (5/1924), p. 134-136.

¹⁴ For the text of the Concordate agreement, see: "Concordat încheiat între România și Vatican la 10 Mai 1927", in: *România-Vatican. Relații diplomatice*. Vol. I, 1920-1950, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică 2003, p. 32-44. For the Greek-Catholic reception of the Concordate see: Aurelia Știrban, Marcel Știrban, *Din istoria Bisericii Unite de la 1918 la 1941*, Satu-Mare, Editura Muzeului Sătmărean, 2005, p. 202-2018; Lucian Turcu, *Între idealuri și realitate. Arhiepiscopia greco-catolică de Alba-Iulia și Făgăraș în timpul păstoririi mitropolitului Vasile Suci (1920-1935)*, Cluj-Napoca, Mega 2017, p. 151-231.

subjected.¹⁵ Although the Orthodox Church protested vehemently against the Concordat, this was later adopted by the Parliament and left Orthodox clergy with a wounded pride.¹⁶

The disappointment relating to the adoption of the Concordat and the legal provision that recognized the Romanian character of the Greek-Catholics who considered the promulgation of it as its own is visible in Nichifor Crainic's and Nae Ionescu's articles and as a direct consequence, they offer their unrestricted support to the Orthodox Church.¹⁷ The 1927 Concordat strained the relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Greek-Catholics and had direct consequences in a gradual disdain towards liberal democracy and the right-wing radicalization of the Orthodox Church's clergymen.

Although Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan eventually nurtured support for the National Peasant Party during the 1928 general elections, his eyes already searched for political options, sympathetic to the Christian agenda of the Orthodox Church.¹⁸ One option was financing newspapers such as *Calendarul*, *Cuvântul*, and, later on, *Sfarmă-Piatră*, where the newly emerging generation of right-wing intellectuals such as Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu drew support for the relevance of the Orthodox Church in the public eye.¹⁹ By so doing, the Sibiu archbishop also disputed the enrollment of Orthodox intellectuals into the ranks of the National Peasant Party perceived as the political arm of the Uniate Church.²⁰ They eventually succeeded in

¹⁵ For more details, see: Nicolae Bălan, *Biserica neamului și drepturile ei*, Sibiu, Tiparul Tipografiei Arhiepiscopale 1928, p. 32-34. Nevertheless, it was a false claim. See: ANIC, Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, file no. 110/1927, p. 17.

¹⁶ "Regimul cultelor", in: *Telegraful Român* 76 (10/2 February 1928), p. 1; "Săvârșitu-s-a", in: *Telegraful Român* 76 (12/8 February 1928), p. 1. See: I. Mateiu, *Valoarea Concordatului încheiat cu Vaticanul*, Sibiu, Tiparul Tipografiei Arhiepiscopale, 1924; Fr. V. Nistor, *Să se facă dreptate! Revendicările Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Sibiu, Asociația Clerului "A. Șaguna" 1934, p. 16-19.

¹⁷ "Articolul XLI", in: *Telegraful Român* 76 (10/2 February 1928), p. 2. Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right. The Nineteen Thirties*, Colorado, Boulder 1999, p. 79; I. F. Biliuță, "Nichifor Crainic and 'Gandirea': Nationalism and Orthodoxism in Interwar Romania," in: *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "Nicolae Iorga"* 5 (2008), p. 67-84; R. Clark, "Nationalism and orthodoxy: Nichifor Crainic and the political culture of the extreme right wing in 1930s Romania", in: *Nationalities Papers* 40 (1/2012), p. 111-116.

¹⁸ ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 0055331, vol. 2, p. 31.

¹⁹ The Orthodox press in Sibiu supported the 1930 national debate regarding which religious denomination should be the spiritual identifier of the nation. See: Dumitru Stăniloae, "Între românism și catolicism", in: *Telegraful Român* 78 (86/29 November 1930), p. 1-2; idem, "Între Catolicism și ortodoxie", in: *Telegraful Român* 78 (88/6 December 1930), p. 1-2.

²⁰ *Fond Nicolae Bălan*, File no. 26561, Vol. 1, 17, 27, Reel 244, RG. 25.004M, Romanian Information Service Archives, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives; Nicolae Brânzeu, *Jurnalul unui preot bătrân*, Timișoara, Eurostampa 2011, p. 34, 59.

energizing the Transylvanian base in support of the Iron Guard.²¹ I argue that this was the turning point for some of the Orthodox clergymen to start searching for new political options, even undemocratic and ultranationalist ones such as the Iron Guard.²²

Moreover, following on the insights argued by James Chappel in the case of the Roman-Catholic intellectuals discovering Catholic modernism through their opposition to the increasing interwar totalitarianism, I argue that in their vituperations against their political or denominational enemies intellectuals such as Nae Ionescu paved the way for anti-modern legionary allegiance for an entire generation of intellectuals and theologians.²³ In other words, from a theological traditional standpoint, the early 1930s onset of Orthodox anti-ecumenism was the intellectual and religious driving force that, once coalescing with Iron Guard's ultranationalism, enabled Orthodox clergymen to enroll in the rank and file of the Romanian fascist movement. In many respects, the Orthodox intellectuals and theologians from Transylvania and the Old Kingdom had to face the challenge of an increasing anti-totalitarian activism and a cutting-edge theological approach defying theological orthodoxy, promoted by various Greek- and Roman-Catholic intellectuals.²⁴

²¹ ACNSAS, fond Penal, file no. 013206, vol. 2, p. 74. ACNSAS, fond Penal, file no. 013206, vol. 3, p. 58; N. Colan, "Apologetii ortodoxiei", in: *Revista Teologică* 15 (7/1925), p. 195.

²² As the archives show, the number of Orthodox priests joining the Iron Guard increased heavily after the approval of the Concordat in the Romanian Parliament. See: ANIC, DGP, File no. 43/1929, 4; ANIC, DGP, 5/1930, 89; K. Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality*, p. 146-150; K. Verdery, "National Ideology", p. 119-126. Nevertheless, this polemic will not be important for the legionary movement, many leading intellectuals such as Ion Banea or clergymen being Greek-Catholics.

²³ James Chappel, *Catholic Modern. The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2018, p. 7. For the anti-modern intellectual tradition, see: Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, New Haven, Yale University Press 2010; Scott L. Montgomery, Daniel Chirot, *The Shape of the New. Four Big Ideas and how They Made the Modern World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 2015, p. 281-336. For the relationship between anti-modernism and fascism see: George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution. Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, New York, Praeger 1999, p. 69-95. For the Orthodox appraisals of fascism and Catholicism see: D. Stăniloae, *Catolicismul de după război*, Sibiu, Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane 1933, p. 139-155. Initially, all the chapters of the book were published by Stăniloae throughout 1929 and 1930 as press articles in: *Telegraful Român* and *Revista Teologică*. For a critique of the pacifist Vatican opposing totalitarian and fascist Rome see: Diorates [Dumitru Stăniloae], "Conflictul între Italia și Vatican", in: *Telegraful Român* 79 (45/13 June 1931), p. 1.

²⁴ Piotr H. Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades. Poland, France and "Revolution," 1891-1956*, New Haven, Yale University Press 2018, p. 21-61. For the anti-totalitarian stance see: John Pollard, *The Vatican in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914-1958*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2014, p. 131-132. For the Romanian case see: Un preot, "Spre ecumenicitate", in: *Unirea* 40 (31/2 August 1930), p. 1; Iulian Ghercă, *Catolicii în spațiul public. Presa catolică în prima jumătate a secolului al XX-lea*, Iași, Institutul European 2013, p. 130-133.

The whole controversy between the two leading Christian denominations in interwar Romania grew disproportionately during the 1930s and overflowed from theology treaties and denominational newspapers into the open, mostly in the newspapers supporting the radical agenda of the Iron Guard. This was the case of the *Predania* circle from Bucharest surrounding the controversial anti-Catholic personality of Nae Ionescu.

The anti-ecumenism of *Legiunea* and *Glasul Strămoșesc* should be interpreted in the Transylvanian context, one described by entrenched, long-standing rivalries between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics.²⁵ Due to their religious affiliation, the Orthodox clergymen from the Sibiu Archbishopric conveyed a provincial version of “clerical fascism”, in some respects different from their Bucharest counterparts.²⁶ Despite their fondness for the fascist ideal of national rebirth, the Sibiu theologians headed by Metropolitan Bălan added their vivid contempt for the Uniate Church’s competing claims of being a “national church.”²⁷

Despite the parochial nature and, sometimes, the regional idiosyncrasies particularizing the local organizations, the Iron Guard’s central leadership reacted poorly in keeping at bay the rifts in the movement.²⁸ Up to the autumn of 1937 a sense of religious ecumenism and open-mindedness towards other Christian confessions dominated the fascist mindset of the Romanian fascists, with people such as Fr. Titus Mălai, a Greek-Catholic priest from Cluj-Napoca, or Ion Banea (1905-1939), the leader of the legionary region of Transylvania, who both published extensively in pages of the legionary press and had direct access to Corneliu Codreanu.²⁹

²⁵ Ciprian Ghișă, “The Image of the Greek Catholic in the Orthodox Press in Romania, 1918-1940”, in: Thomas Bremer, Andrii Krawchuk (eds.), *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness. Values, Self-Reflection, Dialogue*, Basingstoke, Palgrave 2014, p. 109-125.

²⁶ For the historical evolution of the Sibiu Theological Academy see: Mircea Păcurariu, *230 de ani de învățământ teologic la Sibiu*, 2nd edition, Sibiu, Andreiana 2016, p. 153-189.

²⁷ Teodor Bodogae, “Contribuția Ortodoxiei la formarea sufletului român”, in: *Anuarul Academiei Teologice Andreiane* 9 (1932-1933), p. 125-132; Paul Brusanowski, *Autonomia și constituționalismul în dezbaterile privind unificarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (1919-1925)*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană 2007, p. 331; idem, *Rumänisch-orthodoxe Kirchenordnungen (1786 -2008): Siebenbürgen – Bukowina – Rumänien*, Köln, Böhlau 2011, p. 283-287.

²⁸ The 14th of January 1938 “Circular Letter” addressed by Corneliu Codreanu to Bacău and Roman legionary organizations prohibiting the acceptance of new Catholic members among the legionaries because of the electoral negotiations during the electoral campaign from 1937. See: Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, Munich, Colecția Omul nou 1981, p. 238. It was the moment when Roman and Greek-Catholics fell from grace with the Romanian fascists.

²⁹ After joining the Iron Guard in 1927, Fr. Titus Mălai was fired the next year from his teaching position at the Greek-Catholic Seminary of Cluj-Napoca. See: C. Z. Codreanu, “Suspendarea de la Catedră a Părintelui Titus Mălai”, in: *Pământul Strămoșesc* 2 (2/15 Janu-

The anti-Catholic direction inside the Church revealed by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan's manifesto found echo outside the Parliament walls in the pages of Nae Ionescu's press articles. He wrote a series of texts arguing against the Greek Catholic Church's constitutional claim to be "national"³⁰. I argue that this was the turning point for launching the debate about ultranationalism and ecumenism, an ongoing discussion throughout the 1930s, especially in the Greek-Catholic and Orthodox milieus.³¹

Legiunea. Southern Transylvanian Anti-Ecumenism of the Legionary Movement.

In 1932, in the Mândra village, a young student in Theology in Sibiu, Valeriu Beleuță commenced publishing a local legionary newspaper named *Legiunea* [The Legion]. His decision to promote such a publication in a mainly rural area was related to the propagandistic agenda of the Iron Guard, encouraging the release of publications and newspapers imagined as catechisms of the movement to promote its political agenda among the large masses of the population.³² The ultranationalist activism displayed by various Orthodox priests and theologians such as Valeriu Beleuță followed in the footsteps of the early 20th-century generation of Orthodox nationalists fighting for national rights in the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy.³³ Moreover, the sus-

ary 1928), p. 9. Also for his anti-democratic and anti-Semitic mindset see: Titus Mălai, "Democrația una cu daimonocrația", in: *Axa* 2 (12/14 May 1933), p. 3. See: I. Banea, "Căpitanul," in: *Axa* 2 (21/29 October 1933), p. 1. According to Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, Ion Banea was already the appointed successor of Corneliu Codreanu for the movement's leadership in case of the Captain's early demise. See: Ioan Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cal troian intra muros. Memorii legionare*, Bucharest, Lucman 2002, p. 137.

³⁰ For this claim of the Greek Catholic Church and its ancestry see: Hans-Christian Maner, „Die 'rumanische Nation' in den Konzeptionen griechisch-katolischer und orthodoxer Geistlicher und Intellektueller Siebenbürgens im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert", in: Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.), *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag 2006, p. 76-85; Valer Hossu, *Episcopul Iuliu, sfântul Marii Uniri*, Cluj-Napoca, Napoca Star 2008, p. 130-133. For the press articles see: Nae Ionescu, "Concordatul", in: *Cuvântul* 4 (1039/8 March 1928), p. 1. This article was followed by another seven on the same topic.

³¹ K. Hitchens, *Orthodoxy and Nationality*, p. 146-150; K. Verdery, *National Ideology*, p. 119-126. Constantin Mihai, *Biserica și elitele intelectuale interbelice*, Jassy, Institutul European 2009, p. 27. Also see: Dora Mezdrea, "Nae Ionescu-Teologul", in: N. Ionescu, *Teologia. Integrala publicisticii religioase*, Sibiu, Deisis 2003, p. 5-14. Nevertheless, this polemic will not be important for the legionary movement, many leading intellectuals such as Ion Banea or clergymen being Greek-Catholics.

³² Grigore Cristescu, "Dumineca", in: *Calendarul* 1 (36/29 February 1932), p. 1.

³³ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1995, p. 29-48; Robert Nemes, "Mapping Hungarian Borderlines", in: Omer Bartov, Eric D. Weitz (eds.), *Shatterzone of Empires. Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Border-*

tained national missionary work carried out by Fr. Ion Moța (1868-1940), the Orthodox dean from Orăștie, in his own newspaper named *Libertatea*, and the subsequent metamorphosis of this periodical into a legionary platform for propaganda particularly among the rural intelligentsia (priests, secondary school teachers, small bureaucrats, etc.) laid the groundwork for other such editorial endeavors, especially among the young generation of ultranationalist priests and theologians.³⁴

At that time, Valeriu Beleuță was in his fourth year of theological studies in Sibiu and, already from April 1931, when the first nests appeared in Sibiu, he led the “Martirii credinței” Brotherhood of the Cross formed from the Orthodox Academy of Theology’s students.³⁵ Moreover, the year 1932 marked the conversion to the Iron Guard’s ultranationalism of an entire young generation of Transylvanian theologians such as Liviu Stan, Spiridon Căndea, Teodor Bodogae or Nicolae Mladin.³⁶

In his venture of publishing the newspaper, Valeriu Beleuță capitalized on his kinship with Horia Sima (1906-1993), a second cousin and the future leader of the Iron Guard after Corneliu Codreanu’s demise, and Nicolae Petrașcu (1907-1968), at that time professor at the Pedagogical School in Sibiu.³⁷ Moreover, following in the tracks of A. C. Cuza, Paulescu, and the early propagandistic writings and brochures of the Iron Guard, both Beleuță and Sima made reference to the apocalyptical stage, where the survival of the

lands, Bloomington, Indiana University Press 2013, p. 209-228; see: Gheorghe Ciuhandu, *Memorii. Din viața mea. Făcute și pățite, spuse ca să învețe alții*, Timișoara, Amarcord 1999, p. 267-305; Mihai Săsăujan, “Contribuția teologilor Gheorghe Ciuhandu și Nicolae Popovici la sistemul de organizare bisericească în perioada interbelică și în anii instaurării regimului comunist”, in: M. Săsăujan, *Biserica, Națiune și putere de stat (secolele XVIII-XX). Contribuții documentare la Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Bucharest, Editura Universității București 2013, p. 235-253.

³⁴ Valentin Orga, *Moța. Pagini de viață, file de istorie*, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut 1999, p. 143-169.

³⁵ Nicu Iancu, *Sub steagul lui Codreanu. Momente din trecutul legionar*, Madrid, Dacia 1973, p. 72.

³⁶ ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 211444, vol. 2, p. 2. For Fr. Spiridon Căndea see: ACNSAS, fond MFI, No. 12197 (Sibiu), Vol. 1, reel 146, p. 7. Also, during this year in Sibiu, the leader of the Sibiu student center Teodor Bodogae published a refutation of LANC’s anti-Christian nature in support of the Legion of Archangel Michael. See: Teodor Bodogae, “Mai multă religiozitate!” in: *Calendarul* 1 (254/23 December 1932), p. 3. At that time, Teodor Bodogae was the active charman of “Societatea ‘A. Șaguna’ a Studenților de la Academia Teologică ‘Andreiană’ din Sibiu”. See: *Anuarul Academiei Teologice Andreiene* 9 (1932-1933), p. 118.

³⁷ For the family relations with Horia Sima see: ACNSAS, fond Penal, file no. 066001, vol. 4, p. 7. For the articles signed by Horia Sima and Nicolae Petrașcu, see: Horia Sima, “Pornim...”, in: *Legiunea* 1 (1/5 August 1932), p. 1. N. P. Profesor [Nicolae Petrașcu], “Trec alegeri, vin alegeri”, in: *Legiunea* 1 (2/12 August 1932), p. 1-2.

nation was hanging in the balance threatened by the expansion of the Jewish minority.³⁸

The crawling enemies of the Christian Church [the Jews] are the same with those from the past. They have persecuted Christianity from the beginning and they will persecute it until the divine Providence will bear no longer and change the object of their diabolical hate. They tortured Jesus Christ up to the His sacrifice on Golgotha, the apostles up to their martyrdom, and their followers up to the most heinous and barbaric sufferings. Today, just like moles and sables, the same enemies of the Faith in Christ sap at the foundations of the Church and therefore at the destruction of the state to dominate overall the unbearable grin of the filthy offspring of Judas. Until it is not too late and the bowels of the last priest are not used to hang the last of the kings, make smooth the way of the young liberating army, which we can foresee as a shining light making its way through the dark clouds of the contemporary abjection.³⁹

Besides the Jews, young Beleuță unleashed a powerful wave of criticism against the Greek-Catholics in the area, in this particular case the National Peasant Party's prefect of Făgăraș county, N. Vlaicu.⁴⁰ By accusing him of being "philosemite", over-protective of the local Jewish minority and patronizing the economic monopoly of Jewish firms in their businesses with the Romanian state, of unleashing a terrible persecution of the young generation affiliated with the Iron Guard and forbidding a public conference about Mihail Kogălniceanu delivered by Professor I. C. Cătuneanu (1883-1937), Beleuță convincingly extended his criticisms from the Jewish minority to the officials of the Romanian State, considered to be unreliable and militating

³⁸ Nicolae Paulescu, *Spitalul, Coranul, Talmudul, Cahalul, Franc-Masoneria*. Bucharest, Vicozia 1913; idem, *Fiziologie Filozofică. Supliment la cartea Spitalul, Coranul, Talmudul, Cahalul, Franc-Masoneria*, Bucharest, 1914. William I. Brunstein, *Roots of Hate. Antisemitism in Europe before the Holocaust*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 68-69; A. C. Cuza, *Învățătura lui Isus. Iudaismul și teologia creștină*, Iași, Editura Ligii Apărării Național Creștine 1925; idem, *Eroarea teologiei și adevărul Bisericii. 'Eroarea D-lui A. C. Cuza'*, Iași, Tipografia Cooperativă "Trecerea Munților Carpați" 1928; Alexandru Ventonic, *Pe marginea prăpastiei*, Iași, Tipografia Trecerea M. Carpați 1929, p. 6-7.

³⁹ V. B. Religius [Valeriu Beleuță], "Către preoțime", in: *Legiunea* 1 (1/5 August 1932), p. 2. In the next issue, he continued in lambasting the Jews as a national threat for the Romanian Nation, its Church, and state. See: "Legiunea, «Pericolul Jidovesc»", in: *Legiunea* 1 (2/12 August 1932), p. 1-2. The same anti-Semitic rhetoric can be found in other legionary newspapers before and at the same time as Beleuță's attacks on the Jews. See I. Banea, "Republica spaniolă", in: *Legionarii* 2 (4/20 March 1931), p. 1. See: A. Ventonic, "Vrei să fi legionar?", in: *Garda Moldovei* 2 (3/15 August 1932), p. 3.

⁴⁰ V. Beleuță, "Actualul Prefect", in: *Legiunea* 1 (2/12 August 1932), p. 1-2.

against the nationalist interests.⁴¹ According to Beleuță, any Greek-Catholic adhering to the National Peasant Party at that time in power and assuming public office would most probably turn into a friend of the Jews and a traitor to his nation.

The position of Fr. Valeriu Beleuță was consistent with his legionary activism, as previously demonstrated during his years as a student in Sibiu. He continued to criticize the Romanian political parties for the lack of interest in supporting another “crucified social category” that of the elementary school teachers.⁴² Moreover, by claiming the financial and political impotence of democracy, the author unleashed a passionate appeal to the teachers to observe the increasing dominance of illiberal youth all over Europe, enlisting in large numbers under the flags of the nationalist movements:

A commandment of our age asks for the complete transformation of our political life. Where should we expect this radical transformation? From the political parties? Strongly no because they proved incapable [of the task]. From all the others but most importantly from the vigorous and courageous young generation, ready for self-sacrifice which is making its way in the international political arena. The flourishing situation in Italy and Czechoslovakia is due to the disciplined and resolute youth. On the shoulders of the young generation, Germany rises from the mud of the Communist and anarchist disarray. If the circumstances require wise teachers, make the political parties understand that the judgment day is near.⁴³

The threatening tone of Beleuță's articles persisted in the last issue of the *Legiunea* newspaper. Continuing his meditations from the previous issue, he also tackled the topic of the increasing tuition for elementary, secondary, and university studies.⁴⁴ Recycling a number of clichés dear to the legionary journalists, Beleuță reminded Romanian politicians that the actual beneficiary of the school taxes increase was the archenemy of the legionary movement, the Jew:

The obvious consequence of this state of facts is clear to anyone: from now onwards is the time of the foreigners. All those who got rich at the expense of the poor peasant and sucked the marrow out of his bones will fill the benches of the secondary schools, professional and normal schools. The Kike offspring will unabashedly enjoy the benefits of the gratuity of the secondary schools.⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² V. Beleuță, “Către învățători”, in: *Legiunea* 1 (3/30 August 1932), p. 1-2.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Idem, “Taxele școlare”, in: *Legiunea* 1 (4/16 September 1932), p. 1-2.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

Voicing his concerns and proposing a *numerus clausus* for the Jewish minority in schools, the young theologians from Mândra echoed the antisemitic undertones and desperate warnings of Corneliu Codreanu and the 1922 generation of young students fighting about the “danger” posed by the “overwhelming” presence of the Jews in universities and schools across Greater Romania.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, this would be the last article penned by the young Valeriu Beuleuță. Due to the state-imposed ban, the financial strains resulting from the lack of new subscriptions, and the consecration of the main editor Valeriu Beuleuță as a priest for Valea Mărului village (25 miles from Mândra), the *Legiunea* newspaper failed to reach its 5th issue. Nevertheless, the legionary activism of Fr. Valeriu Beuleuță continued after the demise of the legionary newspaper from Mândra and, as the leader of a legionary nest, he continued his anti-Semitic activity, took a keen interest in the martyrdom of Moța and Marin, and played an active role in the legionary rebellion.⁴⁷

The Predania Circle and Legionary Anti-Catholicism⁴⁸

After the Moța-Marin burial (13th of February 1937), another theological journal appeared on the market. This new publication was meant to confront the official hierarchy of the Orthodox Church (bishops, theology professors and laymen with authority in the Church) on various issues, according to the Orthodox tradition of the Holy Fathers and the sacred canons.⁴⁹ According to their own testimonies, the members of *Predania* circle raised their voices against

the spirit of sloth, meddling, love of power, the lack of empathy, love, faith which darken the minds of the shepherds of the flock. As guardians of the Christian teachings, they attempt to change the Scriptures and the essence of the truth. ... In the name of the Church but beyond its dogmas and customs, the official theology attempts to make up a Christian pseudo-ecumenicity at a practical level. We take part in prayers and feasts with the heretics, the deniers of the Seven Sacraments. The princes of the Church of

⁴⁶ Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail” (ed.), *Memoriu adresat tuturor țărilor – cu privire la situația românilor și jidanilor din România*, Iași, Pământul strămoșesc 1928, p. 9.

⁴⁷ ACNSAS, fond Penal, file no. 066001, vol. 1, p. 15-17.

⁴⁸ Some of the ideas present in this section were taken from I. F. Biliuță, “The Archangel’s Consecrated Servants”, p. 265-272.

⁴⁹ S.N., “Cuvânt de lămurire”, in: *Predania* 1 (1/15 February 1937), p. 1-2. The critical attitude of the Predania circle found an answer from Emilian Vasilescu, “Pentru controlul scrisului bisericesc”, in: E. Vasilescu, *Răvna Casei Tale. Gânduri și îndemnuri spre folosul Bisericii*, Bucharest, Cugetarea 1940, p. 44-49. Initially published in 1937.

Christ take part in the public celebrations of the rabbis bringing them praises slapping in the face of Church.⁵⁰

Called programmatically *Predania* [The Tradition], the journal stands as an unceasing effort of the legionary clergymen to reinforce the relevance of the Orthodox Tradition in theological reasonings and to incessantly promote an ultranationalist theological idiom buttressed on the legionary canonical vernacular.⁵¹ Initially, envisaged by its editors such as Gheorghe Racoveanu and Fr. Grigore Cristescu as a bi-monthly theological journal, it reached twelve issues before it was banned by the authorities.

In the first issue, according to legionary main tenets of praising martyrdom for the fatherland, the contributors praised “the martyrs of Christ” (*mucenici ai lui Hristos*) Moța and Marin for their sacrifice and their profoundly religious life.⁵² The journal published important theological contributions from authors like Fr. I. D. Petrescu⁵³ who was apolitical, from Gheorghe Racoveanu (1900-1967) a legionary commander and an Orthodox theologian, who also acted as the editor of the journal, Fr. Grigore Cristescu (1895-1961), a university professor and an old member of the Legion, but also from young converts to ultranationalism of the Iron Guard such as Hierodeacon Firmilian Marin (1901-1972).⁵⁴

According to archival testimonies, the vivid activism of the Orthodox clergymen from *Predania* during 1937 materialized in their articles. Their close relation with Fr. Grigore Cristescu should also be interpreted as a consequence of the decision of the central legionary leadership of appointing on 26th of January 1937 Fr. Cristescu as responsible for the legionary propaganda for the upcoming elections but also to expand the appeal enjoyed by the movement among the Orthodox clergymen.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

⁵¹ According to Petre Pandrea, *Garda de Fier. Jurnal de Filosofie politică. Memorii Penitenciare*, Bucharest, Vremea 2000, p. 57, Nae Ionescu took massive subsidies from Nazi officials to finance the journal.

⁵² S. N., “Ion Moța și Vasile Marin”, in: *Predania* 1 (1/15 February 1937), p. 6.

⁵³ Fr. I. D. Petrescu (1884-1970) was a Romanian specialist in ecclesiastical music and professor of Gregorian chanting at the Romanian Conservatoire in Bucharest (1934-1947). After the Communist take-over of political power, he was purged for a time and could not teach.

⁵⁴ Fr. Grigore Cristescu (1895-1961) professor of Theology in Sibiu (1924-1929) and Bucharest (1929-1940). For his legionary see: *ACNSAS*, fond Penal, file no. 258626, p. 9. For Firmilian Marin see: *ACNSAS*, fond Informativ, file no. 160113, vol. 3, p. 15.

⁵⁵ *ACNSAS*, fond Penal, file no. 258626, p. 33. The same happened in Sibiu area where Fr. Liviu Stan was appointed by the legionary as responsible for the legionary propaganda in Sibiu County. *ACNSAS*, Fond Informativ, file no. 211444, vol. 1, p. 121. According to an archival testimony, *ACNSAS*, fond Informativ, file no. 211444, vol. 2, p. 114, he received this appointment because he persuaded Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan to vacate a two-room apartment in the Boulevard Hotel in Sibiu for the newly established legionary headquarters.

Besides their common ideological views, another thing linking together the legionary clergymen constituting the *Predania* circle was the personal relations developed over the previous years of theological interactions. Both Fr. Grigore Cristescu and Hierodeacon Firmilian Marin befriended Gheorghe Racoveanu and provided him asylum during stages of persecution inflicted upon the movement by various governments.⁵⁶ Also, Racoveanu turned into one of most fervent disciples of Nae Ionescu (1890-1940) and made his debut in the nationalist press in *Cuvântul*, the newspaper edited by the professor.⁵⁷ Moreover, Hierodeacon Firmilian Marin's pen name during his publishing activity with *Predania* was "smeritul Stratonice" [the humble Stratonice], alluding to the saint martyr Stratonice celebrated by the Orthodox Church on the 13th of January, the date when the legionary martyrs Ion I. Moța and Vasile Marin died on the front during the Spanish Civil War.⁵⁸

The journal's agenda turned anti-ecumenical in spirit, targeting both Protestant and neo-Protestant groups (*sectele*) outside or inside the Orthodox Church (Oastea Domnului, the Tudorists, Frăția Ortodoxă from Transylvania, etc.) but mainly the Greek-Catholic minority.⁵⁹ In this respect, Nae Ionescu stood out as the true anti-ecumenical voice and the driving ideological force behind the journal.⁶⁰ His ideas about both the connection between the Orthodox faith and nationalism made an impact on and expressed the ideology of the Iron Guard movement.⁶¹ There are three main lines of argumentation followed by Nae Ionescu's writing in *Predania*: rephrasing the position of the layman in respect to who has the monopoly of formulating theological reasonings in the Orthodox Church, redefining the relation between the Orthodox Church and the Romanian nation/state, and, true to his 1930s rants against the Roman- and Greek-Catholics, an acrimonious journalistic form of anti-ecumenism directed against the non-Orthodox citizens of Romania.⁶²

While Nae Ionescu contested every bit of exclusive authority enjoyed by the Orthodox bishops in shaping the doctrine of the Church at the la-

⁵⁶ ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 235879, vol. 3, p. 388.

⁵⁷ ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 262000, p. 10; Dora Mezdrea, *Nae Ionescu. Biografia*, vol. 2, 2nd edition, Bucharest, Editura Muzeului Literaturii Române 2015, p. 674-676.

⁵⁸ ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 160112, vol. 3, p. 35.

⁵⁹ G. Cristescu, "Îmbiserire nu bibliolatrică", in: *Predania* 1 (3/15 March 1937), p. 7-8; idem, "Oști, frății și alte noutăți misionare", in: *Predania* 1 (4/1 April 1937), p. 6-7; idem, "Prăvilarii Oastei Domnului", in: *Predania* 1 (10-11/1-15 October 1937), p. 6-10.

⁶⁰ For Nae Ionescu's intellectual profile, see Florin Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le prisonnier de l'histoire*, Paris, Editions de la Decouverte 2003; Philip Vanhaelemeersch, *A Generation "Without Beliefs" and the Idea of Experience in Romania (1927-1934)*, Boulder, East European Monographs 2006, p. 205-252; D. Mezdrea, *Nae Ionescu. Biografia*, vol. 2, p. 428-452.

⁶¹ See also: Claudio Mutti, *Penele Arhanghelului. Intelectualii Gărzii de Fier (Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, Vasile Lovinescu)*, Bucharest, Anastasia 1997, p. 45.

⁶² D. Mezdrea, *Nae Ionescu. Biografia*, vol. 2, p. 411-417.

ity's expense, he strived to promote a new understanding of Christian nationalism, palatable to the legionary newly discovered denominational exclusivism.⁶³ The articles from *Predania* illuminate Nae Ionescu's new line of argumentation established before 1930: "Biserică, stat, națiune" and "Naționalism și Ortodoxie".⁶⁴ Throughout the 1930s, Nae Ionescu's obstinate anti-Catholic distaste signals a paradox in the biography of the Romanian philosopher and mentor of the early 1930s generation of intellectuals who would eventually join the Iron Guard. During his internment in German camps during World War One, the young philosopher pursuing a doctoral degree at Munich University debated heavily on scholasticism and medieval philosophy with fellow-inmates, professors at the Catholic Faculty of Theology from Louvain.⁶⁵ Also, after the end of the war, he briefly worked for *Tyroliia*, a Catholic organ of social care, providing assistance for former inmates from German camps, a position that enabled him to become acquainted with the Catholic system of ecclesiastical institutions and Catholic social and speculative theology.⁶⁶ Moreover, another possible source of influence for Nae Ionescu in promoting intolerant views relates to the conservative ideas stemming from the journals of the French *L'Action Francaise* and the philosophical and theological writings of the Russian exile (Dostoievsky, Bulgakov, Merejkovski, Florensky, Soloviev, etc.).⁶⁷

In the first article from *Predania*, Nae Ionescu reacted against the State's decision to ask the Romanian Orthodox Church to refrain from supporting extremist right-wing movements such as the Iron Guard.⁶⁸ On 2nd of March 1937, in the aftermath of the grandiose funeral ceremony of Ioan I. Moța and Vasile Marin (13th of February 1937), impressed by the sheer numbers of Orthodox clergymen headed by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan attending the funeral and the dramatic impact leading to an increase of Orthodox priests joining the Iron Guard, Victor Iamandi, the Liberal Minister for Religious Denominations sent a private letter to Patriarch Miron Cristea asking him to reprimand the Orthodox priests who blessed the flags and the meetings or

⁶³ N. Ionescu, "Pentru o teologie cu nespecialiști", in: *Predania* 1 (1/15 February 1937), p. 3-4.

⁶⁴ N. Ionescu, "Naționalism și Ortodoxie", in: *Predania* 1 (8-9/1937), p. 1-3. For Nae Ionescu's pre-1937 anti-ecumenism see: Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism. The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, Oxford, Pergamon Press 1990, p. 70-75; Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, Bucharest, Editura Fundației Culturale Române 1995.

⁶⁵ D. Mezdrea, *Nae Ionescu. Biografia*, vol. 1, p. 203.

⁶⁶ P. Vanhaelemeersch, *A Generation*, p. 205.

⁶⁷ P. Pandrea, *Garda de Fier*, p. 280-281.

⁶⁸ Florin Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail de la mit la realitate*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică 1997, p. 233.

joined the ranks of extremist organizations.⁶⁹ The insinuation was obvious. This measure of the government was taken to quell the political appeal of the Iron Guard among the Orthodox low clergy. As a consequence, the Patriarch called for a session of the Holy Synod to debate the measures requested by the State representative and on the 10th of March 1937, a statement was issued. Titled “Nihil sine Deo”, the official statement of the Holy Synod called for an immediate re-Christianization of the Romanian political life and nominated the Orthodox Church as “the political guide of Orthodox believers”.⁷⁰ It asked for a more determined attitude on the part of the State regarding its role in enforcing Christian morality in society and national solidarity in condemning materialism and atheism, individualism and class struggle.⁷¹

Nevertheless, on March the 10th the Holy Synod forbade the priests to engage in politics, bless party paraphernalia or use political ideas in their sermons addressed to their flocks.⁷² The Holy Synod’s condemnation of Freemasonry soon after the funeral (11th March 1937) can be looked upon as a natural progression in the relationship between the Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church since both the Synod and the fascists saw freemasonry and Jewish World Finances⁷³ as the evil force behind the Romanian political parties associated with the spread of “communism and atheism.”⁷⁴ In the same session, the Holy Synod refused the request of the State to dissolve the newly created legionary working camps built around its churches

⁶⁹ Grigore T. Marcu, “Lucrările unei sesiuni memorabile a Sf. Sinod”, in: *Revista Teologică* 26 (4/1937), p. 160. For Miron Cristea’s official statements in front of the Holy Synod condemning the priests who joined the ranks of political movements and blessed their paraphernalia see: *ANIC*, fond DGP, file no. 46/1937, p. 6-7. Police officials also asked for clarifications regarding the legionary activism of a part of the Orthodox clergymen by approaching in private Auxiliary-Bishop Irineu Mihălcescu. See: *ANIC*, fond DGP, file no. 46/1937, p. 4. For the entire debate and its ulterior relevance see: Costel Coajă, *Relația stat-biserică în perioada 1938-1948. Cazul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Iași, Princeps Edit 2007, p. 12. For Metropolitan Bălan’s key-role during the legionary funeral of the two fallen legionary martyrs and keeping alive their memory among the Orthodox priests of his diocese by asking them to read his prayer after the reading of the Gospel during every Liturgy on Sundays see: *ACNSAS*, fond Informativ, file no. 0055331, vol. 2, p. 94. For the text of the prayer see: N. Bălan, *Rugăciune rostită în biserica Sf. Ilie Gorgani din Capitală, în ziua de sâmbătă 13 februarie 1937, la înmormântarea în Bucureștii Noi a eroilor Ioan I. Moța și Vasile Marin*, Sibiu, Tiparul Tipografiei Arhiepiscopale 1941, p. 3-6.

⁷⁰ “Partea oficială. Dezbaterile Sfântului Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române. Sesiunea Ordinară pe anul 1937. Ședința din ziua de 8 Martie”, in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 55 Supliment (1937), p. 1-7.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12-14.

⁷² “Partea oficială. Dezbaterile Sfântului Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române. Sesiunea Ordinară pe anul 1937. Ședința din ziua de 10 Martie”, p. 16-17.

⁷³ “Hotărâri sinodale”, in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 55 Supliment (1937), p. 24.

⁷⁴ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Vol. 3, Bucharest, IBMBOR 1981, p. 404; Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, p. 103.

and monasteries. Even more, influenced by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, who produced the anti-Masonic manifest, the Holy Synod upheld “a Christian point of view” against “the spirit of secularism” in politics arguing that the Church could choose itself what party was worthy of support according to its moral precepts.⁷⁵ The decision of the Holy Synod banning Freemasonry was perceived as a victory of the Iron Guard. Codreanu saluted the decision of the Holy Synod as “the beginning of greatness” for the Romanian people in its struggle against the corroding influences from the interior. In his 64th circular, he mandated the readings of the acts of the March Synod for all the legionaries in their nests.⁷⁶

Nae Ionescu picked up on this exchange and the ensuing result and challenged the intrusion of the State into the affairs of the Church. Although the Holy Synod had already answered the State representative’s letter by saying that the presence of the Orthodox Church in politics was its national duty, instilling Christian morals in society, Nae Ionescu made some striking statements, confirming that he was not a defender of the Church, but rather of the Legionary movement.⁷⁷ Delivered in the church of St. Anthony in Bucharest, the church of the (legionary) students, as a conference during Lent on the 17th of February 1937 and republished afterward, the text is a contemptuous critical outburst addressed to Patriarch Miron Cristea.⁷⁸

An old enemy of the Patriarch’s strategy of appeasement, Nae Ionescu took the Church’s point of view regarding the involvement in (party-) politics and radicalized it in the way the Legion expected from the Church. By commenting on the decision of the Holy Synod expressing its intention to support any political movement sympathetic to its cause and its commitment to influence society according to Christian moral precepts, Nae Ionescu commended the decision of the assembled Orthodox bishops to trespass the state’s stern recommendation to abstain from politics as a sign of ecclesiastical realignment with the ultranationalist agenda of the Iron Guard and the main nationalist regimes in Europe:

⁷⁵ “Partea oficială. Dezbatările Sfântului Sinod. Ședința din ziua de 11 Martie”, p. 19-20; N. Bălan, *Biserica și francmasoneria*, Bucharest, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești 1937; S.N., “Biserica și Francmasoneria”, in: *Mitropolia Moldovei* 13 (4/1937), p. 150-152.

⁷⁶ C. Codreanu, *Circulare*, p. 99.

⁷⁷ The Legion was not the only one to speculate on the events from Spain. LANC also did this when asking the support of the Orthodox Church. Tiță G. Pavelescu, “Pentru Înălții Prinți ai Bisericii Creștine”, in: *Santinela* 35 (4/Sunday, 4 April 1937), p. 3.

⁷⁸ According to an archival testimony, at the behest of Fr. Nicolae Georgescu-Edineț and with the participation of 200 legionaries headed by the legionary commander Valerian Trifa, Nae Ionescu also disseminated his views regarding the unbreakable identification between the Orthodox faith and the Romanian national specificity in a conference held at St. Anthony student church in Bucharest. See: *ANIC*, fond DGP, file no. 10/1937, p. 4-5.

Today things change. On the threshold of a totalitarian Europe divided into nations who are both spiritual and organic units, the Orthodox Church, who realizes that it organizes the spiritual life of the nation and is its true life in its need to experience God, has no forgiveness to ask, no humiliation to bear and no separation from the state to fear. Now [the Church] knows that the state, which is responsible for organizing the life of the nation in its entirety, cannot exclude outside the state the church, which is an essentially integral part of the nation. Following the indicative signs of reality, [the Church] prefers to oppose the state rather than dissociating from the nation. [The Church] prefers to do that because it is certain that sooner or later our state will reach the historical and Romanian imperative of the totalitarian nation.⁷⁹

By drawing upon his previous radical right-wing allegiances and confessional understanding of the Romanian nation as expressed best by its direct link with Orthodoxy, Ionescu saw the Orthodox Church, together with the Iron Guard, as the most arduous defenders of Romanian ethnicity against any internal or external threats, the warrants and defenders of Romanian national character.

In his second article,⁸⁰ published at the beginning of March 1937, Nae Ionescu polemized about the relation between Orthodoxy and nationalism with one of Nichifor Crainic's students, Radu Dragnea. Following up on his call to the Church to support the Iron Guard's very existence, he tried to show once again that

Besides being a logical category, the nation is the true collectivity that defines every one of us, the place, the framework and the principle of our entire activity in time. Nationalism is not just a political doctrine as Mr. Dragnea wants us to believe, but rather a polyvalent attitude which covers, in the same way, the spiritual and economical, the political or the cultural–aesthetic sectors of our activity.⁸¹

Therefore, for Nae Ionescu, nationalism became the main political attitude possible for the nation where Orthodoxy was a fundamental category; nationalism intertwined with Orthodoxy was in Nae Ionescu's view the only al-

⁷⁹ N. Ionescu, "Biserică, stat, națiune", in: *Predania* 1 (4/1 April 1937), p. 2-3.

⁸⁰ Idem, "Naționalism și Ortodoxie", p. 1-3.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 2. For a theological appropriation of this discussion see: D. Stăniloae, "Părerii greșite despre raportul între Ortodoxie și naționalism", in: *Telegraful Român* 85 (44/31 October 1937), p. 1; D. Stăniloae, "Naționalismul sub aspect moral", in: *Telegraful Român* 85 (47/21 November 1937), p. 1; D. Stăniloae, "Naționalismul sub aspect moral" II, in: *Telegraful Român* 85 (48/28 November 1937), p. 2; D. Stăniloae, "Naționalismul sub aspect moral" III, in: *Telegraful Român* 85 (49/5 December 1937), p. 2.

ternative for a Romanian cultural and political attitude. Orthodoxy for Nae Ionescu was synonymous with Christian spirituality which came to back a nationalist political ideology in a secular public sphere.

One of the last statements of Nae Ionescu in his article stated that “the community of love of the Church identifies itself structurally and spatially with the community of destiny belonging to the nation. This is Orthodoxy.”⁸² Nae Ionescu identified Orthodoxy with the Orthodox Church, the only institution which could reunite both the nation and its spirituality under the same roof. Nae Ionescu’s interest in the Orthodox Church is not a vote of confidence for the Romanian Orthodox hierarchy or the Holy Synod, but rather for the almost 3,000 Orthodox priests who adhered by that time to the Iron Guard. It was this destiny of the Romanian people that Nae Ionescu had in mind all along. This clerical presence in the Iron Guard assured the movement a great prestige and it is my assumption that at this particular time Ionescu identified the Church and Orthodoxy with the clerics who supported the Iron Guard.

Ionescu’s rediscovered anti-ecumenism towards the Greek-Catholics found inspiration in Codreanu’s circular letter amending the previous benevolent attitude of the legionary leadership towards other Christian denominations, especially towards the Roman- and Greek-Catholics who refused to vote or support the Iron Guard in the 1937 upcoming elections.⁸³ In an article for the same publication, Nae Ionescu stated:

To be in the present means to enter as a decisive component in the structure of the historical present. In my view, this structure becomes clear today in the form of a totalitarian nationalism. Can Catholicism become a part of this historical form? Hard to say! Because:

1. It is a historically accurate fact that Roman Catholicism never and nowhere supported nationalist movements...
2. In all nationalist countries the Catholic votes went not to the nationalist right but the democratic center – when it is known that democracy dissolves the organic forms of life so dear to

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁸³ C. Z. Codreanu, *Circulare și manifeste*, p. 238. The legionary leadership was also punishing the Greek-Catholic priests from Sibiu County for refusing to attend the consecration of the legionary crosses (troițe) in memory of the legionary martyrs Moța and Marin. See: V. Dreptul, “Din viața legionară. Din Copăcel”, in: *Libertatea* 36 (15/15 September 1937), p. 2. For Nae Ionescu’s anti-Catholic attitude see: N. Ionescu, “A fi ‘bun român’”, in: *Cuvântul* 6 (1982/1 November 1930), p. 1; N. Ionescu, “La închiderea unei discuții: Între catolicism și ortodoxie”, in: *Cuvântul* 6 (2033/17 December 1930), p. 1; K. Hitchins, *Romania, 1866-1947*, Clarendon, Oxford University Press 1994, p. 292-335; P. Vanhaelemeersch, *A Generation*, p. 227

the nationalists (in this undertaking, they always cohort with the Jews);

3. As a principle, it is impossible for the Roman Church to embrace nationalism and even less totalitarianism, these doctrines and forms of life postulating the absolute imperative of the nation, the state or whoever and Catholicism admitting a sole political imperative: that of the Roman Church which is supra-national, supra-state, and supra-whatever knows what!⁸⁴

In the wake of the upcoming elections and due to the wide popularity of the Legionary movement, *Predania* closed its gates under the official censorship's intervention. Nevertheless, most of its contributors continued their legionary activity and their anti-ecumenical views lived on until the Communist times.

***Glasul strămoșesc* [The Ancestral Voice]: Un-ecumenical Form of Ultranationalist Ecumenism?**

In their anti-ecumenical attitude, *Predania* and *Legiunea* were not the only ultra-nationalist newspapers in interwar Romania serving the political agenda of the Iron Guard. During the 1930s, another legionary newspaper, this time from Cluj and run by an Orthodox priest, got the attention of the legionary ranks and the official censorship. Its editor, Fr. Florea Mureșeanu was a legionary member from early 1930s and, together with Hodrea Aurel a Philology student in Cluj and Mișu Gaftoiu, studying Law at the same University, initiated the legionary working camp from Dealu Negru village to build a school where at that time he was a parish priest.⁸⁵ Transferred as a priest to the Orthodox cathedral of Cluj (January the 1st 1934), Fr. Mureșeanu continued to receive news about the outcome of the working camps and even went there to work and perform a religious service followed by a legionary propagandistic meeting where Ion Banea, the legionary leader of Transylvania spoke about the Iron Guard's agenda to the local peasants.⁸⁶

He also attended the conferences of Nae Ionescu, General Zizi Cantacuzino-Grăniceru and, on 14th of November 1936, that of Ion I. Moța.⁸⁷ Accordingly, for his legionary faith, Ion Banea asked Fr. Florea Mureșeanu although Banea was a stern Greek-Catholic, to consecrate the new legionary headquarters in Cluj, although the new building was not in

⁸⁴ N. Ionescu, "Și totuș catolicismul este inactual", in: *Predania* 1 (6-7/1-15 May 1937), p. 3-4.

⁸⁵ ACNSAS, fond Penal, file no. 0000695, vol. 1, p. 38.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

his parish.⁸⁸ Despite his southern Transylvanian and Bucharest counterparts, due to the multi-religious context of Cluj, he displayed a more opened attitude to other religious denominations, including the Greek-Catholics, and fostered good relations with legionary Greek-Catholic clergymen such as Fr. Titus Mălai.⁸⁹

In the spring of 1934, at the behest of the legionary commanders Ion Banea and Emil Șiancu, the leaders of the Transylvanian branch of the Iron Guard, he submitted a formal request to the Cluj Municipality for approval of a local legionary newspaper, with the administration and the newspaper's editorial office housed in his home.⁹⁰ Throughout the 1930s, Fr. Mureșanu served as the permanent editor of the newspaper, charged by the legionary leadership with the editorial staff, collecting the contributions and subsidies, and the subsequent distribution of the newspaper to various legionary nests from Cluj and the neighboring areas.⁹¹ Named *Glasul strămoșesc*, the new legionary newspaper enjoyed contributions from various Orthodox priests (Fr. Florea Mureșanu, Fr. Romul Grecu, etc.) and local Greek-Catholic clergymen (such as Titus Mălai).⁹² During the Cluj period, the newspaper's rhetoric tended to disregard the increasing anti-ecumenical tone of the legionary press and to promote the values of mutual toleration, mostly due to the overarching influence of Ion Banea and the good relations cultivated by Fr. Florea Mureșanu with other Orthodox and Greek-Catholic clergymen. In that respect, the legionary allegiance of contributors and the power-structures already established in the Transylvanian organization of the Iron Guard ensured that religious tensions were kept under control.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*. For the legionary working camp there see: Mihail Polihroniade, *Tabăra de Muncă*, Bucharest, Universul 1936, p. 23-27. For the labor camps of the Iron Guard see: Geoge Macrin, "O nouă școală românească. Taberele de muncă," in: *Însemnări sociologice* 1 (4/July 1935), p. 16-23. Valentin Săndulescu, "Taming the Body': Preliminary Considerations regarding the Legionary Working Camp System" (1933-1937)", in: *Historical Yearbook* 5 (2008), p. 85-94. Rebecca Anne Haynes, "Working Camps, Commerce and the Education of the 'New Man' in the Romanian Legionary Movement," in: *The Historical Journal* 51 (4/2008), p. 945. Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Zum Kampf, Arbeiter'-Arbeitsfrage und Arbeitschaft in der Legionärsbewegung", in: Armin Heinen, Oliver Jens Schmitt (eds.), *Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts. Die 'Legion Erzengel Michael' im Rumänien 1918-1938*, München, R. Oldernbourg Verlag 2013, p. 277-360. For the idea of the legionary "new man" see: Valentin Săndulescu, "Fascism and the Quest for the 'New Man': The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement", in: *Studia Hebraica* 4 (2004), p. 349-361.

⁸⁹ ACNSAS, fond Penal, file no. 0000695, vol. 1, p. 44.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

⁹² Fl. Mureșanu, "Ștefan Vodă al Moldovei, ctitor de altare creștinești", in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 4 (8/30 July 1937), p. 3; Romul Grecu, "Corpul preoților legionari", in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 4 (9/1 November 1937), p. 5-6; T. Mălai, "Un general sublim în fața morții", in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 4 (9/1 November 1937), p. 6

After the Second Vienna Award and the Axis' arbitrary decision to allow Hungary the northwestern part of Transylvania (including the city of Cluj), Fr. Florea Mureșanu decided to stay in Cluj under Hungarian occupation because of his multiple appointments (priest at the local cathedral, professor at the Orthodox Theological Academy, editor for *Tribuna Ardealului* and *Viața ilustrată*) and fear that in Romania he would not be able to achieve a comparable social status.⁹³ A new stage occurred in the development of the newspaper, now moved to Sibiu. Although on the cover Nicolae Petrașcu appears as the acting director with Ion Banea as the newspaper's founder, the editorial policy of *Glasul Strămoșesc* fell into the hands of another legionary clergymen and work-horse, namely Deacon Constantin Nicolae from Sibiu.⁹⁴

A brilliant student in Orthodox Theology in Chișinău (1933-1937) and one of Valerian Trifa's most trusted lieutenants in the local legionary student milieu, Constantin Nicolae was the former main editor of the legionary newspaper *România creștină* and leader of the Chișinău legionary student center (1937-1938), with the legionary rank of deputy-commander (*comandant ajutor*) awarded by Corneliu Codreanu personally for his bravery and energy during the legionary working camp from Carmen Silva.⁹⁵ With the onset of the National Legionary State, due to Fr. Spiridon Căndea's good relations with the legionary leadership, especially with Nicolae Petrașcu, the former leader of the nest where Căndea did his legionary apprenticeship, Deacon Constantin Nicolae received from the central legionary authorities the appointment of commander of the Sibiu legionary garrison and the position of acting editor of *Glasul Strămoșesc*.⁹⁶

There was another factor that secured the control of Orthodox clergymen over the legionary newspaper. Because of his prior success in publishing Codreanu's book in *Oastea Domnului* printing house and distributing it under the nose of the censors, another legionary clergymen, Fr. Dumitru Vestemean, was awarded the task of actually printing the legionary newspaper on his own press, thus securing once and for all the complete control of the Orthodox faction over the editorial direction of the newspaper.⁹⁷

By making use of the whole generation of "clerical fascists" from the Sibiu Theological Academy such as Fr. Spiridon Căndea⁹⁸, Fr. Theodor

⁹³ ACNSAS, fond Penal, file no. 0000695, vol. 1, p. 48.

⁹⁴ ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 405703, p. 25.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 27, 53, 61.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

⁹⁷ For Fr. Dumitru Vestemean's legionary activity see: ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 211444, vol. 1, p. 80.

⁹⁸ ACNSAS, fond MFI, file no.12197 (Sibiu), Vol. 1, reel 146, p. 8.

Bodogae⁹⁹, Fr. Liviu Stan¹⁰⁰, Fr. Zosim Oncea¹⁰¹, Fr. Nicolae Vonica¹⁰² and young legionary priests such as Fr. Aurel Borțian from Mândra¹⁰³, Fr. Ion Opriș¹⁰⁴, Fr. Ioan Sabău from Renghet¹⁰⁵, *Glasul Strămoșesc* displayed a protracted anti-ecumenical standpoint for its Transylvanian readers.¹⁰⁶

The anti-ecumenical posture employed by the legionary clergymen obviously contradicted the anonymous letter presumably sent to his Sibiu counterparts by the former main editor, Fr. Florea Mureșanu from Cluj, asking them to keep among the contributors Greek-Catholic clergymen such as Fr. Titus Mălai.¹⁰⁷ From the first issues edited in Sibiu, although making reference to the towering personality of legionary leader and stern Greek-Catholic Ion Banea, Orthodox clergymen failed to enlist Greek Catholic clergymen among its contributors and, when asking for subsidies for the Legionary Help, constantly spoke of the pivotal importance of the “Christian love” shared by various denominations, rather than asking their help:

The campaign of the Legionary Help is a campaign of self-sacrifice and brotherly love. ... It is a spiritual battle, a strong call to the hearts and Christian love of all the sons of our nation. With ram-

⁹⁹ ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no.165105, 125. T. Bodogae, “Biruatorii morții”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (1/8 November 1940), p. 5; idem, “Actualitatea ajutorului legionar”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (4/21 November 1940), p. 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ Ion Fleșeriu, *Amintiri*, Madrid, Colecția Generația 1922 1977, p. 61. This information is confirmed also by the interrogation of Nicolae Petrașcu in ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 211444, vol. 1, p. 14. Liviu Stan, “Filistenii”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 7 (4/19 January 1941), p. 7.

¹⁰¹ ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 501389, p. 1; Zosim Oncea, “Glasul crucilor verzi”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (1/8 November 1940), p. 5-6.

¹⁰² Nicolae Vonica, *Preotul și sănătatea poporului*, Sibiu, Editura Revistei Teologice 1940, p. 44-50. idem, “Pe treptele înălțării legionare”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (2/14 November 1940), p. 5; idem, “Studentii Arhanghelului”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (3/17 November 1940), p. 3.

¹⁰³ Aurel Borțian, “Iubiți frați și camarazi”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (5/24 November 1940), p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Ion Opriș, “Pentru marea biruință”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (1/8 November 1940), p. 5-6; idem, “Moartea, numai moartea legionară”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (3/17 November 1940), p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ He was a nest leader and a legionary propagandist. See: ACNSAS, fond Informativ, file no. 259463, vol. 1, p. 1-5; Ioan Sabău, “Glasul Strămoșesc”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (1/8 November 1940), p. 2; idem, “Aproapele nostru”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (2/14 November 1940), p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ For “clerical fascism” see: Roger Griffin, “The ‘Holy Storm’: ‘Clerical Fascism’ through the Lens of Modernism”, in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8 (2/2007), p. 220; idem, “An Unholy Alliance? The Convergence between Revealed Religion and Sacralized Politics in Inter-war Europe”, in: Jean Nelis, et al. (eds.), *Catholicism and Fascism in Europe*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms 2015, p. 49-67. For the Sibiu generation of fascist theologians see: I. F. Biliuță, “Un fascism clerical regional? Cazul Academiei Teologice Andreiene din Sibiu (1932-1941)”, in: Cornel Sigmireia, Corina Teodor (eds.), *Cler, Biserică și Societate în Transilvania (sec. XVII-XX)*, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut 2016, p. 404-424.

¹⁰⁷ For the letter see: S.N., “Scrisoare”, in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (1/8 November 1940), p. 2.

pant donations of so many touched hearts and moved by the call and holy fire of brotherly love, the unfolding of the Legionary Help's campaign seems a great work of Christ's Church, as in the old times. Anyway, in many respects, the Legionary movement does resemble early Christianity. We have to joyously acknowledge that the Legionary Help's campaign is a Christian battle of Christian awakening of the Romanian soul. *It is a point of return to God by awakening the brotherly love strangled before by the cupidity and the greedy self-interest of the Jewish-democratic mentality that ruled in our country until yesterday.*¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, the legionary Orthodox priests from *Glasul Strămoșesc* saw no impediment to identifying the true, alive Church always equated by them with the Orthodox Church with the Legionary Movement. In one of his articles, Fr. Aurel Borțian stated

The Legion leads the masses to the realization of the alive Church, but the alive Romanian Church which will no longer serve as a means of ... [word censored from the text] to no one! The alive Church and the Legion will make out of our fatherland a "Country as the bright sun in the Sky."¹⁰⁹

Moreover, in the wake of the territorial losses from the summer of 1940, some of the Orthodox theologians acquired Nazi concepts, probably from the local Nazified Saxon community, in order to highlight Romanian aspiration for reversing the August 1940's surrender of Transylvania to neighboring Hungary :

The legionary victory means a virtuous way of life for the Romanian individual and community. The legionary victory means the unquestioned rule over all the souls and lands that belong to the sacred heritage of the Romanians. The legionary victory means reconquering and conquering the "living space" for the Romanian nation to breathe and to prosper. The legionary victory means the rule of law in the country of injustices.¹¹⁰

The legionary rebellion (21st-23rd of January 1941) marked the beginning of the end for *Glasul Strămoșesc*. While some of its contributors such as Fr. Spiridon Câdea, Fr. Ioan Sabău, Fr. Ion Opreș spent some time in prisons and concentration camps for their legionary activism and their involvement

¹⁰⁸ N. Vonica, "Pe treptele înălțării legionare", p. 5. See also: T. Bodogae, "Actualitatea ajutorului legionar", in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (4/21 November 1940), p. 1-2; A. Borțian, "Iubiți frați și camarazi", in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (5/24 November 1940), p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ A. Borțian, "Biserica vie și legiunea", in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (7/1 December 1940), p. 2; I. Sabău, "Adevărul creștin și legionar", in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (9/15 December 1940), p. 7.

¹¹⁰ Spiridon Câdea, "Biruința legionară", in: *Glasul Strămoșesc* 6 (2/14 November 1940), p. 2.

in the rebellion, most of the legionary clergymen from the Sibiu newspaper survived General Antonescu's persecution only to find themselves behind bars after the instauration of the Communist regime. After seven years, the newspaper finally closed down in 1941, its editorial staff disbanded, and most of its issues vanished from university or local libraries once and for all.

Final Remarks

The journalistic activity of legionary clergymen in support of the Orthodox Church and their subsequent anti-ecumenical standpoint did not go to waste. After the anti-legionary repression launched by General Antonescu shortly before and during World War Two, after the fall of the Antonescu regime these clergymen, especially those from Transylvania found themselves at the forefront of the anti-Catholic offensive envisaged by the Communist authorities, mostly against the Greek-Catholic Church. Serving as counselors for the central authorities (Liviu Stan, Spiridon Cândeia) or simply as main actors in the drama surrounding the dissolution of the Greek-Catholic community in Romania and its 1948 forceful "unification" with the Orthodox Church, all these clergymen brought to fruition the anti-ecumenical misconceptions previously voiced in the legionary press.

The theological continuities between the interwar and the early communist period regarding the anti-ecumenical standpoint of a part of the Orthodox clergy shed light also on the undisputed importance of print for conveying religious and ideological messages to the masses by the Orthodox Church. Although interconfessional tensions engulfed Transylvanian Churches from the 19th century onwards, this denominational strife once exported across the Carpathians in post-1918 Greater Romania grew into the Concordat affair (1927) and bred resentment on the part of an entire generation of right-wing intellectuals towards parliamentary democracy and party politics. It also captured the minds of a young generation of Orthodox clergymen who, in their search for a new political option, chose to side with the extremist Iron Guard.