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A Continuum of Dictatorships: Hybrid Totalitarian Experiments in Romania, 1937–44

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In December 1937, the national general elections in Romania produced an inconclusive result: for the first time in the country's inter-war history, no political party managed to reach the electoral threshold of 40 per cent of the total number of votes in order to benefit from the electoral bonus awarding the majority of seats in the parliament, as stipulated by the 1926 law. Instead, the result confirmed two general trends already evident in the 1933 elections: the gradual erosion of popular support for the great bourgeois-democratic parties, the National Liberal Party (PNL – *Partidul Național Liberal*) and the National Peasants' Party (PNT – *Partidul Național Țărănesc*) on the one hand, and the rising tide of new nationalist parties, among which the most important were the fascist Legion of Archangel Michael and the conservative-right National-Christian Party (PNC – *Partidul Național Creștin*) on the other. To be sure, although party politics in Romania was clearly recast as a confrontation between bourgeois-democratic and radical parties, the electoral balance was still overwhelmingly in favour of the former, with the PNL obtaining 35.92 per cent of the vote, the dissident liberal faction led by Gheorghe Brătianu 3.89 per cent and the PNT 20.40 per cent. At the same time, the radical nationalist pole was, however, not only particularly strong – with a record of 15.53 per cent of the votes for the All for the Fatherland Party (representing the Legion) and 9.15 per cent for the PNC – but also on the offensive.¹ The power balance between the two political poles was reversed by King Carol II: eager to undermine the parliamentary regime, in December 1937 Carol II capitalized on the PNL's failure to produce an absolute majority and brought to power the minor National-Christian Party as a prelude to his own personal regime.

In retrospect, the 1937 elections and their repercussions marked a major turning point in Romania's history, the first in a series of departures from

the pluralistic, multi-party parliamentary political system established after the First World War. Over the next six years, Romania was to experience a succession of hybrid dictatorial regimes: the royal dictatorship (10 February 1938–6 September 1940); the National-Legionary State (14 September 1940–14 February 1941); and the military dictatorship of General (later Marshall) Ion Antonescu (6 September 1940–23 August 1944), followed, after a short interregnum in the post-war period, by the Communist takeover on 6 March 1945. The 1937 voting was to thus be Romania's last free elections in more than 50 years (1937–90).

This chapter discusses this cumulative succession of departures from democracy leading to multiple totalitarian experiments in Romania's political life (1937–44). While the history of these regimes has been routinely approached in isolation from each other, here we will approach this period of upheaval in Romania's history as a continuum, being mostly interested in the political legacy of these experiments and the way they built on each other as part of a wider transnational process of political radicalization. To identify the complex patterns of continuities and ruptures between these regimes, the chapter employs a dual comparative perspective: diachronic, underscoring processes of political transition from one regime to another; and synchronic, to account for the wider transnational influences and transfers between these political experiments in Romania and similar regimes in contemporary Europe.

Theoretically and methodologically, the research is anchored in the field of comparative fascist studies, but it challenges the received wisdom in this field in two major ways. First, students of fascism generally operate with a clear-cut typology of political ideologies and movements, differentiating at a conceptual level between genuine fascism, the radical right and the conservative right.² At an analytical level, the differentiation between conservative authoritarian, radical right-wing and fascist movements and parties is indispensable for comparative work, enabling historians to distinguish between related radical political phenomena and account for similarities and differences within the wider 'family of authoritarians' in inter-war Europe.³ In historical reality, however, these ideal types are never to be found in pure form, as Max Weber, the pioneer of this research method, pertinently pointed out; in politics in particular, the fluid nature of ideologies, the dynamics of the political process and the multiple social-political factors that generally shape the nature and outlook of political regimes generate hybrid outcomes.⁴ This is all the more true for post-1918 Europe, a period of upheaval marked by grand experiments and cross-fertilizations across a wide spectrum of mass ideologies and movements, which resulted in peculiar political outcomes. From this perspective, the aim here is not to arrive at a static typological classification of the successive political regimes established in Romania made up of royal, fascist and conservative-military dictatorships, but to understand the complex interaction

between social-political actors, the interplay between local and foreign political models and the hybridization of ideological options, political styles and institutional forms.

Second, we argue that wartime fascist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe should be given greater historiographical attention. As is well known, the concept of fascism can refer to a trans-national ideology, to a set of related political movements and to a set of related political regimes. Each aspect of the triad ideology–movement–regime has its own history and diachronic evolution, and can be analysed separately by means of distinct methodologies. To date, however, comparative works on fascism have focused predominantly on the nature of the fascist ideology and the movements it generated. At the same time, the history of fascism in power has remained relatively under-researched, with the notable exceptions of the independent and long-lasting regimes in Fascist Italy (1922–43) and Nazi Germany (1933–45). The lack of research on the topic is most evident in regard to the history of wartime fascist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. These regimes have been largely discarded as puppet governments in Nazi satellite countries. This perspective is accurate insofar as it describes the subordinate position of these regimes to the foreign policy goals and military plans of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. It highlights the fact that fascist movements in Central and Eastern Europe were not able to gain power without the assistance of external factors. Yet the label ‘puppet governments’ is also misleading, since it inaccurately denies these regimes any form of internal autonomy, agency or (illiberal, as it were) institutional creativity, thus reducing them to would-be copies of National Socialism or Italian Fascism.

Building mainly on research insights advanced by Zeev Sternhell, Stanley Payne and Robert O. Paxton, a handful of researchers have attempted to construct a more comprehensible analytical framework for understanding fascism in power. Aristotle A. Kallis in particular pleads for a redirection of the research agenda in fascist studies from ideal-types of generic fascist ideology to constructing a regime-model of fascism in power.⁵ This chapter follows on this research agenda. Without diminishing the paramount analytical importance of ideal-type models of fascist ideology for the study of inter-war fascism this chapter focuses on the neglected issue of fascism in power by exploring the case study of Romania. It argues that the short-lived regime of the Legion of the Archangel Michael provides an interesting experiment of fascist totalitarianism in action. Instead of discarding this regime as a puppet government, or of exclusively highlighting the internal and external constraints upon the Legion’s rule, it explores this regime’s social-political agenda and evaluate its successes and failures in building a totalitarian state. This regime is seen not simply as marking the transition from the royal dictatorship to Antonescu’s regime, but as a pivotal experiment shaping politics in wartime Romania.

Politics in Greater Romania: between nationalist consensus and ideological competitions

Unification, state building and elite competition

The multiple departures from democratic politics in Romania in the period 1937–44 cannot be fully understood without taking into account the evolution of the country's political regime in the inter-war period. The Old Kingdom of Romania entered the First World War in 1916 on the side of the Entente, and was fully transformed by this experience. Although during the war Romania suffered massive human losses and experienced a long period of military occupation, at the end it managed to double its size (from 130,177 km² in 1914 to 295,049 km² in 1919) and population (from 7,771,341 in 1914 to 14,669,841 in 1919). In addition, following the socio-political upheaval of the war, comprehensive reforms such as universal male suffrage (1919), land redistribution (1921) and a new liberal constitution (1923) granted full citizenship rights to peasants and emancipated subordinated ethno-religious minorities such as Jews, thus effectively remodelling the state into a parliamentary democracy.

Despite these far-reaching reforms, the processes of post-war political reorganization in Greater Romania – as the country was generally referred to – proved arduous, being marked by numerous structural crises related to the establishment and legitimization of a new political order, conflicts among regional political elite groupings in the process of state unification, the expansion of a bureaucratized state administration and its relation to local communities, the integration of ethnic minorities and dilemmas of collective identity. The process of internal integration was hampered by the fact Greater Romania (1918–40) was a heterogeneous assembly of multiple historical provinces. To the Old Kingdom – made up of the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (unified in 1859) and the former Ottoman province of Dobrudja (annexed in 1878) – were added the province of Bessarabia (1918), which had been occupied by Russia from 1812 to 1918; Transylvania, the Banat, Maramureş and the Partium, which had been part of Hungary; and Bukovina, a former province of Austria. Moreover, although Greater Romania was conceived as a nation state of ethnic Romanians as the dominant or titular nation – who numbered 12,981,324 people, or 71.9 per cent of the total population in 1930 – the country also encompassed a high ratio of minorities that amounted to 28.1 per cent of the population.⁶

After succeeding at political unification, the political elite faced the challenge of fostering the administrative integration, cultural assimilation and legislative harmonization of these heterogeneous amalgams, as the historical provinces that composed the country had been shaped by different imperial legacies and socio-political systems. Not surprisingly, the organization of the new state led to persistent debates among rival factions of the political elite,

who advanced distinct ideological projects vying for political dominance, animated by liberalism, agrarianism, social democracy or radical ideologies, such as fascism or communism. Employing Paul Colomy's theoretical framework on institutional change, we can differentiate three types of nation- and state-building projects in inter-war Romania as a function of their relation to the pre-war Old Kingdom: (1) 'elaborative', promoting only minor reforms of the existing institutional framework with the aim of perpetuating practices that functioned in the pre-1918 Old Kingdom, and thus protecting their traditional interest groups; (2) 'reconstructive', arguing for an ample institutional reorganization of the post-war Greater Romania leading to the creation of new bureaucratic agencies and roles, in favour of new political interest groups; and (3) 'totalizing', working for a radical reorganization of the existing institutional order, either in the form of classical revolutions or of charismatic ethical prophecies.⁷

The Romanian political elites of the Old Kingdom, grouped mostly in the PNL, promoted an 'elaborative' institutional agenda. Arguing Greater Romania was a continuation of the Old Kingdom, they advocated the extension of that country's pre-war legislation to the newly incorporated provinces as a means of homogenizing Greater Romania's legislation and administrative system. In contrast to this dominant view originating from the political centre, regional elites in the newly joined territories promoted an alternative, 'reconstructive' institutional agenda. Arguing that Greater Romania was a new state that had to establish its distinct socio-political organization, these elites demanded post-war negotiations for power positions among the political elites of all historical regions, which were to lead to forms of decentralization of the decision-making processes. The most powerful proponent of this view was the National Party led by Iuliu Maniu and active in Transylvania and the Banat, where it had a strong electoral basis due to its decade-long fight for the Romanian national cause in Austria-Hungary. Resenting the abolition of its post-1918 monopoly over Transylvania's regional affairs in 1920, the National Party fused in 1926 with the Peasants' Party of the Old Kingdom to form the PNT as a new party with nationwide coverage.

The political terminology employed by the proponents of these two main competing perspectives on national unification, advanced by the National-Liberal *versus* the National-Peasant parties, was also different: while the political elites of the Old Kingdom demanded the integration of the new provinces into the existing state structures through a process of legislative extension, regional political elites spoke of unification through post-war pan-regional power negotiations.⁸ The PNL and the PNT were also divided over Romania's economic policy and the role of the state in fostering economic development. The former put the emphasis on sheltered industrialization under the slogan 'by our own means': they favoured local capital over foreign investment.⁹ In contrast, the

PNT promoted the idea of a peasant state based on a large strata of independent, self-sufficient farmers, and called for an open door policy to foreign capital.

After a short post-war interregnum of political upheaval and reorganization (1919–22), in the first post-war decade Bucharest's view on national integration prevailed. The process of 'nationalizing the state' by the Romanian ethnic majority was shaped by the vision advanced by the PNL. Animated by the strong personality of its leader, Ion I. C. Brătianu, and taking advantage of his overwhelming influence over King Ferdinand, the PNL dominated politics in the first post-war decade and implemented its view on the process of administrative and cultural homogenization, campaigning for state continuity between the Old Kingdom and Greater Romania.

In the late 1920s, the PNT emerged as Romania's most popular political party and managed to challenge the PNL's political rule by channelling regional elite resistance against Bucharest-based centralization. On 6 May 1928 a massive public demonstration organized by the PNT in Alba Iulia (the city where the union of Transylvania with Romania was proclaimed on 1 December 1918) against the PNL's political dominance, signalled the impatience of regional elites in acquiring political power. In the same year, the PNT obtained a crushing victory over the PNL, gaining 77.76 per cent of the vote. While it formed the government (1928–31 and 1932–33), the PNT attempted to reorganize Romania's political life and administrative system by promoting forms of decentralization and devolution. However, their political experiment was both short-lived and conciliatory to the existing status quo rather than revolutionary. In addition, its implementation was also marred by the dramatic social impact of the Great Depression that was felt in Romania from 1929 to 1933. The process of legislative unification and political integration within Greater Romania progressed gradually – marked by the adoption of a new civil code (1932) – which further eliminated regional legal disparities. Overall, although Romania's main political parties called for the implementation of different social projects: the PNL favouring consolidation of the native bourgeoisie through policies of sheltered industrialization, while the PNT called for the creation of a peasant state through the development of agriculture and co-operation with foreign capital, they both defended a constitutional, multi-party parliamentary system, and promoted moderate state-building measures, which safeguarded the standard rights of ethnic minorities as stipulated in Romania's domestic legislation and international commitments.

The far right: between integral nationalism and fascism

In contrast to the bourgeois-democratic political parties committed to the constitutional, multi-party parliamentary regime, several right-wing movements

emerged in inter-war Romania, animated by the doctrine of integral nationalism and proposing various ‘totalizing’ projects of socio-political transformation.¹⁰ The doctrine of integral nationalism was inherited from nationalist thinkers at the turn of the century, but invested with new connotations by the inter-war far right. The main tenet of integral nationalism was the ethnic nationalization of the state under the slogan ‘Romania to the Romanians’. Its main goal was the removal of ‘foreigners’ – that is, of the non-ethnic Romanian members of society – from positions of power and representation, and their replacement with ethnic Romanians. In the Old Kingdom the main grievances of the Romanian nationalists focused on the status of the Jewish population, concentrated mostly in northern Moldova. It is known that Romania was the last country in Europe to emancipate its Jewish population (1918–19). Until then Jews were classed as non-citizen residents: they lived on Romanian territory and were subjects, but not citizens, of the Romanian state. This status implied numerous duties (most importantly the duties of taxation and military service) without granting full civil, economic and political rights. An elaborate system of segregation, discrimination and exploitation, made up of around 250 laws, deprived Jews of significant civil, social and economic rights. The legal justification for this system was the doctrine of the ‘Christian state;’ the economic justification was the Jewish ‘domination’ of certain economic activities and liberal professions, and their compact geographical concentration in certain areas, most notably northern Moldova, which was portrayed by contemporaries as a genuine ‘Jewish invasion’. This system of exclusion and discrimination was partially dismantled, under pressure from the international community, in 1878, and fully abolished in 1919 under the terms of the Minority Convention.¹¹

The emancipation of the Jews was bitterly contested during the inter-war period by the emerging radical right, which pleaded for the reinstatement of the pre-war regime of constitutional nationalism. In the annexed territories, in addition to the Jews, Romanian nationalists targeted the Hungarians, regarding this group as a former privileged ‘imperial minority’ due to its urban concentration and domination of the liberal profession and state bureaucracies in the annexed provinces of Transylvania and the Banat. Although there was a nationalist consensus in Romanian society over the aim of nationalizing the state, the process was differently conceived by various factions of the political elite, which were by different nationalist visions: the traditional right saw ethnic nationalization as the end result of a gradual process of social and political transformation implemented from above through legal-bureaucratic means, while the radical right conceived of this process as a rapid, bottom-up campaign, implemented through a violent right-wing revolution at the grass-roots level. The radical right blamed the Great Powers and international organizations for the ‘forced’ emancipation of non-citizens in Romania. They also

criticized traditional Romanian political elites for the slow pace of state nationalization and agitated for the implementation of a policy of *numerus clausus* in education, the economy and politics.

In the early post-war years the main catalyst of integral nationalism were the 1920–22 student movements that swept provincial Romanian universities such as the University of Iași in northern Moldova and the University of Cluj in Transylvania, where the new Romanian order was not yet consolidated and the student body was ethnically mixed. After the student mobilization began to wane, the most radical activists searched for ways to channel the student movement into a nationalist political movement. In a first phase, these activists, led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu from Iași and Ion I. Moța from Cluj, contributed to the creation of the National-Christian Defence League (LANC – Liga Apărării Național Creștine) established in 1923 under the leadership of the influential and notoriously anti-Semitic A. C. Cuza, a professor at the University of Iași. The electoral heartland of this organization was mostly in northern Moldova and Bukovina, but it also made inroads into Maramureș and Transylvania. Its programme focused mainly on ‘solving’ the Jewish question in Romania by restrictive measures implemented from above. LANC opposed the emancipation of Romanian Jews in the 1923 Constitution and called for the nationalization of trade in Romanian hands through economic restrictions imposed on the Jewish population.

LANC was a laboratory for the crystallization of fascist ideas and ritual practices, in view of its rabid anti-Semitism, the violent activity of its blue-uniformed paramilitary groups (*lăncieri*, or spearmen) and its anti-establishment orientation. This new paramilitary style of politics, however, increased the gap between LANC’s conservative leadership and the new generation of radical student activists. For this reason, the radical activists’ association with the new party was short-lived. In 1927 the group led by Codreanu and Moța decided to leave and establish their own movement, the Legion of the Archangel Michael.¹² Although sharing LANC’s nationalism and anti-Semitism, Codreanu criticized A. C. Cuza’s ‘moderate’ political discourse and old-fashioned methods. By leaving LANC, the radical nucleus of activists distanced themselves from the mainstream nationalism promoted by the previous generation and put forward a messianic call to generational solidarity under the banner of charismatic nationalism.

It has been argued elsewhere by this author that the Legion was a fascist totalitarian organization: its ideology reinterpreted major themes of romantic nationalism in novel forms, adapting them to the new socio-political context of inter-war Romania.¹³ First, the Legion was successful in appropriating the romantic palingenetic myth of national rebirth, portraying itself as the instrument of divine salvation and redemption. Second, it gave the militant spirit of the turn-of-the-century integral nationalism an anti-systemic orientation

that was missing in its conservative-elitist variant. It merged pre-war anti-Semitism with post-1917 anti-communism into a new ideological formula: that of the Judeo-Bolshevik world conspiracy. Third, it added new elements to the conservative-elitist commitment to militarism and religious values, such as the urgency of apocalyptic thinking, emphasis on expiation of sins through suffering and violent self-sacrifice and ideas about metempsychosis linked with the cult of the ancestors, the cult of the dead and of the martyrs. Fourth, the Legion had a revolutionary character, which was evident in its totalitarian drive, its paramilitary organization and the charismatic nature of its leadership. It aimed to remove the 'corrupt' and 'decadent' political elite and replace it with a new youth fascist elite entrusted with the mission to save Romania under a charismatic leader. The Legion promoted an integral view of politics, governing all aspects in the life of its followers. It exercised a new type of charismatic, oath-taking authority over its members, demanding total and unconditional devotion to the movement and the leader. It also promoted new forms of political organization and activism, militarizing the party and organizing it along the values of hierarchy and discipline, and implementing innovative forms of socialization and of pedagogical education aiming at the creation of the new fascist man.

Although this radical ethno-nationalist project was apparently close to the elaborative or reconstructive projects proposed by various sections of traditional elites, the agenda of the new fascist movement was in fact radically anti-systemic, as it aimed at seizing the state by violent means, reconfiguring it along totalitarian lines and forging a homogeneous ethnic community. Their vision of rebirth and regeneration of the country entailed the purification of the political body of all 'foreign', 'unhealthy' or 'corrupt' elements through denaturalization and deportation. The Legionary project was not only directed against high-status minorities, most notably the Jews and the Hungarians, but also against Romanian political elites, who allegedly betrayed the national cause, thus leading to intra-ethnic ideological strife as well.

Prelude to dictatorship: economic crisis and political departures, 1930–37

As long as the PNT was successful in channelling anti-liberal feelings, far right political parties had a narrow space in which to capture popular protest in order to enter mainstream politics. The Great Depression of 1929–33, and the failure of the democratic opposition led by the PNT to provide a coherent alternative to the PNL, led to long-term political changes. On the one hand, popular support for major traditional parties began to erode and the number of active voters decreased from 77.5 per cent in 1928 to 71.0 per cent in 1932. On the other hand, a multitude of new political factions and groupings emerged, most

of them with similar regional backgrounds and programmes: there were seven significant political parties in 1928, 12 in 1931 and 17 in 1932. Overall, during the period 1928–32, old parties lost around 38.5 per cent of their electoral support, of which 74.0 per cent was absorbed by new political parties.¹⁴

Since the 1930 another major factor impacted Romania's politics and affecting the evolution of its political regime: Carol II's ascension to the throne. As a prince heir, Carol – son of King Ferdinand I and Marie of Edinburgh – had earned himself a poor reputation: after several scandals and a long-term extramarital relationship with Elena Lupescu, Carol was forced to renounce his right to the throne on 28 December 1925 in favour of his under-age son, Michael I, who reigned from 1927 to 1930.¹⁵ However, on 7 June 1930, Carol arrived unexpectedly in Romania and was proclaimed king the next day, with help from certain factions of the Romanian political class but against the wishes of a significant part of it. The issue continued to divide the political establishment for years to come. In addition to the much-contested circumstances of his enthronement and conjugal life, the new king proved to have an appetite for authoritarian rule. His political actions constantly subverted party politics and the parliamentary regime, gradually preparing the political ground for establishing his personal regime. To this end, the king set up two non-party cabinets of national union led by loyal politicians such as Nicolae Iorga and Constantin Argetoianu, surrounded himself with an influential but highly unpopular entourage, the *camarila regală* (the court clique); and undermined internal party politics by appointing as prime minister Gheorghe Tătărescu, a leader of the PNL's Young Liberal faction, in defiance of the PNL's president, Dinu Brătianu.

Entering politics in 1927, the Legion was to be the most successful radical movement in challenging the existing political order. Its charismatic type of legitimization was disruptive of democratic politics based on legal-rational authority, but it was also disruptive of patronage politics based on party clientelism (called politicianism), and as such was highly subversive of the existing order. The Legion's unrivalled commitment and fanaticism challenged conventional politics, obstructing patrons' freedom of movement and forcing them to take sides in the conflict between the formal legal-rational and charismatic authority.

Until 1936, King Carol II attempted to disrupt the Legion's charismatic cohesiveness by channelling it into a privileged patron–client relation. The Legion benefited from governmental favours, such as facilities to organize the 1936 student congress in Târgu Mureş, but still continued its radical critique of the political elite, also targeting Elena Lupescu and the king's clique. The failure of the king's strategy of co-optation led to an open confrontation with the Legion. On 29 August 1936, the king reshuffled the government and demanded firmer measures against political radicalism. These measures were evidently meant to

make the Legion understand the heavy price it would pay for its refusal to co-operate. After this demonstration of force, in February 1937 Carol II made a final attempt to subordinate the Legion. Secret negotiations for political collaboration with Codreanu were fruitless, however. To the king's request to be proclaimed 'Captain' of the Legion, Codreanu responded that his charismatic authority was unique and non-transferable, and argued that charismatic faith cannot be the object of a political transfer.¹⁶ Moreover, in the parliamentary elections of December 1937, Codreanu joined an anti-Carol political alliance with the PNT led by Maniu and the dissident Liberal faction led by Gheorghe Brătianu. As noted above, those elections marked the final crisis of the parliamentary political regime in Romania. Apparently the Legion was the potential winner, since it became the country's third political force, with a considerable potential for growth. The political accession of the Legion was, however, a double-edge sword, since its incomplete victory made it vulnerable to state repression.

Caesarism in power: the king's personal regime, 10 February 1938–4 September 1940

Encouraged by the political crisis caused by the results of the December 1937 elections, King Carol II decided to pursue his long-harboured plans to institute a regime of personal authority, called *dictatura regală* (royal dictatorship). Royal dictatorships were not uncommon in the Balkans during the inter-war years (e.g. Alexander I in Yugoslavia, 1929–31, and Boris III in Bulgaria, 1938–43). Their establishment was usually an ad hoc response by the monarchy and loyal factions of traditional elites to structural political crises. A principal aim of royal dictatorships was to restore political stability by curtailing pluralism and antagonistic party politics, and to block the radical right's access to power. To gain political legitimacy and effectively neutralize fascism, in addition to activating traditional elements of the royal type of authority, these regimes also employed fascist trappings, such as the cult of the leader, the indoctrination of youth and its enrolment into a single mass organization, and emphasis on the propaganda themes of salvation and redemption of the nation. Such trappings were also intended to make these regimes appear modern and dynamic, in tune with the new style of mass politics emerging in inter-war Europe.

The establishment and consolidation of Carol's personal regime took place in several stages, each constituting a major departure from the multi-party, parliamentary political regime. First, in order to bring about the collapse of the multi-party parliamentary system, on 28 December 1937 Carol II brought the PNC, led by A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga, to power, despite it only having won 10 per cent of the votes and finishing fourth in the elections. To control Octavian Goga's new government, Carol appointed his close collaborator

Armand Călinescu Minister of the Interior, and Ion Antonescu as his Minister of Defence (the careers of these two politicians will be explored in more detail below). Unsurprisingly, the PNC was unable to stabilize the tense political situation. Instead, it introduced a decree that revoked the granting of citizenship to Romanian Jews and, with the help of their paramilitary *lăncieri* and police, engaged in a political vendetta against its enemies, marked by several violent confrontations with the Legion's paramilitary troops. While the country plunged into political and economic chaos and having lost much of its external political credit, the ruling party was busy preparing new general elections with the aim of winning a parliamentary majority.

The uncertain outcome of the future parliamentary elections worried Carol II, however, as he feared that either the nationalist right or the democratic opposition would be able to claim a sweeping electoral victory or come together on an anti-Carlist platform. To prevent such an unwanted outcome, the king decided on a pre-emptive strike. After only 40 days of PNC rule (28 December 1937–9 February 1938), and having apparently proved to the public the inability of political parties to manage the crisis, on 10 February 1938 Carol II staged a *coup d'état*, instituted a state of emergency, imposed censorship and assumed authoritarian powers.

The new royal dictatorship was anti-Legionary in character; however, in order to subvert the Legion's political message, it appropriated several fascist tropes and trappings in its political style and rhetoric. Thus, in a proclamation that borrowed the urgent language of Legion manifestos, Carol justified the establishment of his personal regime by the imperious need to put an end to political chaos and sterile rivalry: 'Romania has to be salvaged and am I determined to work toward this end, motivated by my sole and eternal aim: the permanent interests of the country and its continuous strengthening.'¹⁷ The king asked for public support in the 'great work of national awakening, of the country's recovery and salvation'.¹⁸ He appointed a new, non-party government, led by the Orthodox Patriarch Miron Cristea and conceived as a broad anti-Legion coalition, uniting the throne, the church and the army. In order to prevent any significant political opposition and to induce the idea of a national union, the new government included all former prime ministers and other leading politicians, most of them as ministers without portfolio. The appointment of the patriarch as prime minister was meant to appease internal political rivalries, to highlight the Orthodox Church's backing for the king's agenda and to mobilize the prelates and the masses of believers in support of the new regime. The political coalition between the king and the patriarch emulated the Byzantine political tradition functioning in the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia until the early-modern period, based on the autocratic power of the prince and the intertwined relationship between church and state. In exchange for an extension of the church's corporate privileges, the patriarch assisted the king

in the 'domestication' of his subjects. In a virulent pamphlet against political parties, the patriarch enthusiastically endorsed the new political regime, asserting it was 'clear from where salvation comes: from the heroic determination of Your Majesty'.¹⁹

On 12 February, the king announced his political programme, which combined authoritarian rule with ethnic nationalism. Under the slogan 'Peace and Union', Carol II promised comprehensive constitutional reforms promoting 'national ideas and the interests of the Romanian element'; the revision of citizenship for Jews 'in order to allow economic life for the Romanian element'; the depoliticization of the administration; and the maintenance of Romania's traditional foreign policy course based on the defence of the Versailles treaty system.²⁰

The legal basis of the new political regime was the constitution passed on 20 February 1938 under the slogan 'Rescuing Contemporary Romania'.²¹ A few days later, the constitution was approved by a plebiscite orchestrated to produce unanimity for the new regime. Secrecy was eliminated from the ballot procedure and severe punishment was introduced for absenteeism, so that out of 4,303,064 registered voters a mere 5,483 (0.13 per cent of the electorate) had the courage to vote against it.²²

Although the Constitution preserved the decorative facade of a multi-party parliamentary system and a formal separation of powers, it nevertheless consolidated all effective powers into the king's hands and proclaimed the pre-eminence of the executive over legislative power. The king had the right to name the government, to veto the promulgation of the laws voted upon by parliament and to issue decrees when parliament was not sitting. Parts of the constitution were directed specifically against the Legion. To eliminate its young electorate from political participation, political rights were granted only to literate men and women over the age of 30. State dignitaries had to be from families that had Romanian citizenship for at least three generations, a stipulation possibly targeting the Codreanu family, which was naturalized only in 1903 coming from the Austrian province of Galicia. Finally, the constitution introduced capital punishment for assassination attempts against members of the royal family or state dignitaries.

The repressive side of the new regime was established by the decree for the defence of state order, adopted in April 1938. The decree prohibited all activities that would lead to a change of the existing political regime or would propagate the principle of class struggle or the abolition of private property (article 2). While some of these stipulations targeted communist propaganda and activism, most of them were evidently meant to counter the Legionary threat: the decree banned oath-taking ceremonies, the wearing of uniforms in public and paramilitary activities of any kind, political propaganda in print or by way of group singing in public, etc. To neutralize the Legion's main

recruitment base, the decree also expressly prohibited pupils, students and priests from being involved in any type of political engagement, while political propaganda was strictly forbidden in schools and churches. Violation of these stipulations were punished with large fines, house arrest or imprisonment, and the loss of civil rights for a period of up to five years.

Caesarism against fascism: the repression of the Legion of the Archangel Michael

Under Carol's personal regime, the Legion's position rapidly deteriorated as most of the repressive measures adopted by the king directly targeted it. Aware of the danger and confident that his time was yet to come, on 21 February 1938 Codreanu tactically disbanded the All for the Fatherland party, forcing its members into political passivity. He ordered the closure of its headquarters and recommended Legionaries take up mystical communitarian isolation through the observance of fasting, praying and the total abandonment of earthly activities.

Although presented by Legion propaganda as an ethical response to tyranny, Codreanu's prudent attitude to the establishment of the royal dictatorship reflected the Legion's lack of available options. While between 1932 and 1937 the Legion grew into a mass movement, the organization lacked the capacity to stage a successful *coup d'état*, or to resist powerful state-orchestrated repression. Its leaders were trained to work within fragmented local cells which conducted small-scale electoral campaigns or terrorist actions but lacked the experience of effective mass mobilization on a national scale.

Soon after the consolidation of his personal regime, King Carol was quick to unleash with full force his pre-emptive anti-Legionary strategy. On 30 March 1938, the king appointed a second government led by Orthodox Patriarch Miron Cristea. Far from being a simple reshuffling, the new government was the beginning of a fully-fledged anti-Legion campaign. The key figure in the government was King Carol's right-hand man, Armand Călinescu, nicknamed the Black Monocle. Călinescu made his political debut within the Peasant Party in the Old Kingdom. After its 1926 fusion with the Transylvanian National Party, he made a name for himself as a prominent leader of the new wave of young and energetic politicians within the newly formed PNT. In 1932–33, Călinescu was under-secretary of state in the Ministry of the Interior in successive PNT governments led by Alexandru Vaida Voievod, and soon becoming known for his severe and uncompromising attitude against grass-roots agitations by the Legion or the communists. In 1937, dissatisfied with the ossified cadre policies of the PNT – which favoured older politicians – and aware that the political fortune of traditional parties was in decline, Călinescu defected from the PNT and entered King Carol's service as a member of the Centrist political faction. He first served as Minister of the Interior in Octavian Goga's right-wing

government (December 1937–February 1938); after the establishment of Carol's personal regime on 10 February 1938, Călinescu became one of the king's most trusted political collaborators.

Călinescu was in favour of embarking on a swift and comprehensive campaign of repression against the Legion, in order to eliminate it from political life for once and for all. In his personal diary, he characterized Codreanu as 'Uneducated, cruel, [with] no professional activity'.²³ Together with the king, Călinescu established a plan for the arrest and neutralization of the main Legionary cadres. On 17 April 1938, Codreanu and other leading Legionaries and sympathizers were arrested and interned in camps established at Tismana, Dragomirna and Miercurea Ciuc. A military tribunal charged Codreanu with the defamation of a public official. The legal pretext invoked for Codreanu's indictment was an injurious letter he sent to Nicolae Iorga, who was at the time a royal counsellor. In reaction to Iorga's press campaign against Legion restaurants that led to their closure, Codreanu accused the historian and politician of opportunism, dishonesty and betrayal of the national ideals he had once preached to his students. After a short trial, Codreanu was sentenced to six months of forced labour.

Codreanu's trial was only the beginning of a repression against the Legion. In May 1938, after intense legal and political preparations, Codreanu was brought to yet another public trial – this time more elaborate – designed by official propaganda as a definitive public defamation of the Legion and its terrorist activities. The prosecutor's accusations insisted on Codreanu's rebellion against the state, high treason, alleged collaboration with foreign agents against state interests – although no conclusive evidence was produced in this regard – and undermining the existing social order.²⁴ On 26–27 May, Codreanu was sentenced to 10 years' hard labour, despite the fact that the prosecution could not produce a legally sound trial.

Upon the death of Patriarch Cristea on 7 March 1939, Călinescu became prime minister and continued his policy of surveillance and repression against the Legion. Although the Legion was effectively neutralized, the steady growth of Nazi Germany's political influence in Central Europe led Carol II to fear German assistance would lead to the Legion's political resurrection, and made plans for Codreanu's assassination. On the night of 29–30 November 1938, returning from an unsuccessful diplomatic tour that included an official visit to the United Kingdom and unofficial visits to France, Belgium and Germany, Carol II ordered Codreanu's death, along with that of another 13 Legionaries, convicted for terrorism. The following day, a media report announced their deaths, claiming that they had been killed while trying to escape. According to the deposition of one of Codreanu's executioners in 1940, which was taken by the Romanian High Court of Cassation, the prisoners were strangled in a forest near Bucharest. Their bodies were buried in the courtyard of the Jilava prison

and burned with vitriol.²⁵ Later, the common grave was covered with a thick layer of cement in an attempt to prevent a later recovery of the corpses and their political exploitation.

Despite this desperate attempt to undermine Codreanu's charisma, the spirit of the 'Captain' obsessed his followers more than ever, triggering a Legion vendetta. On 21 September 1939, a Legionnaire death squad, led by Miti Dumitrescu, assassinated Prime Minister Călinescu, who they held directly responsible for Codreanu's assassination, in Bucharest. The death squad then stormed the national radio station, and publicly announced that 'the Captain has been avenged'. The 'political will' of the death squad sheds light upon their charismatic beliefs and indoctrination. The terrorist act was presented as legitimate revenge on those guilty for the assassination of Codreanu. The members of the squad restated their conviction that Codreanu was a 'God descended among mortals', and that the Romanian people were destined to fulfil a divine mission entrusted by God.

After delivering their radio message, the members of the death squad surrendered to the police. During the night of 22–23 September, they were taken back to the public square and executed without trial. Their bodies were left on public display for several days. Following Călinescu's assassination, his temporary successor General Gheorghe Argeșanu authorized the military repression of the Legion. On the night of 21–22 September, 252 Legionaries were executed without trial.²⁶ These included the main leaders held in camps: 44 in Miercurea Ciuc, 31 in Vaslui, 13 in Râmnicu Sărat, 10 in Bucharest and 7 in Brașov. They included: Gheorghe Clime, leader of the All for the Fatherland party; Alexandru Cantacuzino, leader of the Moța-Marin section; Gheorghe Gh. Istrate, leader of the Brotherhoods of the Cross section; Ion Banea, leader of the Transylvanian regional section; and the intellectuals Cristian Tell and Mihail Polihroniade. A further 147 Legionaries were selected at random from all over the country (two or three from each county) and executed. Their corpses were displayed in main public squares together with a banner stating 'This is the fate of all traitors to the nation'.

The confrontation between the two forms of political legitimacy, caesarism and charismatic fascism had reached its peak. Unable to co-opt the Legion through political negotiations and to subordinate it to his own political aims, King Carol II had Legionaries killed by lawless methods as the only effective way of stopping their political rise.

From caesarism to para-fascism: the fasticization of the royal dictatorship

During its 30-month existence, Carol II's royal dictatorship experienced many changes: from a soft dictatorship with limited political pluralism to an increasingly repressive authoritarian regime with pronounced fascist trappings.

Although initially Carol II conceived of his authoritarian rule as a barrier to the Legion's bid for power and, as shown above, did not hesitate to crush it by lawless means, his regime borrowed numerous political elements from contemporary fascist movements and regimes, most importantly from the Legion itself, such as the cult of the predestined leader, the single party, corporatism, paramilitarism, the socialization of the youth through political mobilization 'from above' and, towards the end of the regime, anti-Semitism.

The basis of the new political regime was the cult of the king, celebrated as a charismatic leader who would bring salvation to the national community. The regime's official propaganda portrayed Carol II in a multitude of capacities: as a modernizing monarch, a protector of national culture, a legislator, a military commander, a predestined leader and guarantor of law and order, etc.

The cult of the monarch was a necessary but not sufficient tool for creating popular consensus towards the new regime. The king also felt the need to establish a new political party and youth and mass organizations as tools of political representation and mobilization. On 15 December 1938 the king established Romania's first single mass political organization, the Front of National Rebirth (FRN – *Frontul Renașterii Naționale*). The Front's declared aim was 'to mobilize national consciousness for undertaking a unitary Romanian work of national solidarity for the defence and development of the nation and the consolidation of the state'.²⁷ It was to be 'the only political organization in the state', that could operate and campaign in national elections, any other political activity 'being considered clandestine and its authors punished'. The FRN's monopoly on political representation was further consecrated by a royal decree of 30 March 1938, which expressly prohibited all existing or future political parties, groupings and associations. The leadership of the new party was entrusted to Carol II's closest collaborators, mostly former and current ministers.

The FRN was thoroughly reorganized in January 1940, under the slogan 'The King, the Nation, Work and Faith' (*Regele, Națiunea, Munca și Credința*), its evolution reflecting the process of radicalization the royal dictatorship had undergone.²⁸ Thus, if initially the FRN was conceived as a national and implicitly pluralistic union of all political forces, above and beyond the former political parties, in January 1940 it developed in the direction of a hierarchical-territorial organization, with its own ideology, leadership, party structure, uniforms and symbols. Its new 1940 charter stipulated that the FRN was meant 'to propagate its own ideology',²⁹ – declaratively based on the national idea, the cult of the monarchy, corporatism, Christian and conservative family values, work and social justice – and 'to form the public spirit in this direction'.³⁰

The main innovations introduced by the new party charter were a strong emphasis on the establishment of grass-roots cells in rural areas, corporatist organization and representation of main professional categories and the attempt at encouraging permanent political activism by rank and file members.

First, the party's new structure were to include organization in all territorial-administrative units of the country, with particular emphasis on the establishment of party cells in rural areas. Second, party sections were organized along corporatist lines, promoting proportional representation at all levels of the three professional corporations mentioned by the 1938 constitution: agriculture and manual work; industry and trade; and intellectual work.³¹ Since the FRN was the only political organization allowed to present candidates for parliament, this party structure provided parliament and the regime with a corporatist structure of political organization and representation. Third, in order to ensure its members' unconditional loyalty and devotion, and to increase their discipline, the FRN forced new members to swear an oath of loyalty to the king, the fatherland and the party (article 7). To encourage new recruits to become active in the service of the party, the FRN's statutes differentiated between 'adherent' and 'active' members: the former needing one year of active involvement before achieving full membership (article 10).³² The FRN's members were obliged to promote the party's ideology and programme, to observe a strict code of behaviour, to write regular activity reports and to participate in various study groups.³³ They were also expected to recruit new members (article 7). Minority ethnic groups were allowed to create their own, distinct, organizational sections within the Party of the Nation. The decree also established the National Guard (*Garda Națională*) as the party's independent paramilitary security organization.³⁴

The leaders of the FRN were its president, Alexandru Vaida Voievod, vice-president Gheorghe Tătărescu and general-secretary Constantin C. Giurescu, all of whom were appointed for one year by the king.³⁵ The party also had three collective leadership bodies – two deliberative and one executive: the National Superior Council, which approved FRN policy, its candidates for parliament and brought political recommendations to the government's attention; the Directorate, which assisted the Superior Council and approved the FRN's budget; and the Superior Commission, which was entrusted with control over the FRN's internal appointments and cadre policy. The National Superior Council was made up of 180 members, 60 from each of the three main professional corporations established by the 1938 constitution, with half appointed by the king and the other half elected by corporations. The Directorate had 30 members, proportionally representing the three corporations, all appointed by royal decree from among the members of the National Superior Council.³⁶ The Superior Commission was made up of the president, one vice-president, the general-secretary, the three regional first-secretaries and the Commander of the National Guard. In a demagogic fashion, the FRN was defined as an interface between the citizens and the professional associations on the one hand, and the government and the administration on the other (article 4), providing a close link and a constant channel of information between the two.³⁷

Overall, the organization of the FRN was based on an even combination between the 'election' and 'selection' principles of political representation. The party's organizational grid was made up of four parallel pillars, organized territorially and hierarchically, from the most basic (commune), through county, land and upper national levels, as follows: The National Guard, the corporation of the intellectuals, the corporation of industry and commerce and the corporation of agriculture and manual workers, all formally subordinated to the Superior Commission. The main leadership axis of the party consisted of the network of presidents and three secretaries at each territorial level. Finally, the last hierarchical pillar of power was represented by the party's collective bodies organized at territorial levels – the advisory councils and the general assemblies, which reported to the Superior Council. All these pillars of power were directly subordinate to the party's president and three vice-presidents, while the general-secretary acted as a link between them.

The creation of the FRN was part of a larger strategy of mass political mobilization that involved the establishment of a network of youth, professional and leisure organizations, with an overt pedagogical role of social control and political indoctrination. Among them, the most important was *Muncă și Voe Bună* (Work and Leisure), remodelled along the lines of the Nazi's *Kraft durch Freude* and the Italian Fascist *Opera nazionale dopolavoro* in the summer of 1938 and which was aimed at the working class.

To increase the popular base of his personal rule, King Carol made particular efforts to secure the support of the youth. To this end, in December 1938 the youth organization *Straja Țării* (The Sentinel of the Motherland), which had been established in 1935, was reorganized, giving its activities a major boost. *Straja Țării* was conceived as a state institution entrusted with the 'moral, national-patriotic, social and physical education of the youth of both sexes'.³⁸ All citizens aged 7–21 were members and given some military training. Its motto was 'Faith and Labour for the Fatherland and the King' (article 6). The king was its supreme commander (article 16), and he was assisted by a general commander he appointed and by a supreme guiding council consisting of senior dignitaries, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church and various governmental ministers with portfolios that touched upon youth policies (article 17).

The *Straja's* anti-Legion role was clear. First, the participation of 'the entire youth' of Romania in its activities was mandatory (article 3). Second, it held a monopoly over youth education: no other such organizations were permitted in Romanian territory (article 3) – it alone was allowed to organize initiation-courses, training and recreational camps for boys and girls. Third, its members had to swear an oath of loyalty (*crez*) (article 6) similar to the Legionary vow in its glorification of ancestors, religion and sacrifice, although with the major difference that *Straja's* oath political loyalty was directed towards the king, who

was known as Marele Străjer (the Great Sentinel). Fourth, Straja's main educational activities, consisting in the organization of youth camps and colonies, strongly resembled the innovative and largely successful Legionary practice of organizing work camps with the aim of forging the 'new Legionaries'. Fifth, Straja had a paramilitary structure, being organized in hierarchical territorial units made up of phalanxes, lands, legions, cohorts, flocks (flights) and centuries, with sub-units made up of groups, nests and little nests. This structure combined ancient Roman with local traditions of military organization, yet it also defined the nests as Straja's most basic unit of organization, just like the Legion. In addition, the commanders of Straja's territorial units were recruited mainly from among teachers, professors, officers and priests – the main professional categories targeted by the Legion.

Despite these similarities the king's concerted efforts to enlist and indoctrinate the youth were largely unsuccessful, this top-down approach to youth mobilization contrasting sharply with the efficient grass-roots proselytizing methods promoted by the Legion.

The last phase of the royal dictatorship was dominated by foreign policy concerns. The partition of Czechoslovakia, the annexation of Austria and the occupation of Poland placed Nazi Germany in a position of hegemony in Central Europe. Although Romania acted as one of the pillars of the Versailles system, the collapse of the post-1918 collective security system and the capitulation of France forced the king to search for a *modus vivendi* with Germany. The first outcome of this new political direction was the German-Romanian Treaty for the Development of Economic Relations between the Two Countries, which was signed on 23 March 1939, and which subordinated the Romanian economy to German interests.

An important part of this *rapprochement* was the establishment of a fascist-like regime that the king thought would be more compatible with Nazi political expectations of Romania. On 22 June 1940, the FRN was renamed by royal decree as Partidul Națiunii (PN, Party of the Nation). The regime's drive towards totalitarianism was explicit. Article 1 of the decree stated that 'The Front of National Rebirth becomes a unique and totalitarian party, under the name of the Party of the Nation'. Its main declared aim was to co-ordinate 'the moral and material life of the Romanian state and the Romanian nation'.³⁹ In an unprecedented move, the king assumed direct leadership of the new party: 'The party will function under the supreme leadership of his majesty the king.' On the same day a new decree reinforced the repressive side of the regime by introducing penalties of up to five years in jail for any individual who challenged the political monopoly or authority of the Party of the Nation. Far from being a simple cosmetic change, this political reshuffle marked a radical political transformation of the nature of Carol II's dictatorship. In his comments on

Romania's political life dated, 25 June 1940, Constantin Argetoianu noted that after a few days of confusion, 'people begin to realize the radical and revolutionary regime change that occurred with the transformation by the Front of the National Rebirth into the Party of the Nation'.⁴⁰

This far-reaching political change was amply evident in the king's most controversial act: his amnesty and renewed attempts at co-operation with the Legion of the Archangel Michael, which he regarded as a precondition for collaboration with Nazi Germany. Such co-operation was nevertheless difficult given the resentment caused by the terror unleashed by the king in 1938–39 that decapitated the Legion's leadership. After backstage negotiations, on 4 July 1940 the king managed to co-opt a number of leading Legionaries, including the movement's new leader, Horia Sima, as minister of religion and arts, into the new government led by Ioan Gigurtu. This ad hoc co-operation could not mend relations between Carol II and the Legion, however. In fact, facing criticism from inside the Legion for arriving at a *modus vivendi* with the person responsible for murdering Codreanu and the Legion's leadership, Sima resigned from the government after just a few days.

The last stage in process of 'fascistization' was the promotion of anti-Semitic measures to the level of official state policy. Following on from the anti-Jewish legislation introduced by the Goga government in January 1938, on 8 August 1940, decrees 2560 and 2651 annulled the post-1918 emancipation of Jews in Romania and reactivated late 19th-century anti-Semitic regulations. The decrees had a doubly discriminating nature. First, they stripped the entire Jewish population of substantive political and civic rights, such as the right to settle in the countryside and purchase rural property, access to state positions, as well as the right to marry Christians. Second, it also differentiated several categories of Jew. It favoured those Jews who had been emancipated by the Romanian parliament – either individually or collectively, for serving in the Romanian army – but discriminated against Jews who had been emancipated as a result of the 1919 Minority Convention.

The Legion in power: the National-Legionary State (September 1940–February 1941)

In the summer of 1940, Romania suffered massive territorial losses, losing Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union (USSR), and Northern Transylvania to Hungary (followed in early September by Southern Dobrogea to Bulgaria). Since the official propaganda portrayed the monarch as a guarantor of Romania's territorial integrity, these losses confronted Carol's personal regime with a deep crisis of legitimization, leading to mass demonstrations and open unrest. In a desperate attempt to rescue his rule, on 4 September Carol II

brought General Ion Antonescu to power. An adept of authoritarianism and integral nationalism, Antonescu emerged in the 1930s as a staunch critic of the flaws of multi-party parliamentary regimes. In December 1937, Antonescu accepted, at the king's insistence, to join the Goga government as minister of defence; however, he resigned at the end of March 1938, and refused to serve as minister during the royal dictatorship. In response to his continuous critical attitude towards the king's entourage and policies, Antonescu was first stationed outside the capital and later held in the monastery at Bistrița.⁴¹ Despite this persecution, the king never lost hope in co-opting Antonescu. In September he thought that, in view of his authoritarian personality and the prestige he accumulated in nationalist circles, the general would be able to stabilize the situation. After brief political consultations, Antonescu demanded full powers and forced the king's abdication, thus bringing both the royal dictatorship and Carol's monarchic rule to an end. In several proclamations, Antonescu asserted unambiguously that his coming to power did not mean the establishment of 'a new government, but of a new regime'.⁴² To achieve his goal of 'saving the State and the Nation', Antonescu pledged to govern on a new basis, following principles that 'will emerge entirely from the creed of integral nationalism'.⁴³ Adopting an authoritarian-paternalist tone, he called on Romanians to display 'order, work, discipline and obeisance'.⁴⁴

In need of a mass political movement to legitimize his authoritarian rule, the general co-opted the Legion. A communique from the council of ministers stated the general had 'addressed the country and the Legion with a call for union and action', which was accepted with 'joy and enthusiasm'.⁴⁵ The Legion thus became the ruling party and populated the administration and government, while sharing executive power with the army, which retained control of the key ministries of economy and finance, and state leadership through General Antonescu.

On the basis of this agreement, on 14 September Antonescu proclaimed the National-Legionary State. This new state was based on three main principles: it was 'national, Christian and totalitarian'.

It was totalitarian in structure: a series of decrees sanctioned by King Michael I concentrated power into the hands of General Antonescu. Royal decree 3052 of 5 September 1940 suspended the 1938 constitution and dissolved the parliament for an indefinite period. In doing so, the decree dismantled the last remnants of the party system that survived under Carol's royal dictatorship, replacing it with a totalitarian, centralized structure. Royal decree 3053 of 5 September 1940 created the new position of head of state (*conducătorul statului*) invested with the 'full powers to lead the Romanian state' (article 1) to whom public functionaries had to swear an oath of 'loyalty and faith'.

Royal decree 3151 of 14 September 1940 defined the Legion as 'the only political movement recognized in the new state' (article 2), while General Antonescu

was 'the leader of the Legionary state and chief of the Legionary regime' (article 3). The state was based on a dual structure of power: the army led by General Antonescu was the executive branch of government, while the Legion, led by Horia Sima, was the political branch. As the only political party or movement in the state, the Legion alone could provide the cadres to fill positions in the political and bureaucratic apparatus, together with the politically non-engaged army officers. This monopoly on political life was accompanied by the politicization of the administration, which was populated by Legionaries appointed by Antonescu as prefects and mayors at the local level, with the recommendation of Horia Sima. The main aim of this structure was to build a unified totalitarian party-state structure.

Following the abolition of Romania's parliament, the council of ministers led by Antonescu as head of state and prime minister was invested with full legislative powers. In addition, although Romania technically remained a monarchy, the young King Michael's role became purely ceremonial. While in theory he retained certain nominal powers, such as the right to appoint the prime minister, in practice the structure of government was firmly in the hands of Antonescu, as head of state, prime minister and commander of the army. These positions gave him full legislative powers and complete control over the administrative apparatus of the country. Later on, through a decree passed on 21 June 1941, Antonescu designated his close collaborator, Mihai Antonescu, who was vice-president of the council of ministers, as his successor. Representative institutions were thus abolished and absolute power was concentrated at the top. There was, however, a certain ambiguity in the exercise of power between the Legion and the army: the former was symbolically represented in the government with a few ministers, but it was more heavily represented in the lower branches of the administration.

The second pillar in the organization of the totalitarian state was the doctrine of integral nationalism. In the National-Legionary State, this doctrine had two main components: the denaturalization and removal of the Jews; and the redistribution of their property in order to consolidate the Romanian upper and middle class. As shown above, in 1937–38, on the basis of the laws for the 'verification' of citizenship, around 250,000 Romanian Jews (30 per cent of the total Jewish population) were deprived of citizenship. Their denaturalization was followed by their removal from property and exclusion from citizenship rights. A new system of segregation was introduced in the education system, in the army, in culture and in politics. Initiated under the dictatorship of Carol II, this system of discrimination was continued and amplified during the interregnum before the totalitarian state and again during the National-Legionary State.

New anti-Jewish decrees were passed on 5, 6, 7 and 19 September, which stripped Jews of their civil and political rights and effectively sealed off Jewish communities from Romanian society. Additional decrees banned Jews from

working in liberal professions. Decree Law 3437 of 17 October 1940 limited Jewish lawyers – except those who had fought in the Romanian army and were decorated or who were war invalids' lawyers – to working only for Jewish clients. The places vacated by Jewish lawyers were taken up by Christians (art. 3). Fraud or failure to comply with the law was severely punished with exorbitant fines or even prison sentences ranging from one to three months.⁴⁶ According to Mihai Antonescu, the decree was 'inspired by nationalist principles'; its aim was to assure the dominance of Romanians and to create places for Romanian lawyers coming in from the occupied territories.⁴⁷

In addition to the decree concerning the military status of Jews that was adopted on 5 December 1940, another decree dated 21 January 1941 imposed military 'protection' taxes on Jews, in addition to labour obligations, including upon those who were not fit for military activity. Only Jews who had mobilized into the army and those who had served in the army as officers or non-commissioned officers were exempt from these taxes. Jews who could not afford to pay the tax had to carry out additional forced labour. Those who tried to hide or declare a reduced income were punished with fines that were twice or even three times their tax obligation.⁴⁸

The second main component of the doctrine of integral nationalism under the National-Legionary regime was the campaign to Romanize the economy. This process was very long and arduous for several reasons. First, it was a complex and laborious campaign, made up of a myriad of transactions in multiple fields. Second, the success of this campaign depended on the existence of a bureaucratic apparatus that could register, classify, take over and redistribute property to local Romanians or colonists. Soon two strategies were to crystallize within the Legionary state: one gradual, based on 'law and order' and on a centralized, top-down process of redistribution; another conceived as a violent, ad hoc, grass-roots approach conducted by Legionary cells at the local level. An additional obstacle in the process of the Romanization of the economy was the fact that the Jews were essential to the successful running of industry. Despite political imperatives, in practice the process of replacement therefore needed to be gradual, since many valuable Jewish managers had to be temporarily retained until they could be replaced by newly trained Romanians. In September 1940, General Antonescu spelled out this gradual strategy, stating that: 'I will solve the Jewish Question in the course of the process of organizing the state, *slowly* substituting the Jews with the Romanians, first and foremost with Legionaries, who will be preparing in the meantime.'⁴⁹

The legal framework of the process of Romanization was laid out in late 1940 and early 1941. Decree law 3347 of 5 October 1940 stripped Jews of all agricultural property.⁵⁰ In order to prevent the economic collapse of rural industry, article 5 of the decree exempted from confiscation those properties necessary for the functioning of Jewish industries. The properties seized from Jews became

state property and were handed over to the sub-secretariat of state for colonization and the evacuated population to assist with the resettlement of ethnic Romanian refugees from Bessarabia and Bucovina, which had been occupied by the Soviet Union (article 9).

Another decree adopted on 17 November 1940 extended the scope of the confiscation to forests and rural industries of all kind, including mills, factories and distilleries owned by Jewish individuals or associations. In his report to General Antonescu, the minister of justice, Mihai A. Antonescu, justified this new wave of confiscations with 'an old Romanian conception according to which rural properties – the main source of the country's wealth – should belong to Romanians'. Since under the National-Legionary State, this term was understood in an ethnic and not formal legal sense, it implied that the ownership of all rural properties had to be transferred to ethnic Romanians.⁵¹ The decree defined Jews as 'all those having both or only one Jewish parent, regardless of whether they or their parents are currently baptized in a religion other than the Mosaic one, are Romanian citizens, or live in Romania'.⁵² The process of property confiscation was further broadened by the decree for the transfer of all Jewish urban properties to the state patrimony adopted on 27 March 1941, which, argued Mihai A. Antonescu, was meant 'to restore the historical rights of the Romanian nation'.⁵³

The third ideological pillar of the new regime was the doctrine of the Christian state: the new totalitarian state reorganized religious organization, proclaiming Orthodoxy as the state's dominant religion while also recognizing and thus accepting a number of other religious cults. The Mosaic cult was tolerated, but its corporate rights were no longer recognized. The Legionary government wanted to promote a new relationship with Orthodoxy, a new form of political religion that would incorporate but also subordinate the Orthodox Church. The campaign for the institutional reorganization of the church was, however, rather hesitant and did not lead to significant results, falling into a kind of political *modus vivendi* with the church.

Integral nationalism versus fascism: the Legion's fall from power

What was the position of the Legion within this structure of government? Due to the rapid unfolding of events, the Legion was forced to change from a clandestine organization to a ruling party in a very short period of time. After two years of clandestine activity and harsh repression (1938–40), the Legion was unprepared for government. Unsurprisingly, therefore, its rule suffered from lack of coherence and organization, and did not follow a comprehensive programme of legal-political transformation. Legionaries preferred symbolic ritual action and violent revenge to orderly legal political transformation from above. During the Legion's four months in power, its most important acts of government were the rehabilitation and reburial of Codreanu and of the

Legion's martyrs, and the violent elimination of the 'corrupt' inter-war political class. While perfectly fitting to a clandestine, terrorist political fight, the Legion's cellular organizational structure made it difficult to co-ordinate the movement when it was in power. Since the Legion was used to working clandestinely, its members found it easier to continue to employ conspiratorial methods even when they were in power.

The internal weaknesses of the Legion were further aggravated by its rather vulnerable political position in the new regime and its troubled relationship with General Antonescu. Attempts at co-operation between the Legion and the general had taken place during the late 1930s, as well as part of previous initiatives to form a great anti-Carol coalition of the far right, but the outcome of those previous negotiations was rather discouraging. Antonescu was, both then and later, in favour of a large nationalist coalition based on the principles of integral nationalism and focusing on a guided, top-down process of socio-political transformation; however, the Legion rejected any co-operation with LANC or its successor, the PNC, and called instead for a revolutionary, grass-roots transformation of society led exclusively by the Legionaries.

Given these political differences, the collaboration between General Antonescu and the Legion that started in September 1940 was from the very beginning marred by suspicion, and soon degenerated into private and public confrontations. The two parts provided different accounts of the circumstances in which the collapse of Carol's dictatorship and the establishment of the new regime took place.⁵⁴ Emulating the paradigmatic example of Italian Fascists' 1922 March on Rome, the Legion's propaganda argued that in the first days of September there occurred a large-scale Legionary armed revolt, a genuine 'revolution' that brought about the collapse of Carol's tyrannical regime and their ascension to power. In their view, Antonescu had no choice but to collaborate with the Legion as the strongest, most articulate political movement of the day. In turn, General Antonescu and his official propaganda argued that it was his actions and courage that put an end to the royal dictatorship, and that he voluntarily and generously offered the Legion the opportunity to share in the exercise of power.⁵⁵

Second, concerning the cohabitation of the two poles of power during the National-Legionary State, the Legion's propaganda contended Antonescu was never sincere in his co-operation with the Legion, and that all he wanted was to compromise the movement in order to disband it. In contrast, General Antonescu asserted that the Legion in fact planned from the very beginning to seize full state power. He also argued that its lawless and chaotic actions compromised the National-Legionary regime, forcing him to act in a decisive manner.

Third, and most important, a main source of bilateral mistrust was the different visions of the two parties, which was clearly evident in their divergent

discourses and actions. General Antonescu shared the main principles of integral nationalism, but wanted to implement the 'nationalization' of the state through a gradual process, co-ordinated from above in an 'orderly' fashion. He also pleaded for a broad coalition of all valuable nationalist forces, rejecting sectarianism and internal struggles within the nationalist camp. His main ideological emphasis was not on the palingenetic rebirth of the nation, but on the salvation of the state, and through it of the nation. To this end, he planned to rely on both the state administration and mainstream national institutions, such as the church, schools and the army. Ultimately, his actions were not designed to bring about a social revolution from below, but to shelter and consolidate the interests of the Romanian bourgeoisie, to the detriment of ethno-religious minorities. It is in this context that one can understand his pleas for law, order, lack of violence and respect for property – these principles were meant to contain the lawless actions of the Legion, but they were not to be applied to the status of ethno-religious minorities, who were placed outside the protection of the Romanian law by way of discriminatory legislation.

The Legion, in turn, called for the revolutionary transformation of society through the complete elimination of the old political class and its replacement with a new Legionary elite; the nationalization of the economy and of trade through the elimination of ethno-religious minorities and the transfer of their property to Romanians; and the indoctrination of the masses in the Legion's ideology. 'Only when the whole Romanian nation has accepted the Legion will we be able to speak the movement's complete victory', claimed Sima.⁵⁶ Although highly ambitious in its goals, the Legion did not have a comprehensive programme of concrete socio-economic transformation, and lacked both the cohesion and discipline necessary to implement such a long-term agenda. Its ad hoc activities were meant to provide immediate material and political satisfaction to its poor and frustrated supporters who were eager to seize economic and political power. Soon, however, the Legionaries' violent and uncoordinated nature brought chaos and disorganization to the state administration.

The structural crisis in the relationship between the Legion and General Antonescu was to soon paralyze the new regime, generating numerous top-level confrontations. In a first exchange of letters between the two leaders in mid-October 1940, Horia Sima reproached the general about his tolerance for the old order and its politicians, and demanded the latter's political purge and more room of manoeuvring for the Legion. Antonescu replied that there was no room for two heads of state, and urged the Legion to choose between co-operation or divorce. At the end of October, Sima answered in an apparently conciliatory tone, reiterating the Legion's willingness to work with Antonescu. At the same time, however, he unambiguously noted that

the Legionary regime demands rule in the Legionary spirit: totalitarian rule. Totalitarian rule means the political monopoly of one movement, the one that has prevailed, or exclusivity if you wish: so is in Italy, so is in Germany. In Romania there is no place for any other party or for any other grouping.⁵⁷

In response, Antonescu reassured Sima of the communion of goals and interests between himself and the Legion, despite their different approaches:

I want what you also want, but by another means and at a pace dictated by wisdom. We cannot demolish everything in a single day. We need a system, we need to persevere with our efforts. We need to demolish and rebuild bit by bit. As all these are linked together in a living organism, we have to carefully study each problem before taking action.⁵⁸

In view of these seemingly compatible but in fact irreconcilable positions, the time of the final confrontation was only a matter of time and conjuncture. Irritated by the violent and unruly abuses of the Legionaries at the grass-roots level, which culminated in the abominable assassination of 65 former state dignitaries in November 1940,⁵⁹ Antonescu gradually limited the Legion's administrative authority, political autonomy and ability to act, while secretly seeking Berlin's support on removing it from power. Aware that the final confrontation was inevitable, the Legion intensified its clandestine activities and prepared for an armed insurrection while making a concerted effort to undermine Nazi Germany's trust in Antonescu. The military confrontation between the Legion and the army took place between 21 and 23 January 1941. After a chaotic rebellion that was meant to bring them full power, the Legion was disbanded and eliminated from the political scene, while its main leaders sought refuge abroad.⁶⁰ In addition to prompt repression, Antonescu orchestrated an ample propaganda campaign that sought to irrevocably compromise the rebels in the eyes of the public, portraying them as 'a gang of 600 wrongdoers' 'of the lowest kind' who 'hid themselves in the legionary movement for serving alien aims'.⁶¹ Yet, anti-Legionary state repression went well beyond this narrow circle of culprits publicly stigmatized by Antonescu: following the immediate post-rebellion imprisonments of late January 1941, a new wave of anti-Legion repression was soon unleashed. By 25 February the authorities had arrested 4,638 Legionaries in Bucharest and another 4,714 in the rest of the country.⁶² The Legionaries who took part in the rebellion were given public trials and either sentenced to death, to forced labour or were allowed to join special units fighting the USSR on the Eastern Front.⁶³

The elimination of the Legion from power led to important structural changes in the organization of the Antonescu regime. Although in late January 1941 Antonescu pledged to further consolidate the Legionary regime in collaboration with those 'virtuous' Legionaries who remained loyal to the regime,⁶⁴

on 14 February 1941, he nevertheless abolished the National-Legionary State, after only five months of existence, and prohibited all form of political activity and propaganda. A military government was formed, while Mihai A. Antonescu was invested with extended powers, as main ideologue of the regime and as Ion Antonescu's chief collaborator.⁶⁵ Without a mass party to provide popular legitimization to his rule, Antonescu developed his own cult of personality, the official propaganda of the regime portraying the general as a predestined hero and the true saviour of the country, who 'embeds the Romanian destiny'.⁶⁶ To secure a semblance of legitimacy, the general organized plebiscites on his policies in March and November 1941. In his appeal to the votes, Antonescu declared himself an implacable adversary of 'parasite capitalism', and – in the spirit of 'true nationalism' – pledged to promote 'nationalist reforms for reinstating the Romanian people in its saint rights'.⁶⁷ Approximately 3 million people voted in the first referendum and 3.5 million voted in the second, with 99.99 per cent in each case voting in favour of the regime.⁶⁸

Most importantly, although still invoking the Legion's 'ideological spirit', Antonescu pledged a new state organization, aimed at eliminating internal strife by reconciling social classes and generations.⁶⁹ The new state was to rest on three main pillars, the army, the church and the family, and to be structured on the principles of integral nationalism: 'This new state will be founded on the principle of Romanian predominance in all fields and will rest on our agrarian and peasant structure. Its foundation stones will be the National and the Social.'⁷⁰ For Antonescu, the social and the national questions were thus organically linked: the elimination of Jews from the national body was conceived not only as an ethnic-cleansing operation but also as a campaign of large-scale social engineering.

Conclusions

Political life in post-First World War Europe was characterized by the acute polarization of rival ideological outlooks. Ideological conflicts were further aggravated during the 1930s, a decade that was marked by the collapse of most liberal democracies and the emergence and consolidation of authoritarian regimes. Greater Romania was no exception to this trend. Although the country emerged from the war victorious, managing to achieve national unity and remodel its political system into a constitutional, multi-party parliamentary system, the country's democratic consolidation was hampered by numerous structural crises that were largely concerned with regional cleavages and ethno-religious tensions. Its multiple flaws notwithstanding, it is important to note that the regime that existed in Romania under the 1923 constitution survived until 1937, when the southern and north-eastern parts of the continent had already succumbed to authoritarianism. Yet, in the late 1930s politics in Romania was dominated by the confrontation of pluralist and radical forces: at

one end of the spectrum were those parties supporting the multi-party parliamentary regime, while at the other end there were anti-systemic forces seeking to remodel the state along authoritarian or totalitarian lines. In the end, the latter prevailed, their rule unleashing a period of political experimentation with hybrid ideological and institutional forms. Manifold domestic and external reasons account for the gradual but steady departure from democratic politics: the pressure for change from the part of radical movements that found themselves on the fringes of the political system and which wanted to remodel the socio-political system to their advantage; the deep political impact of the economic crisis that destabilized the country's fragile socio-economic balance; the authoritarian tendencies of King Carol II; and the geo-political pressure imposed by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

In this context, the 1937 elections led to a period of political experimentation – a continuum of dictatorships, each with different ideological emphases and supported by different social strata. The first, short-lived, experiment was conducted by the PNC, a party formed in 1935 and which represented the interests of a narrow but nationalist section of the regional elites in Moldova and Transylvania. Their programme focused obsessively on the Jewish question as a way of solving Romania's pressing social problems, while in foreign policy they called for close political co-operation with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Brought to power briefly in December 1937, the PNC was unable to transcend its regional and ideological limits and to bring the conservative right together into a large political coalition. Rather its time in government served as a forerunner of Carol II's royal dictatorship.

Established in February 1938, the royal dictatorship initially stood on an anti-fascist platform and enjoyed the political support of the traditional elites. The regime employed the rhetoric of change and transformation, legitimized by a comprehensive plan for socio-economic modernization centred on the person of the king. The nature of this royal dictatorship changed significantly over time, from being resolutely anti-fascist through fascistization to co-operation with the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Although it can be argued this change was dictated more by pragmatic geo-political considerations than being ideologically driven, it is undeniable that the regime increasingly turned towards nationalist and anti-Semitic interest-groups.

Proclaimed on 14 September 1940, the National-Legionary State was based on an uneven alliance between the conservative-nationalist Antonescu and the revolutionary and violent Legion of the Archangel Michael. Despite its claim to have come to power as a result of a grass-roots revolution against the king's tyranny, the Legion was in fact brought into office following a series of negotiations with General Ion Antonescu. To ensure this cohabitation, the Legion had to make significant concessions and renounce its most radical demands. During its brief time in government, the Legion attempted to build a totalitarian

state by replacing the multi-party system with a single-party dictatorship, by reshaping the state along corporatist lines and by advocating an ethnic understanding of citizenship and a new patriarchal organization of gender and social relations. The Legion was unable to establish a long-lasting dictatorial regime and fulfil its main ideological goals: instead, its campaign of violent revenge and random plunder triggered a violent response by the army, leading to the Legion's elimination from Romanian political life. Its failure was due to its own structural weaknesses and the fierce political competition from traditional sections of the ruling elites who effectively blocked the Legion's path to full power.

With the removal of the Legion, the nature of Antonescu's regime gradually changed. After the Legion's rebellion, while condemning Horia Sima and his supporters for starting the uprising and thus compromising the Legion, Antonescu's regime continued to speak positively of the Legion and to praise the figure of the 'Captain', Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Antonescu also made concerted attempts to reorganize the Legion, or to establishing another single mass party. Gradually, however, references to the Legion got fewer as the regime gave up on the idea of reactivating a movement or of creating a new, all-encompassing, official party. Instead, Antonescu developed its own charismatic cult, presenting himself as the country's true saviour, a guarantor of law and order and as someone who would fight to defend Romania's territorial unity. Although the Antonescu regime lacked the support of a grass-roots political movement and relied mainly on the army, the police and the gendarmerie to enforce its rule, it cannot merely be classified as a military dictatorship. While military dictatorships do not generally have a ruling ideology, Antonescu's regime was motivated by the principles of integral nationalism, characterized by anti-Semitism and xenophobia against ethno-religious minorities, a policy that culminated with the deportation and partial extermination of Jews and Gypsies and the organized persecution of non-Orthodox religious cults and sects. Moreover, although on the surface the regime appeared tolerant of the political opposition, allowing the traditional elites limited freedom of expression,⁷¹ the regime was averse to democratically elected representative institutions, and promoted the concentration of power in Antonescu's hands as the all-mighty dictator.

Overall, from 1937 to 1944, Romanian political life was an interesting example of the hybridization of dictatorial regimes that combined conservative, authoritarian and fascist elements. The fluidity of these experiments is remarkable, as is evident in the transition from an anti-fascist to a fascistized royal dictatorship, and from a fascist regime to a xenophobic, conservative-nationalist military dictatorship. While these regimes were apparently very hostile to one another, they also inherited major ideological themes, legislation and institutions from each other. One example of continuity within

these regimes is their aversion to the constitutional parliamentary system, with each dictatorial regime taking more steps towards the absolute concentration of power. Another example of continuity was the anti-Semitic legislation that was first adopted by the PNC in 1937, then extended by the royal dictatorship of 1938–40, comprehensively developed by the National-Legionary regime and systematized and fully implemented by the Antonescu regime.

Beyond these continuities, it is important to stress that Romania's complex 'family of authoritarians' was unable to forge a great coalition or agree on a particular form of government. Rather it remained fragmented into rival political factions and groupings. Despite concerted efforts, neither the PNC in 1937, nor the king in 1938 nor Antonescu in 1940 were able to unify the far right. The main stumbling block in this respect was the cleavage between the conservative right and the fascist Legion of Archangel Michael, attempts to co-opt the Legion failing in 1937, 1938 and 1940. Overall, the Legion's rise to power was successfully contained by Romania's traditional elites on at least two decisive occasions: in 1937–38 by King Carol in alliance with the church and parts of the traditional elites; and in September 1940, following Carol's abdication, by Antonescu at the head of the army and conservative factions within the ruling elite. Looking back on the Legion's political trajectory, it can be seen that it thrived within an under-institutionalized political system marked by rampant corruption, inefficiency and the absence of the rule of law. Under authoritarian regimes the movement proved vulnerable to organized state repression, while in power it proved largely ineffective.

It should also be noted that despite their – at least partial – success in containing the Legion, for a long time conservative politicians failed to understand the uncompromising nature of fascism, repeatedly entertaining hopes of taming and manipulating it to their own purpose. In retrospect, it could be argued Antonescu was more successful than King Carol in eliminating the Legion from the political scene: unable to subordinate the Legionaries, Carol had them illegally executed. His harsh repression proved largely unproductive, however, for while it did decapitate and thereby weaken the movement considerably, it also bestowed it with an aura of martyrdom, and thus unintentionally paving the way to the Legion's bid for power in the post-Carol era. In turn, while apparently sharing power with the Legion, Antonescu skilfully forced it into a narrow legal-institutional set-up. Although the Legion was granted full political monopoly over the country's administration, its unruly actions were systematically exposed and condemned by Antonescu, so that the repression against the Legion and its fall from power in January 1941 could be convincingly justified in the eyes of public opinion as part of a campaign to restore 'law and order'. Although the Legion continued to be active in Germany after January 1941 and then in the Romanian diaspora, its power base as a political organization had effectively been destroyed by systematic state repression.

On 23 August 1944 the Antonescu regime was overthrown by King Michael, Carol's son, with help from a large political coalition that including the PNL and the PNT. The 1923 constitution was reinstated, the multi-party regime restored and preparations made for fresh parliamentary elections. This democratic interlude lasted for fewer than seven months, however, and on 6 March 1945, yet another radical, revolutionary-minded party captured political power: the Communists. Outlawed in 1924 because of their subordination to Moscow and their campaign for the break-up of Greater Romania, the Romanian Communist Party re-entered political life under Soviet patronage and soon captured the government by forging the 1945 national parliamentary elections. Under their leadership, Romania plunged into another long-lasting totalitarian experiment in social engineering. In the new political context some Legionaries joined the armed anti-Communist resistance until it was eventually liquidated in the mid-1950s. Many other Legionaries joined the Communist Party and, in exchange for political amnesty, contributed directly to the destruction of the *ancien régime* and the construction of the new totalitarian party-state.⁷² In the late 1940s and early 1950s this experiment in political co-optation on an anti-Western, anti-democratic and anti-liberal platform came to an abrupt end. With the consolidation of the Communist regime, former Legionaries were purged and imprisoned.⁷³ During the post-Communist period, the persecution the Legion suffered under successive political regimes, and its experience in Communist prisons is being glorified as a form of martyrdom that is now serving as a basis for a new fascist project of regeneration.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, in the post-Communist political confusion, the general public often finds it difficult to distinguish totalitarian rivalry from genuine democratic resistance.

Notes

1. For the 1937 election results, see *Monitorul Oficial* 1, no. 301, 30 December 1937, p. 9717.
2. For a historical typology of the three faces of authoritarian nationalism, (fascism, radical right and conservative right), see S. G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, p. 15. On the ideal-type of generic fascism, see R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1991, and, more recently, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; on the historical right, see H. Rogger and E. Weber, eds, *The European Right: A Historical Profile*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965; on fascism and the conservative right, see M. Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in 20th-Century Europe*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990, and M. Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe, 1919–1945*, Harlow, Longman, 2000. On contemporary perspectives, see S. P. Ramet, *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.

3. M. Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. vii–viii, 24, 31.
4. For the concept of hybridity applied to national culture, see H. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in H. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, London, Routledge, 1990, pp. 291–322; on Bhabha's hybridity theory of nationalism, see A. Trindafyllidou, 'Hybridity Theory of Nationalism (Homi Bhabha on Nationalism)', in L. L. Snyder, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, Chicago, St James, 1990, pp. 131–134.
5. See A. Kallis, 'The "Regime-Model" of Fascism: A Typology', *European History Quarterly*, 30, 2000, pp. 77–107. Kallis applies these criteria to a sample of eight case studies, which includes the two 'paradigmatic' regimes of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and also the 'para-fascist' regimes of Spain, Portugal, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Greece. He nevertheless excluded from his analysis the wartime 'fascist puppet regimes' in Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Slovakia and the Ukraine, on the ground that they could only be established with the help of external factors. As mentioned above, here the focus is on one such neglected regime, that of the Legion of Archangel Michael in Romania.
6. These were as follows: Hungarians – 1,425,507 or 7.9 per cent; Germans – 745,421 or 4.1 per cent; Jews – 728,151 or 4.0 per cent; Ruthenians – 582,115 or 3.2 per cent; Russians – 409,150 or 2.3 per cent; Bulgarians – 366,384 or 2.0 per cent; Gypsies – 263,501 or 1.5 per cent; Turks – 154,772 or 0.9 per cent; and Tartars – 22,141 or 0.1 per cent, out of a total population of 18,057,028. *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1939 și 1940*, Bucharest, Imprimeria Națională, 1941, pp. 44–45.
7. P. Colomy, 'Neofunctionalism and Neoinstitutionalism: Human Agency and Interest in Institutional Change', *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 2, 1998, p. 270.
8. See P. Marcu-Balș, 'Autohtonă Ordine Juridice (Concepția Rationalistă și Concepția Istorică a Codificațiilor)', *Gândirea* 6–7, 1928, in I. Chimet, ed., *Dreptul la memorie*, vol. 3, Cluj, Dacia, 1992, pp. 142–143.
9. The chief creator of this policy was Vintilă I. C. Brătianu. See his *Scrieri și Cuvântări*, Vol. I: 1899–1906, Bucharest, Independența, 1937. See also Ștefan Zeletin's defence of the political and economic dominance of the PNL in *Burghesia Română. Originea și rolul ei istoric*, Bucharest, Nemira, 1997.
10. The doctrine of *intégralisme* or *nationalisme intégral* was first theorized at the turn of the century by the French thinker and politician Charles Maurras, and was characterized by an aversion to democracy, the primacy of the nation understood in organic terms, monarchism and the struggle for federalism and decentralization. For a brief encyclopaedia presentation of Maurras' view on integral nationalism, see S. Bastow, 'Integral Nationalism', in C. P. Blamires, ed., *World Fascism: A Historical Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, Santa Barbara, CA, ABC-CLIO, 2006, p. 338. The concept was employed by J. Carlton, H. Hayes in *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, New York, R. R. Smith, 1931 to denote a specific type of radical nationalism, as distinct from humanitarian, Jacobin, traditional and liberal nationalisms. The concept was further developed by Peter Alter in *Nationalismus*, Frankfurt am Main, 1985 (English-language edition, *Nationalism*, London, E. Arnold, 1989), who distinguished between *risorgimento* nationalism employed by nations seeking to establish a state, and integral nationalism employed by nations that have succeeded in establishing their national state and which are ready to engage in projects of homogenization. In Alter's view, integral nationalism is characterized by statism, radical extremism, anti-organicism, anti-individualism and militarism. Although Alter regards Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as epitomizing the doctrine of integral nationalism, the

- present author takes a different stance on the issue and differentiates between the statist forms of integral nationalism implemented from above and the fascist revolutionary ideology, promoted by anti-systemic, grass-roots movements of change.
11. On the citizenship status of Jews in the Old Kingdom and their emancipation, see C. Iordachi, 'The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of "Non-Citizens" in Romania, 1866–1918', *European Review of History* 8, no. 2, 2001, pp. 157–186.
 12. This organization assumed different names during that time. The Legion of the Archangel Michael was dissolved by the Romanian authorities in 1931. In 1930 Codreanu formed the Iron Guard, which participated in the 1932 elections and gained five seats in Parliament. Following the prohibition of the Iron Guard on 10 December 1933, Codreanu founded the All for the Fatherland Party, which took part in the December 1937 elections. Notwithstanding these frequent changes in the name of the party running in parliamentary elections, the organization was generally known under the generic name 'Legionary Movement' (Mișcarea Legionară).
 13. C. Iordachi, 'God's Chosen Warriors: Romantic Palingenesis, Militarism and Fascism in Modern Romania', in C. Iordachi, ed., *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 316–357.
 14. M. Ivan, *Evoluția Partidelor Noastre Politice, 1919–1932*, Sibiu, Krafft & Drotleff, 1933, pp. 32–33.
 15. For the polemics surrounding these acts, see *Acte și Corespondența Relativă la Renunțările la Tron ale Fostului Principe Moștenitor (1918–1919–1925)*, no publisher, undated, for an anti-restoration view, and *Uneltirile Împotriva Dinastiei*, Bucharest, Independența, 1930, and M.I. Costian, *Regele Carol II și Partidele Politice*, Bucharest, Lupta, 1933, for a favourable opinion of King Carol II.
 16. See Z. Boilă, *Memorii*, apud *Citate Culese din Documente Privind Mișcarea Legionară, 1933–1938*, 2nd ed., Madrid, 1989, pp. 17–18, and Z. Boilă, *Amintiri și Considerații Asupra Mișcării Legionare*, M. Petreu and A. Cornea, eds, Cluj, Biblioteca Apostrof, 2002.
 17. Carol II, *Cuvântările Regelui Carol II, 1930–1940*, [The Speeches of King Carol II], 2 vols., Bucharest, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă Regele Carol II, 1940, vol. II, p. 307.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
 19. *Monitorul Oficial*, 1 March 1938.
 20. *Universul*, 12 February 1938, cited in M. Mușat and I. Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, vol. 2, *November 1933–September 1940*, Bucharest, Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988, p. 805.
 21. *Noua Constituție a României. Textul, pe Articole, al Noului Constituții*, Brasov, Unirea, 1938.
 22. Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 805.
 23. A. Călinescu, *Însemnări Politice*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1990, p. 390.
 24. For a pro-Legionnaire analysis of the trial, see K. W. Treptow and G. Buzatu, eds, *'Procesul' lui Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (Mai, 1938)*, Iași, S.C. Dosofoței, 1994.
 25. Quoted in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, vol. 2, pp. 877–878. For a Legionary account see the memoirs of Michael Sturdza, Minister of Foreign Affairs during Legionary rule, M. Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe: Memoirs of Prince Michael Sturdza, Former Foreign Minister of Rumania*, Boston, MA, and Los Angeles, CA, Western Islands, 1986, pp. 119–120.

26. See Ș. Palaghiță, *Garda de Fier spre Reinvierea României: Însoțită de o Cronologie Privind Istoria Mișcării Legionare*, Buenos Aires, S. Palaghiță, 1951 (reprinted, Bucharest, Roza Vânturilor, 1993), p. 124; F. Veiga, *La Mística del Ultranacionalismo: Historia de la Guardia de Hierron. Rumania, 1919–1941*, Bellaterra, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1989 (Romanian edition, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919–1941: Mistica Ultranationalismului*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995), p. 261; A. Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien: soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, Munich, R. Oldenbourg, 1986 (Romanian edition, *Legiunea „Arhanghelul Mihail”: Mișcare Socială și Organizație Politică. O Contribuție la Problema Fascismului Internațional*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1999, p. 376).
27. 'Legea nr. 4.321 din 15 decembrie 1938 pentru înființarea organizației politice a "Frontului Renașterii Naționale"', *Monitorul Oficial* no. 293, 16 December 1938.
28. *Monitorul Oficial al României*. Part 1, 108, no. 017, 20 January 1940, pp. 214–219.
29. *Monitorul Oficial al României*. Part 1, 108, no. 020, 24 January 1940, p. 214.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Corporatist ideas were harboured in the inter-war period, in various forms, by many nationalist organizations, including the Iron Guard. The main ideologue of corporatism in Romania was Mihail Manoilescu (see his *Le Siècle du Corporatisme: Doctrine du Corporatisme Intégral et Pur*, Paris, F. Alcan, 1936), a politician who initially cooperated with the Iron Guard, but who also played important political roles during Carol II's royal dictatorship (as Minister of Foreign Affairs in Gigurtu's government of July–September 1940) and later in the Antonescu regime.
32. *Monitorul Oficial al României*. Part 1, 108, no. 020, 24 January 1940, p. 214.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
38. See 'Lege pentru Organizarea și Funcționarea Străzii Țării', *Monitorul Oficial* no. 292, 15 December 1938, p. 5942.
39. 'Decret-lege pentru transformarea Frontului Renașterii Naționale în Partidul Națiunii', *Monitorul oficial*, 22 June 1940. Constantin Argetoianu claims the source of inspiration for the new charter of the Party of the Nation was the statute of the German National Socialist Party, a copy of which was requested from the German Legation in Bucharest by the king's advisors. C. Argetoianu, *Însemnări Zilnice*, vol. 8, 1 ianuarie–21 iulie; 25 octombrie–31 decembrie 1940, Stelian Neagoe, ed., Bucharest, Machiavelli, 2007, p. 377.
40. Argetoianu, *Însemnări Zilnice*, vol. 8, p. 382.
41. The personality of General Ion Antonescu and the nature of his regime has been the subject of intense debate in Romanian historiography. Under the communist regime, the Antonescu regime was condemned as a fascist dictatorship. In the late 1980s, however, with the development of an ideological conflict with the Soviet Union, the late Ceaușescu regime began (partially) rehabilitating Antonescu, presenting him as someone who fought to maintain Romania's territorial integrity in the face of Soviet aggression. This trend continued into post-Communist times, when Antonescu was hailed a patriot, an anti-Communist fighter and a martyr for the national cause. See G. Buzatu, D. Beldiman and E. Ardeleanu, eds, *Mareșalul Antonescu în fața istoriei*, 2 vols, Iași, BAI, 1990; L. L. Watts, *Romanian Cassandra: Ion Antonescu and the Struggle for Reform, 1916–1941*, Boulder, CO, East European Monographs, 1993; I. Dan,

- 'Procesul' Mareșalului Antonescu, Bucharest, Lucman, 2005. For attempts to demystify Antonescu's personality and for critical treatments of the Antonescu regime, see R. Florian, 'The Antonescu Regime: History and Mystification', in R. L. Braham, ed., *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the Antonescu Era*, Boulder, CO, and New York Social Science Monographs, 1997, pp. 77–115; 'Comisia Internațională Privind Studiarea Holocaustului în România', *Raport Final*, T. Friling, R. Ioanid and M. Ionescu, eds, Iași, Polirom, 2005; D. Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania, 1940–44*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
42. I. Antonescu, 'Proclamație către țară', 6 September 1940, in *Generalul Antonescu către țară, 6 septembrie 1940–22 iunie 1941*, Bucharest, Imprimeria națională, 1941, 11.
 43. 'Proclamația generalului Ion Antonescu către țară', in S. Duicu, ed., *Ion Antonescu și 'Garda de Fier': Pe marginea prăpastiei, 21–23 ianuarie 1941*, Tîrgu-Mureș, Rom-Edition, 1991, p. 57.
 44. 'Proclamația generalului Ion Antonescu către țară' and 'Chemarea Generalului către țară, la 7 Septembrie 1940', *ibid.*, pp. 57, 61.
 45. 'Apelul la ordine și muncă al Conducătorului statului, din 11 Septembrie 1940', and 'Apelul către țară al generalului din 11 Septembrie 1940', *ibid.*, pp. 64–66.
 46. 'Decree Law 3437, 17 October 1940, Concerning the rights of Jewish lawyers', *Noua legislațiune cu privire la evrei*, Buchaest, Curierul Judicial, 1940, p. 14.
 47. M. A. Antonescu, 'Raportul d-lui Ministru al Justiției către Conducătorul Statului și Președintele Consiliului de Miniștri, 10 October 1940', *Noua legislațiune cu privire la evrei*, p. 15.
 48. 'Decree Law 132, 21 January 1941, Concerning the military taxes due by Jews', *Noua legislațiune cu privire la evrei*, pp. 16–23.
 49. I. Antonescu, statement for the Italian newspaper *La stampa*, 26 September 1940, in *Antonescu către țară*, p. 43, my emphasis.
 50. 'Decree Law 3347, 5 October 1940, Concerning the transfer of Jewish rural properties to the state', *Noua legislațiune cu privire la evrei*, p. 3.
 51. Antonescu, 'Raportul d-lui Ministru al Justiției', p. 12.
 52. *Noua legislațiune cu privire la evrei*, p. 3.
 53. Mihai A. Anonescu, *In serviciul justitiei românești; patru luni de activitate la Ministerul Justiției. Reforma justiției românești*, Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, Imprimeria Centrală, 1941, p. 107.
 54. V. V. Blănaru-Flamură, *Generalul Antonescu în Cămașa Verde Legionară: Detronarea Regelui Carol al II-lea și 'Rebeliunea' Văzute din Stradă, de la Radiodifuziunea Română și din 'Buncărul' Antoneștilor*, Bucharest, Sepco, 1995. For Antonescu's view, see *Pe Marginea Prăpastiei, 21–23 ianuarie 1941*, vol. 1, part 1: *Lovitura de stat din septembrie 1940*. Part 2, *Guvernarea național-legionară*. Vol. 2, parts 3 and 4, *Pregătirea rebeliunii*. Part 5, *Rebeliunea*, 2 vols, 2nd ed., Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, Imprimeria Centrală, 1941 (reprinted, Bucharest, Scripta, 1992). The author uses a reprint of Volume 1, *Ion Antonescu și 'Garda de Fier': Pe Marginea Prăpastiei, 21–23 ianuarie 1941*.
 55. See Antonescu's statement 'I am the one who decided on 7 September to organize the National Legionary State', 1 February 1941, in *Antonescu către țară*, p. 233.
 56. H. Sima, 'Appeal to the Legionnaires', 15 September 1940, *Ion Antonescu și 'Garda de Fier'*, p. 69.
 57. Horia Sima's letter to Ion Antonescu, *Ion Antonescu și 'Garda de Fier'*, pp. 100–101.
 58. Ion Antonescu's letter to Horia Sima, *ibid.*, p. 103.

59. For the Antonescu regime's official investigation into these assassinations and its conclusions, see Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, Ministry of Interior, Diverse, file 27/1940.
60. For documents on the Legionary rebellion, see G. Buzatu, C. Ardeleanu, D. Beldiman, C. Beldiman, I. P. Lică, G. Neașu and R.-D. Vlad, eds, *Evenimentele din ianuarie 1941 în Arhivele germane și române*, 2 vols, Bucharest, Majadahonda, 1998–99; O. Trașcă and A.-M. Stan, *Rebeliunea Legionară în Arhive Străine: Germane, Maghiare, Franceze*, Bucharest, Albatros, 2002.
61. *Antonescu către țară*, p. 225.
62. *Universul* no. 52, 25 February 1941, cited in C. Troncotă, *Eugen Cristescu: Asul Serviciilor Secrete Românești*, Bucharest, Roza Vânturilor, 1994, p. 71.
63. D. Dobrințu, 'Legionarii și Guvernarea Ion Antonescu (1941–1944)', in K. W. Treptow, ed., *Romania: A Crossroads of Europe*, Iași, Oxford, Palm Beach, FL, and Portland, OR, The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002, pp. 199–230.
64. *Antonescu către țară*, pp. 66–67.
65. Mihai A. Antonescu gave up his position as Minister of Justice (September 1940–January 1941), but became vice-president of the Council of Ministers (January 1941–August 1944), Minister of National Propaganda (June 1941–August 1944), and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1942–August 1944).
66. Antonescu, *In serviciul justiției românești*, p. IV.
67. I. Antonescu, 'Apelul prin care se chiamă țara să-și spună cuvântul la plebiscitul din 2 martie 1941', in *Antonescu către țară*, pp. 96–97.
68. In both plebiscites the vote was open and public rather than secret. Failure to vote was interpreted as approval, which accounts for the small number of votes against the regime.
69. *Antonescu către țară*, p. 233.
70. *Ibid.*
71. See, in this respect, the audiences and regular exchange of letters and political memos between Antonescu and the leaders of inter-war Romania's main political parties, Iuliu Maniu of the PNT and Constantin I. C. Brătianu of the PNL, collected in M. Pelin, ed., *Episolarul Infernului*, Bucharest, Viitorul Românesc, 1993. Antonescu repeatedly confessed his 'feelings of trust and appreciation' for the two leaders, but noted their irreconcilable political differences. Antonescu disapproved of the previous democratic political regime, blaming it for the break-up of Romania and the 'moral decay', so instead opted for a 'regime of authority' (Pelin, *Episolarul*, pp. 89, 141).
72. On the political agreements concluded between various Legionary groupings and the Communist Party in 1945, see S. Tănase, *Elite și Societate: Guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej, 1948–1965*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1998, p. 48.
73. In the period 1948–52 a membership verification campaign was eventually linked to the elimination of the Ana Pauker group accused of right-wing deviationism and led to the removal of around 100,000 Legionaries from the Communist Party. This was followed by other 40,000 by 1960, many of whom were also arrested and imprisoned. See the figures in N. Ceaușescu, 'Stenograma Plenariei CC al PMR din 30 noiembrie-6 decembrie 1961', cited in Tănase, *Elite și societate*, p. 90. Despite this purge, the Legionary threat remained a major concern for the Communist regime. Figures compiled by the Ministry of the Interior in 1957 indicate 289,582 people were hostile to the regime, including 84,521 former Legionaries. See Tănase, *Elite și societate*, p. 157. These figures should be taken with a pinch of salt in view of the manipulation of

the accusations of fascism during Communism as a means of eliminating different politically undesirable individuals.

74. See the campaign to canonize such figures as the Legionary Valeriu Gafencu (1921–52). A commander of the Brotherhood of the Cross arrested after the Legion's rebellion in January 1941, Gafencu spent 11 years in prison, where he died at the age of 31. He is currently hailed as a saintly figure and a 'martyr of the cross' on such websites as *Sfinții Închisorilor* (The Prisons Saints) (www.sfintii-inchisorilor.ro and orthodoxword.wordpress.com/.../19/a...christ-valeriu-gafencu).