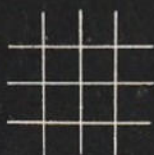


Romanian Nationalism:  
The Legionary  
Movement



Alexander E. Ronnett, M. D.

*Translated from Romanian by*  
Vasile C. Barsan, Ph. D.



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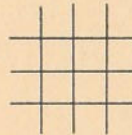
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THE LEGIONARY MOVEMENT

**T**O THE MEMORY  
of all Legionary martyrs  
who so willingly  
gave their lives for the freedom  
of the Romanian Nation.



THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL  
PATRON OF THE  
LEGIONARY MOVEMENT

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#### TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The remarks, prefacing the book you are about to read, are primarily addressed to the intelligent, objective and strictly impartial individual, whoever and wherever he may be. Moreover, they represent a challenge to that particular type of reader, admonishing him to adhere to the principles of a moral obligation. It is hoped that in the process he will obey the dictates of his conscience, and consequently be able to cast a broader outlook upon the evolution of the historical events presented by the author.

In other words, many-sidedness is definitely a basic characteristic trait of a man endowed with common sense. This sets him apart from other people who display a narrow and limited point of view couched in subjectivity and pre-conceived ideas. It follows, therefore, that the hallmark of an intellectually honest person is not merely his impartiality and equitable judgment but, especially, his willingness to probe much deeper below the surface, reject former theories and allow at least a new approach in considering the matter at hand.

Dr. Alexander E. Ronnett, a prominent physician of Romanian descent residing in Chicago, has endeavored to share with his

readers many eye-witness accounts of an epoch, in the history of Romania, filled with upheavals and turmoil. The incidents he relates are of a paramount importance in the over-all assessment of factual truth pertaining to a strong Romanian nationalistic movement which ideally set out to take in its youthful and energetic hands the destiny of the Romanian people. We follow along the rugged paths and up to the jagged cliffs of history the trials and tribulations of the Legionary Movement that led to unspeakable tragedy and supreme sacrifices. It is our unbiased opinion that the Movement in question deserves at least its day in court, and the chance to uphold and interpret the events in a totally new light.

For this main reason, Dr. Ronnett's condensed treatise should indeed be welcomed and received as a noteworthy effort to pursue the truth as he sees it. In the process, the author, supported by proper documentation, succeeds in bringing into focus new elements and factors that disperse so many misconceptions and strong prejudices against the Legionary Movement and its leaders. Dr. Ronnett steadfastly refutes and courageously withstands the onslaught of one-sided theories and reactions which, in more recent years, have swarmed like stinging bees of hatred and venom into the hives of so-called in-depth historical studies dealing with the rise of nationalism in Romania.

Indeed, the time is now ripe to weigh in the balance of universal justice the merits of innumerable previous studies which have arbitrarily condemned the doctrines and practices of the Movement either from a racist or extreme left standpoint. The authors of such books slammed the door shut forbidding the other side to present its case.

Read through the pages of any book dealing with the area of nationalism in Romania and you will find the same stereotyped opinions, pseudo-truisms and cliches endlessly devised to pin ugly labels on the events and people connected with a national mystique. As an exhaustive researcher in many fields of endeavor, I have gradually become highly indignant at the dishonesty which reigns supreme whenever anything that belongs to the rich Latin-Dacian heritage of Romanian ancestry and its unique treasures of superb creativity is derided and trampled under the feet of its enemies. As a matter of fact I know of no other ethnic group here in the United States more unjustly degraded in movies, television shows, cartoons, and above all in scholarly studies whose authors pretend to give us a true picture of historical facts. They are all insults leveled at a God-fearing, hard-working people with hardly any crime rate.

This background constituted the main reason why, when Dr. Ronnett asked me to translate his original text, I accepted without any qualms or fear despite the fact that, here and there, eyebrows would be raised. By that time, I had arrived at the conclusion that the real issue was not whether the Legionary Movement's doctrines and practices were right or wrong but that its detractors had relentlessly made all possible efforts purposely to obstruct the view of objective scholars and historians, those who might look beyond the distortion and exaggerations to find the kernel of truth. There is no doubt in my mind that the former have not abided by the honor codes of fair play, abusing and debasing the fundamental ideas of freedom for all.

In a great country like the United States, for centuries a haven and comfort for the oppressed people who came to its shores to seek and enjoy God-given rights, the sense of equity and impartiality rules over every issue, demanding that both sides be heard. Consequently, in the sincere pursuit of truth, opposing views should be confronted with each other and proper evidence presented. It is most unfortunate to realize that the studies I have most carefully analyzed do not have the potential and the insight necessary to probe deeply below the surface of events. A careful study of the phases of Romanian nationalism should comprise its causes, conditions of development and effects. This approach, however, has totally escaped the "alert" minds of scholars. The basic fault lies in hearsay and the inability to understand a country and a nation viewed from far away and from within the confines of their ivory towers.

In contrast, Dr. Ronnett's study has the merits of at least narrowing the gap still existing between facts and distortion. He opens wide the door to many unexplored vistas and invites the true scholar and researcher, people from all walks of life, young and old, to ponder seriously some crucial points before passing harsh judgments on Romanian phenomena obviously in need of more study. For instance, it should be carefully noted that, despite the current statistics, there is ample proof that Marxian socialism in anti-peasant and anti-nationalist form, had very little appeal in a county with a minuscule working class even before the First World War when it was not yet identified with the hereditary enemy--Russia. After the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, communism became the byword for high treason. It is not surprising, therefore, that communism never appealed to the masses of the Romanian people. Most of the few communists in Romania came from the hostile minorities

who pushed hard for severing Transylvania, Bessarabia, Bucovina and Dobrogea from the Romanian State.

The people living in the Free World behind more settled frontiers and governments should deeply reflect on the fact that only twenty years after the Romanians had achieved their most cherished dream--the unification of Romanians--in the form of Greater Romania, the nation was forced to see the country dismembered and carved up amongst its neighbors. Imagine, if you will, not only the bitter hatred that such treatment must engender between peoples, but the moral effect it must have on a whole nation. Moreover, how difficult it is for any Romanian to forget that it was the Russians, in alliance with the Germans, who tore his nation apart.

The Romanians have survived the vicissitudes of their foreign and domestic oppression by virtue of their tenacious national entity. In his treatise, Dr. Ronnett points out that "the young nationalists of yesteryear found within the essence of the nation, a strength of national spirit." We might add that Romanian nationalism needed no artificial stimuli from the Nazis, Fascists and definitely had nothing in common with the Marxist-Leninist doctrines. Indeed the national spirit constitutes one of the most powerful factors influencing the policy of anyone who tries to rule Romania.

It is also deemed necessary to stress that nationalism--and not necessarily in its worst sense--flourished in Romania with a vigor and fire that surprises people who have grown up in countries where national rivalries and ambitions have subsided. Yet, no matter how amazed and embarrassed we may feel or how deplorable we may find this fiery display of nationalism secretly pulsating in the homeland and openly expressed wherever there are Romanians outside its border, we should nevertheless remember that such a spirit is an indispensable factor in national survival.

Throughout their turbulent history, the Romanians have learned how to resist and repel the invader and would-be occupier. They have also learned how to preserve their national identity and traditions even within the limits imposed by alien domination. Above all these considerations, the Romanians also acquired the benefits of a long experience of working slowly and patiently to rid themselves of unwanted masters.

In this respect, Dr. Ronnett's book conveys a clear-cut message to everyone concerned, asserting that the battle between light and darkness, freedom and oppression continues to rage.

"The end result," he predicts, "will be the supreme victory of our side, even amid seemingly impossible obstacles for the crusaders of nationalism, who in the name of God and the Nation wage a battle for the salvation of the homeland."

My task as a translator of this book ends. By the virtue of my non-creative, modest position, I simply strove to grasp the essence and spirit of the original text. I sincerely acknowledge my limitations. I can truthfully state that the structure of the original text and the narration of events could not be more concisely or better expressed. On the whole, it was my firm conviction that my total absence from the script's tone and point of view would enhance the value of the finished product.

Vasile C. Barsan  
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## WHAT IS THE LEGIONARY MOVEMENT?

Current exhaustive research evidences the fact that the Romanian Legionary Movement is one of the oldest nationalistic movements in Europe.

The Movement was created, inspired and led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu through unspeakable adversities and immense obstacles. No other movement was more dominated by its founder, even after his violent and untimely death in 1938. Consequently, there cannot be any understanding of the Legionary Movement, without a thorough comprehensive insight into Codreanu's doctrine, his ultimate goals and a true assessment of his intrinsic values.

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu began to fight communism in 1919, when he was just a freshman at the University Of Jassy (Iași) where he went to study at the School of Law. Jassy was the capital of Moldavia, the "holy land of nationalism," the town of writers and poets like Hașdeu, Eminescu, Alexandri, Negruzzi, Kogalniceanu, Barnuțiu and many other apostles of nationalism.

The Bolshevik Revolution had already taken over the University and the Marxist current had deeply penetrated into the stu-



dent masses. The town and the University were kept in ferment with leftist agitations, disorders, strikes and the menace of the looming Soviet power just across the Dniester (Nistru) River. Codreanu's ardent nationalism made him the moving spirit of a rapidly growing group of non-communist workers called The Guard of National Consciousness. Codreanu joined forces with its leader, Constantin Pancu, an electrician, to fight for the cause of the workers who, he proclaimed, "have the right to bread and dignity."

After three years of struggle, from 1919 to 1922, Codreanu succeeded in changing the orientation of the student body. By that time armed with determination, zeal and perseverance, Codreanu had drawn around him a small, tight-knit group of nationalistic, religious students. This group succeeded in persuading the apathetic disorganized majority to accept the ideas of "God, Fatherland, Army and King" as slogans which the student body had repudiated until then; and Marxism disappeared from the University of Jassey.

At the end of his university studies, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu became an active member in Professor Alexandru Cuza's political organization called The League of National Christian Defense whose program and ideas were strongly anti-semitic. In the 1926 elections, the League obtained a resounding success, sending ten representatives to Parliament. In the following year, however, the League (or L. A. N. C.) split into two distinctive factions; and in the elections held in the summer of 1927, no representative appeared on the electoral list of this organization.

At the time of the League's division, Corneliu Codreanu was in France studying law at the University of Grenoble where he successfully passed his examinations for the Doctorate of Law. When the news reached him concerning the unfortunate happenings within the League, Codreanu anxiously hurried home with the intention of helping the two factions settle their differences in a reconciliatory way. When he failed to attain this goal, Codreanu decided not to take sides with either of the two factions within the League, firmly convinced that the time had come to create his own political organization.

On June 24, 1927, Corneliu Codreanu called together his most faithful, devoted and battle-tested comrades and issued his First Order of the Day in which he proclaimed the founding of The Legion of the Archangel Michael. It is significant to mark Codreanu's memorable words on that occasion: "Those whose faith in God and the Legion have no boundary should enter our ranks. Those who waver and doubt should stay out."

## THE LEGION'S DOCTRINE

From the outset, Corneliu Codreanu, in striking contrast with all other political parties, did not launch a political program. Codreanu thought it was too early to elaborate such a program which, as he put it, "no one knew if, after a few years, it would continue to prove realistic and up to date."

Codreanu considered another perspective: a program, perhaps, sufficient to establish the foundations of a political party--a program deemed necessary only until the size of the Movement had increased and the conquest of power in the State might be close at hand. However, in order to start a movement, a greater factor becomes crucially important: the ability to create a state of mind in the people and arouse them to action.

In the first phase, from 1927 to 1933, the propaganda for the Movement was based on a few fundamental principles, capable of stirring resounding echoes within the masses.

The first one was Faith in God.

Corneliu Codreanu, not only believed in God, but held the firm conviction that politics could not be separated from religion. In his opinion, only men who show respect for the Divine Order can

become full-fledged patriots. He asked his followers to attend church every Sunday, as well as, on religious holy days; to pray at all times; and, in moments of danger for the nation or the Legion, especially to invoke Divine help. He placed his Movement under the protection of Michael, the Archangel, from whom the Legion derives its original name. For reasons previously discussed, many foreign scholars and researchers have justly observed that the Legionary Movement is the "only political movement in the world with a religious structure."

Every Legionary meeting, small or large, started with a religious invocation. Prayer and an appeal to the forefathers was considered by Codreanu as a decisive weapon in the Legionaries' onward march toward victory. The Legion's slogan solemnly asserted that, "It is God who carries us along in his victorious bandwagon." The Legionary Movement inspired by its faith in the Almighty strived, not merely to fulfill the destiny of the Romanian people, but to fulfill it "along the road to salvation."

The second pillar, upon which the Legionary Movement supports itself, is the idea of nationality. Corneliu Codreanu states that the nations are not products of history and geography, but Divine creations. Each nation has a mission to fulfill in the world. The leaders of a people must discover the role reserved to their nation in history and to guide their political views in conformity with this particular destiny. Codreanu calls this general orientation of policies, this direction which all the parties and governments must follow, "the historic life line of a nation."

The third element of the Legionary doctrine is the individual who cannot be limited to his strictly egotistical self. Human beings are infinitely more complex. Man is a bearer of superior values which transcend his particular existence. For the realization of these values the individual must fight and sacrifice throughout his life. What are these values? Family, State, Fatherland, Church, Culture and God.

Among these principles there exists a hierarchical order. The individual is subordinate to his nation and, in turn, the nation is subordinate to God and His divine laws.

The Legionary Movement is a nationalistic movement in the sense that the political views it precognizes encompass the preservation and progress of the nation. The difference between the Legionary Movement and other nationalistic organizations consists in the fact that the Legion totally lacks any chauvinistic or imperialistic manifestations. The Christian affiliation and structure of the Movement prevents it from degenerating into

excesses of this type. True nationalism respects the right of other people to live.

Moreover, the Legionary Movement is not racist. All the citizens of Romania who partake of the national spirit are Romanians. They are called upon with equal rights and duties to participate in the making of their history.

## A NEW MAN

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu began his political life fighting against communism. Later, having discovered that many communist students were Jewish, coming from rich, merchant and capitalist families, he enlarged the sphere of his actions to include combating the Jewish menace. The Jews, in their immense majority, were hostile to the Romanian State causing Codreanu, in concert with all the student leaders, to demand the reduction of Jewish enrollments (in accordance with their ethnic proportion--numerous clausus) in secondary schools and universities throughout the country.

It must be emphasized, at this point, that for Codreanu and the Legionary Movement, anti-semitism was not a racial nor even a religious problem. It had been Professor Cuza who frequently broke out against the Jews for "crucifying our Savior." Codreanu, for his part, said little or nothing in his writings against the Jewish race or faith as such. Ion Banea, a leader of the chosen few of the Legionary elite discussed the problem in very clear terms: "The Jews . . . cannot be persecuted on a racial or religious basis--only on the basis of the danger they

represent to the State."

After Codreanu became better acquainted with the panorama of Romanian political life, he concluded that the chief responsibility for the decadence of the Romanian State lies with the ruling class. Without exception, the representatives of all parties, constituted a caste of exploiters, comprising the most corrupt elements of society. Consequently, it was absolutely necessary to change this mentality by creating a new elite--men who would replace the current rulers. Only then could political life become wholesome and capable of alleviating the suffering of the Romanian people. The Jewish and Communist threat are both phenomena derived in relation to the plague of political methods which undermine the very existence of the nation.

With a view of these changes, Corneliu Codreanu once stated: "Before we aspire to take helm of the country's rule, we must mold a different type of Romanian totally cleansed of today's vices and defects. In place of the corrupt specimen, who now dominates our political life, a new man of integrity and strong character must rise. For him, morality in public life must become a tenet. Carry the message everywhere that evil, misery, and ruin spring forth from the soul. This fact constitutes the cardinal point. We must, therefore, strive for the purification of the soul of the individual and the masses."

Codreanu goes on to say that "Before the Legion becomes a political movement, it must fulfill an educational mission in the life of our nation. It bears more the character of a great spiritual school. If a man enrolls in it, he must come out a hero." Thus Codreanu's goal was the creation of a new man. The Legion was to become a "new Romanian aristocracy" but not one concerned with material goods or with "birth-rights but of spiritual qualities--an aristocracy of virtue."

The Legion is a revolutionary movement, but in another sense than communism or other leftist organizations which claim that violence is a decisive factor of any political struggle. The goals of the revolution, pursued by the Legionary Movement, are of an inner nature. It takes place, within the souls of men, with the sole purpose of elevating them to a lofty spiritual plane.

## ORGANIZATION

In addition to the New Man, Corneliu Codreanu created a new system of organization unknown until then in the political life of Romania. At the foundation of this system is the Nest, otherwise referred to as the "basic unit of the Legion." The Nest consists of a group of three to thirteen individuals under the leadership of a chief. The Nest chief in turn is subordinated to an entire hierarchy in which the Head of the Legion--the Captain (Capitanul)--looms high above the foremost in the ranks.

The Nest is a living unity with multiple functions. It collects the membership fees, distributes propaganda materials, holds meetings, offers its share of manual work in voluntary labor camps, creates new Nests and performs any other actions that occur in the life of the Movement. The Nest, which meets once a week, undertakes the task of educating its members, an education of quite a different type or style because any principle enunciated is immediately put into practice. It has the character of a dynamic education which is implemented parallel to, and in close connection with, both its theoretical and practical aspects. From each deed performed by the Legionaries, the Nest chief

draws a moral lesson which he explains to the members. Similarly, any educational principle is put into practice through the example of a deed accomplished by the entire Nest.

The meetings of the Nest were like a church where everybody forgot for an hour's time all the petty, sordid cares of daily life and devoted their thought to the Fatherland only. The education of the members was neither done at random nor did it satisfy the whims and moods of the Nest chief. For this reason, Corneliu Codreanu established six rules which must constantly be obeyed in the course of the activities and Legionary life within the Nest:

1 The Rule of Discipline. "Legionary! Be disciplined! Only in this manner will you be victorious. Follow your Nest leader through thick and thin."

2 The Rule of Work. "Work! Work every single day. Work with love. Let not the reward of your labor be for the sake of material gain, but the satisfaction that you have placed a brick for the foundation and elevation of the Legion and for the glory of Romania."

3 The Rule of Silence. "Be frugal with words. Speak only about what is absolutely necessary. Your speech must be the oratory of action. Perform deeds and let others be chatterboxes."

4 The Rule of Self-Education. "You must become another man, a New Man, a hero. Do all your education in the Nest. Learn well to know the Legion."

5 The Rule of Mutual Aid. "Help your brother, overcome by misfortune. Don't abandon him!"

6 The Rule of Honor. "A Legionary must always march on the paths of honor. Fight and never become a lowly coward. Leave infamous deeds for others. Even honorable defeat is preferable to dastardly victory."

The commonly accepted rule was that everyone should attend the meetings of the Nest punctually and with a good heart. Finally, the Nest's duty was to be active always and everywhere--in the village, in town, at the universities. The Nest leaders displayed a great deal of initiative. Their orders, and the decisions concluded at the previous meeting, were carried out, unconditionally, by every member of the Nest. Iron discipline, constant

action, initiative and obedience characterized the entire hierarchy of the Legion, from the Captain to the Brothers of the Cross--young people up to the age of twenty.

#### THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

After World War I and the fulfillment of the great dream of national unification of the Romanian people, the large boyar (landowners) properties disappeared from Romania. The largest part of the agricultural land was distributed to the peasants. However this generous agrarian reform did not solve the peasant problem. The political parties, which after the war succeeded each other in power, did not legislate appropriate measures designed to assure the small peasant landowner the means of production and profit. The latter totally lacked farm implements and animals for labor. Moreover, they were not able to acquire reasonable credits and loans, nor were they able to find foreign markets in which to sell their agricultural products.

The absence of any aid coming from the State plus the lack of encouragement needed for private initiative lead the peasants to sign financially burdensome contracts. Outrageous interest rates buried them deeply in debt. In 1930 the agricultural depression resulting from the world economic depression worsened. When the political parties in power saw that the peasants were unable to pay their loans, they had to resort to a law of con-

version (to reduce the interests on the loans) of agricultural debts. For the time being this law changed the fate of the peasantry, but at the same time it ruined tens of thousands of depositors who, for the greatest part, were people of low social income.

Together with the peasantry, the industrial working class was also leading a difficult, hard life. Wages were extremely low, the hours very long, and labor exhausting. Eighty per cent of the population lived in permanent economic uncertainty. In some regions of the country, the peasantry fell victim to famine. Driven away by misfortunes, many peasants migrated to the cities only to face the impossibility of earning a livelihood. Thus they ended their life span in misery.

Corneliu Codreanu describes the deplorable socio-economical situation of the country in his electoral manifesto entitled "A Ruin" which appeared during that memorable year (1930) as follows:

"Nobody who has eyes can fail to see that this rich country has become a ruin. The peasant's household and land, the village--a handful of miserable people, who lament--the county, the region, the barren mountains, the uncultivated plains which no longer produce anything for the poor, unfortunate peasant--all are in ruins. The State budget and the entire country are a shambles.

"And above these ruins scattered all over the Romanian land, a band of dishonorable men, of imbeciles and shameless brigands, have built palaces defying the country which writhes in pain and ridiculing your suffering, poor, miserable Romanian peasant!

"A more revolting, painful and indecent scene has never been witnessed by anyone elsewhere in the world. Millions of households are being destroyed, crushing underneath their ruins countless God-forsaken people who have nothing else left except tears. To top this shame, the palaces of the rascals, who plundered the land and emptied the treasure of our country, rise like a supreme irony and mockery."

At the end of World War I, it appeared that the new party founded by General Averescu would be able to solve, to everyone's satisfaction, the acute social problems existing in Romania. At first General Averescu enjoyed a great popularity. However, during his two terms in power, 1921-1922 and 1926-1927, his party did not bring the expected relief to the masses. After this deception, the peasants and the workers concentrated their hopes on the National Peasant Party. This organization purported to be an exponent of the lower classes and, therefore, went to the extent

of advertising its awareness of class distinction and contrasting characteristic traits. This party's term in power also ended, without making visible improvements in the conditions of the people who continued to live in poverty.

In these moments of general despair, of economic depression and political crisis, during the thirties, when the people had lost their trust in the existing political parties and had fallen into a state of apathy and resignation, the Legionary Movement suddenly erupted into public life. In the beginning, the people's attitude toward the Movement was skeptical and reserved. After their previous experience with political parties, the Romanian people, fearful of suffering still another deception, didn't welcome or offer their enthusiastic support to a new political organization. Nevertheless, in direct proportion to the more and more frequent Legionary public manifestations, the people became aware of the Movement's program. A new hope for social justice was reborn in their hearts. As time went by, in ever increasing numbers, the peasants and the workers adhered to the new organization.

Primarily, the peasants were deeply impressed that the Legionaries did not make any demagogical promises. As a matter of fact, they did not promise anything. They urged the peasants to join forces with them in battle and to make sacrifices for the salvation of the entire nation. Once public life had a "clean bill of health," the new State, purified of the miasma of political corruption, would distribute its benefits for a change to the needy peasants. Moreover, inspired by true love and understanding of their plight, the people were confident that the Legionaries would treat them in a humane manner.

In all his actions, Corneliu Codreanu was on the side of the exploited. Yet his program, which stood for social justice, was not based on class struggle. For him the nation constituted a block, a unity, a totality with great precedence over the social classes. He considered the various social classes only secondary phenomena. Social justice had to be imparted within the framework and resources of the nation. No help should be sought from foreign powers or doctrines. He rejected with the strongest energy possible the Socialist and Communist internationalists. No matter how just the cause of the worker, how legitimate his demands, he should not turn to the internationalists for a solution. Such an action would clearly mean betrayal of one's country and the destruction of the nation.

Codreanu openly and courageously denounced all exploiters of

the people whether Romanian or foreign. At the same time, he warned the workers that they should not resort to actions which could place the existence of their country in danger. He emphasized his thoughts in a celebrated clear cut phrase expressing the double aspect of the social question: "One's justice within the frame of the nation's justice."

Codreanu furthermore says that, "It is inadmissible while seeking your justice that you should break to pieces the historical justice of your own nation. But neither will we tolerate, behind the shield of tricolor patriotism, an oligarchical and tyrannical class to set itself upon the backs of all workers of every type-- and literally skin them . . ."

For Corneliu Codreanu the Romanians, regardless of social class or profession, whether a street sweeper or a university professor: all are sons of the same homeland. Consequently all must be treated in an equitable manner. Any discrimination is strictly forbidden. Every individual has rights and obligations, but his most important duty is to give due respect to his nation of which he is an intrinsic part. Personal, class, and job interests must be permanently subordinated to the national interest.

The social program of the Movement is founded on the idea of national solidarity. This excludes the excesses of a capitalist economy. Even more it excludes the communist and socialist systems in which exploitation is infinitely more crushing, systems which unavoidably lead to the enslavement of an entire nation.

## LAW AND ORDER

What paths did Corneliu Codreanu chose to follow for his actions in public life?

From the initial moment of the foundation of the Legion, Codreanu established as a firm principle for his political actions the respect of the official Constitution and of the laws of the country: "We shall walk straight forward on the line drawn by the nation's laws, refusing to provoke, avoiding any provocation or reaction to it." Consequently, this clearly shows that violence, disorders, anarchist agitations were not the weapons used by the Legion to attain its political goals. There is no doctrinal or propaganda text signed or authored by Corneliu Codreanu or by any of his closest followers to indicate an incitement of the people to revolution. In this respect too the Legionary Movement is radically different from communism and other organizations that consider the revolutionary training of the masses an indispensable factor in obtaining the victory.

Though the Movement, in its contacts with the people, did not take one single step beyond the limits imposed by the laws in force, the ever changing governments held an altogether dif-

ferent view and reacted quite violently against its activities. The Movement was constantly accused that its true, secretive goal was the violent overthrow of the existing order in the State. Since the deeds performed by the Legionaries constituted a denial of such accusations and a living proof of their legality, the men in power were the ones who transgressed the boundaries of law. In the process, ironically enough, they committed the very same "lawless" actions of which they accused the Legionaries. Though the public meetings of the Movement were held in perfect order, the authorities systematically blocked them by using force.

Wherever Legionaries appeared, whether in hamlets, villages or towns, the gendarmes and the police arrived ahead to confront them. There followed brutal attacks, arrests and tortures. All this because they freely chose to exercise their rights granted by the Constitution and enjoyed by all other citizens of the country. In the course of illegalities and abuses committed by the authorities from time to time the Legionaries did clash with the police force. This occurred especially when the terror of the government surpassed all limits of endurance. Some situations called for desperate retaliations on the part of some Legionaries, as it happened in the case of Prime Minister Duca. However, such retaliations were extremely rare in comparison with the violence unleashed by the government in the name of law and order. Unfortunately, the Legionaries were the ones who fell victims to the terror of the rulers.

In this respect, we take the liberty to quote a memorable answer given by Ion Moța, Codreanu's foremost collaborator, to all the detractors who accused the Movement of being "anarchical, terroristic and subversive."

"The nationalist, Legionary youth is not anarchical by any interpretation of the law. The Legionaries do not practice violence by virtue of nihilist principles, not even as a normal technique in battle. Our youth is closely bound to the idea of order-- in the first place, moral order; in the second, order enforced by law. The evidence for this lies in the fact that the Legionaries never fail to appear of their own free will before the authorities they could have eluded. The Legionaries hold that the legal system upon which they rely is sufficient to help them accomplish their historic mission and be victorious.

"However, when the men in power are frightened even by the normal and legal development of the struggle, they are the first to concoct a diabolical scheme to outlaw the peaceful actions of the youth and to plot against it, employing the most treacherous

maneuvers. The Movement is officially declared illegal, shootings occur provoked by the government, and young people stand accused of secret assassination plots against the leaders. The Legionary youth finds itself absolutely incapable of fighting against such methods on legal grounds. Thus, in the end, we insist on making it known to the country that we have reached the peak of our endurance and refuse to bow our heads in resignation or concede our defeat on such immoral, illegal and cowardly grounds. On the contrary, in the name of our most legitimate and sacred right of self-defense, we are determined to react with all the means to which the law gives us the right.

"I am fully aware that our statements can be easily denied by our adversaries. They will maintain that the provocations we mentioned and the infamous, immoral and illegal attacks we complained about, are all lies. They will say to us, 'On the contrary, it is you who are to blame for the plots and the violence.' Yet, before God and history, we uphold that our 'acts of violence' were only our most legitimate defense. The beginnings of the lawlessness and violence can be traced back to our enemies. God and history will decide who committed the first act of injustice and whether their violence or ours is justified or not.

"If, in the future, the politicians really desire peace and quiet in the country, would they kindly ward off the temptations of the evil spirit who urges them to get rid of their adversaries. May they cease outlawing our legal actions, plotting against our lives and forcing us to set aside our honorable and gentlemanly codes of battle. Only then will they at last find the peace and quiet they want. Should their violence continue, however, the men in power will be forced to meet head on the Legionaries who are staunchly defending their mission and principles."



## THE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE MOVEMENT

In its relations with other countries and nationalistic movements, the Legion constantly manifested its spirit of independence. It never accepted any foreign subsidies or political protection.

The Movement was always fully aware that it represented the destiny of Romania in the world and that within its framework the "national religious piety" of the masses would find expression. The leader of the Legion constituted the embodiment of the invisible spiritual condition of the Movement. Codreanu considered the Legion's mission a holy crusade; its enemies were, not only the enemies of Romania, but also the enemies of God.

One of the most frequent and widespread slanders leveled at the Legion was that of its being a "branch of the Nazi." Only an individual with evil intentions and totally ignorant of the Legion's history, could issue such a wild statement.

Most assuredly, great differences of doctrine separate the two movements. In the first place, National Socialism strayed away from the Christian faith it had professed in initial years. Instead, it evolved toward a sort of pantheism. In contrast, the Legionary Movement not only respects the Christian church but

finds in Christianity the strength upon which to build its ideology.

Secondly, while National Socialism was racist, the Legionary Movement considered the nation, not the race, the creative factor of history and culture. There are many races which constitute the component elements of any nation.

It is important to note that in 1919 Corneliu Codreanu began his struggle on a national plane. At this date in history, no one had yet heard of Hitler. Not only did Codreanu never borrow any foreign ideologies, but actually through his ideas he anticipates by a few years a nationalistic revival in Europe.

After the First World War, a unique type of nationalism reached its epoch of splendor and expansion in Europe. This nationalistic efflorescence grew out of the presence of a serious, ever-rising communist menace. Legionarism had its roots in Romania; fascism in Italy; National Socialism in Germany; and falangism in Spain. Though all these movements sprang from a mutual need and goal, they were independent of each other, representing the specific expression of the creative genius of the respective nation.

There is no doubt that the Legionary Movement underwent certain influences of Italian fascism, but only with reference to some matters of a purely formal order: wearing a uniform and the Roman salute. In comparison with fascism and Nazism, the Legionary Movement preserved its national character based on peasant values. While fascism worships the State; Nazism the race and nation; the Legionary Movement exalts the values of the individual in the attainment of the aspirations of the collectivity.

Corneliu Codreanu held Mussolini in great esteem because he felt that by creating the Fascist State, for the first time in history, the Italian leader demonstrated, in practice, that the social problem can be solved within the nation's structure, without the interference of the Communist internationalists. In this manner, Mussolini challenged the Communists' claims that the improvement of the living conditions of the workers is possible only through their universal solidarity beyond the frontiers of their respective homelands.

## DEMOCRACY AND THE LEGIONARY MOVEMENT

From the very first public appearance of the Legionary Movement and its initial contact with the masses, the government then in power began its persecutions against the Legion. The chief argument raised by the political parties to support their unjust retaliations was the alleged purpose of the Legion to change the system of government through violence. Codreanu became the target of strong accusations for having made statements hostile to democracy. Moreover, numerous attacks were leveled at him for his ideas which favored a single, central, national government. In the minds of his detractors, this was identical with a dictatorship and a totalitarian regime.

These points of view need, however, to be debated further because the statements of the Legion's chief, concerning the reorganization of the Romanian State have been very frequently misunderstood, and for the greatest part, falsely presented and even purposely misquoted by the enemies of the Movement.

First, it is necessary to find out who were the "staunch defenders" of democracy in Romania. Who, exactly, were they and what really did they believe? Was their devotion to the cause

of freedom of the people and the individual truly sincere? Did they abide by and respect the people's free will, as it is customary, in a democratic system?

The Legionary Movement's experience with democracy in Romania was indeed a bitter one. Codreanu regarded democracy with its party system destructive of Romanian national unity and unable to carry out any worthy program. This particular system of government, based on the universal right to vote, functioned only on paper. The main characteristic trait of Romanian democracy consisted of the predominance of the executive power in the State's political machinery. Basically this political system, democratic in appearance only, was just a dictatorship of the oligarchy in disguise.

The source of power was not generated by Parliament, but by the king himself. The latter's position was not limited to being the arbitrator of political life as in other constitutional monarchies. The king refused to appoint a prime minister on the basis of the nationwide results at the polls. On the contrary, he acted in his own best interest. The king called to the helm of government one political party or another, without paying any attention whether these organizations enjoyed popularity or not. After it came in power, the respective party immediately proceeded to dissolve Parliament and hold new elections. An unpopular party could not conduct free elections because in order to assure its majority in Parliament, it was obligated to resort to terrorist methods and commit grand theft at the ballot boxes. Clearly the national will was not in the least respected; instead, it was trampled under the feet of the administrative apparatus and tailored to fit conveniently the electoral needs of the government.

Corneliu Codreanu once asked the very significant and pertinent question: "What rights do the sovereign people really have to decide freely their destiny, when public meetings are forbidden; when, at the time of elections, tens of thousands of people are prevented from voting, mistreated, threatened with death and even murdered?" The same men who are empowered to rule the country become flagrantly guilty of breaking the democratic law and order. Consequently, the leaders of the political parties had no moral authority to order Codreanu to be tried in the courts and to pass judgment on his aims, since they showed no respect at all for the fundamental judiciary of the State whose duty it is to uphold law and order.

It is worthy to note how Codreanu assessed the values of a real authentic democracy and how he totally rejected the false

statements broadcast through the adversary's powerful propaganda channels. Undoubtedly, the repugnant spectacle presented by public life in Romania did not arouse his enthusiasm for a system of government which functioned as a see-saw--what one party built, another destroyed when it came to power. According to Codreanu Romanian democracy makes it impossible for a politician to fulfill his duty toward his people. Electoral promises and obligations distract him from concerns with the national interest.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that from his very first activities as a representative in Parliament, Codreanu openly declared himself against democracy, harshly criticizing it, and charging it with all the evils which befell the Romanian people. It is not less true, however, that at the age of thirty, his political experience was limited to the horizons of Romanian Democracy. Obviously he condemned democracy because of its deplorable results in Romania. Codreanu held that democracy does not allow the election of a real national elite best suited for leadership.

In the name of democracy were elected immoral and unscrupulous men, who tortured, whipped, derided and exploited the Romanian people to the last drop of blood. What kind of government of the people was this which, instead of allowing the enjoyment of God-given rights, imparted humiliations and injustice? Once a year, when the citizen was called upon to decide in elections his country's fate, his voice was stifled by rifle butts. The conclusion to which Codreanu arrived reflected the deficiencies specific only to Romanian democracy. We cannot ascertain, however, to what extent he would have remained steadfast in his conclusions had this particular type of democracy developed in a Western climate.

Nevertheless, parallel with Codreanu's indictment of democracy, we observe in his political thought another tendency akin to the democratic ideal--an infinite respect for the will of the people--an attitude never evidenced in the old political parties. The latter functioned in a political milieu of permanent duplicity, pretending to rule in the name of the people, while at the same time endeavoring to choke the aspirations of the people. In a word as Codreanu pointed out democracy is set against the nation as such, ignoring its will while claiming to represent its historic mission.

Corneliu Codreanu distinguishes between democracy and the source of power within a State. The latter is generated solely by the will of the people. Never does he neglect or show contempt for such a will. He does not plead for its annihilation. On the

contrary he thinks it should stand firm at the basis of any form of government. He demands that it be permanently respected. He vows to obey the decisions of what he refers to as "the will of the historic nation." He goes on to say that the essence of the State lies in this will--not in the system of government. Today a liberal regime may be in power, tomorrow a less liberal one may rule more authoritatively. The essential fact remains that in all these changes of regime "the nation must be present and everything done in accordance with its consent."

Codreanu upholds the theory that any change in the present form of government must be made in conformity with the laws approved by the existing Constitution. He is set against any changes which would force the present situation by violating the will of the people and arbitrarily imposing a new constitution from top to bottom.

According to Codreanu, the distinction between democracy and the Legion's point of view lies in the former's individualism and inability to create real authority as a system implemented by political parties. On the contrary Codreanu's beliefs take into account the will of the nation. At certain moments the will of the people can be reflected by political parties, but nothing prevents the masses from finding other different means of expression. If the people are sovereign in their decisions by virtue of the basic principle of democracy, they can renounce parliamentary democracy and adopt another form of government.

"The State," Codreanu asserts, "is just a simple garment that covers the body of the nation. To fulfill its own functions, the garment must be tailored to fit the needs of the body it clothes. The body is the nation together with all its interests, aspirations and ideals. The nation comes before the State and establishes its conditions. The creator of the State represents the will of the nation."

Without committing himself to a specific form of the State the Legion would favor, Corneliu Codreanu issues a fundamental anticipatory statement in regard to the relations between the State and the nation: "If at a given moment," Codreanu inquires, "the form of State no longer corresponds to the needs of the nation, what should we do? Must we change the situation by force, overthrowing the government in order to smooth the path leading to the constitutional renewal of the country? No! Categorically not! If the present Constitution and laws in force prevent an action designed to save the people, then the General Constituent Assembly should be called together to empower the people to name the

person whose responsibility it will be to take suitable measures on behalf of the country."

As time went by the evolution of Corneliu Codreanu's political thoughts regarding democracy truly set him apart from all the others. In 1938, when King Carol II plotted the violent overthrow of the government in power, all the political parties hurriedly disavowed the democratic system, thus seeking the favor of the sovereign. Corneliu Codreanu was the only leader who continued staunchly to defend the Constitution and openly condemn its abolition by force.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Free translation of a passage quoted from "Histoire du Mouvement Legionnaire (History of the Legionary Movement)" by Horia Sima, pp. 97-102.

#### THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM OF THE MOVEMENT

One matter always received special attention in Romania (and doubtlessly all over the world) when a new political party was founded. What were the sources of financial support for the organizations? Who provided the funds? How did the leader of the new group manage to acquire funds to pay for business trips, propaganda, publication of newspapers, salaries for office personnel, and the like?

The Legion's enemies resorted to the most loathsome slander to explain in their own way the Legion's sources of monies. The press wrote that the Legion was subsidized by Mussolini and Hitler. Other newspapers went even further making the atrocious statement that the money came from Moscow, going even as far as the aberration that Jewish capitalists and financiers supported the Legion.

Yet the economic resources of the Movement were a great deal more simple to explain. They came, in their entirety, from the Legionaries' pockets; although, for the greatest part, they were poor. The Legionaries were divided in groups of about thirteen--called the "Nest." The Nest held weekly meetings

where the participants offered their obolus in the form of donations, often sacrificing the little they had for their own sustenance. Absolutely no meeting of the Nest ended without the treasurer gathering the donations of the members, starting with the minimum of one leu (Romanian currency), though usually more than one leu was given. Anyone can calculate how much money can be collected during one month from a Nest consisting of thirteen members.

The Movement spent the money obtained through the Nest system exclusively for the necessities of battle. Obviously in the beginning when the Nest were few in number, the Legion's funds were also small. When the organization spread throughout the country with a chain of thousands of Nests, it is easy to assess how large its income became. The culminating point of the organization's development can be set at the beginning of the year 1938, when there were in the whole country at least 200,000 Legionaries. Figuring on the average of about five lei per Legionary per meeting, at four meetings a month, the donations reached a total of four million lei each month. In addition to the donations, there were also special gifts or tokens, representing the amount a Legionary could offer in addition to his current contribution. There were also financial drives organized periodically to subsidize urgent and important activities. Immense collections of funds were solicited throughout the country.

When the Legionary Commercial Task Force began to function, it constituted another important financial enterprise that promised spectacular financial gains. Unfortunately, the Carlist dictatorship stopped its lucrative efforts by force.

Who financed the Movement? "No one did," Corneliu Codreanu asserts, "only the boundless faith of the Romanians." The founder of the Legion would never have accepted money furnished by foreign capitalists, nor would he have taken donations from any secret funds of the State. He believed that a movement that agrees to be financed, not only loses its independence but can be liquidated any time at the discretion of those who paid for its support. Codreanu asserts, "These particular individuals could stop financing the Movement anytime they so desired. The organization, unaccustomed to living on its own income, simply dies."

He then goes on to say, "For a normal and healthy development, a movement has the right to consume only what it can produce by its own means. Its ability to produce depends on the measure, potential faith and sacrifice of its members. So, it doesn't give fruitful results? Well, the road leading to the Legion's

material gains is not open for the Legionaries. You have free access only to the path which strengthens your faith and spirituality."

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Movement supported all its activities from its self-devised financial system, based on the anonymous and modest sacrifice of the thousands of Legionaries who were active in the Nests.

## THE CONSTRUCTIVE CHARACTER OF THE LEGION

From the first contact with the masses, the propaganda teams of the Legion reaped remarkable results in gaining new members. One principle cause of this success was the creative elan of the Legion. During any electoral campaign the old political parties made extremely generous promises which they forgot the very next day following the elections. Moreover they completely disappeared from the villages they had once visited in luxurious limousines. In those days and months prior to the elections they needed people to cast their votes for them.

Unlike the political parties, the Legionaries refused to make promises they could not keep. Even as poor and as persecuted as they were, they set out to demonstrate by example their wholesome and sincere good-will and actually do something worthwhile for the people. Without asking for any remuneration, the Legionaires proceeded to help the peasants with their work in the fields, repairing here and there a broken bridge, building a house for a needy family, digging ditches for water drainage, becoming caretakers of cemeteries and churches.

Wherever the Legionary Voluntary Workers made their appearance, they left tangible proof of their love for the people. In this manner the peasants gradually became more aware of the differences between the Legion and the old parties. While the representatives of the political factions were obviously indifferent to the suffering of the people, the Legionaries did not hesitate to pick up a hoe, a shovel or a sickle to help them.

The small voluntary deeds of great social value performed by the Legionary units across Romania's villages and towns were not planned just on the eve of elections for the sake of propaganda. They constituted a permanent characteristic trait of the Legion. The first Voluntary Labor Camp was created by Corneliu Codreanu, as early as 1924, when he was a militant in Professor Cuza's organization. At that time the nationalist student body did not have a hall, or even a large room, to hold its meetings. Corneliu Codreanu called together the students and urged them to build, with their own hands, a hall which they badly needed. Thus Codreanu initiated the first Voluntary Labor Camp with university and high-school students at Ungheni on the Pruth River. There they dug the earth and made bricks. With these bricks they built the Christian Cultural Home in Jassey--a construction project completed in 1929. This building also housed the main offices of the Legion.

After 1927 the difficulties, inherent to the creation of a new organization, prevented the opening of additional Voluntary Labor Camps in other parts of the country. Until the summer of 1933, Corneliu Codreanu was unable to bring together the Legionaries for another project of some importance. In that summer he mobilized a few hundred Legionaries and sent them to construct a dam, six kilometers long at Vişani situated in the Buzau district. The dam was needed to raise a strong barrier against the floods that in the past had hampered the villages and destroyed the harvests. The project could not even get off the ground because of the armed intervention of the gendarmes who by the force of overwhelming numbers drove out the Legionaries from their construction site.

A month after the Vişani incident, Codreanu opened a new labor camp--this time in one of the wards of the capital called New Bucharest (Bucureştii Noi). Here the Legionaries erected a rest home for the Legionaries wounded in battles. Later this construction took the name of "The Green House."

From 1933 to 1934 the work of the Legionary Voluntary Workers was constantly interrupted by the terroristic perse-

cution against the Legion. As soon as the wave of persecution subsided, the work resumed at New Bucharest and in countless other labor camps established throughout the country. In the summer of 1934 there were already five labor camps functioning in full strength. In the year 1935 their number increased over twenty and by 1936 all district organizations had opened Voluntary Labor Camps of this type.

At this point it is necessary to distinguish between labor camps and smaller construction sites. A labor camp presupposed a larger group of men, ranging from a minimum of thirty to three hundred or more. This particular kind of camp had to stay open at least a month and execute projects of special importance--a school, a church, a highway, homes, offices, a rest home. A construction campsite could be opened by any Nest because it required only a minimum of five Legionaries. Their task was to work together for at least five days and carry out a modest project--digging a ditch, fencing a yard, repairing a house.

While the labor camps, in their glowing moments of glory, did not go over a hundred, one could count the smaller construction sites by the thousands. Even the smallest task became a special undertaking of the Nest. The camp sites mentioned had a greater propaganda impact on the people, since almost all the villages profited from the voluntary work of the Legionaries.

The impulse to create the first labor camp at Ungheni in the year 1924 was of a material order--the urgent need to have a hall where the nationalistic students of the University of Jassy could meet. The moral results of this camp excelled by far the initially proposed material objective--it also destroyed class prejudice. "Our first labor camp," said Corneliu Codreanu, "had the effect of the beginning of a revolution in the contemporary mentality. The people were witnessing the destruction of a past arbitrary and masterful set of rules. Until then, it was considered humiliating for an intellectual to work with his hands, especially to engage in doing hard labor. The latter had been a task reserved to slaves and lower classes and was looked upon with deep contempt.

"The first to understand the labor camps, from this point of view, were the lower classes fallen into disconsideration and neglect. The peasants and the workers, morally separated from the other social categories, meek and humble because their labor was not valued at its worth, joyously welcomed these camps. They showed deep admiration for the Legionaries' exhaustive labor, praising the accomplishments of fine idealistic young men of a different

mold. They felt honest and cleansed, and foresaw, perhaps in the future, better days for their children and themselves."

When the labor camps swept the country from one end to the other, they served as an educational medium for the formation of the New Man. The participants in the camps' endeavors were individuals of the most varied social background and origin--princes of old aristocratic families, college professors, members of the liberal professions, skilled workers, students, peasants and factory workers. All these people fraternized in a rhythm of the creative work for their homeland. Without attempting to level off the individuals and without tending to destroy the social differences between men, the work performed in common, created a community-like spirit, a prelude of greater accomplishments to come. In the labor camp the individual renounced his cupidity and selfishness. He was thus reinstated on a superior plane of national ideals.

A monstrous law, voted in 1937, forbade voluntary labor in camps. Work, the distinctive mark of man, the activity that ennobles his life, was decreed a "subversive act." The king, the political parties, and the entire ruling class hated the patriotic and manly example of the Legionaries in the work camps. It represented both a defiance of and a challenge to the kind of life the politicians were leading and to the system of government based on corruption and exploitation of the masses.

Thus, one of the most flourishing social activities of the Movement was paralyzed. The lower classes, peasants and workers, were unable to profit any longer from the free, voluntary work done by the tens of thousands of Legionaries. Once again they fell into the apathy and misery to which the anti-social policies of the parties had condemned them.

#### WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM "IRON GUARD?"

Many foreign writers are still confused by the double and even triple designation of the Movement: The Legion of the Archangel Michael, The Legionary Movement, and The Iron Guard.

The first name under which the Movement initially was known was "The Legion of the Archangel Michael." Because at that time throughout Europe a series of nationalistic movements appeared, the Legion of the Archangel underwent some change. Although no official pronouncement was made, the name "Legion" was accepted as the new organization's abbreviated title. Parallel with it appeared, more and more frequently, the designation "Legionary Movement."

The origin of the "Iron Guard" is more precise. In the spring of 1930 the communist agitations reached alarming proportions in Bessarabia. Corneliu Codreanu could not remain indifferent to these disturbances which undermined the existence of the Romanian State. He launched an appeal to the entire Romanian youth to set aside all the political differences and reunite in a mutual organization with the exclusive, unique purpose of facing up to the communist danger within the province. This was his intention

when he created the "Iron Guard" in which, alongside the Legionaries, all the militant young men desirous of participating in the campaign to combat communism in Bessarabia could enroll.

Corneliu Codreanu's appeal however did not have the desired effect. The youth belonging to other parties did not lend their support to his initiative. Therefore the Legionaries were left to stand up against the communist underground. Since there were no other young people besides the Legionaries willing to participate in the combat against the communists, the two organizations blended together perfectly. They identified with one another in such a way that in the end the Iron Guard became an alter-ego--the other self of the Movement.

The new name penetrated quickly among the masses and aroused even greater interest in the Legion's struggles. In the eyes of the multitude, the Iron Guard gave the impression of a strong force ready to stand up bravely against the parties, defying them and the State apparatus in their relentless pursuit of social justice. The Iron Guard evoked a warlike atmosphere and the oppressors shook with fear. The adversaries of the Legion also preferred the designation Iron Guard because the name furnished them with sufficient arguments to emphasize the ruthless "terrorist" character of the Movement.

The same phenomenon occurred abroad. The Iron Guard replaced the term Legion, and became the name under which the Movement was known throughout the world. Within the Legion during its most extensive expansion between 1935 and 1937, preference was given more and more to the name Legionary Movement. Corneliu Codreanu in his circulars of that period uses the latter designation without exception.

Although there is no error in using either of the two denominations, we consider Legionary Movement a term which better expresses the political and spiritual doctrine of this Romanian nationalistic movement. In the last years of his life its founder, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, decided to use it on all occasions.



## THE LEGIONARY MOVEMENT AND THE JUDICIARY SYSTEM

All the accusations leveled against the Legion--namely, that "it is an anarchical, a terrorist and subversive movement visibly inclined toward violence, in order to seize the rule of the State by force"--are definitely false. The Legionaries have never been found guilty. The sentences given by the Military and Civil Courts of Romania reflect their innocence.

To the legitimate surprise of any objective researcher, he will discover that each time the Legionaries were brought to trial before a higher or lower court, the verdict of "not guilty" never failed to clear them of any charges. This happened repeatedly in hundreds of trials held in countless courts throughout Romania. Indeed there were few courts that did not handle Legionary cases. In spite of numerous trials, sentences were so scarce they could not match the almost unbroken chain of verdicts of acquittal. To the despair of those in high places in government, the judiciary maintained its independence and integrity.

Every time the government attempted to put pressure on this august arm of the law, it met head-on with the most stubborn resistance. The magistrates in Romania enjoyed the right of

fixity or tenure--irremovability. As long as there was no proved transgression of the law, the magistrates refused to pass any sentences other than those existing in codes. Each was guided by his conscience. Only after the judicial system was forcibly chained under the dictatorship of King Carol II were sentences dictated by orders from the highest authorities.

From the endless list of Legionary trials we will choose a few causes celebres, famous cases that shocked the conscience of the nation. These cases even endangered the existence of the governments which sponsored them.

On January 11, 1931, the Iron Guard was dissolved by the National Peasant Party then in power. Corneliu Codreanu, together with a group of six leaders, was arrested and brought to trial for "conspiring against the safety of the State." The offices and meeting places of the Movement were sealed. Further activity was forbidden. The warrant for Codreanu's arrest stated that "the chief of the Legion had undertaken action against a government recognized by the Constitution, attempting to incite to revolution--the results could endanger the security of the State. By forming an association called The Legion of the Archangel Michael/Iron Guard, Codreanu and his Legionaries stand accused for their intent--to institute at a suitable moment by violent means a dictatorial regime." The trial took place on February 27, 1931 at the Ilfov District Court, Bucharest. The result: all those charged were acquitted. Here is the answer of the Tribunal to the prosecution's conclusions: "We find no evidence that the persons who recruited or those recruited have undertaken any action against the present government determined by the Constitution. We find no criminal action which could possibly be a danger to the security of the State."

The prosecutor appealed this verdict of acquittal issued by the Ilfov Court. A new trial was set at the Court of Appeals in Bucharest with the same final result--acquittal. Following this the prosecutor of the Court of Appeals appealed the decision. The Highest Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court, unanimously rejected his approach. Corneliu Codreanu's commentary is worthy of note: "We have before us two decisions--on the one hand, Mr. Mihalache, the Minister of Interior Affairs, decides to dissolve both the Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Iron Guard, declaring them subversive and dangerous organizations for the existence of the Romanian State. On the other hand the entire Romanian judicial system--the Tribunal, court of Appeals and the Supreme Court--unanimously upholds the decision that the

Legionaries are not guilty, that the Legion and the Iron Guard are not endangering public order or the safety of the State."

The second famous trial of the Iron Guard was held at Teiuș in the heart of Transylvania. There Professor Ion Zelea Codreanu, the father of the Movement's creator and a representative in the National Assembly, had announced a lecture and a meeting. As a member of Parliament, no one could stop him from traveling the country wherever he wished nor from speaking to the people in any region or district. In spite of his immunity, the government ordered that the city of Teiuș be surrounded by troops; access into town by people from the neighboring villages was forbidden.

The local populace protested against this illegal proclamation. As a result there were clashes with the gendarmes. The Legionaries, who had concentrated their small group within the city, were thrown into jail and indicted for "instigating to revolution and disturbing public law and order." However in the trial that took place in June 1933, all were found "not guilty." Once again it became crystal clear that the real instigators of disorder most certainly were not the Legionaries, but rather the government itself and the men in power--men who, instead of defending the laws, violated them with a "sovereign" contempt.

Finally we can single out the massive Legionary trial that took place in the spring of 1934. As a direct consequence of the unspeakable terror unleashed in all its fury against the Movement by the Liberal Party in December of 1933, the Legion was dissolved. In a mammoth roundup over 11,000 Legionaries were arrested, put in chains and thrown into jails. With the consent of Ion Duca, Head of the Liberals and Prime Minister, the whole police machine was given a free hand to deal with the Legion. Furthermore during the forthcoming elections, Duca ordered that the Legionaries be kept from the polls by bayonets and bullets.

On December 29, 1933 three students, known under the collective name "Nicadori," unable any longer to support the beatings and tortures of the police shot and killed I. G. Duca, the Prime Minister of Romania. Duca was principally responsible for the illegalities and crimes mentioned above. The leadership of the Legion had no knowledge of the plans of the "Nicadori." A new wave of terror spread over the country. This time more than 18,000 Legionaries were incarcerated. Nevertheless after successive "selection" and "sorting out," there remained only fifty Legionaries held directly responsible before the law for Duca's assassination. Among these were Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and General Contacuzino-Granicerul.

The government strongly maintained that there existed a conspiracy for the assassination of Duca and insisted that it involved the foremost leaders of the Legion. The trial took place in March 1934 under the jurisdiction of the Council of War of the Second Army Corps of Bucharest. The Military Tribunal composed of generals found all the accused "not guilty," with the exception of the Nicadori, who drew life sentences. The sensational moment of the trial came when the Military prosecutor, General Petroviceascu, in his redirect to the Court, produced both evidence and convincing arguments that refuted the idea of Legionary conspiracy. The conclusion of the Court was summed up in the decision that the suit against Corneliu Codreanu and the other Legionary leaders should be dropped.

Never in the annals of justice did anything like this happen! Not only did the Military prosecutor and the Court marshal refuse to approve the government's action in making the 18,000 arrests to discover "the culprits," but they also pointed an accusing finger at the men in power, those responsible both for the unrest in the country and the desperate reaction of the Legionaries.

The position of the judiciary changed for the worse only when the irremovability of the judges was arbitrarily suspended during King Carol's dictatorship. Then Military Justice degraded itself by becoming a tool of the regime. The judges were ordered to pass sentence in accordance with the instructions received from the government. Very often even the quantum of the sentence to be given in this or that particular trial was indicated in advance.

Nevertheless every time justice in the country was allowed to follow due process and its own free judgment, then the Legionary Movement triumphed. The truth came to light despite all the abuses and pressures exercised by the executive power.

## FROM PROSECUTION TO PERSECUTION

The Legionary Movement suffered several major waves of terror during its turbulent history. One conducted by the Liberal Party in 1933-1934; then King Carol II's terror, 1938-1939; followed by Marshal Antonescu's terror, 1941-1944; and lastly the Communist terror which began in 1944 and continues to this day. All told there were thirty-seven years of actual persecution. If we subtract these years from the life of the Legion from its beginning until today (a total of forty-five years), it follows that the Legionaries enjoyed only eight years without persecution.

Yet even this calculation lacks complete accuracy. As a matter of fact the entire history of the Movement records a continuous oppression. Invariably all the governments of Romania followed the same line of terror regardless of the party at the helm. Clashes with the gendarmes, arrests, forced house entrances without warrants, trials, and prisons: all became usual occurrences in the life of a Legionary. Even during the eight years when apparently the Legionaries enjoyed freedom, the persecutions never ceased. The only variation was in intensity--a first, second, or three degree of impact.

There were some periods of what might be called "indulgent" persecutions, when police harassments and terror did not reach extremes; at such times the ruling parties did not resort to mass arrests and assassinations. Nevertheless, all the other methods were applied in full force: censorship, forbidding Legionary propaganda, individual arrests, trials, tortures in prison cells, slanders and conspiracies. These daily frictions with the authorities constituted real tests of endurance in a Legionary's life. A Legionary's personal file had a unique commendation for his merits: days spent in prison, appearances in court, and the like.

In the Legionary's interpretation the persecutions, properly speaking, represented something more than just permanent conflict with the authorities. The persecutions formed a special chapter of hardships with a well-defined beginning and end. They invaded the human organism like a disease that causes high fever. The entire organization was subjected to terrible, almost fatal shocks. The persecutions by the authorities knew no limits. Their aim was the annihilation of the Legion.

The beginning of any large scale persecution in Romania was characterized by the deliberate non-functioning of the judiciary system. Without a proper Court of Justice, the Legionaries found themselves alone, an easy prey to the brutality of government. For them, the laws had ceased to exist. The police and the gendarmes could detain the Legionaries for weeks, months, and even years without warrants for their arrests. They could be murdered by public agents without the pronouncement of a death sentence. No one would hold their murderers responsible.

A second characteristic of the terror was its extent and force. During a more common type of persecution, only isolated individuals had to suffer if they were caught in the midst of propaganda. In a larger scale terror the entire Movement and almost all its followers were subjected to a calvary of suffering and sacrifice. And this without any guilt other than being members of the Movement.

The transition from a "soft" period of terror to one of duress did not depend so much on the party in power, but rather on the strength and influence acquired by the Movement at that particular time. At such times the government faced the alternative: retreat and grant the Legionaries freedom to continue their propaganda under the Constitution and in a sense of equity; or resort to terror and once again apply it with a maximum severity in order to force the Movement to capitulate.

In such crucial moments the government invariably chose force. The ruling party felt that it could not possibly allow the Legion's free manifestations. This would have meant at the next electoral confrontation that the old parties might face defeat. Then the Iron Guard might have the legal right to rule the nation.

#### THE LARGE-SCALE TERROR OF 1933-1934

The terror period 1933-1934 had its origin in the pressures exercised on the Duca government by Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Titulescu. The latter maintained that our "great allies," England and France, demanded the destruction of the Iron Guard. Moreover he asserted that without a thorough police operation against the Guard, he could no longer guarantee the stability of the actual frontiers of the country. In reality Nicolae Titulescu (as was amply proved later and strongly evidenced in documents published by the Communist regime in Bucharest) was a high-class special agent of the Communist conspiracy. He hatched his plots and intrigues in the Western countries.

When Titulescu demanded that the Legionary Movement be outlawed at the wish of "our foreign allies," he simply executed a mandate handed to him from Moscow. The Legionary Movement, eminently anti-communist, had become a serious impediment to the implementation of Moscow's imperialist plan to seize Romania and all South-Eastern Europe.

The National Peasant Government of Vaida-Voevod was considered too weak to liquidate the Movement by violent means. For this reason the Legion's enemies requested the full-fledged services of I. G. Duca, Head of the Liberal Party. Duca solemnly promised the king and Titulescu to dissolve the Iron Guard and to "ferret out" from their hiding places all "these outlaws" of the State.

I. G. Duca came to power in November 1933 and, in conformity with a long-standing custom, he proceeded first to dissolve the existing Legislative Assemblies. Then he called for new elections on December 20, 1933. Ten days before the election the Legion was dissolved. All the lists of candidates officially registered with the Movement were annulled. The same day, in all the counties and districts of the country, large-scale police raids were conducted. Legionaries' homes were ransacked. The authorities confiscated electoral propaganda, detained and imprisoned the Legionaries--without any warrants. More than 11,000 Legionaries were illegally jailed in this gigantic operation which spread to every corner of the land.

After the elections, held in an atmosphere of terror previously unknown in Romania, the majority of the Legionaries were set free. An exception was made for some of the leaders who spent the Christmas holidays in jail. Ion Mota, Vasile Marin, and Sterie Clumeti were freed from prison on December 29, 1933. That same evening Prime Minister I. G. Duca was shot to death on the railroad platform of the station in Sinaia where he had come for an audience with the king. The perpetrators were three students--members of the Legionary Movement--Nicolae Constantinescu, Doru Belimace, and Constantin Caranica. The Legionaries had just been set free from prison, happy to spend the holidays in peace with their families, when suddenly in the night they were arrested again and thrown into jail. This time those incarcerated exceeded 18,000 Legionaries. Evidently these massive arrests could not possibly have had anything to do with the shooting. Indeed, it would be difficult to conceive of a conspiracy planned by 18,000 people! It was an act of violence by the Liberal Party to avenge the death of its head man at the moment he was celebrating his triumph by trampling on the sacrifices of young men he had ordered killed.

Exactly as in the first terror detention of many thousands of people was illegal. Nobody bothered to issue Warrants of Arrest. During three months of detention no investigation whatsoever was conducted in connection with Duca's assassination.

Then the majority of the Legionaries held in province prisons were set free. Only the most prominent were transferred to Bucharest to await the investigations.

From this group fifty were detained. The Foremost leaders of the Legion were arraigned and placed in the charge of the Military Prosecutor's Department. They were accused of being implicated in the plot to assassinate Prime Minister Duca. The other Legionaries were set free without any inquiry, without any explanation for the long detention. The authorities did not even inform them which law they had breached and by virtue of what specific law they were held without a warrant.

The attempt at Sinaia was the exclusive initiative of the three young men mentioned earlier. They were subjected to indescribable tortures to force them to denounce their "accomplices." The investigators were unable to make them implicate anyone else. They repeatedly maintained that only the three of them were responsible for Duca's death. The Liberal government was not satisfied with the result of the inquiry. The party leaders at all costs fervently desired a Legionary conspiracy. Only in that case could they implicate Corneliu Codreanu and all the other leaders in the assassination. Since there was no plot, the government "manufactured" it with the help of "evidence" furnished by the police.

In the preceding chapter we described the attitude of the Judiciary concerning the Movement and we gave the result of the trial. We emphasized the fact that all the leaders of the Movement from Corneliu Codreanu down were acquitted. Only the three men who shot Duca received life sentences. In the end the Liberal Party suffered a serious defeat. It was just on the verge of going out of power when, at the last minute, arrangements "behind the scenes" intervened to change events in the government's favor.

## THE MASSACRE OF THE LEGIONARY ELITE UNDER KING CAROL II'S DICTATORSHIP

The surprising electoral success of the Legion in December 1937 gave vent to a sweeping, engulfing wave of terror. For the first time in Romania a party in power lost the elections and was forced to resign. Following this King Carol charged Octavian Goga, Head of a nationalistic group much weaker than the Iron Guard, with the formation of a new cabinet. The Parliament was dissolved and new elections were announced for March 15, 1938. The King hoped that Goga's Nationalistic Party would attract the electoral masses who had voted for the Legion in December 1937, and in this manner win the elections. But the polling of all the districts and provinces of the country by the authorities predicted a crushing victory for the Iron Guard. The power granted to Goga's Nationalist Party could not foil the electoral masses.

Frightened by this nightmarish outcome King Carol demanded Goga's resignation. He then cancelled the officially set elections and proceeded to form a cabinet consisting of "all talents" of dictatorial rule, headed by Patriarch Miron, Chief of the Orthodox Church in Romania. In addition Armand Calinescu was appointed

Secretary of the Interior and under his jurisdiction was placed the dreaded Security and entire Police Force. General Antonescu became Secretary of Defense. The newly formed cabinet presented to the country a new Constitution, markedly authoritarian, which abolished all political parties and all political freedoms. The people were asked to voice their opinion in a referendum. No secret vote was allowed. Consequently ninety-nine per cent of the people voted to approve the new Constitution.

From the moment it succeeded in creating a political and juridical framework to unleash the terror, the Carlist regime began a relentless offensive against the Movement. In the night of April 16, 1938, the Chief of the Legion--Corneliu Codreanu--was arrested; concurrently, hundreds of the foremost leaders of the Movement were interned in several concentration camps. Corneliu Codreanu was indicted for "high treason" and "the preparation of a social revolution in Romania with the aid of a foreign power."

The trial began on May 23, 1938 under the jurisdiction of the Council of War of the Second Army Corps and was conducted under rigorous conditions. It arbitrarily ruled out testimony of any witnesses for the defense. It intimidated the lawyers. In spite of this the defense proved the lack of factual foundation for the accusations brought against Codreanu. Unfortunately this temporary triumph did not serve to change the course of justice. The members of the Court Martial were special officers, hand-picked by the government, to make sure that whatever the circumstances they would find Codreanu guilty. On May 27, 1938 the country was shocked by the sudden news that Corneliu Codreanu, leader (of all things!) of a "nationalist" movement, was found guilty of "high treason." He was sentenced to ten years hard labor in the penitentiary.

The appeal made by Codreanu and the petition for review had the same fate. The military and civilian magistrates no longer weighed the cases in the balance of justice, in conformity with "law and conscience"; instead they obeyed orders and passed pre-arranged sentences before the actual trial took place. Codreanu's infamous trial and his condemnation were only the beginning of the calvary. On July 1, 1938 another trial took place under the same conditions; it was conducted by the Military Tribunal of the Capital. The principal leaders of the Legion, including Gheorghe Clime, the new Chief of the organization (Everything for the Homeland--a political branch of the Movement) received very harsh sentences.

In September of 1938 another concentration camp opened for the internment of Legionary leaders. The terror grew beyond the limits of endurance. Before they were sent to the camps the Legionaries became the object of savage and primitive police tortures. Then they were tried in courts.

Finally King Carol II and his entourage decided to deliver the mortal blow to the Legion. They had the Legion's chief murdered. Late at night November 29, 1938 under the pretext of being transferred to Bucharest, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and thirteen other Legionaries were taken from their prison cells at Ramnicul Sarat. The group did not reach the capital alive. The thirteen Legionaries and their chief were loaded into a truck and tied with ropes. On a deserted road the truck stopped. Then the prisoners were strangled to death by the gendarmes. Their bodies were taken to Jilava prison where a freshly dug common grave awaited them. They were riddled with rifle shots at the back of their heads. They were thrown into the grave; then countless gallons of sulphuric acid were poured over the bodies. Finally a thousand-pound concrete slab was placed on top to hide their grave.

On September 21, 1939 to avenge this abominable crime, nine Legionaries shot and killed Prime Minister Armand Calinescu who had inexorably conducted savage Legion persecutions. He was also largely responsible for all the executions. King Carol and the government used this incident to put into practice the second part of their plan to exterminate the Legion. They liquidated all the important leaders of the Movement still being held in prisons or concentration camps. On the night of September 21, 1939 a total of 252 prominent Legionaries were massacred throughout the country.

During the summer of 1940 the situation of the Carlist Regime became critical. On the one hand the sad remembrance of Carol's crimes aroused permanent revulsion against the King among the Romanian people. On the other the King's foreign policy predicament was in the hands of the two powers then dominating the continent: Germany and Russia. In this situation King Carol turned toward the Axis Powers. They in turn, as a price for the Alliance the King wanted, demanded that he satisfy the territorial claims of Romania's neighbors: Hungary, Bulgaria and Russia. Due to the ultimatum of June 26, 1940 Russia occupied Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina. Through the verdict of the Axis Powers in Vienna, Hungary obtained Northern Transylvania and Bulgaria the southern part of Dobrogea (Dobrujda).

At this dramatic moment when the boundaries of Romania crumbled in every direction, the revolution of the Legionary Movement exploded like a bombshell. On September 3, 1940 the Legionaries attacked government institutions in the capital and also in several cities in the provinces. In despair King Carol called General Antonescu to power in the hope that he could extinguish the flames of the revolution. His attempt was a complete failure. The people clamored for the King's abdication. Huge meetings were held in the capital and in all large cities throughout the country. Abandoned by everyone, the army included, King Carol abdicated on the morning of September 6, 1940. The Carlist terror ended. The last Legionaries were freed from prison.

#### MARSHAL ANTONESCU UNLEASHES A NEW TERROR WITH THE HELP OF GERMANY

The National Legionary Regime lasted only four months. It began on September 14, 1940 and ended January 26, 1941 when the Legionary Movement was driven from power by a violent overthrow of the government plotted by General Antonescu.

On January 20, 1941 General Petrovicescu, the Legionary Minister of Interior, was forced to resign his cabinet post. The next day on January 21 the army received orders to occupy all administrative and political headquarters in every district and all police stations which, up to that time, were administered by the Legionaries. Since the latter had been appointed by royal decree Antonescu's orders were illegal. The army officers designated to occupy the police stations were able to present only telegrams or orders issued by telephone. Faced with this situation the Legionaries resisted. They refused to abandon public institutions held on the basis of perfectly legal orders.

The Legion with many thousands of devoted followers prepared to put up a strong resistance. For this reason General Antonescu's retaliations were paralyzed from the start. Furthermore in most cities the army adopted an attitude of expectation

and collaborated with the Legionaries in maintaining order. Thus only in very few places did actual clashes between the army and the Legionaries occur.

On the evening of January 22, 1941 Antonescu found himself in such a precarious and hopeless situation that he was prepared to surrender. At this decisive moment in the night of January 22, Hitler's orders were delivered to the German divisions on Romanian soil requesting them to offer full collaboration to the Romanian Army for the "reestablishment of order" in the country. Under the burdensome pressure of this summons, Horia Sima, Commander of the Legionary Movement and Vice President of the Council of Ministers was forced to issue urgent orders to the Legionaries to evacuate public buildings and return to their homes.

When they asked the Legionaries to give up any resistance, both the German Army and General Antonescu assured the Legionary leaders that there would be no repercussions. "No one," they ascertained, "will be arrested or held responsible for their actions during those few days of turmoil." Despite these promises twenty-four hours after the cease fire both the army and the police began to round up Legionaries in massive arrests. For the hundredth time jails overflowed with thousands of Legionaries. Again the machinery of court martials began functioning actively. Death sentences were passed with a facility unheard of even in Carol's time. The simple matter of carrying on one's person a revolver exposed a Legionary to the danger of losing his life. Most assuredly many were led before the firing squads.

Exactly as in the preceding waves of terror the honest and lawfully-minded judiciary could not function. Before the trials all records for the indicted Legionaries were sent to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. There in closed chambers sentences, and the time to be spent in prison, were settled in advance. Regardless of their respective convictions the Military Tribunals were forced to impose the sentence already recorded in the Legionary's dossier.

In the process General Antonescu found a more expeditious method for dealing with large numbers of Legionaries at any one time. Profiting by the outbreak of war he gave orders to form special units made up of imprisoned Legionaries who were then freed to join the army. These units were the so-called "Battalions of Sarata," a locality in Bessarabia where training these infantry battalions took place. The special battalions were sent to the most dangerous front lines and were soon



decimated by the enemy. A constant flow of new Legionaries kept those battalions freshly supplied with young men--a mill whose production was destined to send the Legionary youth to certain death.

The Legionaries fortunate enough to be outside prison walls did not fare any better. The regiment commanders received orders to use them in the most perilous missions, not to decorate them for acts of bravery and to deny them the right to any promotion. Even the Legionaries in the Army Reserve, including officers, lost their former rank and on the front lines they were demoted to simple soldiers. There was only one possibility left for the "rehabilitation" of the Legionaries: death. Indeed they were treated worse than the most infamous bandits in Romania or army deserters who constantly repeated their offense.

While this wave of terror took the lives of thousands of Legionaries, Antonescu enjoyed constant political and military help from Berlin. As a matter of fact the Legionary Movement suffered the brunt of double persecution from both Hitler and Antonescu, especially during Antonescu's dictatorship. It is now clear that without Hitler's consent, Antonescu's terror against the Legion could not have run riot, nor could it have lasted so long. The persecution was not limited to Romanian territory but extended into Germany and throughout Europe or wherever the Legionaries took refuge.

Later on in Germany a forced domicile was established in Rostock for the self-exiled Legionaries. In December 1942 they were interned in the concentration camps of Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg. In France, Italy, Finland, Bulgaria, Hungary and even Spain (where the German domination and influence extended) Antonescu's wishes were fulfilled thus preventing any Legionary manifestation against him on foreign soil.

Therefore by the time the Axis Powers had reached their culminating point of expansion in Europe, the Legionary Movement endured a new and terrible terror. This fact definitely refutes both the accusation and theory--still persisting in some circles--that the Legionary Movement was a "branch of Nazism." On the contrary precisely because the Movement refused categorically to be subordinated to the imperialistic goals of Germany, Hitler preferred that Romania be ruled by General Antonescu, a weak man; a man who enjoyed absolutely no popularity in his country but depended exclusively on Berlin's protection.

General Antonescu's Regime of Terror ended with the capitulation of August 23, 1944 and the consequent invasion of Romania by Soviet troops.

## THE TRIBULATIONS OF THE LEGIONARIES UNDER THE COMMUNISTS

To understand what happened to the Legionaries under the Communist rule we must discover both their situation and location at the time of Romania's surrender August 23, 1944. In summary they can be divided into three groups:

In the War For the greatest part hundreds of thousands of young Legionaries were still fighting on the front in various army units. Many died during the war. Others fell into enemy hands and were transported to Russian labor camps with other prisoners. Still others were caught in surprise by the unexpected events in the country. The latter followed the destiny of the entire Romanian army. They continued to fight against the German army and even advanced as far as Vienna.

In prison A few thousand men sentenced by Antonescu to serve severe sentences were not granted amnesty or parole. Only those with lesser sentences were set free on the condition that they join the famous army units of Sarata as previously mentioned. The overwhelming majority of Legionary leaders--those who played an important part in the Movement and the State during the National Legionary Government--remained in

prison. These men were "kept on ice" by Antonescu until the final moment of collapse at the front lines. Then he intended to hand them over to the victorious coalition. In this way he hoped to cast upon them and the Movement the burden of his own responsibility for his criminal actions.

After General Antonescu's arrest and surrender to the Russians through a coalition of political parties, the beneficiaries of the coup d'etat of August 23 followed his plan. The parties and the government kept the Legionaries in jail intending to offer the Communists a living demonstration of their "anti-fascism." In reality the Legionary Movement had not participated in any public action since January 23, 1941. They were acutely aware that they could not be charged with responsibility for Antonescu's war crimes against humanity. Throughout the war the Legionaries were oppressed considerably more than the communists. The Legion paid an immense price in human lives.

In Germany A third group of Legionaries was located in Germany. It consisted of those who had managed to cross the border to avoid imprisonment or the firing squad. As we have already remarked this group was interned in concentration camps as a result of the Hitler-Antonescu pact.

Only after the collapse of the front lines in Romania did Hitler remember the Legionaries in the camps. He ordered them freed in the hope of initiating their help in rebuilding a new line of defense. Although the Legionaries were badly treated in Germany they answered this appeal. At that moment was not their own country's fate at stake? They felt they could not shun their obligation to continue the fight against communism. Their firm stand represented their undaunted fundamental political orientation, a stand which could be traced to the Movement's creation. Aside from this an infinitely more serious question was raised. Could the Romanian people threatened to be blotted out of existence survive? There was no doubt in anyone's mind that once the Russians invaded Romania they would do everything in their power to bolshevize it. And later who could stop the Russians from going even further and incorporating Romania into its empire? Confronted with this terrifying prospect the Legionaries did not hesitate to engage in a desperate last minute battle hoping to change the tragic course of events.

Horia Sima, the Commander-in-Chief of the Legionary Movement, had until that time been held in the Saschanhausen-Oranienburg Concentration Camp. He was urgently called to Hitler's Headquarters in East Prussia and requested to constitute a na-

tional government that would continue the war alongside Germany. The Chief of the Legion accepted the proposal. On August 26, 1944 a radio station broadcast a proclamation which condemned the act of August 23, 1944. The speaker urged all of Romania to oppose the Bolshevik invasion.

#### THE ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT IN EXILE

The Romanian Government in Exile chose Vienna as its residence and began to organize the resistance with the small means at its disposal. Within the next two weeks all Romanian territory had been occupied by the Red Army. No part of the country could be used for recruitment and action. Under the circumstances the Legionary Command resorted to parachute-drops of Legionaries, whose mission was to create a resistance movement behind the front lines. Parallel with this action a national army was formed from Romanians exiled in Germany and from volunteer war prisoners captured by the German Army. A regiment of this army was transferred to the Oder, near Stettin, where it guarded the river passage during the final phases of the war.

The activities of the Vienna Government ceased when Germany surrendered on May 9, 1945. The Legionary forces which had penetrated into Romania, either by parachutes or on foot under the cover of secrecy, met an altogether different fate. These Legionaries, independent of their comrades in the West after having lost all contact with them, engaged in a life and death struggle with the invaders.

#### THE FATE OF THE LEGIONARIES IN ROMANIA

In Romania meanwhile radical changes had taken place. The very same parties and certain military circles who aided the implementation of the act of August 23 suddenly realized the grave error they had committed. They now took a firm stand against the communists' abuses and crimes. Unfortunately it was too late. The communists supported by the Soviet Army of Occupation imposed on the people a Red dominated government. This government began to arrest even those leaders who had facilitated the Russian invasion of Romania.

In other words the communists had begun the liquidation of their "fellow-travelers." Under these circumstances the Legionaries from their forest and mountain hiding places boldly dealt powerful blows against the communists. The echoes of

these strikes resounded throughout the land. Beginning in 1946 youth from all political parties joined forces with the Legionaries. They formed a resistance group made up of real guerrilla units which harassed and challenged the new government until about the early fifties.

In October 1953 the authorities discovered Legionaries who had penetrated into Romania from the West with the purpose of reorganizing a resistance movement. Thirteen Legionaries were sentenced to death and executed.

The vast majority in prisons consisted of Legionaries. The communists first of all took over the large group already imprisoned under Antonescu. To these were added individuals arrested in the course of gigantic police raids against the "fascists." On this occasion another series of former Legionary dignitaries were brought to trial and sentenced though they had not participated at all in the events of the war. Their number was increased by some Legionaries from Germany who had been either arrested or betrayed. The communist persecution against the Legionaries unleashed its fury in 1948 when the savagery went beyond human limitations. That same year in May tens of thousands were arrested throughout the country. The prisons were filled to saturation with Legionaries. Especially three of these prisons--Pitești, Aiud and Gherla--will be forever remembered for the tragic fate of the Legionaries incarcerated in them. The horrors of these prisons were described at length in many books published in the Free World. In 1950 another infernal machine designed to destroy Romanian youth and the intelligentsia was put into operation on the Danube Canal--a forced-labor camp with the fantastic goal of linking the Danube with the Black Sea. Among those detained there were a large percentage of Legionaries. They received the brunt of the cruelty from the executioners who guarded the prisoners.

The communist persecution against the Legionaries constituted a crescendo of blood-thirsty insanity until around 1963. After this date the communists offered a semblance of amnesty for the walking skeletons still in prison. Many Legionaries died from 1948 to 1964 from hunger, prolonged solitary confinement, and from the tortures to which they were subjected. Even after twenty years imprisonment the freed Legionaries were unable to enjoy a moment's peace. Some were forced to become security agents. Others at the slightest movement were quickly judged by the authorities to be hostile to the regime. They suffered anew the pain of illegal arrest and incarceration.

The situation in Romania continues to be as difficult for the entire people as it was in the Stalinist period. All the information that leaks out to the Free World and refers to a so-called "softening" or "liberalization" by the regime is utterly false. Nothing has changed within the structure of the terrorist regime which was set up with the help of the Russian Occupation Armies. The goal pursued by communism in Romania also remains the same--the transformation of a free nation into a mass of slaves fated to disappear tomorrow in the ethnic mixture of the Soviets.

#### THE LEGIONARY MOVEMENT IN EXILE

While the Legionary Movement in Romania continues to endure communist persecution, the Legionaries in exile (diverse nuclei spread all over Europe and the two Americas) make gigantic efforts to inform the West about the suffering Romanian people.

The Legionary Movement within intellectual and political circles in the Free World fights against ideas that could perpetuate the present-day enslavement and annihilation of the Romanian people. Such ideas are widely circulated by the communist conspiracy operating in the Free World. They are detrimental to the struggle for the liberation of the captive nations. Such ideas also demonstrate the Free World's total ignorance of the reasons behind Moscow's intentions in spreading this misinformation which may eventually be fatal to the West itself.

We reproduce in the pages that follow the principal points of the "Declaration of the Legionary Movement" issued by Horia Sima in 1964, the tragic twentieth anniversary of Romania under the communist yoke. This Declaration ten years after its publication preserves intact its intrinsic value. In addition it constitutes a document of the highest political foresight, one

which cautions the leaders of the Western States. It warns them in a drastic manner of the eminent danger of communism. It insists that communism rises like a historical and social monstrosity over the entire human race.

EXCERPTS FROM "A DECLARATION BY  
THE ROMANIAN LEGIONARY MOVEMENT"  
BY HORIA SIMA

At the present time we are faced with a series of disquieting tendencies strongly manifest in the international arena. For the crucial reason that these factors represent a tremendous danger to the future of Eastern Europe, the Romanian Legionary Movement deems it necessary to express clearly its own point of view on the problems which, in one way or another, affect that area of the world. The time of tergiversation and hesitation is gone forever. We are now looking for categorical, dynamic decisions to conform to the imperatives of great historical moments.

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The Legionary Movement protests against recent tendencies manifested in Western politics to accept, as final, the incorporation of Eastern Europe into the sphere of the Soviet imperialistic system. The fundamental objective of the Soviet Union, after installing itself by force in this part of Europe, has been to wring from the Western powers the recognition of a European status quo. The Soviets want to transform the situation, in which the occupation of these territories functions, into one of legitimacy under International Law.

The Legionary Movement considers that any pact signed by the Powers of the Atlantic Alliance and the Powers of the so-called Warsaw Pact can have neither moral nor juridical value. Such a pact would not have as its principal effect the settlement of current questions discussed between East and West: cessation of nuclear experiments, disarmament, the Berlin problem, non-aggression agreements. But the pact would deal with the legality of the Iron Curtain in international affairs. Furthermore, the Warsaw Pact is implemented without the participation of those people directly interested and directly affected. The communist governments of Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Eastern Germany--co-signers of the so-called Warsaw Pact--do not have the right to represent their people. The Pact consequently does not carry valid signatures. Therefore the signers cannot be allowed to put their signatures on any treaty alongside the Powers of the Atlantic Alliance. A diplomatic fiction cannot be associated with any community of Free States. The peoples of Eastern Europe suffer today under the yoke of a foreign power. They lack a spokesman to make known their respective national wishes and their political aspirations.

The signing of a non-aggression pact by the Powers of the Atlantic Pact and the Powers of the so-called Warsaw Pact, as demanded by the Soviets, is an absurdity from the point of view of World Peace. Soviet Russia, the aggressive power, requests the Western Powers to recognize all its territorial conquests to date whether in Europe or elsewhere in the world. Furthermore they seek a guarantee of recognition for future Russian aggression. It is absolutely certain that Soviet Russia, even after signing this pact, will not give up clandestine activities which menace the existence of other States. Furthermore she will disavow conquest through revolutionary methods.

A non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia would make sense only if: first, Russia evacuated Eastern Europe thereby restoring to captive nations their liberty and political freedom; and second, if she consented to dismantle her conspiratorial machinery operating at present in foreign countries and constituting the most serious threat to World Peace.

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The Legionary Movement demands the withdrawal of Soviet occupation troops from Romania and from all countries of Eastern Europe. Political independence must be restored to their countries. It is inconceivable that, while European Powers have grace-

fully relinquished colonial possessions throughout the world, the Soviet should be allowed to build, under the tolerant eyes of the West, a colonial empire in the heart of Europe thereby subjugating peoples of superior culture and higher creative power.

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The Legionary Movement contests the right of the present government of Romania validly to represent Romania before the International Forum. The communist regime in Romania is a creation of the invaders. It has no mandate from the people and maintains itself in power exclusively by Soviet bayonets. The communist government in Bucharest in fact is no more than a group of Kremlin functionaries who administer Romania on orders received from Moscow.

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The Legionary Movement asks for the implementation in Romania of free elections under international control without excluding any political group. Only a Parliament formed by the consultation and consent of a free people can guarantee normal constitutional processes in Romania. Only a government which is the expression of such a Parliament can represent Romania in a legitimate fashion before the world.

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The Legionary Movement places the responsibility on both the Soviet regime and the Romanian communist regime for the assassination of more than one and one-half million innocent Romanians from the date of the Soviet invasion until today. This terrifying loss of human lives is due to the crimes directly committed by the regime--not to mention the starvation, sickness, inhuman labors, systematic extermination in camps and prisons. Victims to the communist blood orgy were ninety per cent of all the nation's intellectuals, high functionaries, officers, professors, lawyers, engineers, priests, doctors, writers, political leaders and newspapermen from throughout the country.

\* \* \* \*

The Legionary Movement denounces the policy of extermination of the Romanian people instituted by the Soviet government, and put into effect in recent years with the help of their sinister accomplices within Romania. The plan becomes perfectly evident when one reviews the treatment of the Romanian people by the

communist government: starvation, overexhausting work, the regimen of extermination in camps and prisons, lack of medicine and medical care, the demoralization of youth by means of alcohol and the destruction of the family, the continuous assassination of the best Romanian citizens and the encouragement of abortions by the State. The tendency is to slow down the demographic growth to assure the long range aging and destruction of the entire population. The Legionary Movement warns all the Western governments, all international forums, all faiths and religious organizations to be aware of the daily acts of genocide in Romania.

An identical policy of extermination can be clearly observed in other Eastern European countries. We have strong reason to believe that Moscow plans to create a biological vacuum in these territories, to depopulate them systematically in order to colonize them later with human masses moved from Russia and Siberia.

The Legionary Movement protests against policies of denationalization and against the colonization of Siberia by Romanians from Bessarabia and Bucovina, both provinces forcefully annexed in 1940 and 1944. The Legionary Movement asks for the restitution of these provinces by virtue of the principle of the people's self-determination. Such a principle was proclaimed in 1917 by the Russian revolution itself, and these territories put it into practice in 1918 when they decided to become part of Romania.

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The Legionary Movement deplores the fact that Western public opinion allows itself to be deceived so easily about the conditions behind the Iron Curtain. In Romania the living standards of the people are lamentable, much worse even than during the Stalinist era. It is estimated that there are between 200,000 to 300,000 people permanently interned in concentration camps. Other tens of thousands languish in prisons. Terror has not slackened, nor has heart-rendering poverty and misery. There is nothing comparable anywhere else in the world.

The Legionary Movement asks for the creation of an International Commission of Inquiry to investigate the living conditions of the people in Romania. It begs for the urgently needed help of all those organizations whose major concern is to combat starvation throughout the world. With such help the Romanian people might be saved from annihilation.

\* \* \* \*

The Legionary Movement respectfully draws to the attention of politically key-men concerned with international trade that an enslaved people cannot reap the harvest of trade with the West--only the executioner can profit. The industrial products which Romania exports are manufactured by slave labor. Food products which reach the West are literally snatched from the mouths of the Romanian people. It is indeed a crime against humanity to export Romanian food products at a time when its own people are dying of hunger.

The Legionary Movement asks that Soviet pillage of Romanian economy cease. The value of Romanian goods ceaselessly transported to Russia without just compensation--either unpaid or paid at prices below those on the international market--has risen to more than twelve billion dollars.

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The Legionary Movement denounces the present regime in Romania for its systematic and persistent attempt to de-christianize the younger generation. State and Party functionaries are forbidden to attend religious services, nor are they allowed to baptize their children. Religion is eliminated as a part of education. In its place intense atheistic propaganda is spread throughout the schools at children of all levels. Six and seven year old elementary-school children are beaten by their instructors until they bleed if they are caught making the Sign of the Cross. The Orthodox church is still tolerated for "tactical" reasons, but the church's existence tends to be suffocated by the continued strangling interference by the State. Ecclesiastical dignitaries have been removed and then replaced by communist-trained laymen who undoubtedly support the regime.

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The Legionary Movement considers false and dangerous to the security of the Free World the theory elaborated by Western experts on communism and by the so-called "Kremlinologists" in the United States regarding:

- destalinization,
- the liberalization and increasingly bourgeois tendencies of the communist regime in Russia,
- the evolution toward a more bland and tolerant brand of communism,

- the existence of a great conflict between Moscow and Peking which may develop into an open break between these two capitals of world communism,
- the apparent willingness of Soviet Russia to arrive at a general understanding about the questions pending between the East and the West,
- the possibility of instilling a climate of peaceful competition between the Great Powers despite their respective ideologies,
- the possibility of ending the cold war.

All these theories are based on falsified information given directly to Western people by the communists or through their secret agents in the West. The objective of this campaign is to indoctrinate public opinion with false theories and to convince free people to swallow the dangerous pill of coexistence. In the communist strategy peaceful coexistence is nothing but a phase preceding the final blow to be struck against the West around 1980. Nothing has been changed in communist belief. It continues to pursue in old devious ways its main objective: to dominate the world.

Developments in Romania totally contradict these theories. On the contrary, this land is moving toward a communism which becomes more and more rigid, toward a form of oppression which gains more and more control over the population. In recent years it has forced the maximum of collectivization of the land so that today free farmers have completely disappeared. Alarming in recent years there has been a recurrence in both art and literature of "socialist realism." This trend has suffocated the fragile signs of creative liberty manifested in Romania after the death of Stalin. Finally recent years have witnessed the unleashing of a new wave of terror, crime, and brutality upon the Romanian people. In various ways the intensity of this terrorism surpasses that of the Stalinist epoch itself.

If there is a grain of truth in these theories--which is very unlikely--the defense of the Free World cannot be based essentially on the ascertained weakness of an enemy. The defense must depend upon strategy, policies, initiative, action, and the proper spirit of decision. The West commits a fatal error when it awaits salvation from the disintegration of the communist

regime in Russia. From the year 1918 to the present prophecies like these have not been lacking, but meanwhile communism has continued its onward, victorious march, becoming a danger to all the nations of the world.

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The Legionary Movement discovers fundamental contradictions in the external policies of the great Western democracies. For instance the great democratic States show hostility toward any authoritarian regime imbued with a sense of nationalism--even when such a regime is necessary to avoid anarchy. The same Western Powers did not hesitate to engage in a long and bloody war because their opponents were totalitarian dictatorships. Still these same Powers have shown themselves extremely indulgent toward communist dictatorships. They even encouraged the communists to perpetuate their system, a system far more evil and dangerous to mankind than those the Powers fought against.

After twenty years of slavery under communism, Eastern Europeans now ask whether it is not the time for the Western democracies to notice the totalitarian communist regimes in Eastern Europe, whether it is not the time to pursue their liquidation. The Western democracies cannot ignore forever this injustice which stamps out liberty, honor, and the right of another people to live.

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The Legionary Movement unmasks the hypocrisy of certain Western statesmen. Whenever such statesmen are asked by refugee organizations to do something for subjugated peoples, they invariably reply: "A devastating atomic or nuclear war cannot be risked for your liberation."

We wish to remind these politicians that the bondage of Eastern Europe is not of recent date. These peoples were handed over to communist imperialism nearly twenty years ago. Soviet Russia did not then possess the monstrous arsenal of atomic and nuclear weapons she has today. Were the United States sincerely preoccupied with the liberation of these peoples, it had the chance to liberate Eastern Europe without risk of war in 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, and 1950. Since only the United States then possessed the atomic bomb, it could have effectively addressed an ultimatum to the Soviet Union. It could have compelled her to withdraw behind the frontiers of 1939, as it did in the case of Iran in 1946.



The refugee organizations, despite the Free World's failure to restore the political independence of their nations, asked help from the Western Powers so that through their own efforts and sacrifices they might shake off the communist yoke. Unfortunately this request met with no response. This lack of help is directly responsible for the shameful plight of the Hungarian people during the memorable revolution in October 1956. In three days the Hungarians expelled the communist regime and the Soviet Army of Occupation from their country. The United States failed to lend a helping hand to the revolutionary government. What was worse it collaborated with the Soviets in overthrowing the new government and restoring tyranny--the Russians with tanks, the Americans with diplomacy.

The refugee organizations often wonder whether the West has a policy of liberating the captive nations. If so, what exactly is it? The refugees do not believe the new concessions offered to the Soviets or the exchange of amiabilities with the Kremlin answer the problem of securing a better future for the people and their homelands.

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The Legionary Movement emphasizes the enormous responsibility of the United States in resolving the present world crisis. As a matter of fact the United States, due to the unfortunate concessions made to Stalin at Teheran and Yalta, is directly responsible for having created the present situation in Europe with half the East occupied and Soviet divisions on the Elbe. Having assumed the responsibility of leading the entire Free World, is it not the duty of the United States to repair the war-time error made by some improvident policies?

If the United States today (after twenty years of slavery and suffering to which it has condemned these peoples) should continue a dilatory attitude regarding their liberation, should attempt to arrive at a "modus vivendi" with communism before obtaining the evacuation of Eastern Europe: then such action confirms those authors who say that at Teheran and Yalta, not only were errors made, but the first phase of a policy was applied--a policy of progressively giving the Free World into communist hands.

The nations under the bondage of Moscow do not need today platonic manifestations of sympathy for their cause. They need and expect deeds from the West, measures which in the aggregate, will represent a policy of liberation.

The Legionary Movement warns the Western world against the false communist alternative advocated in the West: mankind must choose between nuclear war with all its gruesome consequences and the peaceful coexistence of the two systems. Peaceful coexistence is as fatal as the war itself because it adds up to piecemeal destruction of the West. Peaceful coexistence delays the final showdown a few years, but cannot save the Free World from slavery and death.

There is another solution. To acquaint ourselves with it, all we need do is to observe carefully what the communists are actually doing. They neither wage war, nor capitulate; neither do they stop fighting. They fight ferociously on the cold war front; there they have victoriously won their greatest battles. On this front the Westerners have never engaged in any serious action. Despite all affirmations and propaganda to the contrary, the cold war has been waged solely by the communists. The West has done absolutely nothing except absorb blow after blow. The Free World must take the offensive on this cold war front. Then communism will be thrown on the defensive.

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The Legionary Movement denounces the abuse made of the notion of "peace" in international assemblies. "Peace," as it is defined by Pope John XXIII in his last encyclical, "cannot be separated from the notion of justice."

Soviet Russia finds herself at permanent war with many subjugated nations. These nations were despoiled through violation of their rights, and subjected to a total exploitation by their conquerors. Soviet Russia cannot invoke the doctrine of peace when hundreds of millions in her empire have been dispossessed of elementary human rights and reduced to slavery. Communism finally finds itself at permanent war with mankind. Its aggression will not cease in accordance with its own doctrine, until its domination extends over the entire face of the earth.

No responsible political leader in the West can accept the peace offered by Russia until the wrongs done by this state have been rectified. There can be no peaceful understanding as long as Moscow has not dissolved its apparatus for dominating and undermining other states. No peace until Russia renounces the idea of world domination!

A peace realized between West and East based on maintaining a European status quo but without fulfilling the conditions mentioned above would not live up to true standards. It would be

the greatest lie in history. It would be the peace of cemeteries, the peace of Katyn graves, the peace of concentration camps and prisons, the peace of perpetual silence imposed upon certain peoples--a silence so absolute that it could not be called human. It would be the peace of Western complicity in the crimes of the bloody Moscow regime, the peace of profaned and destroyed churches, the peace of priests assassinated by the thousands-- it would be the peace of the anti-Christ.

The Romanian people reject a peace that perpetuates their slavery, that destroys their last hope of a better future.

Mindful of the final aim of communism to destroy the Church of Christ, Western Christians have a duty to manifest extreme vigilance toward the maneuvers of the enemy. Communism is not a new barbarian invasion, as some scholars specializing in comparative history think, but a projection of the power of evil into the world.

Any compromise with communism that recognizes a spiritual, doctrinal, or political status quo is an offense to Christ. The peace of the world cannot be found in comradeship with those who wage war to deny His Kingdom. It is not possible now to extend the hand of friendship to those who wield power in the Soviet Russia. Nor will it be possible until they have dismantled their infernal machinery aimed at the total destruction of churches and the whole of the human species.

Only by taking into account the tremendous tragedy in Eastern Europe and in all the other nations outside Europe under the communist yoke can we clearly see the fate reserved for mankind unless the deadly communist menace is annihilated.

Any compromise, any tendency toward conciliation, any goodwill manifested toward Moscow will become channels for infiltration by the communist virus--deadly traps for naive or wishful thinkers.

The peoples of the Free World have few years left in which to decide their fate. Their victory is still within reach. But if they waste time on secondary actions and grant the communists freedom to maneuver and encircle the Free World, then they must resign themselves to an agonizing end--an end so terrible that we pray the Free World may be spared. With heroic efforts for a few years, mankind can be saved from immense suffering. A few years of prosperity and apparent peace could condemn future generations to slavery for hundreds of years.

The enemy aims at destroying throughout the world the last vestiges of freedom and spiritual endeavor. He is powerful and

he considers himself fated to run the world. If we confront this enemy with courage and decision, God Almighty will support those who struggle for right and truth.

We hope for a change. We hope for clearer thinking. May those who today determine the future of man be guided by God.

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CLIPPINGS & NOTES



RONNETT

ROMANIAN NATIONALISM: THE LEGIONARY MOVEMENT



(top) Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, founder of the Legionary Movement / (bottom) Horia Sima, commander in chief of the Legionary Movement / ISBN 0-8294-0232-2

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