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WORK CAMPS, COMMERCE, AND THE EDUCATION OF THE ‘NEW MAN’ IN THE ROMANIAN LEGIONARY MOVEMENT*

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ABSTRACT. *This article explores two aspects of the Romanian legionary movement’s organization in the 1930s, namely work camps and commerce. These are placed in the context of the Legion’s attempts to construct a ‘parallel society’ that challenged the hegemony of the state and the dominant class of Romanian politicians and Jewish capitalists. The Legion’s work camps and commercial ventures played a crucial educational role within the movement. The work camps were regarded as ‘schools’ in which the legionary ‘New Man’ was to be created and nurtured. Through its commercial ventures, the Legion aimed to educate a new generation of ‘Christian’ entrepreneurs to win back the economic position which the Romanians had allegedly lost to Jewish traders. This new elite would thus replace the decadent Romanian political and commercial classes which the Legion regarded as devoid of national awareness. The success of the Legion’s ‘parallel society’ provoked government counter-measures which culminated in the murder of the movement’s leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, in 1938, and the fragmentation of the Legion. The article draws upon hitherto unused Romanian archival sources, as well as legionary memoirs and articles.*

In the late 1980s Václav Benda described the purpose of the emerging ‘parallel society’ in communist Eastern Europe as ensuring ‘the preservation or the renewal of the national community ... along with the defence of all the values, institutions, and material conditions to which the existence of such a community is bound’.¹ In what follows, we will seek to explain two aspects of the Romanian

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¹ Václav Benda, Milan Šimečka, Ivan M. Jirous, Jiří Dienstbier, Václav Havel, Ladislav Hejdiánek, and Jan Šimsa, ‘Parallel *polis*, or an independent society in Central and Eastern Europe: an inquiry’, *Social Research*, 55 (Spring/Summer 1988), pp. 211–46, at p. 217.

legionary movement's organization in the 1930s (work camps and commerce) in terms of the Legion's attempts to construct a 'parallel society' that challenged the hegemony of the state and the dominant class of Romanian politicians and Jewish capitalists, while endeavouring to found an alternative and competing raft of economic and social institutions. As in the late 1980s, this aim acquired a powerful moral dimension. Whereas Václav Havel saw the 'parallel society' as providing 'a model of basing social relations on authenticity and moral responsibility',² the Legion and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, its leader, saw the Romanian 'parallel society' of the 1930s as guiding the construction of the 'New Man', a spiritually regenerated Romanian.

Despite the emergence of a considerable body of secondary literature relating to the Romanian legionary movement (also known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael or the Iron Guard) over recent years, there has been little attempt at a comprehensive discussion of the Legion's extensive system of work camps or commercial undertakings. Both Western and Romanian historians who have written about these legionary organizations have tended to see them largely as tools for legionary propaganda.³ While there is no doubt that the work camps and commercial outlets did serve as propaganda tools, they also played an important educational role within the movement. The work camps in particular were regarded as legionary 'schools' in which the 'New Man', or 'Tomorrow's Romanian', was to be created. Through its commercial ventures, the Legion aimed, moreover, to educate a new generation of 'Christian' entrepreneurs and win back the economic position which the Romanians had allegedly lost to Jewish traders.

In legionary thinking, the decadent Romanian political and commercial classes were devoid of national awareness. They served not the Romanian nation but materialistic, and 'Jewish', economic interests. Additionally therefore, the Legion's 'parallel society' sought to protect Romanian national elements from the disintegrative forces of both liberal democracy and communism, whose insidious agents the Jews were also believed to be. The success of the Legion's 'parallel society' prompted government counter-measures against it, culminating in the arrest, and subsequent murder, of the Legion's founder, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, in 1938.

² Mikko Lagerspetz, 'From "parallel polis" to "the time of the tribes": post-socialism, social self-organization and post-modernity', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 17 (June 2001), pp. 1–18, at p. 4.

³ See, for example, Dragoş Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail de la mit la realitate* (Bucharest, 1997), pp. 83, 197, 217–20; Constantin Petculescu, *Mișcarea Legionară: mit și realitate* (Bucharest, 1997), pp. 60–2; Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the others: a history of fascism in Hungary and Romania* (Iași and Oxford, 2001), pp. 367, 397–8, 402–6; Armin Heinen, *Die Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien: soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation* (Munich, 1986), pp. 229–30, 282–4; Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919–1941: mistica ultranaționalismului* (Bucharest, 1993), pp. 219–22.

I

A brief review of Codreanu's early student political activities is crucial to an understanding of his desire to create a legionary 'parallel society'.⁴ Codreanu and his nationalist student colleagues believed that the integrity of Great Romania (*România Mare*) and the fate of the Romanian people were under threat from 'Judeo-bolshevism' and the failings of the liberal political establishment. In 1919, it seemed that the newly enlarged Great Romanian state would disintegrate under the combined forces of the territorial revisionism of Bolshevik Hungary and Russia and of the communism which appeared to be gaining ground amongst Romanians due to the country's acute economic and social distress. As well as identifying the Jews with communism both inside and outside Romania, Codreanu perceived the Jews as a threat to the Romanian middle class, due to their penetration of Romanian commerce and industry and hence the urban environment. Furthermore, the large number of Jews entering the universities would, he believed, eventually ensure their complete domination of the Romanian state. Codreanu accused the politicians, who he described as the 'low-level servants of Judaism', of failing to protect the Romanian nation from this fate.⁵

Codreanu's first political activities took place as early as 1919 in the city of Iași in north-east Romania in the nationalist workers' movement, the 'Guard of National Consciousness' (*Garda Conștiinței Naționale*). This movement sought to divert the city's workers away from communist internationalism (to which they had supposedly been lured by the machinations of the Jews) and back towards loyalty to the Romanian throne and Orthodox altar. Codreanu became convinced that the workers, and the Romanians in general, could expect no help from the political elite to ameliorate their subordinate position in society. They should turn instead to self-help and cross-class co-operation. Codreanu also became involved in student politics at Iași university, demanding that the government introduce a *numerus clausus* to reduce the number of Jewish students in the universities to their proportion amongst the general population. This, Codreanu believed, would prevent Jewish domination of the country's future middle class.

In 1923 Codreanu, together with Professor A. C. Cuza, the anti-Semitic professor of political economy at Iași university, campaigned against the planned constitution through which the country's Jews were to receive Romanian citizenship. In October, following the failure of the campaign, Codreanu, and his colleague Ion Moța, were involved in a plot to assassinate the politicians responsible for the new constitution, together with senior Jewish figures. The plot failed and the would-be assassins were imprisoned. The granting of Jewish citizenship by the Romanian parliament led to Codreanu's increasing alienation

⁴ For Codreanu's early career, see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural politics in Greater Romania: regionalism, nation building and ethnic struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1995), pp. 245–96, and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *For my legionaries (The Iron Guard)* (Madrid, 1976) (originally published as *Pentru legionari*, Sibiu, 1936), pp. 3–117.

⁵ Codreanu, *For my legionaries*, pp. 58–72, at p. 117.

from the older generation of nationalists, such as Cuza, who had remained willing to work within the traditional parliamentary system.⁶ It also led to Codreanu's complete rejection of liberal democracy. Not only did the party system divide the Romanian nation into warring class-based parties, but he believed democracy favoured the interests of the Jewish minority against those of the Romanian majority.⁷

Codreanu established his first work camp in May 1924 at Ungheni on the border with Romania's new Bessarabian province.⁸ Here, Codreanu and his student followers set about constructing a 'Christian cultural home'. In a speech to mark the opening of the camp, Codreanu stressed the alienation felt by the youth of Romania towards the politicians and the need for self-help in the battle to create a regenerated Romanian state. 'The power to carve ourselves another destiny', he said, 'we will find only in ourselves.'⁹ Beyond the practical aim of the work camp, there was, however, also an 'educational mission' which was to 'ennoble manual work'.¹⁰ At the time, Bessarabia, which bordered on to the Soviet Union, was rife with Bolshevik propagandists.¹¹ Codreanu hoped to render communist ideology less attractive to impoverished workers and peasants by healing the rift between manual workers and intellectuals through encouraging the students to place greater value on manual work. According to Codreanu the Ungheni work camp 'generated a revolution in the thinking of the day' because 'a dominating concept crumbled: that it is shameful for an intellectual to work with his hands, particularly at heavy labour'.¹² The emphasis on manual work was to be the central feature of the 1930s legionary work camps.

II

In June 1927, Codreanu founded the ultra-nationalistic Legion of the Archangel Michael (*Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*). The following year, Codreanu and his

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88. ⁷ For Codreanu's views on liberal democracy, see, *ibid.*, pp. 302–26.

⁸ Despite the Legion's claim that their camps were not influenced by foreign models, work camps, and experiments in communal living were a widespread phenomenon amongst other fascist movements, such as the Nazi youth movement and the *Croix de feu*. In addition, in both Europe and North America, state-sponsored work camps were often a response to mass unemployment following the Great Depression. On the Legion's claim to uniqueness, see Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919–1941*, p. 219. For an American view on state-sponsored work camps in 1930s Europe, see Kenneth Holland, *Youth in European labor camps: a report to the American Youth Commission* (Washington, DC, 1939). For a comparative perspective on labour service and work camps in Nazi Germany and the United States, see Kiran Klaus Patel, *Soldiers of labor: labor service in Nazi Germany and New Deal America, 1933–1945* (Cambridge, 2005). For the *Croix de feu* and its various communal associations, hotels, resorts, and summer camps, see William D. Irvine, 'Fascism in France and the strange case of the *Croix de feu*', *Journal of Modern History*, 63 (June 1991), pp. 271–95.

⁹ Codreanu, *For my legionaries*, p. 139.

¹⁰ Horia Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare* (Timișoara, 1994), p. 19.

¹¹ For a discussion on the Bolshevik threat to Bessarabia, see Rebecca Haynes, 'Historical introduction', in Rebecca Haynes, ed., *Moldova, Bessarabia, Transnistria* (Occasional Papers in Romanian Studies 3, London, 2003), pp. 1–142, at p. 104.

¹² Codreanu, *For my legionaries*, p. 141.

followers returned to the Ungheni work camp and completed the Christian cultural home originally begun in 1924. In 1933 Codreanu began organizing new camps and refining the educational principles that lay behind them. In July, he drew up a plan for 500 legionaries to build a two-and-a-half kilometre dam on the river Buzău at Vișani commune in Râmnicu Sărat county. On 7 July, however, the local gendarmes arrested legionaries arriving at the camp.¹³ Undeterred, in August 1933 Codreanu established another work camp in a Bucharest suburb to build a 'rest home' for sick and injured legionaries. Once again gendarmes intervened in the Legion's activities, and closed the camp. The building, the so-called Green House (*Casa Verde*), was only finally completed in 1936, and served as the movement's home, or non-administrative headquarters.¹⁴

Despite these setbacks, by 1936 (which the movement declared to be the 'year of the work camp') there were seventy-one camps throughout the country, as well as thousands of smaller work sites throughout Romania.¹⁵ The work camps were dedicated to a variety of tasks such as building or restoring churches, parish halls, schools, bridges, roads, and other structures, building legionary hostels, or agricultural work. Raising crucifixes on the summit of mountains and building and dedicating fountains were especially popular as small work projects.¹⁶ Of the six most important work camps operating in 1935 and 1936, one was the *Casa Verde* camp; two, at Arnota and Susai-Predeal, were dedicated to religious purposes, to which we shall return. At the Cluj work camp the legionaries built themselves a hostel and at the Rarău camp in the Bukovina they set up another 'rest home' for sick legionaries. The Carmen Sylva camp, located near the resort of the same name on the Black Sea, was the largest of the work camps, and this will be discussed below in detail.¹⁷

In May 1935, Codreanu clarified the organization of the work camps, stipulating that they should have a minimum of thirty legionaries, under a camp commander appointed by the movement's headquarters, working for at least one month. The camp was also to have a legionary 'missionary', to take responsibility for the 'spiritual education' of the legionaries.¹⁸ Such was the importance of the

¹³ Arhivele Naționale, Sediul Central, București (National Archives, headquarters, Bucharest) (hereafter Arh. Naț.), Fond Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 4/1933, pp. 118–21, 15 July 1933, Construction of a dam by the Iron Guard.

¹⁴ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 116.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 117–42, at p. 142.

¹⁶ Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Așanghelul Mihail de la mit la realitate*, pp. 217–20; Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 3/1936, pp. 300–21, Police Directorate of the Security Services, Information Service, 'All for the Country' party. The word 'fountain' is the literal translation of the Romanian *fântână*. It is used in this article with some misgiving since it suggests a decorative feature. Legionary fountains were, in fact, natural springs which were piped and presented in stonework, usually with a tap. They were thus vital to the village economy and infrastructure.

¹⁷ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 118; *Tabăra de muncă*, with a foreword by Mihael Polihroniade (n.p., 1936, pp. 17–21, 61–2. This volume, containing numerous photographs of the most significant of the legionary work camps, was clearly produced to celebrate the 'year of the work camp'.

¹⁸ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulari și manifeste, 1927–1938* (Munich, 1981, originally publ. Bucharest, 1940), 'Circular: the duty of the student', 31 May 1935, pp. 39–42.

work camps as an educational experience for the young legionary that Codreanu decreed that no member of the movement was to have a position within the legionary hierarchy unless he had passed through a work camp.¹⁹

III

A police report on the Legion's attempt to establish its first work camp at Vișani in 1933, ascribed it to the movement's desire 'to raise its popularity in the villages and amongst the general public'.²⁰ The dissemination of legionary propaganda was not, of course, the primary function of the camps. As Codreanu explained in his clarification of camp organization in 1935, 'the work camp has the character of a school'.²¹ Within this school, the legionary 'New Man' (*omul nou*), a morally and spiritually regenerated individual, would be born.²² As Horia Sima, Codreanu's successor as leader of the movement, wrote in connection with the work camps, the 'creation of the 'New Man' was [Codreanu's] principal objective with regard to our people, because this man, once created, would be able to resolve all the problems of the nation'.²³

Codreanu's vision of the legionary 'New Man' was intimately connected to his attitude towards the Romanian political establishment and the Jewish minority. The Jews, he believed, were only able to dominate Romanian society owing to the moral failings of the Romanians and the consequent corruption of their political elite. 'A country has only the Jews and the leaders it deserves', he wrote.²⁴ It followed that political life could not be transformed by party programmes unless individuals were first perfected by a return to Christian morality, discipline, and love of nation. 'A new state', Codreanu wrote, 'presupposes in the first place, and as an indispensable element, a new type of man'.²⁵ Since this 'New Man' would be forbidden from entering any political party, the political elite would be starved of 'young blood' and eventually crumble. Without a corruptible and anti-national political elite, the 'Jewish problem', so Codreanu believed, would

¹⁹ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 118.

²⁰ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 4/1933, pp. 118–21, at p. 118, 15 July 1933. Construction of a dam by the Iron Guard.

²¹ Codreanu, *Circulari și manifeste*, 'Circular: the duty of the student', 31 May 1935, pp. 39–42, at p. 41.

²² For an exploration of the nature of the legionary 'New Man', see Valentin Săndulescu, 'Fascism and its quest for the "New Man": the case of the Romanian legionary movement', *Studia Hebraica*, 4 (2004), pp. 349–61. Roger Griffin has described the concept of the 'New Man' as a 'sub-myth' within fascism's 'palingenetic political myth' of transformation. See Roger Griffin, *The nature of fascism* (London, 1996), p. 35. For the 'New Man' especially in relation to Fascist Italy, see George L. Mosse, *The image of man: the creation of modern masculinity* (New York, 1996), pp. 154–80. Emilio Gentile has described this attempt to create the 'New Man' as fascism's 'anthropological revolution'. See, Emilio Gentile, 'Fascism, totalitarianism and political religion: definitions and critical reflections on criticism of an interpretation', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 5 (winter 2004), pp. 326–75, at p. 356.

²³ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 143.

²⁴ Codreanu, *For my legionaries*, p. 131.

²⁵ Corneliu Codreanu, *Cărticica Șefului de cuib* (Munich, 1987), p. 65 (originally published in Bucharest in 1933).

be solved.²⁶ The legionary movement was not so much a political movement, therefore, as ‘a great spiritual school ... [which] strives to transform and revolutionize the Romanian soul’.²⁷

Codreanu’s ‘New Man’ was to be educated within ‘a moral medium’ consisting of the ‘nest’ (*cuib*), which was the basic unit of legionary organization, the work camp, and the broader legionary organization. Here, the nascent ‘New Man’ would ‘be isolated from the rest of the world by the highest possible spiritual fortifications’, wrote Codreanu, ‘[and] defended from all the dangerous winds of cowardice, corruption, licentiousness and of all the passions’ before being sent out into the world.²⁸ This need to protect the ‘New Man’ from society reflected Codreanu’s belief that the mainstream educational and political system was essentially decadent, secular, divisive of the nation, and dominated by ‘Jewish’ interests.²⁹ The ‘New Man’ was to be protected from such influences at all costs until he was spiritually strong enough to be immune to the negative influences of the outside world.

What then were the educational principles which Codreanu believed conducive to the creation of the ‘New Man’ and which his supporters saw reflected within the work camps? The first principle was that of manual work, which was considered ‘an educational means of the first order’. The camps, beginning with the Ungheni camp of 1924, were believed to have ‘ennobled the notion of work’.³⁰ Work not only led to physical fitness and good health but also created solidarity between the intellectual middle classes, workers, and peasants. According to Horia Sima, the camps ‘destroyed class prejudice’ by bringing together different sections of Romanian society.³¹ Work, however, was not to be pursued for material gain. ‘Work every day!’ Codreanu exhorted his followers, ‘Work with love!’ The legionary would receive as his reward not ‘profit’ but the knowledge that he had worked for the ‘flowering of Romania’.³² At the same time, through the camps Romanian youth had to learn that ‘no one has the right to live without work, using for himself in a parasitic manner the fruits of others’ work’.³³

The stress on work was intimately linked to the second principle of the camps, that of communal life. George Macrin, a contemporary commentator on the legionary camp system, argued that since man lives in relation to others, it was by

²⁶ Codreanu, *For my legionaries*, p. 133.

²⁷ Codreanu, *Cărticica Șefului de cuib*, p. 111.

²⁸ Codreanu, *For my legionaries*, p. 222.

²⁹ Codreanu considered the state education system to be ‘under Jewish influence’. See Săndulescu, ‘Fascism and its quest for the “New Man”’, p. 359.

³⁰ G. Macrin, ‘O nouă școală românească: taberele de muncă’, *Însemnări sociologice*, 1 (July 1935), pp. 16–23, at p. 16; G. Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva’, *Însemnări sociologice*, 2 (Oct. 1936), pp. 12–23, at p. 15; G. Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă. Aspectul politic’, *Însemnări sociologice*, 2 (Aug. 1935), pp. 16–23, at pp. 17–18.

³¹ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 118.

³² Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib*, p. 6.

³³ *Tabăra de muncă*, p. 1. Săndulescu notes that Codreanu’s emphasis on physical work was in part meant to address the Romanians’ alleged laziness. See, Săndulescu, ‘Fascism and its quest for the “New Man”’, p. 359.

working within the 'community of work' created by the camps that individuals developed higher aims and a sense of 'spiritual community' and nationhood.³⁴ According to the legionary intellectual, Mihail Polihroniade, the camps were 'a school of social solidarity and national fraternity' because workers, peasants, and intellectuals worked and lived together.³⁵ Moreover, since the camps brought together legionaries from all regions of the country, some of which had been only recently incorporated into Romania, they created a new sense of 'Romanianism' which transcended both class and regional identity.³⁶ In keeping with the role of the camps as a reflection of the Romanian nation as a whole, women were also present in the camps where they had responsibility for the preparation of food and general housekeeping.³⁷ In keeping with its name, 11.5 per cent of the members of the Legion's largest camp at Carmen Sylva were women.³⁸ (Carmen Sylva had been the pseudonym of Queen Elisabeta, wife of former King Carol I.) The camps, although dominated by young people, were not devoid of older legionaries, especially intellectuals, who shared the work and life of the camps. Children were also present at the Carmen Sylva camp.³⁹ It seems, moreover, that the legionaries sought to include ethnic Romanians from beyond the political borders of Great Romania in the camps where possible. The Craiova gendarmerie reported in 1935 that the movement planned to include ethnic Romanians from the Timoc region of Yugoslavia in a work camp in the region.⁴⁰

The third educational principle of the camps was the cultivation of an austere discipline and healthy body. Modern comforts and 'frivolities' were eschewed as being conducive to 'national decline'. Through spartan and disciplined living, a well-balanced, altruistic, and physically healthy nation would be created. In addition, the 'natural hierarchy' which was said to develop in the camps, would lead to the creation of an 'ascetic elite' with an 'athletic spiritual structure' which would one day challenge the traditional elite which governed Romania.⁴¹ The

³⁴ Macrin, 'O nouă școală românească', at pp. 17–18, and Macrin, 'Taberele de muncă: aspectul politic', p. 18.

³⁵ *Tabăra de Muncă*, p. 1.

³⁶ Leon Țopa, 'Taberele de muncă obligatorie', *Insemnări sociologice*, 2 (Nov. 1936), pp. 24–9, at p. 27.

³⁷ Interview with Dr Șerban Milcoveanu on 19 Apr. 2006. I am grateful to Dr Milcoveanu for the interviews he gave me on 19 and 20 Apr. 2006 regarding Legionary work camps. As president of the National Union of Romanian Christian Students, Dr Milcoveanu worked with Codreanu from 1936 to 1938 and attended the Carmen Sylva camp in 1936.

³⁸ *Tabăra de muncă*, p. 30; Maria Bucur, 'Romania', in Kevin Passmore, ed., *Women, gender and fascism in Europe, 1919–1945* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 57–78, at p. 77.

³⁹ It is clear from photographs in the volume *Tabăra de muncă* that older people were involved in the camps. The elderly General Cantacuzino, president of the Legion's political wing 'All for the Country' even sometimes helped out. See *Tabăra de muncă*, p. 31. For the children at Carmen Sylva, see Macrin, 'Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva', p. 21.

⁴⁰ Arh. Naț., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 3/1929, pp. 189–223, at p. 204, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Craiova, Information bulletin regarding the internal situation for 1–31 Aug. 1935.

⁴¹ Macrin, 'Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva', p. 14; Macrin, 'Taberele de muncă: aspectul politic', p. 18; Macrin, 'O nouă școală românească', p. 20; Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, 'Câmpina legionary camp', Tuesday 6 July 1937, pp. 161–3, at p. 162; *Ponunca Vremii*, 30 July 1935, 'Constructive nationalism: nationalist youth's work camp at Carmen Sylva'.

stress on austerity and discipline within the camps was intensified by the stricture that legionaries were not permitted to leave the work camp during their stay, except in emergencies or at the behest of the camp commander. In their free time, members of the camps were to read enlightening legionary literature and receive instruction as to their duties within the movement.⁴²

This brings us to the fourth principle held to be at work within the camps, the educational principle itself. The aim of legionary education was not, however, the acquisition of intellectual knowledge, but that which was conducive to Christian morality, good behaviour, and spiritual growth. Such education was thus regarded as being of a 'spiritual' rather than an academic nature.⁴³ Following the creation in 1935 of the Legion's political wing, 'All for the Country' (*Totul pentru Țară*), which was placed under the presidency of General Cantacuzino, Codreanu dedicated himself fully to legionary education. His emphasis on moral improvement and good behaviour was evident in a circular written to legionaries taking part in a work camp at Arnota monastery in July 1935. He informed them that 'this year the camps have the educational aim of creating ... the honest man (*omul corect*)' who would be honest in relation to himself, the movement, his friends, country, and God. The legionary, Codreanu concluded, must behave in such a way as to give rise to a saying amongst the general public: "He is as honest as a legionary."⁴⁴ In 1936, in a circular written to camp commanders, Codreanu stressed that legionary education was to be realized both through communal life, and through formal classes which took place after manual work had finished for the day. Discussions were to centre upon behavioural issues which could adversely affect the movement, such as the 'illness' of disunity and quarrels or insubordination towards superiors. Codreanu demanded that camp commanders set a good example to the legionaries and that they should 'insist on the importance of legionary behaviour in society' outside the camps.⁴⁵ Codreanu himself took part in many of the work camps. He spent the summer of 1936 at Carmen Sylva, the largest of the camps, where he shared in the legionaries' life and work and led their discussions in the evening.⁴⁶ Topics included practical questions, such as legionary behaviour towards other nationalist groups as well as 'spiritual' issues, such as the Legion's attitude to the church and the difference between legionary spirituality and democratic

⁴² Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 2/1936, p. 249, General Directorate of Police, Note, nr 2324, 3 Aug. 1936.

⁴³ Macrin, 'Taberele de muncă: aspectul politic', pp. 18–19; Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 143.

⁴⁴ Codreanu, *Circulari și manifeste*, 'To the legionaries in Arnota work camp', 20 July 1935, p. 47.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 'Legionary education', 10 July 1936, pp. 76–7.

⁴⁶ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, pp. 143–4. Dr Șerban Milcoveanu attended the Carmen Sylva camp in the summer of 1936 and witnessed Codreanu leading the question and answer sessions in the evenings which provided part of the legionaries' 'intellectual education' which followed their 'education through work' during the day. Individual legionaries were often asked to present reports. In keeping with Codreanu's stress on morality and good behaviour, he commanded a particularly ambitious lawyer to report on the need for modesty in daily life: interview with Dr Milcoveanu on 19 Apr. 2006.

spirituality, and legionary mysticism.⁴⁷ In mimicry of the mainstream educational system, legionaries received a diploma after successfully completing their time at the camps.⁴⁸

IV

The didactic principles behind the work camps were those held to be conducive to creating the 'New Man' who would be the very antithesis of the materialistic, individualistic democratic politician.⁴⁹ 'When the politician enters a party', wrote Codreanu, 'the first question that he puts is "What can I gain from this"? ... When a legionary enters the Legion, he says "For myself I want nothing."' The 'New Man' created by the camps would thus be 'a social hero', incapable of exploiting the work of others, which was in legionary thinking a characteristic of the politicians and their 'Jewish' economic allies.⁵⁰

In a similar vein, George Macrin argued that the political elite was a 'sick' and 'parasitical class', dependent upon the 'foreign forces' of Judaism and freemasonry, as well as the constant 'state of emergency' and censorship, to retain itself in power. Macrin further argued that since the creation of Great Romania, the political parties had encouraged both class conflict and regionalism and he contrasted the divisiveness of liberal democracy with the 'spiritual unification' of the Romanian people taking place in the camps. Unlike the 'sick' and parasitic politicians, the new elite being created in the work camps was 'hardworking, disciplined, healthy in body and soul' and dependent not on foreigners, but on the Romanian people. The camps were thus a school for the creation of 'Tomorrow's Romanian' and had finally provided the people of Romania with 'real civic education' which the democratic educational system, with its 'individualistic conception of life', was incapable of

⁴⁷ Macrin, 'Taberele de muncă: aspectul politic', p. 22. The broad didactic principles behind the legionary work camps, especially the cult of work and the healthy body and the concomitant reaction against soft living and decadence, were common to all fascist movements. For a comparison with education in the Nazi labour service, see Patel, *Soldiers of labor: labor service in Nazi Germany and New Deal America*, pp. 190–261.

⁴⁸ For an example of a diploma, see, Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 6/1935, p. 481, *Diplomă de Tabăra*, awarded to Ioan Stegărescu who spent twenty-five days working at the legionary co-operative, and signed by Codreanu as head of legionary education and by General Cantacuzino as head of 'All for the Country' on 14 Nov. 1935. Printed on the diploma is the following: 'Comrade, retain a clear memory of these days of work, of hard life and fraternity. Let it be for you a duty of honour to remain at your legionary post to the end of your life, in the service of the Romanian people who will triumph through the work and sacrifice of you and your colleagues. Silence and work!'

⁴⁹ According to Leon Țopa, as a result of the Jewish infiltration of the economy in the nineteenth century, the Romanian political elite represented not the interests of the Romanian nation but only 'economic interests and the interests of people who lead the economy' i.e. the Jews. See Țopa, 'Taberele de muncă obligatorie', p. 26.

⁵⁰ Codreanu, *Cântecul Șefului de cuib*, pp. 62, 65. For the legionary belief in 'Jewish economic parasitism', see Săndulescu, 'Fascism and its quest for the "New Man"', p. 355.

providing. Macrin concluded that ‘Honest work for the country, order and discipline, and the natural hierarchy which results from the camps signify the death of *politicianism*.’⁵¹

Macrin claimed, furthermore, that the camps had helped to rebuild the country materially, thus proving what could be achieved in the absence of politicians.⁵² This claim was not without some foundation. The camp planned at Vișani in 1933 had been a response to politicians’ repeated failures to fulfil election promises to build a dam to prevent the local river flooding peasant holdings.⁵³ Subsequent work camps were frequently a response to the inability, or unwillingness, of politicians and local authorities to maintain and expand basic infrastructure and public buildings. With the expansion of the work camps in 1935, the ministry of the interior ordered local authorities to begin work to repair and build public buildings throughout the country, to prevent the Legion taking matters into their own hands. This did not prevent the legionaries from setting up camps and successfully stepping in where the local authorities were failing. Indeed, the priest, parish council, and inhabitants of the commune of Laz in Transylvania’s Alba county specifically called upon the legionaries to build their cultural centre instead of the local authorities.⁵⁴

The legionaries clearly regarded the work camps as the ‘school’ in which the ‘New Man’ was to be created to save Romania not only from its democratic politicians but also from the communists. With the collapse of Béla Kun’s Bolshevik regime in Hungary in 1919, the possibility of the destruction of Great Romania through the combined revisionism of Hungary and the Soviet Union receded. The Soviets did not cease, however, to exploit Romania’s vulnerability wherever possible, especially through the country’s discontented minorities, or at times of intense political instability, such as that surrounding King Carol II’s return from exile in 1930.⁵⁵ The formation of the Popular Front government in France in 1936, Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu’s attempts to incorporate

⁵¹ Macrin, ‘O nouă școală românească’, p. 21; Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă: aspectul politic’, pp. 19–20, 22; Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva’, pp. 12, 14, 17. The Romanian philosopher Constantin Rădulescu-Motru defined *politicianism* as a type of political activity whereby public institutions and services became a ‘means for fulfilling personal interests’. Quoted in Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, politics and violence: the Legion of the ‘Archangel Michael’ in inter-war Romania* (Trondheim, 2004), p. 42. For a discussion of the genuine shortcomings of the Romanian political system, and the shallowness of Romanian democracy, see *ibid.*, pp. 40–5.

⁵² Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva’, p. 15.

⁵³ Ion Banea, *Căpitanul* (Timișoara, 1995) (originally published in Sibiu in 1936), pp. 94–5.

⁵⁴ Arh. Naț., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 19/1932, p. 401, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Cluj, Gendarmerie Legion Alba, Informative Note, nr 58 of 4 July 1935; *ibid.*, p. 402, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Cluj, Gendarmerie Legion Alba, Informative note nr 59 of 4 July 1935.

⁵⁵ George Cipăianu and Ioan Ciupea, ‘Soviet attempts at destabilizing Romania during the “dynastic crisis”, 1928–1930’, in George Cipăianu and Virgiliu Țărău, eds., *Romanian and British historians on the contemporary history of Romania* (Cluj-Napoca, 2000), pp. 17–31. On Soviet exploitation of irredentism amongst, for example, the Bulgarian minority in Romania, see Dan Cătănuș, *Cadrilateral: ideologie cominternistă și irredentism Bulgar, 1918–1940* (Bucharest, 2001).

Romania into the Franco-Soviet security system and the outbreak of the civil war in Spain appeared to the legionaries as a prelude to the communist take-over of Europe and Romania.⁵⁶ At a legionary meeting in Iași, members of the movement were exhorted to attend work camps to strengthen them both physically and spiritually. 'When the communists are overrunning France, Spain and Russia', said the main speaker, 'everyone has to be well-steeled, hard-working and disciplined for the fight which is to come in the future.'⁵⁷ The Legion's anti-communism was closely linked to its defence of Orthodox Christianity. In October 1935, General Cantacuzino wrote to the church hierarchy stressing his pride in the fact that the Legion had drawn the youth of Romania towards 'sacred work for the Church and the Nation' and away from 'parties, café houses, licentiousness' and 'Bolshevism' which, in neighbouring countries, had turned churches into 'stables and cabarets'.⁵⁸

V

The strong Orthodox Christian character of the Legion, and the involvement of the Orthodox clergy in the movement, are well documented.⁵⁹ With the emphasis on Christian morality and spirituality within the work camps, and the fact that the majority of them were dedicated to projects with a religious purpose, it is not surprising that Orthodox priests were involved in the camps, officiating at religious services and the blessing of finished constructions. Some priests even acted as camp commanders.⁶⁰ Furthermore, in keeping with the development of the work camps as a legionary 'parallel society', religious ceremonies such as weddings, baptisms, and even funerals took place in the camps. At a camp in the village of Morenii Vechi near Iași where legionaries were building a church, the local priest, Leonid Miron, conducted the wedding of two legionaries who had met at the camp.⁶¹ At the Carmen Sylva work camp, the baptism of

⁵⁶ For Titulescu's foreign policy and reactions to it within Romania, see Rebecca Haynes, *Romanian policy towards Germany, 1936–1940* (Basingstoke and London, 2000), pp. 2–14.

⁵⁷ Arh. Naț., Direcție Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 46/1936, pp. 171–2, 20 June 1936, nr 1700, Note on a meeting held at the legionary centre in Iași.

⁵⁸ Arh. Naț., Direcție Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 239/1935, pp. 1–2, at p. 2, Letter from General Gh. Cantacuzino-Grănicerul, head of the 'All for the Country' party, to Their Holinesses the Bishops of Romania and to all Romanians of good Christian faith, Bucharest, 2 Dec. 1935.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the others*, pp. 247, 250–1, 265–8; Heinen, *Die Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien*, pp. 317–21, and Iordachi, *Charisma, politics, and violence*, pp. 104–17.

⁶⁰ Zamfirescu, *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail de la mîl la realitate*, pp. 83, 217–20; Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 3/1936, pp. 300–21, Oct. 1936, Police Directorate of the Security Services, Information Service, 'All for the Country' party; *ibid.*, Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 29/1935, pp. 258–63, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Oradea, Information bulletin nr 5 of 29 May 1936.

⁶¹ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr. 6/1935, p. 51, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Iași, Informative note, nr 10 of 24 Sept. 1935. See also the photographs of a wedding taking place at the work camp in Izbuc-Bihor in Transylvania in *Tabăra de muncă*, pp. 50–1.

a child took place in the summer of 1936 with Codreanu acting as a godfather. A wedding and funeral also took place there in 1936.⁶²

The most popular small work project with a religious purpose was the setting up of crucifixes on mountain tops, usually to commemorate events or persons significant in legionary, national, or church history. Thus, in August 1935 a group of legionaries from Bușteni in the Carpathian mountains set up a crucifix on the nearby Jepi mountain to commemorate the first legionary ‘martyr’, Virgil Teodorescu. Once completed, a religious service took place, officiated by an Orthodox priest.⁶³ The following year, legionaries set up a crucifix in Hălmagiu commune in Arad county, Transylvania, on the spot where seven Orthodox priests had been executed during the Horia, Cloșca, and Crișan rebellion of 1784. A group of priests blessed the crucifix on its completion, in a ceremony which was also attended by General Cantacuzino, as president of the political wing of the movement, ‘All for the Country’.⁶⁴ In October 1936, legionary workers from the Prahova valley erected a particularly spectacular monumental crucifix to commemorate Romanian soldiers who had died on the Soroca mountain near Azuga in the Carpathian mountain range during the First World War. The crucifix was apparently eight metres high and could be seen from distant towns. It had been especially designed by an architect and carved from a massive oak tree by the legionary workers in their spare time with materials provided by a local manufacturer. The figure of Christ crucified was five metres high and had been painted by a legionary artist. The blessing of the crucifix was a highly popular event with a number of Orthodox priests officiating in the presence of General Cantacuzino, Gheorge Clime, head of the legionary workers’ corps, and a number of legionary commanders. Also present were 600 legionary workers from the Prahova valley, as well as a delegation of war veterans. The ceremony attracted some 4,000 members of the public from the locality, as well as from the more distant cities of Brașov and Bucharest.⁶⁵ In addition to setting up crucifixes and the building or repairing of churches, some work camps were dedicated to larger religious building projects. At Buga work camp in Bessarabia, Romania’s frontier with the atheistic Soviet Union, 100 legionaries were engaged in building a monastery to train Orthodox missionaries.⁶⁶

Of the six most important work camps operating between 1935 and 1936, two, at Arnota and Susai-Predeal, were dedicated to religious purposes. In July 1935,

⁶² Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 3/1936, p. 5, 2 Sept. 1936, conf. 1194; Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva’, pp. 22–3.

⁶³ *Tabăra de muncă*, p. 22

⁶⁴ Arh. Naț., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 29/1935, pp. 303–8, at p. 306, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Oradea, Information bulletin nr 9 of 29 Sept. 1936.

⁶⁵ Ioan Scurtu, ed., *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România 1919–1938* (4 vols., Bucharest, 1996–2003), IV (7 July 1934–30 Mar. 1938), p. 220, document nr 120, 27 Oct. 1936, Cluj: article published in *Porunca Vremii* regarding the blessing of a crucifix on Soroca mountain.

⁶⁶ *Porunca Vremii*, 4 Aug. 1935, I. Diaconescu, ‘Constructive youth: monasteries, churches, hermitages and roads – ‘All for the Country’ work camps’.

sixty-six legionaries 'in green shirts and in military formation', led by the priest, Gheorghe Doară, arrived to undertake restoration work at Arnota monastery in southern Romania. Between July and September, over 200 legionaries in all, including teachers, students, workers, and peasants, worked on the project to repair the mountain road leading from the monastery to the church where Matei Basarab (ruler of the Romanian principality of Wallachia between 1632 and 1654) was buried. Codreanu's brother, Horia Codreanu, whose army regiment was located in the region, was simultaneously involved in successful discussions with the church hierarchy for the erection of a church by the movement at nearby Maglavit where a peasant had apparently had a miraculous vision. Doubtless these discussions were helped by the fact that many priests living in the vicinity of the camp were activists for the movement.⁶⁷

The work camp at Susai-Predeal in the Carpathians was set up to build a mausoleum to house the bones of Romanian soldiers who had died on Susai mountain in 1916 defending the border between the Old Kingdom of Romania and Transylvania, then under the jurisdiction of the Habsburg monarchy. Codreanu had personally discovered the bones on a walk in the mountains, and was appalled that the soldiers, who had given their lives for the creation of Great Romania, had not received Christian burial and due honour by the Romanian authorities. It only served to confirm his opinion of the Romanian establishment as an anti-national force. The church hierarchy was directly involved in the Susai-Predeal camp which was inaugurated with a requiem and stone-laying ceremony presided over by Metropolitan Gurie of Bessarabia. On 5 September 1936, however, the local gendarmes destroyed the mausoleum, which was nearing completion, throwing away crucifixes, icons, candles, and even the bones themselves in the process.⁶⁸ General Cantacuzino, who had been present at the camp's inauguration ceremony, demanded a government enquiry into what he described as 'sacrilege' committed towards 'the holy bones'.⁶⁹

VI

Although a number of Orthodox metropolitans, such as Gurie of Bessarabia, endorsed the legionary work camps during the 1930s, the church hierarchy was often equivocal in its response to the involvement of the clergy in the camps.⁷⁰ Following the establishment of the camp at Arnota monastery in July 1935, the

⁶⁷ Arh. Naț., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 3/1929, pp. 189–223, at pp. 201–4, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Craiova, Information bulletin regarding the internal situation for 1–31 Aug. 1935; *ibid.*, Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 3/1929, pp. 81–120, at pp. 99–114, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Craiova, Information bulletin regarding the internal situation for 1–31 July, 1935; *Tabăra de muncă*, pp. 31–44.

⁶⁸ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, pp. 152–3.

⁶⁹ Codreanu, *Circulari și manifeste*, pp. 77–8, 'Dissolution of Susai camp', Bucharest, 9 Sept. 1936, General Cantacuzino-Grănicerul.

⁷⁰ On the ambiguous relationship between the Orthodox hierarchy and the Legion, see Iordachi, *Charisma, politics and violence*, pp. 114–17.

Orthodox Patriarch apparently forbade the clergy from collaborating with the Legion on the restoration or building of church properties because he believed the movement was exploiting its links with the church for propagandist purposes.⁷¹ The ministry of the interior clearly shared the Patriarch's opinion. A report of October 1936 pointed out that the majority of camps were dedicated to projects 'connected to developing religious sentiment and strengthening Christian belief, factors considered to be most beneficial in aiding the propagandist aims of this organization'.⁷² Indeed, the Orthodox clergy were frequently personally involved in disseminating legionary propaganda. The priest, Leonid Miron, for example, who was responsible for the legionary wedding at the work camp near Iași, edited a newspaper which he used as an outlet for legionary propaganda.⁷³

Clearly, the Legion fully exploited their links with priests, as well as local lawyers and teachers, who lived in the vicinity of the camps. It was, after all, this sector of society which enjoyed 'an unchallenged authority amongst the population'.⁷⁴ Reports drawn up by the police and gendarmerie reveal how the legionaries used these links, as well as music and folk dance, to spread their influence, and that of their political wing, 'All for the Country', amongst the largely rural population in the vicinity of the camps. In July 1935, for example, a group of seventy legionaries, thirty-three in legionary green shirts, and the remainder in national costume, arrived in the town of Băile Herculane in south-west Romania singing legionary songs. After taking part in a religious service in the town, they set up the national flag on the outskirts of the town and took part in a further religious service. This was officiated by a local priest as well as one from Bucharest, and even included a church choir. Some 150 spectators also took part. At the end of the service, one of the priests gave a speech in which he expressed his admiration for the movement, which he described as 'the hope of tomorrow'. He explained that, as a result of the work camps, ruined buildings and neglected land had been transformed for the benefit of the Romanian people. The church choir then sang the 'Hymn of the young legionaries'. A retired colonel from Bucharest subsequently spoke in favour of the movement, and a round of stirring legionary songs concluded the event.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Arh. Naț., Direcție Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 239/1935, pp. 1–2, Letter from General Gh. Cantacuzino-Grănicerul, head of the 'All for the Country' party, to Their Holinesses the Bishops of Romania and to all Romanians of good Christian faith, Bucharest, 2 Dec. 1935. Iordachi points out, however, that the hierarchy refused publicly to repudiate the Legion. See Iordachi, *Charisma, politics and violence*, p. 116.

⁷² Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 3/1936, Oct. 1936, pp. 300–21, at p. 315, Police Directorate of the Security Services, Information Service, 'All for the Country' party.

⁷³ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 6/1935, p. 51, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Iași, Informative note, nr 10 of 24 Sept. 1935.

⁷⁴ Arh. Naț., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 29/1935, pp. 8–14, at p. 13, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Oradea, Information bulletin regarding the internal situation, nr 9 of 30 Sept. 1935.

⁷⁵ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 2/1936, pp. 244–5, General Directorate of Police, Note nr 2326, 3 Aug. 1936, Băile Herculane work camp.

The following month, legionaries from the work camp at Ineu in Arad county, Transylvania, utilized their links with Orthodox priests in the communes of Târnova and Chier, taking part in open-air prayers with the priests and villagers and in folk dances. On 8 September, a group of legionaries from the same camp arrived at Hălmaşiu near Arad where the local priest organized accommodation for them. The next day they opened a small work camp to set up a crucifix. Food was provided by the local inhabitants and the priest brought the twenty-strong church choir to the camp 'who sang different songs in honour of the legionaries'. The latter apparently held nightly meetings in the priest's house, and that of a local lawyer, in order to gain new recruits. Members of the work camp at Izbuc monastery in Bihor county, Transylvania, were also engaged in similar activities in the villages surrounding the work camp. According to the gendarmerie, as a result of these activities, the Legion, and their political wing, 'All for the Country', gained 'a great number of adherents' in Arad and Bihor counties.⁷⁶ Legionary propaganda did not always, however, fall on fertile soil. Following the blessing of a fountain at Vinţul de Jos in Transylvania in March 1936, a number of legionaries made speeches in which they criticized the country's political parties. They then proceeded to make promises as to what the 'All for the Country' party would do once it came to power. Unconvinced, members of the audience accused them of making empty promises.⁷⁷

VII

The Legion also utilized photographs of the work camps as a means of propaganda. Individual photographs of life in the work camps were circulated widely.⁷⁸ Scenes from Carmen Sylva work camp were particularly popular and used as the background for 'All for the Country' election posters in 1937, the year of the general election.⁷⁹ Carmen Sylva camp was by far the largest and most highly organized of the Legion's work camps. It was in itself an example of the larger

⁷⁶ Arh. Naţ., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 29/1935, pp. 8–14, at p. 13, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Oradea, Information bulletin regarding the internal situation, nr 9 of 30 Sept. 1935; *ibid.*, Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 29/1935, p. 22, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Oradea, Note on the activities of the legionary work camps within this inspectorate.

⁷⁷ Arh. Naţ., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 19/1932, p. 516, Regional Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie Cluj, Gendarmerie Legion Alba, Informative note nr 39 of 23 Mar. 1936.

⁷⁸ Arh. Naţ., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 8/1936, pp. 109–10, General Directorate of the Police to the minister of the interior, letter of 5 May 1936.

⁷⁹ One election poster, for example, showed a line of bronzed legionaries in swimming trunks, lined up in military formation with their work tools. Beneath them was written 'Look at them! Burned by the sun, tough, rugged, the heralds of a new life ...'. Another showed Codreanu at work amongst his legionaries with a pick-axe breaking up the soil with the slogan 'All that is putrid and evil will crumble beneath the tempest of your destiny': Arh. Naţ., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 13/1937, pp. 117, 119.

'parallel society' which the Legion was creating through the work camp system as a whole. The Carmen Sylva camp was thus described by George Macrin as 'a state in miniature'.⁸⁰ Between July and September 1935, 800 legionaries, led by Codreanu in person, established the camp on the Black Sea coast two kilometres away from Carmen Sylva resort. At the work camp the legionaries built a number of stone chalets and huts, as well as six kitchens, a cellar, five fountains and a hen house. Orderly paths were cut between the buildings, and small terraces and flower beds created which were laid out with tables and benches. The legionaries even laid down a 200 metre road from the camp to the beach, which they named 'the Road of Tomorrow's Romanian'. The shore line was also consolidated in order to protect the camp, and deep drainage channels were cut into the banks. Contemporary photographs reveal a series of impressive and orderly constructions. Over 500 trees were planted at the camp, and cereals, beans, and vegetables were planted on land at nearby Tuzla. Horses, donkeys, and carts were kept in the camp for transportation of provisions.⁸¹ In addition, between 1935 and 1936 the legionaries built over a kilometre of main road leading from the camp and running parallel to the sea. This was built using stones which the legionaries had taken from the sea and was, once again, designed to show that the Legion could do better than the country's politicians who had planned to construct a road along the coast using stones brought from the Carpathian mountains.⁸²

The break-down of membership of the Carmen Sylva camp reveals that the Legion's claim regarding the cross-class composition of the camps was not without substance. Although students made up the largest single group, artisans, workers, and peasants were also well represented, in addition to teachers, lawyers, priests, professors, and even pilots and members of the artistic professions. Women worked at the camp, as well as older supporters of the movement, and a number of foreign visitors. During the summer of 1936, the camp was also home at any one time to several dozen children who worked with the legionaries.⁸³ Legionary organizations throughout the country sent children from poor families to stay at the camp for up to twenty days to benefit from the healthy life by the sea and, doubtless, to imbibe legionary propaganda. The children received free medical care from the legionary doctors who worked in the camp's infirmary, while the legionary women acted as nurses.⁸⁴ The variety of work being undertaken, as well as the diverse social and regional origins of the camp's members,

⁸⁰ Macrin, 'Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva', p. 23.

⁸¹ Scurtu, ed., *Ideologie și formațiuni de dreapta în România: 1919-1938*, IV, pp. 123-4, document nr 51, 17 Aug. 1935, Constanța: report from the municipal police station at Constanța regarding the legionary work camp at Carmen Sylva; *Tabăra de muncă*, pp. 31-44; Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, pp. 73-4, Carmen Sylva 24 Apr. 1936, 'To the legionary family'.

⁸² Interview with Dr Șerban Milcoveanu, 19 Apr. 2006.

⁸³ Macrin, 'Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva', pp. 19-21.

⁸⁴ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 2/1936, p. 274, General Directorate of Police, Note, nr 2374, 10 Aug. 1936, Focșani legionaries to send sixty to seventy sick children to Carmen Sylva.

prompted George Macrin to describe Carmen Sylva as ‘an archetypal city’ (*o cetate ideală*) in which all social classes and age groups allegedly worked together without antagonism.⁸⁵

The camp was run with military precision by a ‘service officer’ selected every day by Codreanu. Under his direction, legionaries rose at 5.30 a.m. every day for gymnastics, followed by manual work with brief pauses for singing and bathing and a frugal breakfast and lunch. Meat was served only twice a week. Following a rest in the afternoon, work continued from 4.30 to 8 p.m., to be followed by time for discussion, singing, prayers, and supper. Visitors regularly entered the camp, even taking part in the evening discussions, and on Sundays and feast days, the legionaries gave regular demonstrations of work, held competitions, gave choral recitals and displays of folk dancing. With its austere discipline, dedication to song and prayer and moral earnestness, Macrin’s description of Carmen Sylva as ‘an immense monastery in the open air in which the legionaries pray for the whole nation’ seems not inappropriate.⁸⁶

VIII

Evidence of Codreanu’s interest in commerce was also apparent at Carmen Sylva. In addition to donations of food by supporters, the crops grown in and around the camp, the sheep and pigs tended, and the fish regularly caught in the sea provided food not only for the legionaries but also for a buffet which was open to the public. The food here was cheaper than at the Carmen Sylva resort and hence the buffet attracted many visitors. As a result of this, and the financial donations made by supporters, Carmen Sylva camp made a small profit in 1935 which was used to set up the legionary co-operative in Bucharest.⁸⁷

The so-called ‘Battle for Legionary Commerce’ was inaugurated on 14 September 1935 and the co-operative, run by the legionary women, was opened

⁸⁵ Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva’, p. 23. The existence of the so-called ‘Carmen Sylva law’ for settling disputes and ejecting miscreants suggests that relations between members were not always as harmonious as Macrin imagined. See Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, pp. 151–2, 1 July 1937, ‘The Carmen Sylva law’.

⁸⁶ Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva’, p. 23. For a comparison with the daily schedule in a Nazi work camp, see Patel, *Soldiers of labor: labor service in Nazi Germany and New Deal America*, pp. 210–11.

⁸⁷ Macrin, ‘Taberele de muncă: tabăra dela Carmen Sylva’, p. 22. Food for members of other work camps was usually donated by local supporters. Materials and the sites for the camps were often provided by more influential supporters. The Rarău camp, for instance, where the movement was building a ‘rest home’, was set up on land belonging to the estates of Prince Nicolae, King Carol II’s brother, with whom the movement had close relations. The furniture and bedding were provided by local legionaries and legionary railway workers. See Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 6/1937, p. 730, Câmpulung-Bucovina police nr 11 444 of 7 Oct. 1937 to the Regional Inspectorate of Police Cernăuți. Construction material for the building of *Casa Verde*, as well as other work camps, was donated by the industrialist and nationalist politician, Ion Gigurtu. See, *ibid.*, Direcție Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 264/1937, p. 327, General Directorate of the Police, nr 1569, 1 Dec. 1937, Note regarding the ‘Mica’ society and the legionary movement.

two months later.⁸⁸ Horia Sima described the ‘Battle for Legionary Commerce’ as ‘a non-violent war, pursued by legal means’ against what he described as ‘the invasion of the Jews’ in the national economy.⁸⁹ Although the initial purpose of the co-operative had been to provide funds for the unpaid legionary workers at the movement’s administrative headquarters on Strada Gutenberg in Bucharest, the initiative quickly acquired an educational mission. Codreanu not only wished to overturn the prevailing Romanian mentality which disparaged trade in favour of a career in the professions and bureaucracy, but also the idea that the Jews had a talent for commerce which was lacking in the Romanians. In the wake of Jewish penetration of Romanian towns, Codreanu accused the Romanian authorities, supposedly easily corrupted by Jewish money, of abandoning Romanian traders. The latter, isolated in the face of the ‘organized offensive of the Jews’ had, he claimed, been forced to desert their shops. Codreanu’s solution, therefore, was to train a Romanian ‘army’ of traders against the ‘Jewish bloc’.⁹⁰

There was also a moral imperative to Codreanu’s call to arms. He considered the Jewish traders guilty of both profiteering and selling substandard goods. Consequently, he believed the new ‘Christian’ commerce should be established on principles which would serve the needs of the whole national community, rather than that of ‘a greedy minority’.⁹¹ Codreanu stipulated that legionary commerce, and the new co-operative, should be based on selling fresh and high-quality goods at normal prices. Although the seller had the right to make a small profit, since he performed a special function in society, there should be honourable relations between the buyer and seller. ‘Legionary commerce’, he wrote, ‘signifies a new phase in the history of our commerce defiled by the Jewish spirit: it is called Christian commerce, based on the love of people, not on robbing them.’ It was, he concluded, a ‘commerce based on honour’.⁹²

In the autumn of 1935, the movement also opened a legionary canteen catering for thirty to forty legionaries. These were to include the fifteen legionaries who worked with Codreanu at the movement’s administrative headquarters at Strada Gutenberg in Bucharest, as well as those working at the co-operative and members visiting Bucharest on legionary business. The canteen utilized the produce of the legionary co-operative and, like the co-operative, was the preserve of the legionary women, who cooked and served the food.⁹³ Plans were also

⁸⁸ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 119; Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, pp. 84–5, 20 Sept. 1936, ‘For the buyer from the cooperative’.

⁸⁹ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 202.

⁹⁰ Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, pp. 48–51, Bucharest, 29 Sept. 1935, ‘First circular regarding legionary commerce’; Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, pp. 119–22, at p. 121.

⁹¹ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 120.

⁹² Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, pp. 48–51, at p. 51, Bucharest, 29 Sept. 1935, ‘First circular regarding legionary commerce’.

⁹³ Interview with Dr Șerban Milcoveanu on 20 Apr. 2006 in Bucharest. Dr Milcoveanu confirmed that the legionary women were heavily involved in legionary commerce, as a result of their role in the work camps in preparing food and general housekeeping. See also, Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, pp. 52–5, Monday 7 Oct. 1935, ‘The legionary canteen’. Women were organized within their own units of legionary organization, known as a ‘fortress’ (*cetățuie*), but it should by now be clear that women played

unveiled for a legionary hairdresser, shoemaker, and tailor to work in rooms next to the canteen. These were to form part of what Codreanu described as 'the legionary family', in other words, those who worked in and around the movement's central administration.⁹⁴

IX

No new commercial ventures were set up in 1936 which was, as we have seen, the 'year of the work camp'. The expansion of the work camps and their obvious popularity led to the government's decision to ban privately organized work camps in the autumn of 1936.⁹⁵ The following April, the government passed a law for the organization of work of public utility, making state-run work camps obligatory for youths between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one. Severe punishment was to be meted out to 'persons or organizations who seek to use labour service on their projects without the permission of the state'.⁹⁶ Under these circumstances, Codreanu was forced to close the legionary work camps and instead concentrated his attention on the expansion of legionary commerce, beginning with a general store in the Black Sea resort of Carmen Sylva. This apparently proved popular with visitors because prices were cheaper than in local shops. This was followed by the opening of a restaurant at Carmen Sylva resort in July 1937.⁹⁷ A restaurant was also opened at the movement's administrative headquarters at Strada Gutenberg at the end of June, presumably on the site of the legionary canteen. The autumn of 1937 witnessed a rapid expansion of the Legion's commercial activities. These included a restaurant for legionary workers in the working-class district of Grivița in Bucharest, the scene of strikes which had been bloodily suppressed by the Romanian government in 1933, a boarding house in Predeal in the Carpathian mountains, a general store and restaurant in the Obor region of Bucharest, and two further restaurants in Bucharest on the Bulevard Basarab and Bulevard Elisabeta (the Lazăr restaurant). An ironmonger's store was also established at the movement's *Casa Verde* headquarters in a suburb of Bucharest, and a co-operative in Bacău in Moldavia.⁹⁸

The financial benefits of this new phase of expansion of legionary commerce were, however, held to take second place 'to moral principles and the greater national interest'.⁹⁹ Horia Sima described the movement's administrative

a significant role in various aspects of legionary activity within and beyond the work camps. For a discussion of the important role of women within movements of the far right in France, especially the *Croix de feu*, see Kevin Passmore, ' "Planting the tricolor in the citadels of communism": women's social action in the Croix de feu and Parti social français', *Journal of Modern History*, 71 (Dec. 1999), pp. 814–51.

⁹⁴ Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, pp. 56–61, Bucharest, 17 Oct. 1935, 'The legionary family'.

⁹⁵ Heinen, *Die Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien*, p. 283.

⁹⁶ Holland, *Youth in European labor camps: a report to the American Youth Commission*, p. 279.

⁹⁷ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, pp. 194, 196.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

headquarters, restaurant, and co-operative on Strada Gutenberg in Bucharest as being 'like a new citadel of Romanianism, of professional education, of honesty and of morality'.¹⁰⁰ In his circular written for the opening of the Strada Gutenberg restaurant, Codreanu described its purpose as being to act as 'an economic school' for young Romanians, and to provide cheap food for the legionaries at their headquarters, as well as raising money for the movement whose core workers were unpaid. The restaurant also aimed, however, at the realization of 'legionary social harmony'. Codreanu expected workers and professors to sit down to eat together, with their wives and children, and not to be ill at ease or rude to one another. 'Here in the restaurant', he wrote, 'I want to create a real school of good behaviour, elegance and warm legionary camaraderie, with brotherhood between all who are of the nation.'¹⁰¹ The legionary 'New Man', whatever his social origins, was, furthermore, expected to be both decent in appearance and trustworthy. 'Be honest', Codreanu wrote in his circular, and 'do not leave without paying. Not because I will be robbed of twenty *lei*, but because I will be ashamed of my people.' He also expected all customers to be clean and neat, even if their clothes were old.¹⁰²

A novel feature of the Strada Gutenberg restaurant arose from Codreanu's decision to take in ten peasant children who had completed their elementary education and who were either orphans or from impoverished families. These children were to grow up within the 'legionary family', work at the restaurant, and imbibe the values of legionary commerce. It appears that Codreanu's request for relevant names to be sent to the movement's headquarters was only too successful. The movement ended up with twenty-five shoeless and coatless children who became 'the children of the Legion'.¹⁰³

Meanwhile, at the legionary restaurant at Carmen Sylva on the Black Sea the public was waited on by Bucharest intellectuals and professionals who were members of the movement. These included artists, writers, university professors, lawyers, and engineers.¹⁰⁴ As in the work camps, Codreanu sought to encourage the intellectual and middle classes to place a value on the manual work which took place in the restaurants and to suggest that there was no such thing as 'inferior work'. His philosophy was that 'all work has nobility when it is executed with honesty and love, and in the conviction that it brings service to those close by and to the collectivity'.¹⁰⁵

The Grivița restaurant in Bucharest, with its working-class customers, was run by a lawyer and a student in a conscious attempt by Codreanu to encourage

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Codreanu, *Circulari și manifeste*, pp. 152–4, at pp. 152–3, 3 July 1937, 'Words for the public at the legionary restaurant'.

¹⁰² Ibid., at p. 154; Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 196.

¹⁰³ Codreanu, *Circulari și manifeste*, p. 143, Bucharest, 15 June 1937, Circular nr 77; *ibid.*, p. 155, 3 July 1937, 'To heads of nests'; Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 9/1937, p. 77, Section I-a, nr 3, 28 June 1937.

¹⁰⁴ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 196.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

intellectuals to place themselves at the disposal of workers and thereby promote social solidarity.

With the expansion of legionary commerce in 1937, Codreanu was at pains to stress that legionary 'Christian' commerce was to be based on different trading principles to those on which the Jews allegedly based their trade. This was apparent in his speech to celebrate the opening of the general store in the Obor quarter of Bucharest in October 1937. According to Codreanu, some 50 per cent of traders in Obor were now non-Romanians and the situation was similar in other parts of the city. He described the legionary store as a 'small fortress' from which Romanian 'conquerors' would be sent as traders to 'the lost citadels' i.e. those town and cities in the country now dominated by Jewish traders. The Legion, he went on, rejected the current belief in the 'right to enrichment'. The shopkeeper and merchant, he argued, was more than a mere provisioner in society and 'must be a disseminator of goodwill, a nucleus of moral health and enthusiasm in the body of the nation'.¹⁰⁶ The 'right to enrichment', which, he believed, could only be realized through the exploitation of others, would thus give way to the idea of 'service for the collectivity'.¹⁰⁷ At the opening of the Grivița restaurant, Codreanu made a direct attack on what he described as the 'Judaico-materialistic principle' of 'lust for profit' and 'hunger for gold'.¹⁰⁸ In legionary thinking, therefore, economic activity was not an end in itself, but was regarded as a support for higher aims and was to serve the health of the individual and the collective. One example of this, according to Horia Sima, was the legionary boarding house, opened at Predeal in the Carpathian mountains in the autumn of 1937, as a sanatorium for urban youths suffering from tuberculosis.¹⁰⁹

In September 1937, two years after the inauguration of legionary commerce, Codreanu created the 'Battalion of Legionary Commerce'. The Battalion was made up of the male and female legionaries who had worked in the movement's commercial undertakings, but with additional new recruits recommended by the legionary hierarchy. It was an attempt to prepare personnel in a more professional manner than hitherto. Each recruit, therefore, was to work provisionally within the Battalion for one year before being fully accepted. The Battalion was also to co-ordinate legionary commerce throughout the country and to analyse markets for new commercial ventures. As Codreanu wrote, the Battalion's mission was 'to conquer, metre by metre, the economic position which our nation has lost. Its naming is a call to war, not to business.' The

¹⁰⁶ Codreanu, *Cîrculări și manifeste*, pp. 189–91, at pp. 190–1, 'Inauguration of the legionary general store at Obor'.
¹⁰⁷ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁸ Codreanu, *Cîrculări și manifeste*, p. 209, 10 Nov. 1937, 'The Captain's words: "Workers from throughout Romania, to battle!"' The menu for the Grivița restaurant had various comments on the margins such as 'To be great a nation must be honest, have faith and be ready for sacrifice at any moment.' Tips were not accepted at the restaurant. See Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 21/1938, pp. 10–13, at p. 12, Legionary restaurant, Calea Grivița 198, Menu.

¹⁰⁹ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, p. 198.

Battalion was even to include a provisional legionary inspector of commerce to oversee the movement's commercial activities.¹¹⁰

The years 1937, and early 1938, were to prove to be the high-water mark of legionary popularity and expansion. The 12,000 legionary 'nests', the basic unit of legionary organization, which existed at the start of the year, had risen to some 34,000 by December 1937.¹¹¹ Although the Legion's political wing, 'All for the Country', officially came third of all the political parties in the elections of 20 December 1937, there is evidence that the Legion in fact came second, after the government party, before the authorities falsified the election results. When further elections were scheduled in the New Year, the ministry of the interior predicted a legionary victory.¹¹² Under these circumstances, Codreanu planned a large expansion of legionary commerce into areas such as textiles, electricals, pharmaceuticals, and the construction industry. In order to raise capital for these ventures, he inaugurated 'Operation Old Iron' in September 1937. Under this scheme, legionaries and their supporters were to collect scrap iron from gardens, waste land, roads, and houses. By December, huge quantities of iron and other metals had apparently been collected, only to be subsequently confiscated by the authorities.¹¹³ It appears the Legion did, nevertheless, make some inroads into manufacturing during the autumn of 1937. The legionary co-operative was not only selling toothpaste manufactured by the movement, but a legionary team was also visiting Romanian pharmacies recommending their '*Symbol*' toothpaste as a Romanian product, superior to foreign equivalents or those made by the ethnic minorities.¹¹⁴

In view of the banning of the legionary work camps late in 1936, Codreanu was also forced to find new ways of developing legionary education. There seems to have been an attempt to create a party school in May 1937, under the guise of 'rest camps' for sick and injured legionaries. The rest camps were, however, also banned by the authorities.¹¹⁵ Given that the elections scheduled for March 1938 were predicted to result in a legionary victory, the need for schools to train the necessary cadres became critical. In January 1938, therefore, Codreanu announced his intention to open a school to train legionary mayors in each provincial capital, together with a school in Bucharest to train legionary prefects. Courses were to take place under Codreanu's direction.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 202; Codreanu, *Circulari și manifeste*, pp. 170–1, at p. 170, Bucharest, 13 Sept. 1937, 'For the establishment of "The Battalion of Legionary Commerce"'; ibid., pp. 171–2, Bucharest, 13 Sept. 1937, 'The organization of the Battalion of Legionary Commerce'.

¹¹¹ Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the others*, p. 293.

¹¹² Constantin Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice* (7 vols., 2 Feb. 1935–22 Nov. 1939) (Bucharest, 1998–2003), III, pp. 295–7, 21–2 Dec. 1937; ibid., IV, p. 70, 28 Jan. 1938.

¹¹³ Sima, *Istoria mișcării legionare*, pp. 200–2.

¹¹⁴ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 28/1937, p. 64, Section 1-a, nr 28, 4 Oct. 1937.

¹¹⁵ Arh. Naț., Direcție Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 264/1937, p. 348, Section 1-a, nr 38, 20 May 1937.

¹¹⁶ Codreanu, *Circulari și manifeste*, pp. 240–1, Bucharest, 20 Jan. 1938, Circular nr 126.

The movement's rapid expansion, and the possibility of a legionary election victory, was, however, too much for the country's political elite and especially for King Carol II. On 10 February 1938 the king established his personal dictatorship and set about abolishing the political parties. Codreanu, however, believed that this need not restrain legionary activities, since these could be maintained under the cover of the movement's commercial organizations which he believed the government would not dissolve. He thus announced his intention of expanding the movement's commercial ventures and of founding a legionary timber industry.¹¹⁷ The new constitution of 20 February 1938, however, greatly strengthened the royal powers and introduced a series of measures aimed against the Legion. The ministry of the interior, moreover, decided to shut down the legionary restaurants because of their role in politicizing workers and artisans. On 21 February, therefore, Codreanu dissolved the movement's political wing 'All for the Country' in order to pre-empt the government's suppression of the movement and imprisonment of his followers. He did not, in any case, believe the royal dictatorship would have sufficient support to be of long duration. Once political parties resumed a legal existence, he believed that the country would vote for the Legion.¹¹⁸ When the legionary restaurant on Strada Gutenberg was shut down in March, Codreanu announced that 'What we did yesterday, we cannot do today, but we will do tomorrow. Our time has not yet come. But be sure that the legionary victory is approaching rapidly.'¹¹⁹ The legionary victory when it did, however, come in 1940 was to be without its founder. Codreanu was arrested on 16 April 1938 and, as a result of his trial in May, was sentenced to ten years' hard labour. He was murdered by the royal regime in November 1938. With his death, and the subsequent murder or flight into exile of most of the movement's leadership, the organizational structures created by Codreanu effectively dissolved.

X

In its pursuit of a 'parallel society' which embraced alternative forms of community, commerce, and the education of the 'New Man', the Romanian legionary movement lay well within the mainstream of European interwar fascism. Indeed, in his book, *The anatomy of fascism*, Robert Paxton points out the importance of the 'parallel structures' created by fascist movements. With these the fascists could first challenge the state's monopoly of power and 'after achieving power, the party could substitute its parallel structures for those of the state'.¹²⁰ Paxton sees these structures as being replications of government agencies, such as party police, or the Nazi foreign policy agency, the *Aussenpolitisches Amt*. The legionary movement in the 1930s, however, did not set

¹¹⁷ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 19/1938, pp. 54–5, Detectives' Corps, Section 1-a, nr 4, 11 Feb. 1938.

¹¹⁸ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 1/1938, pp. 25–7, C. D., 24 Feb. 1938.

¹¹⁹ Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, p. 281, 15 Mar. 1938, 'Closure of the legionary restaurant Gutenberg'.
¹²⁰ Robert O. Paxton, *The anatomy of fascism* (London, 2004), p. 85.

about to create a ‘parallel society’ which mimicked government agencies. Indeed, although the movement was certainly armed, it did not even attempt to establish a legionary police force until it had actually come to power in 1940. Instead, it sought to direct its activities down a less conventional route, but one entirely in keeping with earlier criticisms of Romania’s historical development.

One of the criticisms often made by Romanian ‘traditionalists’ in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that the country’s political, social, and cultural institutions possessed ‘form without substance’. In other words, while Romanian institutions had the outward form of such structures in the West, they lacked a true foundation and roots in Romanian society, which was still overwhelmingly rural, illiterate, and un-politicized. Codreanu, therefore, sought to build from the bottom up, starting with the individual’s moral and spiritual composition. He aimed to empower the Romanian people spiritually to enable them, in due course, to establish institutions which would, in his thinking, conform to the genuine needs of Romanian society. This entirely comported with the spirit of fascism. It was Mussolini himself who wrote that fascism was ‘an educator and a promoter of spiritual life. It aims at refashioning not only the forms of life but their content – man, his character, and his faith.’¹²¹ The legionary ‘parallel society’ was thus not simply, as Paxton assumes for fascist institutions as a whole, an instrument for taking power. Rather it performed, in keeping with the views of its founder, vital moral, regenerative, and educational functions. Or, as Václav Havel might have asked, was not the ‘parallel society’ of the legionary movement a kind of ‘rudimentary pre-figuration’ of those ‘more meaningful “post-democratic” political structures that might become the foundation of a better society?’¹²²

¹²¹ Benito Mussolini, *Fascism: doctrines and institutions* (Rome, 1935), pp. 13–14.

¹²² From Václav Havel, ‘The power of the powerless’, in Paul Wilson ed., *Václav Havel Open letters: selected writings, 1965–1990* (New York, 1978/90), pp. 125–214, at p. 213. Quoted in Lagerspetz, ‘From “parallel Polis” to “the time of the tribes”’, p. 4.