

The Legionary Movement in Romania

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It is the authors' observation that most people make the mistake of not considering socio-political phenomena in their natural context in order to discover the legitimate causes, the true sense of their development, and especially their importance in the environment which fostered them. Carried away by the passion of political convictions or by the hope of immediate benefits, they reduce every phenomenon to a linear problem: good or bad, to be accepted or rejected.

Moreover, governments, the authorities, "reason" in the same manner. This maintains an atmosphere of suspicion and misunderstanding and is detrimental to the awakening of consciousness to what we believe are certain essential truths. In addition, when the age has been ravaged by bloody conflicts and when bad memories or hates are not yet dissipated, nothing is easier than to maintain this partial and prejudiced way of judging matters each time that circumstances bring the discussion of such a problem before the public.

This disposition of the public to a puerile partisanship is manipulated by those who are interested in compromising, or even in annihilating, a historical, political, or social truth. They know that the mass man:

- ...reduces everything to his personal conception, considering as false and dangerous anything which does not conform to his thoughts;
- ...is incapable of placing himself in the socio-historical context of the phenomenon in order to judge it according to reality, nor does he manage to make abstraction from his own reality, and comparisons are reduced to what seems just and perfect in relationship to himself;
- ...and is influenced by what the press disseminates without ever being able to perceive the lies, exaggerations and perfidious insinuations which infest most of these communications.

Therefore, playing upon these attitudes of the mass man, it is easy for dishonest people to direct even the most liberal and intelligent opinion and to lead the most honest and just people into error. That is not surprising, for, if the coalition of detractors is always powerful (because it works on the ease of emotional and uncontrollable arguments), those who are the target of this relentless propaganda are most often those who are ill-equipped to defend themselves. People are not sufficiently distrustful of this kind of sporadic attack, which is of little documentary importance. In the long run, for lack of pertinent refutation, these hoaxes end up being considered as authentic documents and the game is won.

Thus prejudice and the distortion of reality come lethal weapons capable of confusing the soundest minds and creating an undercurrent of hate or distrust toward certain socio-political doctrines which are valuable. Such is the case of the Romanian Legionary Movement. The purpose of this synthesis is to help the public reach a more accurate understanding of the

movement, as viewed by its former members.

Those who have read only the stories spread by the persistent detractors of the thinking, educational methods, and activities of this spiritual movement have acquired a picture of a blood-thirsty terrorist organization. That is totally unjust and far from the truth.

A doctrine which seeks to modify an individual's spiritual structure in order to make him a better, more intelligent and more honest person, a doctrine whose foundations are morality and love can certainly *not* be terrorist, racist or oligarchic. It addresses itself to every individual, regardless of race, social or professional position, regardless of culture, religion or philosophical opinion.

What is important in the realization of this "New Man" is the transformation of an ordinary person into an individual of quality. This new person can surpass himself by renouncing every tendency towards hate, materialism and the taste for power.

One young Italian writer had the courage to go beyond the prejudices imposed by the enemies of the Legion of the Archangel Michael (The Legionary Movement) and to go to the legitimate sources of Legionary Doctrine. This is what he says about the Legionary Movement:

Above all, one thing should be very clear to everyone: The Legion of the Archangel Michael is not a party as we understand it, nor a pressure group, nor a para-religious organization, nor in anyway denominational. It is an absolutely original movement whose primary goal and purpose are: a spiritual and moral renewal, and the creation of a new individual - an individual who will stand in contrast to the democratic *homo æconomicus*, who is essentially pragmatic and egotistical. [\[1\]](#)

If, up until now, the Legionary Movement has been presented in a derogatory light, it is because the foundations of its doctrine, as well as its educational precepts, ran counter to the political conceptions based on materialism and immorality . In it people discovered a powerful renewing force which in the long run would be capable of overthrowing the dominant conception of our mixed-up and indecisive world - not only at the philosophical level, but also at the practical socio-political level. A national mission and universal vocation were perceived in the strength of its exceptional norms. Such ideas could not help but disturb the political factions which were dominant or dreaming of domination.

That may seem unlikely, given that the doctrine in question arose from a small country, from the bosom of a people without expansionist tendencies or pretensions. In the Legionary substance there is, nonetheless, a spiritually based messianism which addresses every honest man who is conscious of his human value and who wishes to change the course of history. Change is brought about through the use of moral norms in peoples' behavior and in nations' lives; these norms replace the egoism which is presently dominant. Such modification is surely difficult, but certainly not impossible. This explains the doggedness with which the Legionary doctrine and its members are still attacked today, 40 years after the Communist takeover of Romania and the outlawing of the Legionary Movement. It is because the Legionary spirit persists, invisible but tenacious, anchored in the depths of the Romanian soul as the only salvation for the nation, and perhaps for the world, which sees and feels itself carried towards the abyss.

The accusations, insinuations and lies about the Legionary movement are well known. Every opportunity is taken to forbid its precepts or to savagely attack those near or far who envision this doctrine as the path of salvation for the Romanian Nation. It will take many years to

re-establish an equilibrium and to give the original and highly spiritual content of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's doctrine its proper value in the eyes of the world.

The following work is one sincere effort among others to put some explanation of what the Romanian Legionary Movement really is at the disposal of those who have the conscience and the courage to look beyond the sordid propaganda. This is not a detailed analysis of the Legionary phenomenon, but a synthesizing summary of the various phases and attitudes assumed by the Legion of the Archangel Michael during its first fourteen years of existence: it is, up to Romania's entry into the war. At that time, several tens of thousands of Legionnaires were in the prisons of General Ion Antonescu, who had usurped the Legionary Movement's victory over the dictatorship of King Carol II and had installed his own dictatorship.

Brief History of the Legionary Movement

In the face of the ferociously materialistic, morally bankrupt tendencies which dominated the national scene, it was felt that nothing but the authority of the Commandments, a return to religious sources and the force of sacrifice could stop the slide towards total ruin.

For that reason, since the beginning, the Legionary Movement is set on original foundations:

- it has a *hierarchical character*;
- it values *personal responsibility*;
- it calls for *national affection*;
- it rests on *Christian spirituality*;
- and it raises the *notion of sacrifice* to the highest dignity.

Under these conditions, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu did not address the crowds in order to organize them and turn them into an opposition party. He was not interested in electoral change but in the *internal change of the individual*. He sought to modify a mentality. He wanted above all to create a school which would prepare people for the future - people who would be honest, hard-working, moral, intelligent and willing to make sacrifices for the common good.

Nowhere in the Legionary norms and precepts can an incitement to social, racial or religious hate be found. The basis of the Legionary Movement and education is love. Love in the purest sense of the word: that of *respect for one's fellow man*, whatever he may be; that of *respect for work*, even the most humble; that of *respect for each person's opinion*, no matter how absurd or contradictory it may be.

Germans, Hungarians, Turks, and Tartars entered the Legion ranks because the Legionary ideal was not posed in racial or religious terms. They were engaging in a battle against a mentality which could dominate the masses of another race just as well as the Romanian masses. Everyone had the right and the obligation to participate. There was only one essential condition: each person had to blend himself body and soul into the great spiritual revolution. That was the only way to be able to comprehend the profound sense of the political vision of Corneliu Codreanu.

The beginnings of the Movement were extremely difficult. There were numerous reasons for that

difficulty, and many of them were justified:

- The Legion of the Archangel Michael represented a new set of principles which were totally opposed to those that were then practiced.
- At the outset, the group was made up of inexperienced young people who promised absolutely nothing concrete and immediate.
- There was a natural distrust of a new organization, a new "party," which was assumed to be similar to all the others. (At that time there were around thirty different parties in Romania.)
- There was a general skepticism about anything which might announce a possible change.
- The Press immediately lumped the Legionary Movement into the ranks of the Fascists and later the National Socialists.
- Government authorities were hostile towards a voluntary movement which proved to be resistant to every attempt at maneuvering.
- There was a reticence of the masses before an uncustomary political power.
- The organization being formed was in a state of total poverty.

It literally started from *absolute zero*. It was not supported by any monetary power: bank, capitalist group, *etc.*

It is for these reasons that Codreanu based his Movement on the value of its unusual principles:

1. The Militant Organization:

He placed it under the insignia of personality, capacity for sacrifice and will.

The basic unit of the Legion of the Archangel Michael is not an assembly of members who have a political center, but a small group of individuals recruited one by one by the person who is going to become their leader. This unit, called a "Nest," is an independent unit, but it is hierarchically attached to a higher unit, and so on up to the top of the pyramid to the Leader of the Legion. [\[2\]](#)

2. The Political Organization:

This organization does not depend on committees and subcommittees which seek the satisfaction of particular interests. It is a hierarchical system ending with the Legionary Senate and Chief of the Legion, who are dedicated entirely to the nation, its well-being and its harmonious development.

3. The Spiritual Organization:

This constitutes the most important part of the Legionary purpose. The goal is to provoke a radical transformation in the mental structure and the morals of the nation through continuous work on the individual. Therefore, the Legionnaire continually seeks to educate according to

moral and ethical norms, by rules of comportment, and by voluntary submission to a spiritual discipline. In the long run, this spiritual discipline will give rise to other impulses, other attitudes, other convictions about the meaning of life in society and about man as the central element of society. [\[3\]](#)

4. The Financial Organization:

The establishment of the resources which are indispensable to the activity of the Movement was definitely removed from the usual system of financing owed to particular interest groups, to social monopolies or to even more obscure organizations. It was decided that in order to arrive at a fundamental modification of the reigning mentality, the Legionary Movement would set the example of independence. It would support itself by means of its own resources. The self sufficiency of a movement which desires to be respected signifies its independence of all other groups and gives it the opportunity to face its fight without fearing anyone. From this painful beginning up to the present the Legionary Movement has fed its efforts by the dues and donations of its members and sympathizers.

The following is a chronological history of the Movement:

June 24, 1927: Codreanu and his four companions (Ion Mota, Ilie Garneata, Corneliu Georgescu, Radu Mironovici) lay the foundations of the Legionary Movement under the name of The Legion of the Archangel Michael. The birth certificate of this organization contains only the following lines:

Today, Friday, the 24th of June, 1927, (Saint John the Baptist,) at 10 P.M., the Legion of the Archangel Michael is founded under my direction. May he whose belief is unbounded enter its ranks. May he who has doubts remain outside. I hereby name Radu Mironovici, chief of the Guard of the Icon. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.

July 10, 1927: Codreanu specifies the first spiritual lines of the new Legionary life: faith in God, confidence in the mission of the Legionary Movement, love among the legionnaires, and song.

August 1, 1927: The bi-monthly magazine *Pamantul Stramosec (The Land of the Ancestors)* appears. This is the first publication and the official organ of the Movement under the direction of Codreanu.

November 8, 1927: Codreanu receives the solemn oath of the first Legionnaires. In total: 28 people.

February 19, 1928: A truck is purchased, thanks to the contributions of the first Legionnaires (begun December 1, 1927).

Summer 1928: Legionary commerce based on the new principles begins. The team responsible uses the truck to transport staples and fruits (produced by another Legionary team in a rented garden) to health resorts where they are sold.

December 10, 1928: Professor Ion Gavanescul takes the Legionary oath.

January 3-4, 1929: General Ion Tamoschi takes the Legionary oath and the first meeting of the "Nest" leaders takes place. Codreanu stipulates the fundamental principles of the system of "dynamic education." (Action is education.)

During the same meeting, the Legionary Senate is formed. The first members are: Hristache Solomon, General Macridesco, General Ion Tamoschi, Spiru Pecieli, Colonel Paul Cambureanu, Professor Ion Butaru, and Traian Braileanu.

Summer 1929: As a follow-up to the decision to use the dynamic educational system, Corneliu Codreanu organizes two educational levels whose goal is: to develop the will; to accept a hard life; and to impose the obligation for each person to be strict with himself.

December 15, 1929: The first public Legionary meeting takes place in the small Moldavian village of Beresti. The authorities appear and try to prevent the meeting.

January 1930: Corneliu Codreanu decides to intensify Legion propaganda among the peasant masses. Legionary teams begin to penetrate the districts of Moldavia. The first "conflicts" with the authorities arise.

February 10, 1930: A large Legionary demonstration takes place at Cahul. More than 20,000 peasants are present. From this moment on, the peasants of other regions (Bessarabia, Maramures) begin to ask that the Legionnaires come to their region. too.

June 1930: Codreanu decides to launch a new national organization for combating the communist propaganda in Bessarabia. This was to be an organization inclusive of the Legion of the Archangel Michael and other youth groups not affiliated with any political party. His appeal had as its main goal a peaceful march and demonstration against the communist influence in Bessarabia.

At a meeting with his co-workers the formation and name of the new organization was discussed. Mr. Granganu proposed the name of the organization to be The Iron Guard. (The Iron Guard later became the political party of the Legionary Movement.)

An authorization from the government for the march by the Iron Guard was obtained from Mr. Vaida-Voevod, at that time the Minister of Internal Affairs. Later, however, Mr. Vaida-Voevod, under pressure from the controlled press, withdrew the approval of the planned march into Bessarabia by the Iron Guard.

July 20, 1930: The government forbids the distribution of the Legionary Movement's propaganda in Bessarabia, although it had previously given its authorization for that distribution.

Corneliu Codreanu issues a Manifesto-Notice in which he criticizes the maneuvers of the Jewish leaders and of bribed politicians. He calls upon spiritually upright Romanians to fight. An extremely violent campaign against the Legionary Movement is begun by the press.

November 8, 1930: The first center of the Legion is inaugurated at Bucharest.

December 1930: Without saying anything to anyone, an exasperated Legionnaire, Dumitrescu-Zapada, attempts to assassinate Socor, a Communist journalist who is the director of the newspaper *Dimineata (The Morning)*.

January 9, 1931: Codreanu is arrested and confined in the prison of Vacaresti along with a group of Legionary leaders.

January 11, 1931: Ion Mihalache, Minister of the Interior, dissolves the Iron Guard and the Legion of the Archangel Michael for the first time by an executive order issued by the Council of Ministers. (An illegal act under the constitution of Romania.) Falsified documents are published which attempt to compromise the Supreme Leader of the Legion in the eyes of the public.

End of February, 1931: In the trial of the first dissolution of the Iron Guard and the Legion of the Archangel Michael, the Tribunal of Ilfov delivers a unanimous verdict for acquittal.

March 31, 1931: After 81 days of prison, Codreanu and the six Legionnaires involved in the previously mentioned trial are freed.

June 1, 1931: The Legionary Movement participates in the general elections for the first time and obtains 43,183 votes but no deputy is elected.

August 31, 1931: Partial elections are held in the district of Neamt. In spite of many obstacles, the Legionary forces obtain their first success: 11,301 votes. Corneliu Codreanu is proclaimed deputy.

December 31, 1931: Codreanu delivers his first speech to Parliament. In this speech he specifies the cardinal points of his generation: *God, Country, King, Family, Property, and Army.*

Next he expounds on the fundamental problems of the time for Romania: "The Jewish Problem;" "The Problem of Youth;" "The Problem of Foreign Policy;" "The Problem of the Misery of the Peasant Class;" and "The Problem of Communism." He accuses the democratic political parties of being responsible for the nation's misery.

On this occasion, he also stipulates the Legionary position on foreign affairs for the first time: "As for our position, if it is a question of choosing between these two extremes (Fascism or Communism), we are among those who believe that the Sun does not rise in Moscow, but in Rome." It is also during this speech that Codreanu formulates several political measures considered of extreme urgency:

- to introduce capital punishment for defrauders of public funds;
- to confiscate the fortunes of these defrauders;
- to bring to justice all politicians who have acted against the country;
- to forbid politicians to take part in the Administrative Council;
- to expel all foreign exploiters from the country;
- to declare the territory of Romania as the inalienable and imprescriptible property of the Romanian Nation;
- to make all elected officials work honesty;
- and to institute a central administrative authority.

January 9, 1932: Codreanu opens the electoral campaign for the election of a deputy in the

district of Tutova.

March 1932: The Iorga-Argetoianu government disregards the law and dissolves the Iron Guard for the second time. This does not keep the propaganda teams from continuing their efforts, but it makes it impossible for Codreanu to defend his cause in Parliament.

The press makes accusations and injurious statements and urges the annihilation of the Iron Guard. Scores of Legionnaires are beaten and imprisoned by the authorities.

April 17, 1932: Even so, the Iron Guard wins the elections at Tutova, and Professor Ion Zelea Codreanu, Corneliu's father becomes the second Legionary deputy to enter Parliament.

July 17, 1932: General elections are held. The Iron Guard win 70,000 votes and elects five deputies.

December 10, 1932: Corneliu Codreanu creates the first superior rank in the Legionary hierarchy: that of "Legionary Commander."

The Movement's periodicals have reached 35,000 copies per issue. The Legion owns a print shop and two trucks.

April 1933: A propaganda team dubbed "The Team of Death" leaves on a two-month journey to include the provinces of Oltenie, Banat, and Transylvania. (The team was so named because of a Legionary song of that name, and because its members were determined to sacrifice themselves to the last man without replying to the provocations and armed attacks made against them.)

June 1933: The first court case is brought against the "Team of Death" at Arad (Banat). All are acquitted.

Beginning of July, 1933: Second trial of the "Team of Death" at Alba Iulia (Transylvania) also results in an acquittal.

July 10, 1933: The A. Vaida-Voevod government forbids the opening of the community work camp of Visani, where more than 200 Legionnaires were to build a 6 km. dam. The arrested Legionnaires are brutally mistreated by the police.

August 4, 1933: Construction is begun on the *Casa Verde* (The Green House) at Bucurestii Noi (New Bucharest) a suburb north of the capital. The initial purpose of the *Casa Verde* is to make a home for the wounded Legionnaires. Later, it becomes the Headquarters of the Legionary Movement.

July-August 1933: A ferocious press campaign is launched against the Legion and its social activities. During this campaign of calumnies, the Legionary Movement is accused of having set up a counterfeiting ring at Rasinari (Transylvania), of working for foreigners, of being financed by Hitler, Mussolini, and Moscow. The most dogged are the newspapers of Sarindar street where the Jewish press is concentrated.

November 15, 1933: The liberal government of I.G. Duca comes into power. It attempts to destroy the Iron Guard. New elections are scheduled for December 20.

The electoral campaign is very favorable to the Legionary Movement. The government unleashes an unheard of terror against the legal activity of the Iron Guard: arrests, prohibition of placarding and meeting, suspension of the Legionary press, *etc.*

November 22, 1933: The first Legionnaire falls. While hanging posters, a student named Virgil Teodorescu is killed by police at Constanta (Dobroudja).

November 28, 1933: Legionnaire, Nita Constantin, a driver, is assassinated at Jassy (Moldavia).

December 4, 1933: Corneliu Codreanu distributes a memorandum in which he criticizes the terror of the liberal government. He accuses the following members of the government of assassinating and tomtrng Legionnaires: I.G. Duca, Nicoale Titulescu, Victor Iamandi, Inculet, Victor Antonescu, Valer Roman, General Dumitrescu (Commander of the Police), Eugen Critescu (Director of Security).

December 9, 1933: Nicolae Balaianu, a peasant, is assassinated in the district of Vlasca (Wallachia).

December 10, 1933: The Duca government dissolves the Iron Guard for the third time in order to keep it from participating in the elections. More than 18,000 Legionnaires are arrested and imprisoned. Corneliu Codreanu succeeds in hiding.

December 1933: Gheorghe Bujgoli a Romanian Macedonian, is assassinated in the province of Dobroudja.

December 29-30, 1933: Legionnaires Nicolae Constantinescu, Doro Belimace and Ion Caranica assassinate Prime Minister I.G. Duca, who had ordered the savage terror against the Legionary Movement. All three immediately turn themselves in to the authorities. The terror is intensified. The assassinations carried out by the authorities multiply.

December 29-30 1933: Sterie Ciumetti, Codreanu's secretary, a Romanian Macedonian, is assassinated by means of atrocious tortures for refusing to reveal where his leader is hiding.

December 30, 1933: Toader Toma. a tailor, is assassinated at Tecuci (Moldavia). The two large daily newspapers, *Calendnrul (The Calendar)* and *Cuvantul (The Word)*, which support the Legionary struggle are abolished and their directors, Nichifor Crainic and Professor Nae Ionescu, are sent to Jilava prison.

March 14,1934: Three days before the opening of the trial for the dissolution of the Legionary Movement, Corneliu Codreanu presents himself, of his own free will, before the Council of War, which is to judge him. This Council is made up of five generals: Ignat, Costandache, Comanescu, Dona and Filip. Royal Commissioner (prosecutor): General Pelrovicescu.

April 5,1934: The Council of War of the Military Tribunal of the Capital declares the Legionary Movement not guilty and consequently acquits the 52 indicted Legionnaires. The three Legionnaires who assassmated I.G. Duca are condemned to life at hard labor.

From this time on, The Central Headquarters of the Legionary Movement is established in the home of General Gheorghe Cantacuzino at 3 Gutenberg Street, Bucharest.

After this acquittal the prestige of the Legionary Movement grows greater and greater. The great period of education through work begins for the Legionnaires. Community work camps spring up in every region of the country. The most famous are: Giulesti, near Bucharest (commercial truck garden and brickyard), Dealul Negru in Transylvania (construction of a school), Rarau, in Bucovina (construction of a convalescent home for the Legionnaires made ill from the prisons), Cotiugenii Mari in Bessarabia (reconstruction of a church in ruins) and Movila Techirghiol in Dobroudja (rest camp for the wounded).

September 5, 1934: A plot against Corneliu Codreanu is discovered. Mihail Stelescu, Legionary Commander and Deputy, and a very ambitious man, falls under the influence of forces which are trying to destroy the Legionary Movement. Stelescu is plotting to poison Codreanu.

September 25, 1934: Mihail Stelescu is judged by a "Council of Honor" composed of 23 Legionary Commanders, like himself, with General Cantacuzino presiding. Found guilty, Stelescu is eliminated from the Legion.

January 1, 1935: Memorandum by Codreanu containing the log of the terror of the liberal government of Romania.

- 18,000 arrests
- 300 hospitalized with serious injuries
- 16 Legionnaires assassinated
- 3 Legionnaires condemned.

March 20, 1935: Codreanu institutes *Totul Pentru Tara* (Everything for the Country) as a legal party under the presidency of General Gheorghe Cantacuzino.

June 1935: Hundreds of Community Work Camps are inaugurated.

July 5, 1935: The work camp, Carmen Sylva, begins on the coast of the Black Sea. 800 Legionnaires work there under the direction of Codreanu.

July 20, 1935: In a memorandum, Codreanu explains to 242 Legionnaires of Camp Amota (Oltenie) what constitutes Legionary propriety: "The Legionnaire must behave in such a manner as to be the personification of a saying: 'He is as proper as a Legionnaire.' Proper from every point of view: in regard to himself, in regard to outsiders (behavior, attitude, good faith, respect, etc.), in regard to the organization, in regard to his fellows, to his superiors, in regard to his country, in regard to God."

September 13, 1935: The inauguration of Legionary Commerce. The first Legionary Co-operative appears.

September 19, 1935: Memorandum on Legionary Commerce. Codreanu gives instructions to Department leaders. He ends his memorandum with the following words: "Legionary commerce signifies a new phase in the history of commerce which has been stained by the Jewish spirit. It is called: Christian commerce - based on the love of people and not on robbing them; commerce based on honor.

October, 1935: The first meeting of the Leaders of the 13 Legionary Regions is held. These 13 regions comprise the framework of the Movement on the national level.

November 11, 1935: Codreanu institutes "The Legionary Control " whose goal is "to see that Legionary activity is maintained at the highest level of effectiveness and morality."

November 26, 1935: On the occasion of a difference of opinion between the Legionary Movement and the nationalist newspaper *Porunca Vremii (The Order of Time)*, Corneliu Codreanu recalls in a memorandum one of the main principles of the Legionary Doctrine: "According to Legionary dogma, we are not permitted to behave dishonorably even toward our enemy. How he behaves or will behave toward us is his business."

April 5, 1936: Codreanu finishes the first volume of his book *Pentru Legionnaires (For My Legionnaires)*.

April 22, 1936: The first Legionary camps and work projects of the year begin and throughout the country more than a thousand appear.

May 30, 1936: Memorandum concerning the external politics of the Romanian government. Codreanu denounces Nicolae Titulescu's maneuvers to draw Romania nearer to the U.S.S.R.: "That would be an act of treason on the part of the Romanian people toward God and toward the moral order of this world."

July 16, 1936: Mihail Stelescu, traitor to the Legion who continued his betrayal and infamy in his newspaper *Cruciada Romanismului (The Crusade of Romanianism)*, is killed by a group of ten comrades who are historically to bear the name of *Decemviri (The Ten Men)*.

The same day, Legionnaire Gheorghe Gligor is killed by Communists at Cernauti (Bucovina).

October 1, 1936: Even though it is banned throughout the country, Corneliu Codreanu's book comes out in Sibiu (Transylvania).

October 25, 1936: The "Corps of Legionary Workers" is organized.

November 5, 1936: Corneliu Codreanu addresses a *Memoire* on foreign policy Problems to the king, the politicians, and the country. In this publication he affirms: "There is neither a Petite Entente nor a Balkan Entente. Whoever believes in all that proves that he understands nothing...

"Two worlds are face to face. All diplomatic liaisons will crumble under their pressure in time of war. These two worlds: the States where there have been national revolutions which fight to defend the cross and a millennial civilization, and Bolshevism which, with its dependencies, fights to destroy nations and to topple Christian civilization.

"Today all those who are on the line of destiny and national history have a duty to demand and to enforce that both internal and external Romanian politics be removed from the influence and control of Free Masonry, of Communism, and of Judaism. This is the only salvation for the future of this nation."

November 24, 1936: A Symbolic team of seven Legionary Commanders (Ion Mota, Vasile Marin, Gheorghe Clime, Neculai Totu, Alexandru Cantacuzino, Banica Dobre, Father Ion

Dumitrescu-Borsa) leaves for Spain to fight at the side of Spanish nationalists against Communism.

January 13, 1937: Legionnaires Ion Mota (brother-in-law of Corneliu Codreanu) and Vasile Marin fall on the Spanish front at Majadahonda near Madrid.

January 26, 1937: Codreanu writes a Memorandum in which he clarifies the meaning of Legionary victory: "...The Legionary Movement will never resort to the idea of a plot or coup d'état in order to win. The Legionary Movement can only win by accomplishment of an internal process of conscience of the Romanian Nation. The victory that we await in this manner is so great, so luminous, that we will never accept that it be replaced by a cheap, fleeting victory born of a plot or a coup d'état."

February 12, 1937: The "Oath of Ranking Legionnaires," who constitute the Movement's elite, takes place in Saint Gorgani Church before the bodies of Mota and Marin. Codreanu ends the eulogy with this statement:

"That is why you are going to swear that you understand that being a Legionary elite in our terms means not only to fight and win, but it also means above all a permanent sacrifice of oneself to the service of the Nation; that the idea of an elite is tied to the ideas of sacrifice, poverty, and a hard, bitter life; that where self-sacrifice ends, there also ends the Legionary elite."

February 13, 1937: Mota and Marin are buried in the mausoleum of the *Casa Verde*. The funeral procession is several kilometers long. Attendance is estimated at several hundred thousand people.

The pro-Legionary wave takes on significant proportions. The government becomes uneasy. A new campaign of calumnies and provocations is organized against the Legionary Movement with the help of the press. There is increasing talk of the plots and the "coup d'état" that the Legion is supposedly fomenting.

March 2, 1937: The liberal government of Gheorghe Tatarescu begins a new phase against the Legionary Movement:

- all Romanian universities (powerful centers of the Movement) are closed *sine die*;
- all canteens and student housing are closed;
- all cases brought against Legionary students end in sentences;
- all Legionary camps and work projects are banned.

April 15, 1937: The Council of War at Bucharest begins the trial of the *Decemviri*. The defense is eliminated from the court and the principle witnesses for the defense are not allowed to appear.

April 27, 1937: The Council of War condemns the *Decemviri*.

Eight are condemned to life at hard labor, two to ten years hard labor.

June 18, 1937: Memorandum by Codreanu on the occasion of ten years of Legionary existence.

This memorandum ends with the following words: "Be proper, be just, be pure, be of good humor as you would want every Romanian to be and to behave in his Legionary county."

July 14, 1937: Corneliu Codreanu rejects the government-demanded control by the O.E.T.R. (Office of Education of Romanian Youth) over the Legionary work camps.

October 9, 1937: Death of General Gheorghe Cantacuzino, party leader of *Totul Pentru Tara*.

October 12, 1937: Gheorghe Clime, an engineer, Commander of the *Buna Vestire*, is proclaimed the new party leader of *Totul Penhu Tara*.

October-December 1937: Legionary business takes on national proportions. Restaurants, canteens, boarding houses, cooperatives, factory warehouses, *etc.*, are opened everywhere.

November 11, 1937: Codreanu opens the electoral campaign for the general elections which will take place on December 20.

November 30, 1937: Corneliu Codreanu's declaration on foreign policy. Among other things, he says: "I am against the great Western Democracies; I am against the Petite Entente; I am against the Balkan Entente; and I have no attachment to the League of Nations in which, I do not believe. I am for a Romanian foreign policy at the side of Rome and Berlin at the side of the States which have had national revolutions. Against Bolshevism. Forty-eight hours after the victory of the Legionary Movement, Romania will have a new alliance with Rome and Berlin and will thus begin on the path of her historical mission in the world: for the defense of the Cross, of culture and of Christian Civilization."

December 20, 1937: General elections. The Legionary Movement party obtains 16% of the votes and 66 seats in Parliament in spite of the terror unleashed against its members.

December 28, 1937: Having lost the elections, the Tatarescu government resigns. Octavian Goga is commissioned to form the new Cabinet.

January 13, 1938: On the occasion of the commemoration of the deaths of Mota and Marin, Codreanu creates a special order in the ranks of the Legionary units: "The Mota-Marin Corps" under the direction of Alexandru Cantacuzino. The members of this elite corps have as their slogan "Ready To Die." The pro-Legionary movement among the masses is growing at a tremendous rate.

February 8, 1938: Following the infamous campaign of calumnies of the Cuza-Goga government and the deaths of several Legionnaires killed by the myrmidons of a "nationalistic government," Corneliu Cordreanu reveals his decision to remove the Legionary Movement from electoral propaganda.

February 10, 1938: The Cuza-Goga government is dismissed by the king. The patriarch Miron Cristea sets up the new government.

February 12, 1938: The coup d'état of King Carol II:

- annuls the Constitution;

- adjourns elections;
- suppresses party activities:
- poses the spiritual leader of the Orthodox Romanian Church as Council President;
- imposes Armand Calinescu, the future assassin of Corneliu Codreanu, as Minister of the Interior;
- imposes a new constitution entirely directed against the Legionary Movement; and invokes the death penalty for the members of the Legionary Movement.

February 21, 1938: Codreanu decides upon the self dissolution of the party *Totul Pentru Tara* and the liquidation of Legionary commerce in order to avoid conflict with the authorities.

February 22, 1938: Codreanu sends a letter of protest to the royal Councillors in which he denounces coup d'état and the imposition of the new Constitution.

March 5, 1938: The government suspends all salaried Legionary administrators from their posts (ministers, professors, teachers, civil servants *etc.*).

March 25 1938: Codreanu sends Professor Nicolae Iorga a letter concerning the latter's campaign of calumny undertaken against the Legionary Movement in his newspaper *Neamul Romanesc (The Romanian People)*. In this letter, Codreanu brands Professor Nicolae Iotga's lack of character with infamy before the nation and before history: "...From the depths of my battered soul, I cry to you and I will cry even from the depths of the tomb: *you are a spiritually dishonest being* who has without reason mistreated our innocent souls. Neither you, Professor, nor those who have assumed responsibility for a bloody and unjustifiable oppression will encounter any violence or even any opposition on our part."

March 29, 1938: Codreanu addresses a letter to the director of the newspaper *Neamul Romanesc* in which he denounces the attitude of Professor Nicolae Iorga who had published his reply to Codreanu's letter without also publishing the text of that letter. He demands that his letter of March 26 be published as the code of honor prescribes.

March 30, 1938: Professor Nicolae Iorga, instead of replying goes to the public prosecutor and demands the opening of a lawsuit against Codreanu for insult and injury. This suit constitutes the basis of all later government action which culminates in the assassination of Corneliu Codreanu on November 30, 1938.

April 17, 1938: Codreanu is arrested at Predeal. This is the beginning of the Great Persecution unleashed by King Carol and his Minister, Armand Calinescu. Hundreds of well-known Legionnaires are sent to concentration camps. Tens of thousands of militants are arrested and imprisoned.

April 19, 1938: Codreanu is condemned to six months in prison (the maximum penalty) by the Council of War at Bucharest in the suit filed by Professor Iorga. At the same time, the government is preparing another suit in which he is to be presented as a traitor to the country, a betrayer to the Nazis and the organizer of a revolution against the regime.

May 23, 1938: This second trial takes place before the same Council of War of Bucharest. The public is not allowed to attend. The only people admitted are press correspondents.

May 27, 1938: The Council of War delivers the sentence for second trial of Codreanu: the latter is condemned to *ten years* at hard labor on the basis of imaginary accusations.

June 16, 1938: The Legionnaires who have not been arrested organize. Ion Belgea reconstitutes the "Chain of Command of the Legionary Movement." Those who take part: Ion Belgea, Iordache Nicoara, Horia Sima, Ion Antoniu, Constantin Papanace and Gheorghe Dragomir-Jilava.

July 11, 1938: Ion Belgea is arrested. Ion Antoniu takes command. A few days later, he, too, is arrested. Constantin Papanace follows him.

July 23, 1938: Constantin Papanace is arrested and freed immediately. However, he passes the command to Horia Sima before disappearing in the country to throw off police searches.

September 8-12, 1938: New concentration camps are created and quickly filled by floods of Legionnaires who are arrested everywhere. Hunted Legionnaires are tortured and assassinated.

Beginning of October 1938: Second reorganization of Legionary Command: Vasile Cristescu, Alexandru Cantacuzino, Father Dumitrescu-Borsa, Horia Sima, Constantin Papanace and Nicolae Petrascu.

October 1938: This is the month of "Manifestos" and "Memorials" launched by the Legionary Command, student organizations, officers, *etc.*, for cessation of the terror. A

revision of the case of Corneliu Codreanu is brought up for consideration, as well as the issue of responsibility in case the conflict between the king and the nation should continue to worsen.

November 10, 1938: On the occasion of Carol II's departure abroad, the Legionary Command sends a "Manifesto-Communiqué" in which Armand Calinescu's already extant plan to assassinate Corneliu Codreanu is denounced.

November 13, 1938: King Carol II leaves for London and Paris.

November 30, 1938: Under the direct order of Armand Calinescu, Minister of the Interior, Codreanu, the *Nicadori* and the *Decemviri* are assassinated by the police 30 km. from Bucharest in the forest of Tancabesti during a transfer from one prison to another.

December 1, 1938: A manifesto is signed by Vasile Christescu and Dumitrescu-Borsa, a priest in which peace and self-control are recommended to the Legionnaires.

The Legionary Movement begins a new clandestine life. The raids, arrests, summary executions and executions without process intensify. The tension between the king and

government and the nation revolted by the injustice and barbaric methods employed, intensifies to the point of paroxysm.

December 15, 1938: Beginning of Legionary exile. The first group of Legionnaires passes secretly into Poland.

January 8, 1939: A second Legionary group also passes into Poland.

January 26, 1939: Professor Vasile Christescu is assassinated by the police.

February 4, 1939: Accompanied by a group of Legionnaires, Horia Sima crosses the border into Hungary, and four days later, they arrive in Berlin.

February 8, 1939: A Legionary team (Enache Nadoleanu, Martin Vucu, Gherman, Dragos Popovici and Dr. Ion Iovu), which is preparing an attempt on the life of Armand Calinescu, Codreanu's assassin, is arrested and its members are shot on the spot, after which their bodies are thrown into the crematory oven.

February 27, 1939: With a group of Legionnaires, Constantin Papanace takes refuge in Berlin after passing through Czechoslovakia.

May 1939: In Berlin the New Legionary Command is organized: Father Ion Dumitrescu-Borsa, Constantin Papanace, Horia Sima, Ion Victor Vojen, Victor Silaghi and Alexandru Constant.

September 21, 1939: Armand Calinescu, the executioner of the Legionary Movement, is cut down by a team of nine Legionnaires, later dubbed *Rasbunatorii* (The Avengers): Miti Dumitrescu, Cezar Popescu, Traian Popescu, Nelu Moldoveanu, Ion Ionescu, Ion Vasiliu, Marin Stanciulescu, Isaia Ovidiu and Gheorghe Paraschivescu.

After the execution of the tyrant, the team announces the punitive measure on the radio in these terms: "Armand Calinescu, President of the Council of Ministers, has been executed by a team of Legionnaires. We are sons of Romanians of Prahova, and we have accomplished a painful necessity. We have punished the one by whose consent the great Romanian, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, was executed."

After that, they turned themselves in. After torturing them for eight hours, the police executed them without trial. Their bodies were thrown on a public square to be exposed to the view of passers-by.

September 21-22, 1939: The great massacres. The new government of General Argeseanu orders execution on the spot of all Legionary directors in concentration camps and prisons in Romania. A total of 252 Legionnaires are thus massacred among the thousands who are imprisoned. Later several hundred others pay with their lives for being Legionnaires.

January 1940: Father Dumitrescu-Borsa, Alexandru Constant and Victor Vojen voluntarily withdraw from the directing group in Berlin and the leadership falls to Horia Sima and Constantin Papanace.

January-March 1940: In Romania a Legionary delegation made up of Ilie Gameata, Corneliu Georgescu, Radu Mironovici (all three founders of the Legionary Movement), Augustin Bidianu and Dr. Vasile Noveanu, continues the bargaining for a detente which was begun in December, 1939, with King Carol II.

March 28, 1940: The first Legionary delegation (Radu Mironovici and Constantin Stoicanescu) arrives in Berlin with the official mission of setting forth the condition of the case for detente and to negotiate the return of the Legionary refugees.

May 2, 1940: The second Legionary delegation (Constantin Stoicanescu and Augustin Bidianu) arrives in Berlin. Horia Sima and Constantin Papanace send letters, addressed to King Carol II, in which the Legionary Movement's point of view on external politics (anti-communist) is specified.

May 5, 1940: Horia Sima, accompanied by a group of Legionnaires, leaves Germany to secretly penetrate into Romania where he is arrested on May 19.

June 13, 1940: Horia Sima is set free.

June 23, 1940: Horia Sima is given an audience with the king.

July 3, 1940: The Tatarescu government resigns. Three Legionnaires (Horia Sima, Dr. Vasile Noveanu and Augustin Bidianu) take part in the new Gigurtu government.

July 7, 1940: Horia Sima resigns. He is replaced by another Legionnaire Radu Budisteanu.

End of July, 1940: The "Legionary Forum," whose decisions become unassailable, is created. The members are Horia Sima, Col. Zavoianu, Popescu-Buzau, Aristotel Gheorghiu, Vasile Iasinschi, Corneliu Georgescu, Ilie Gameata, Mile Lefter, Prof. Traian Braileanu, and Radu Mironovici.

August 16 1940: There is a collective audience of Legionary directors, Horia Sima, Traian Braileanu, Corneliu Georgescu and Radu Mironovici, with King Carol II. No acceptable result is attained.

September 3, 1940: Following a Manifesto drawn up by Horia Sima on September 1, in which the abdication of King Carol II was demanded, large anti-Carolist demonstrations take place in the urban centers of the country. During these demonstrations, eight Legionnaires meet their deaths.

September 4, 1940: General Ion Antonescu is assigned to form a new government.

September 5, 1940: General Antonescu receives complete powers. The Constitution of 1938 is suspended. The Legionnaires arrested on September 3 are freed.

September 6, 1940: Abdication of King Carol II under pressure of the Legionary forces. The Legionary Movement is requested to take part in the formation of a new government.

The same day, the Legionary Forum, the supreme entity of the Movement, represented by Corneliu Georgescu (one of the founders of the Legion) salutes Horia Sima as the successor of Corneliu Codreanu.

September 14, 1940: The "National Legionary State" is proclaimed. Several Legionnaires take part in the government directed by General Antonescu:

- Horia Sima -Vice President
- Vasile Iasinschi - Labor and Health
- Traian Braileanu - Education

- Ion Protopopescu - State Inventory
- Michel Sturdza - Foreign Affairs
- Comcliu Georgescu - Colonization
- Constantin Papanace - Finance
- A. Constant - Propaganda
- Horia Cosmovici - Under Secretary of State
- General Ion Petrovicescu - Interior

November 23, 1940: Legionary Romania joins the Tripartite Pact which was signed on September 27, by Germany, Italy and Japan.

November 25, 1940: At the prison of Jilava, work is begun to exhume Corneliu Codreanu, the *Nicadori* and the *Decemviri* who were assassinated the 29/30 of November, 1938 at

the order of Armand Calinescu and with the consent of the government and of King Carol II.

November 27, 1940: The throng of Legionnaires who take in that work are unable to contain themselves at the sight of the mortal remains of their great leader and the other martyrs. In an outburst of rage, they execute the 64 members of previous political regimes who are imprisoned at Jilava and who tortured and massacred Legionary youths.

November 29, 1940: General Antonescu initiates official steps to oust the Legionary Movement from the government.

January 12, 1941: General Antonescu tries to cause a rupture in the heart of the Legionary Movement by proposing to Vasile Iasinschi, Minister of Health, that he take over leadership of the Legionary Movement. This proposal was made by the General in front of Mihail Antonescu, Minister of Finance. Of course the proposal was politely refused.

January 13, 1941: Legionary circles learn that that the General has been preparing a personal rapprochement with Hitler for a long time and is leaving for Berlin the next day for an interview with him. The same day, Berlin requests by telegram that Horia Sima participate in that conference. Notified at the last moment. the Movement's leader, in agreement with the other Legionary directors, refuses to take part in it.

January 14, 1941: General Antonescu discusses with Hitler the question of Romanian participation in the eventuality of a war with the U.S.S.R. He appears disposed to such participation under certain conditions. One of the conditions is *German neutrality in case of a settling of accounts between him and the Legionary Movement*. His principal argument is that the army is entirely on his side and ready to follow him. The chain of events shows that the argument evoked carried more weight in Hitler's calculations than the Legionary Movement's ideological kinship to and spiritual influence on the Romanian nation. On the other hand if General Antonescu posed the problem that way, it was because he envisioned taking action against the Legionary Movement shortly.

January 15, 1941: The General returns. He resumes his activities without acquainting Horia Sima, Vice-President of the Council and leader of the Legionary Movement, with the results of his interview with the Führer.

The same day, Mr. Constantin Greceanu, Romanian Minister to Berlin, is recalled to Bucharest for "consultation." It was only later that the astuteness of this re-call was understood. General Antonescu was contemplating replacing several Legionary Ministers as the first step in his plans for the coup d'état. Therefore, it was necessary that there be no one in Berlin who could promptly appeal to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and protest this use of force.

January 16, 1941: It is learned that the German Embassy, by order of Ambassador Fabricius (a confessed enemy of the Legionary Movement), is spreading false news about the atmosphere brought about by the attitude of the Legionnaires. That false news goes so far as to state that in the large cities the Legionnaires are scuffling with the army; that their behavior is provoking a growing anxiety in the population; that the army can no longer put up with the audacity and provocations of the Legion's troops; that General Antonescu will be obliged to take exceptional measures.

Such news circulated everywhere. The General, approving these rumors, waited for the psychological reparation of public opinion to reach the optimum point to proceed to his political-military offensive.

On the other side, the German Embassy collected those "internal events" (which it spread) and transmitted them to Berlin in the form of libel against the Legionary Movement.

According to them, the Legionary Movement was undisciplined, incapable of facing up to difficult political moments, questionable for the Reich in a conflict with the U.S.S.R, *etc.*

The Legionary Movement had to be discredited to that extent in Romania as in Berlin before the General's authoritarian action.

January 17-18, 1941: While Legionary Ministers devote themselves to their daily work, and the organization is far from suspecting anything, General Antonescu and the forces supporting him take the last steps to assure that the coup d'état will succeed and that the guilt will fall on the Movement.

January 19, 1941: Doring, a German major, head of the military transports bound for Bulgaria, is assassinated. The anti-Legionary coalition which is preparing the coup d'état immediately releases word that the German major's death was a consequence of the negligence of the Minister of the Interior, General Petrovicescu. The goal was two-fold: it was an admirable pretext for eliminating a Legionnaire from one of the most important Cabinet posts: it was an exceptionally good way to anger Hitler and turn him against the Movement.

By the time the assassin was arrested and it was ascertained that it was a Greek who had come to Romania with a passport, it was too late to change public opinion and modify the reports sent to Berlin.

General Antonescu unilaterally decides to dismiss the Commissioners of Romanization (all Legionnaires).

January 20, 1941: General Antonescu takes a series of anti-Legionary measures without consulting the Council of Ministers, which shows that coup d'état had been ready for a long time. He removes General Petrovicescu (Minister of the Interior) from office without warning or reason. Michel Sturdza (Minister of Foreign Affairs), another Legionnaire, had already been dismissed on December 8, 1940, for reasons which were just as insignificant. The elimination of the Minister of the Interior completed a plan which was already well-established and nearing its culmination.

If in Legionary circles everyone thought Minister Michel Sturdza's dismissal was one of General Antonescu's customary whims - a whim which would pass in the long-run - the dismissal of General Petrovicescu put them on guard. It was too abusive. In Bucharest, huge protests took place.

At this time, to increase his chances of winning, General Antonescu summons all the Legionary Prefects of the entire country to be in Bucharest the next day. January 21, for administrative reasons. The majority of those Prefects will later be arrested, tried and condemned.

January 21, 1941: While the Prefects arrive in the Capital, believing they are there for an administrative convocation, military Prefects are assigned to their places. The lists of the military Prefects had already been prepared for several days. The take-over of the Prefectures was made *manu militari*, without respecting the slightest rule of transmission of power - as happens in coup d'état.

Two other Legionnaires are dismissed for no official reason other than General Antonescu's wish: Alecu Ghica (Head of Security) and Radu Mironovici (Chief of Police of Bucharest). Still more evidence of the General's true intentions.

When the news of General Petrovicescu's dismissal spread through the country, there was a reaction on the part of Legionnaires. Where they were able to assemble, they barricaded themselves in and resisted the military forces.

The Coup D'Etat of January 21, 1941

One of the most unusual accusations which hovers over the Legionary past is that only four and one-half months after the birth of the National Legionary State, the Legionary Movement is supposed to have provoked a rebellion for motives which are poorly defined and which the authorities of Antonescu's government have always avoided discussing. After those unhappy days of January, 1941, a host of Legionary leaders were condemned to harsh prison sentences as high as 25 years at hard labor, but *never* for reasons in direct relation to that famous "rebellion." That is because there was a painful discomfort among the ranks of the "conquerors" who knew quite well the real truth of the matter in which the Legionary Movement was only the victim.

One thing must be clear from the beginning: the uprising of January 21, 1941 *was neither prepared nor set off by the Legionary Movement.*

First, the Legionary Movement had no plausible motive to do it because:

1. It had just emerged from a long period of persecution which had decimated its leading ranks.

2. It was in the midst of internal restructuring and administrative preparation of what had been saved.
3. It knew all too well that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to replace the existing ranks without provoking a long period of political instability and national economic collapse.
4. In addition, the international political climate did not lend itself to that type of manifestation.

On the other hand, the Legionary Movement was in power, and it had no reason to want to overthrow General Antonescu. The duties of the two forces present (the army and the Legionary Movement) were perfectly defined.

The Legionary Movement, in accordance with its doctrine, faced a vast education of the masses according to its principles, which would require several years of arduous social, scholastic and cultural efforts. One can even advance the argument that General Antonescu's presence as the head of the government was considered indispensable. A patriotic, energetic man who kept a tight rein on the armed forces, he could not help but play the desired role of allowing the Legionary Movement to accomplish its preliminary projects and prepare the administrative and political ranks it was lacking.

For the Legionary Movement, the essential problem was not the presence or absence of General Antonescu at the head of the government, but the Communist danger which was an unceasing menace in the East, and the actions of the political survivors of the old regime who were maneuvering in the wings to regain their former status.

With this in mind, the reconciliation between the Legionnaires and the forces supporting General Antonescu was fraternally accepted. For the same reason, a host of privileges for the army was also accepted. It was necessary to maintain internal harmony and to give evidence of complete understanding.

Why? Because the Legionary Movement was perfectly aware that political circumstances demanded *a continual sacrifice on its part*. The supreme leader of the Legion was not preoccupied by being first in the government, and even less by the idea of starting a revolution to take the place of a capable ally. The most elementary principles of Legionary life precluded such a solution. After years of persecution, irreparable losses and continual tension, the Legionary Movement hoped for a period of relative tranquility to rebuild itself and complete its mission.

The idea of breaking off collaboration with General Antonescu especially under the circumstances of that time, and even less by force, never existed in the leading circles of the Legionary Movement. Such an idea went against the most intimate convictions of the Legionary Movement whose fundamental principle is never to resort to brute force or to foul play: and for the Legionary Movement principles are not slogans meant to trick people. They are current, obligatory standards of conduct. It is only in submitting to those standards that the Legionnaire becomes a different man.

In addition, in accepting entrance into a government directed by General Antonescu, the Legionnaires had sworn fidelity to him, and nothing in the world could make them become

pejurors.

Finally, it must be taken into account that the new political order proclaimed by the King and General Antonescu was based upon militant Legionary formations. The State itself bore the name of "National Legionary State." Is it humanly possible to revolt against oneself?

The most convincing evidence of Legionary innocence in this matter is that the military forces that took part in the coup d'état under the direct order of General Antonescu, encountered a massive but totally unorganized resistance. It was, therefore resistance and not offensive attack or an organized plan on the part of the Legionary forces. They simply answered the military forces' attempts to seize administrations, prefectures, city halls, police stations, *etc.* which were *officially* directed by Legionnaires.

Logically, what revolutionary force in the world would start a revolution without preparing it, without having a plan of attack, without having a part of the army on its side, without starting off its "revolution" with a general offensive in several parts of the country, and without trying before everything else, to seize some members of the government in order to break constitutional continuity? That is the least that could be demanded of such an action. Not one of these characteristics can be attributed to the Legionary Movement, which only defended itself against the deliberate action of General Antonescu. In fairness, if the Legionary Movement had decided to take recourse to armed action in order to eliminate the non-legionary Ministers from the government, the famous "rebellion" would have had a different complexion and would not have ended in the defeat of those accused of having stirred it up.

Then there is the question of who planned this revolt and why.

History written by the conquerors almost always presents the conquered as the instigators of all the trouble: from evil intentions right up to the secret preparation of the operation - from the unleashing of the action up to the most odious crimes committed during the conflict. In this case, things were no different. And since after this episode the Legionnaires were either in Romanian prisons or in German concentration camps, it was impossible for them to bring out the truth. And that truth absolves them of all guilt and heaps it completely upon General Antonescu.

With the perspective of time, there is no longer any doubt in the minds of those who took the trouble to dissect the events of the time. The entire plot and execution of this said "affair" is on the General's shoulders. It was he who decided to break the pact of collaboration with the Legionary Movement and to bring about conflict permitting him to expel the Legionnaires from power in order to become the absolute master of the government and if possible, of the entire Movement. This was all the easier to accomplish because the Legionnaires, in their sincerity and loyalty, did not suspect anything and believed firmly in the political rapports established between themselves and General Antonescu under the aegis of the National Legionary State.

But why would the General have made such an illogical, anti-national, hazardous decision? For one and only one reason - which for millenia has brought about the worst conflicts and brought on the most disastrous consequences: ambition. Those who knew him confess that one could rarely encounter a more ambitious individual or one who longed more for greatness or was more exclusive in command. It went to such a point that he was nicknamed "the red dog" not as much because of the color of his hair as because of his character. In a book which was laudatory of

General Antonescu and venomous toward the Legionary Movement, that person is described in the following manner:

Antonescu did not owe his nickname "the red dog" to the fidelity and devotion which are characteristic of the canine race. If he passed for a dog, it was in the pejorative sense. "He bites when one expects it the least" said the officers who had served under him. The first feeling that he inspired was fear. His severity, his insensitivity which caused him not even to know the meaning of the verb to pardon, certainly had a part in that. But it must be added that he was not of our time: in him lived again a man of the primitive kind which was only slowly domesticated through the ages. What feeling other than fear could be caused by the anachronistic presence among us of a direct descendant of the tricky, savage warriors of long ago? [\[4\]](#)

These lines are taken from a book extremely favorable to General Antonescu, written by a person in his entourage who cannot be suspected of sympathy for the Legionnaires. Caught in the web of his ambition, the General could not accept or even envision, sharing a power which he considered rightfully his. The presence of a Legionary hierarchy, and especially the existence of Horia Sima as supreme leader of a political movement which escaped his personal influence, weighed heavily upon him. There was one organization in the State which, in spite of its loyalty, escaped him as an organized power and foundation of the new regime.

General Antonescu would have liked for the Legion Movement to be dependent on him and to recognize him as the sole leader of the Movement. He even tried to win the sympathy of the Legionary masses by wearing the green shirt and trying to talk and act like a Legionnaire, while trying to outdo Horia Sima's personality. These were vain efforts, for he in no way possessed the qualities indispensable to such a feat. He even went to the point of demanding that the Legionary forces recognize him as supreme leader of the Movement. This attempt also met with total failure.

Nothing was left for General Antonescu in order to satisfy his boundless ambition but to eliminate the Legionary Movement by indirect means. The circumstances lent themselves marvelously to such actions:

1. War with the U.S.S.R. was becoming imminent for Germany. The General could pose the question of Romanian participation in that war in terms of his personal prestige.
2. The General was sure that between the Legionary Movement (a nationalistic movement entirely politically independent with regard to Hitlerian doctrine and goals) and him (as head of the government and "commander" of the armed forces), the Germans would support the one who had direct hold on the fighting forces.
3. The political parties deprived of their power by the action of the Legionary Movement (September 3-6, 1940) manifested an open hostility against the Movement but never expressed any negative gestures against the intentions of General Antonescu.
4. From the political point of view, the Legionary Movement was far from reaching the threshold of equilibrium and internal consolidation. The frightful losses of elite men, the years of prison and clandestineness imposed up to that time, put it in a state of professional inferiority, which caused a certain hesitation in the activities of Legionnaires in positions of responsibility. The four months of active presence in the administrative machine were insufficient for a strong structure with a basis of

Legionary elements to have time to assert itself.

5. In addition, the Legionary Movement was not distrustful. It counted on the loyalty of the General. No one could imagine that a man otherwise of perfect integrity would be capable of giving in to the morbid compulsion of his unbounded ambition. Mr Horia Sima, Vice President of the Council, as well as the Legionary Ministers, knew the hateful, arbitrary and dominating temperament of the head of the government, but he believed to be incapable of an act that would ruin the understanding which reigned among them and which was sealed by the recognition of the "Legionary State." That was seeing things in the light of reciprocal loyalty which the Legionary Movement considered as existing.
6. On the other hand, General Antonescu knew perfectly well that the Legionary Movement would not start a rebellion against anyone, for the simple reason that one does not set off such an action when one is in power. Even the term "rebellion" that has been given to this tragic action is absurd; but under that name it could more easily be blamed on the Legionnaires and thus cover up the aspect of the "coup d'état" which should be attributed to it.
7. Finally, for the General, the few minor incidents which had occurred between Legionary elements and certain military representatives attached directly to the head of the government could serve admirably as a cover for the legal motivation of the foreseen act.

The contingencies were favorable to General Antonescu's intentions, as the chain of political circumstances which ended the events of January 21, 1941, and in Antonescu's dictatorship shows. The facts interlock like pieces of a puzzle, revealing the true character of the affair provoked and executed under General Antonescu's orders.

The entire drama effectively unfolds between the 21st and 23rd of January, 1941, when the legitimate Legionary reaction takes place against the abuse of power perpetrated by the head of the government. However, the antecedents are of such a nature that there is no longer any doubt about the General's guilt in the preparation and execution of the coup d'état.

General Antonescu's entourage, made up of a military coterie (Colonel Rioseanu at the head), a great part of the politicians ousted by the new regime, and some camouflaged Communists had been counting for a long time on the General's megalomaniac ambition. That was his weakness on which the Legionary Movement's enemies played thoroughly.

Nothing was easier than to make him think that the presence of a supreme Legionary leader diminished his authority and his prestige, and that the only way to regain his "rights" was to eliminate that obstacle. The "reason-excuses" for such an action were not lacking. It was a post-revolutionary period full of enthusiasm, of painful adjustment, of exaggerations, even of errors. In addition, it was not easy for a regime with a Legionary doctrine to exist harmoniously next to General Antonescu, an authoritarian, exclusive person, who considered any initiative not emanating from him as a direct attack on his pre-eminent position. That state of mind led him to see the supreme Legionary leader as a threatening shadow to his political grandeur.

Naturally, the others did not miss a chance to poison the fraternal relations established between

the two forces which made up the foundation of the nationalist government. The Legionary Movement's enemies used three principal means of preparing the General's coup d'état:

- a) Continual provocation by means of special agents, some of whom had even entered Legionary ranks after September 6, 1940 (later called the *Septembristi*). These agents' actions had a precise goal: to compromise the name of Legionnaire in public opinion, to attract disdain and even hate toward the Movement. It was those government agents and former political parties which committed reprehensible acts for which the Legionary Movement was then reproached. But at the same time it was very difficult to discover them and bring them to justice. Some were protected by secrecy, others by the Legionary uniform they wore to accomplish their heinous crimes. Thus, anything disagreeable or violent that happened on Romanian territory was indiscriminately blamed on the Legionary Movement and the news was carefully spread by the General's entourage so that public opinion would lose confidence and withdraw from the Legionary Movement. The latter, sure of its innocence and preoccupied by its internal reorganization, paid too little attention to these intrigues, and waited for a better moment to re-establish the truth. That was not possible, because its presence in the government only lasted four and one half months.
- b) The second means was the exaggeration of incriminating facts in reports addressed to General Antonescu. Thus, in the eyes of the latter, each incident took on the appearance of provocation, intentional aggression, or arbitrary action. All these adjectives, knowingly set off, profoundly irritated the General's military temperament and made him consider the Legionary Movement as an anarchical organization, difficult to command; therefore, in perspective, a great danger if not a formidable competitor due to its ambitions. Scruples did not bother this coalition of informers, and the truth never counted for General Antonescu when his personal prestige and his desire for power were in question.
- c) Finally, the third means was the job of undermining the German Embassy at Bucharest so that when the time came, the Legionary Movement would have no moral or material support from the Germans. The most perfidious calumnies were hurled at the Legionary Movement to show the representatives of the Reich that if there were any impediments to German troops' movements toward Bulgaria or elsewhere on Romanian territory, the fault was entirely incumbent upon the Legionary Movement. Therefore, if there were a question of a war with the U.S.S.R., it would be first necessary to push Legionary elements out of the government and annihilate the Movement's influence in the country. The only sure element for an eventual war would be General Antonescu, who had the army's confidence.

These three methods all bore their fruit and brought about an irresolution in people's minds in regard to the Legionary Movement, just at the moment when General Antonescu instigated his coup d'état. Furthermore, seen in the light of consecutive facts, the coup d'état of January 21, 1941 had been premeditated quite far in advance (perhaps even from the first day that General Antonescu and Horia Sima, leader of the Legionary Movement, were united in the same government). In the anti-Legionary book, *Mémorial Antonescu - The Third Man of the Axis*, which appeared in 1950, the author states that following some conflicts between the General and the Legionary Movement,

Under Berlin's pressure, Antonescu consented to keep the Legionary Movement in his government even though his faith in the possibility of collaboration with it was definitively shaken. But from that moment on, he waited only for a favorable opportunity to dismiss the Legionary Ministers. [5]

And later, when he recounts the preliminaries of the coup d'état (which he calls the "Legionary rebellion"), the author affirms however that for the army, "The disposition for the fight had already been carefully studied." [6] In the same book are found innumerable passages which demonstrate German complicity in ousting the Legionary Movement in addition to the premeditation of coup d'état. Germany found it easier to get along with General Antonescu than with the indomitable Legionary Movement. Thus in the course of a visit with Hitler, in the midst of a discussion on the modern revolution, General Antonescu made the following remark:

"And what do you do with the fanatics, for it would be difficult to make a renovating movement without them?"

"You have to get rid of them," replied Hitler without hesitation, and he smilingly threw the General a look of complicity. [7]

Hitler ended his exposition with these sentences;

The man who allows himself to be dispossessed of his command - and he stared at the General with insistence - proves that he does not know how to use a machine gun. A 20th century dictator cannot be overthrown. If he falls, it is because he committed suicide...

Back in Bucharest, Antonescu maintained absolute silence about the matters discussed during the fifteen minutes he spent alone with Hitler. The conversation which had taken place in the presence of witnesses gave the impression that he had gotten satisfaction as far as his conflict with the Legionary Movement was concerned... [8]

January 22, 1941: Dawn of this day finds the military forces and the Legionnaires face to face. The military attacks buildings occupied by Legionnaires, the latter defend themselves. The clashes between the two belligerents seem more like a siege, in which the besieged are those who are accused of fomenting the rebellion and who defend themselves with whatever weapons they can find. It is a strange "rebellion" in which the supposed rebels choose not to attack and to avoid any conflict with the forces that besiege them.

There appears to be a kind of stabilization of positions and expectations of the two sides. In certain regions there is even collaboration between the army and the Legionnaires. Some local incidents have taken place in Bucharest, Braila and Prahova where several Legionnaires but no military fell.

The most serious problem for General Antonescu arises on January 22, 1941, because of the attitude of the peasant masses. By the hundreds of thousands they begin to penetrate into the cities to help the besieged Legionnaires.

In the meantime, negotiations take place during the day between the German representative, Neubacher and Horia Sima for the cessation of hostilities. Result: The Legionary Movement agrees to stop all resistance. General Antonescu pledges not to take any action against the Legionary Movement or its militants. However, parallel to those negotiations, General Antonescu increases his intrigues, his accusations against the Legionnaires and his military offers to Hitler. All of those accusations only completed the series of calumnies made in Berlin against the Legion and worsened the Legionary position in Hitler's eyes. Under those

circumstances, nothing could be more natural than the order received during the night of January 22- 23 by the German troops stationed in Romania to "...put themselves at the disposition of General Antonescu to crush the Legionary rebellion."

Therefore, it was the Germans who determined the fate of General Antonescu's coup d'état.

January 23, 1941: The troops being unable to rout the Legionnaires from the official buildings they occupy, General Antonescu gives the order to employ artillery against them. At the same time, the troops in the Capital receive orders to fire into the crowd of passers-by who are automatically considered as partisans of the Legionary Movement. Several hundred who had nothing to do with politics or the Legionary Movement were killed. These were premeditated actions which were to be charged to the Legionary Movement and presented to the Germans as undisciplined and unconscionable actions on part of the Legionnaires.

And yet at dawn, Horia Sima had ordered that the resistance cease and that the buildings be evacuated. It should be pointed out that in many cases, the public buildings occupied by the Legionnaires were first turned over to the German army, which then turned them over to Romanian military authorities so that all possibility of conflict would be entirely avoided.

The pact accepted by Horia Sima and General Antonescu before the German diplomat was categorical: total liberty for Legionnaires. Nonetheless, that pact was not respected by the General nor even considered by the Germans. A few hours after the Legionnaires' capitulation, General Antonescu gave the order for repression. The enactment of that repression registered several hundred killed and tens of thousands arrested. The Legionary Movement entered a new phase of persecution.

April 9, 1941: Horia Sima, leader of the Legionary Movement, arrives in Berlin as an ordinary refugee.

April 18, 1941: The Legionary refugees in Germany are informed that they will be confined from then on to compulsory quarters in certain areas (Rostock, Berkenbruck, *etc.*) as a result of agreements between the German and Romanian governments.

By Way of Conclusion

This work does not pretend to serve the immense flood of problems and questions that the Legionary Movement's doctrine and behavior bring up. Its intentions are much more modest and are confined to some aspects of a past which has not succeeded in destroying the image of this organization so different from all others.

The world is still unaware of many truths which were through the care of some powers of the time. It is especially unaware of the positive, and therefore real and beneficial, side of nationalist movements. They are habitually called Nazi, terrorist, dictatorial, *etc.*, and all possible defects are imputed to them. The truth is something different, and it must come out as soon possible, before the wind of hate which is blowing everywhere sweeps away the last vestiges of good sense and humanity. The wave of calumny must cease, and society must become aware that there are two sides to the coin.

The Legionary Movement is among those nationalistic movements that have been shamelessly

abused and upon which the most unlikely accusations have been heaped even today. It is even surprising that it is possible to be so persistent and repeat the same lies about problems which are either totally invented or out-of-date for 30 or 40 years without saying one word about what is really the essence of the Legionary Movement! These are unworthy methods which play the game of the political speculators who hope to eliminate from their way the forces which are conscious of the danger they constitute for the future of the world.

As wisdom says, "patience, too, has its limits." As for us, Legionnaires of the Legion of the Archangel Michael (Legionary Movement), we have reached the limits of our patience. We have decided to put an end to all the calumny, lies and absurd accusations which continue to be thrown at us with a persistence worthy of a better cause.

This work is only a beginning, an introduction to the subject, to establish certain points of reference. It does not treat any aspect in depth. It only gives a synthesizing account of some pressing problems as well as a chronological relation of the Legionary march in the midst of a politically hostile world ravaged by the lack of morality and by spiritual decomposition. It is, therefore, a focus on some truths.

The process of explaining the Legionary phenomenon was begun a long time ago in European countries. Important works on the question have appeared in French, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Italian. Only the Anglo-Saxon world remained closed to these awarenesses. We hope that other works will follow to complete this indispensable information.

Notes

- [1] Sburlati, Carlo, *Codreanu, il Capitano*, p. 63, Ed Volpe, Rome, 1970. (Translation by authors.)
- [2] See: Corneliu Codreanu: *Carticica sefului de cuib*, Ed. Omul Nou, Munich, 1971 (in Romanian); Paul Guiraud: *Codreanu et la Garde de Fer*, Ed. Francisme, 1940; Faust Bradescu: *Le Nid, unite de base du Mouvement Légionnaire*, Ed. Carpatii, Madrid, 1973.
- [3] See: Faust Bradescu: *Les trois épreuves légionnaires*, Ed. Promethee, Paris, 1973.
- [4] *Mémorial Antonescu*, p. 14, Coll. Documents Politiques, Ed. de la Couronne, Paris, 1950.
- [5] *Mémorial Antonescu*, *ibid.*, p. 38.
- [6] *Mémorial Antonescu*, *ibid.*, p. 104.
- [7] *Mémorial Antonescu*, *ibid.*, p. 73.
- [8] *Mémorial Antonescu*, *ibid.*, p. 74.

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