



Anti-Semitism at the Intersection of Corruption and Colonialism:

Continuities of Political Rhetoric in Romania from the Nineteenth Century to the Interwar Period

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The *topoi* of “corruption” and “colonialism” that emerged in nineteenth-century Romania in connection to infrastructure projects and the anxieties related to the prominence of foreign capital therein converged into an anti-Semitism that acted as a proxy to displace both. Around 1900, an emerging far-right further radicalized this rhetoric, with Alexandru C. Cuza (1857–1947), nicknamed “the patriarch of Romanian anti-Semitism,” representing a conveyor belt between the state-driven institutional anti-Semitism of nineteenth-century Romania and the grassroots version that would become characteristic of interwar Romanian fascism. Drawing on parliamentary debates, press articles, and the numerous pamphlets and scientific publications of the prolific Cuza, this article focuses on his re-fashioning of the nineteenth-century vision of infrastructure projects relying heavily on foreign capital into a nexus for thinking about corruption, colonialism, and anti-Semitism. It argues that Cuza helped to turn economic matters explicitly political, adding to them—in synchronicity with similar developments across Europe—a populist component that ushered in the development of a native fascist movement, for which he acted as a godfather. The interwar legionary movement adapted and radicalized the nineteenth-century nexus that identified Jews as simultaneously responsible for corruption and as agents of colonial powers or colonizers in their own right.

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Introduction

The Legion of the Archangel Michael (also known as the Iron Guard) was Romania’s interwar fascist movement and the third largest fascist organization in Europe.¹ Scholars agree that, in its ideology and practices, the Legion was not an imitation of Italian or German fascism, but a native variant of fascism that incorporated elements specific to its context, such as the Legion’s alleged spiritual

character and mysticism.² Anti-Semitism was central to its ideological structure, and, although significantly indebted to an anti-Semitic “tradition” established in Romania during the nineteenth century, the representation of the Jew in legionary ideology was more radical and comprehensive than any previous or contemporary manifestations. Similar in this respect to Nazi anti-Semitism, it diverged from the latter’s biological-racial grounding by emphasizing cultural and religious arguments and positing religion, not race, as a criterion for exclusion.³ Less noted by scholars of the legionary movement, but no less important for the Legion’s ideological opposition to all forms of democratic politics, was the issue of corruption. Like anti-Semitism, corruption followed established pre-war discursive patterns which denounced it as endemic to Romanian politics, a position the Legion subsequently radicalized into a condemnation of democracy itself. The link between the two linked placed anti-Semitism and corruption in the framework of colonial anxieties—with both international and national dimensions—that had pervaded Romanian public space since the mid-nineteenth century.

Legionary ideology radicalized an earlier rhetoric of colonialism and colonization, turning representations of the Jews from agents who promoted the colonizing drives of other states (primarily the Austro-Hungarian and German empires) to colonizers proper.⁴ Moreover, it coded their alleged nefarious and corrupting agency as possessing world-historical significance and inflecting all the -isms which the Legion opposed, whether liberalism, capitalism, or socialism. The introduction of the external agency of “the Jew” into the legionary ideological structure thus allowed the movement to circumvent the apparent paradox of being an ultra-nationalist movement in opposition to and opposed by national (and nationalist) political elites, which it denounced as inauthentic, alienated, and acting primarily on behalf of “foreign”—primarily “Jewish”—interests. Often described as novel for the Romanian political landscape, legionary ideology was however profoundly indebted to such *topoi* as corruption, colonialism, and anti-Semitism that became visible in the 1860s and fully permeated public space by the turn of the century.

This rhetoric was radicalized in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century by Alexandru C. Cuza (1857–1947), nicknamed “the patriarch of Romanian anti-Semitism,” who acted as a conveyor belt between the state-driven institutional anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century and the grassroots version characteristic of interwar fascism.⁵ This article draws on parliamentary debates, press articles—especially from *Neamul Românesc* (*The Romanian Nation*), the main newspaper of the Nationalist-Democratic Party, which Cuza co-founded with historian Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940) in 1910—and the numerous pamphlets and scientific publications of the prolific Cuza. It links the emerging nineteenth-century vision of infrastructure projects relying heavily on foreign capital as a nexus of corruption, colonialism, and anti-Semitism to the radicalization of this rhetoric by fascist politicians in the significantly expanded Romanian state after World War I. I argue that Cuza made a decisive contribution to turning economic matters explicitly political,

adding to them—in synchronicity with similar developments across Europe—a populist component that ushered in the development of a native fascist movement, for which he acted—quite literally in the case of its leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899–1938)—as a godfather.

To do so, I draw on Holly Case's conceptualization of the nineteenth century as "the age of questions," understood as "structuring ideas about society, politics, and states [. . .] influencing the range of actions considered possible and desirable."⁶ By identifying such questions—at once "highly contentious and competitive" and raised simultaneously, or "bundled together"—as a transnational form essential to Europe in a very long nineteenth century ending with World War II, I trace their bundling to understand how the "Jewish question" came to constitute a veritable Gordian knot, whose resolution was perceived as holding the promise of solving any and all others.⁷ While continuities with respect to anti-Semitism have been extensively explored in the existing literature,⁸ its connections with rhetorics of "corruption" and "colonialism," themselves an intrinsic part of the growing pains of the Romanian project of modernization, are considerably under-researched. I argue that rather than via separate treatments of economic history, infrastructure development, politics, and diplomacy, it is precisely by focusing on their nexus that we can understand the salience of anti-Semitism in Romania, from the late nineteenth century to the inter-war period.

From "Belgium of the Orient" to the Strussberg Scandal: Corruption, Colonial Anxieties, and the "Jewish Question" in Nineteenth-Century Romania

Following the Treaty of Adrianople (1829) and the drawing up, under Russian occupation, of the first proto-constitutional arrangements, the so-called Organic Regulations, the two Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were able to increasingly elude their formal Ottoman suzerainty. Consequently, the 1830s marked both their opening to international capitalist trade, which prompted intensified Jewish migration from the Pale of Settlement to Romania, and a re-orientation toward "the West."⁹ As Romanian elites veered decisively away from their Eastern entanglements and toward Europe, they condemned the previous Phanariote period for its Oriental despotism and arbitrariness, responsible for the country's backwardness vis-à-vis its new, European or Western models.

During 1714–1821, in response to native rulers having occasionally sided with Christian Orthodox Russia in its wars with the Ottoman Empire, princes of foreign origin, primarily Greek (or Hellenized) from the Phanar quarter of Constantinople, were directly appointed by the sultan.¹⁰ Such appointment was usually obtained and maintained through lavish gifts and bribes, paid back by extracting revenue from the country the prince came to rule. This translated in ruthless exploitation of the

Principalities, a system of legalized plunder that came to associate “governing” with “getting rich” in popular parlance.¹¹ As a result, not only was politics and especially the state administration associated with corruption, but both acquired colonial overtones, with the “foreignness” of the rulers accounting for nineteenth-century anti-Greek attitudes and xenophobia more broadly.¹² The denunciation of the Phanariote period as a “colonial legacy” became entangled with allegations of corruption, itself externalized unto foreigners, and both were imbricated with xenophobic anxieties that rendered the latter, by definition, suspicious.

In terms of their re-orientation toward Europe, while the Romanian elites constantly emulated the French model as part of their project of accelerated modernization, more pragmatic considerations of size and Belgium’s spectacular industrial development after independence led to self-representations of the Principalities as the “Belgique de l’Orient.”¹³ Developing extensive economic and cultural links with Belgium, the Romanian state-builders modeled their country’s legislation, and, in particular, the first 1866 Constitution, after the 1831 Belgian one and prioritized railway construction as both a cornerstone of economic development and an infrastructural connection to Europe.¹⁴

At precisely these moments, the limits of the liberalism of Romanian elites came to the fore. The 1866 Constitution diverged from the Belgian model in two respects, which reflected the anxieties of the Romanian governing elites: Article three prohibited “colonization with populations of foreign stock” (*gintă*), while Article seven restricted naturalization to “foreigners of Christian rites” and thus effectively blocked Jewish emancipation.¹⁵ Both foreign colonization and Jewish migration, eventually conceptualized as a colonizing enterprise, were seen as immediate, salient threats to the country’s sovereignty. Similarly, in the parliamentary debates on infrastructure and the concession of Romanian railways, “the fear of the foreign capitalist” became visible in discussions on whether the railways should be built with (unavailable) domestic capital or by foreign concessions, possessing both the requisite capital and engineering expertise.¹⁶ With Romanian legislators agreeing that the national interest ought to be placed above private interests, especially those of “foreigners,” the building of railways fueled anxiety that Romania was “besieged” by its more powerful neighbors. MP Dimitrie Ghica (1816–1897) stated in 1868: “we are threatened by the railroads of Hungary and Bucovina that will encircle us from all sides, which will transport all riches there, while our country will be completely poor and isolated in Europe.”¹⁷ A path to Europe and to civilization, the building of critical transport infrastructure was directly linked to the country’s quest for sovereignty.

All of these came to a head with the scandal engendered by the Strussberg concession, detailed in the first article of this thematic cluster. The largest of the foreign concessions for building the Romanian railways, it was denounced in Parliament in 1868 as an example of foreign encroachment by Prussia. A vocal opponent of foreign concessions, the Iași MP Alexandru D. Holban (1836–1917) viewed the leverage that a foreign power acquired in this vital modernization project as tantamount

to establishing “a state within a state,” anticipating a leitmotif of late nineteenth-century Romanian anti-Semitism.¹⁸ After Strussberg declared bankruptcy, Holban felt vindicated, railing against “the famous gang known as the *Strusberg* [sic!] *Consortium*,” as a result of whose actions “Romania was exploited and robbed by some daring industrialists, who simultaneously swindled us and the European public.”¹⁹ As Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898) appointed the Jewish-German banker Gerson Bleichröder (1822–1893) to represent the interests of Prussian investors and find a solution to the crisis, the separate questions of the Romanian railways and Jewish emancipation became intertwined. As the Great Powers and transnational Jewish organizations were pressuring the Romanian authorities to address the ongoing abuses against the Jewish population and reverse Article seven of the 1866 Constitution, Bleichröder saw his role and Bismarck’s full backing as uniquely suited to protect Romania’s Jews.²⁰ In time, the “Strussberg question,” as Holban had dubbed it, became bundled with the “Jewish question,” as well as with heightening Teutophobia and fears generated by Germany’s *Drang nach Osten*, doubled by concerns that corrupt Romanian politicians would sell out the “national interest” for personal gain.²¹ Colonial anxieties, corruption, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism became imbricated with Romania’s imperiled project of building a national railway infrastructure, with the “Strussberg question” able to simultaneously raise all the others.

By the time of the 1878 Congress of Berlin, when Great Power recognition of Romania’s independence was made conditional on Jewish emancipation, Strussberg was no longer “Prussian,” as he had been during parliamentary debates a decade earlier, but “Jewish.” Most Romanian elites opposed Article forty-four of the Congress, which called for the implementation of the principle of equality of civil and political rights irrespective of religion, and perceived it as an affront to the country’s hard-won independence. In a speech decrying “the Jewish invasion,” legislator Vasile Alecsandri (1821–1890) stated:

the only Israelite who ever attempted here an enterprise of so-called public interest is the famous Dr. Strusberg [sic!], and today we know how much personal profit he derived from building his railway, unique on the face of the earth, and also how much prejudice it caused and still causes the country! It pays dearly the trust it had in one of the most famous characters of the Israelite aristocracy.²²

Accusations of willful deception worked both ways, and from Bleichröder’s side, the thwarting of his efforts to promote Jewish emancipation was read as proof that Prince Carol, “a German and a Hohenzollern [. . .] has made himself a Rumanian in his soul” and “is at the head of those who want simultaneously to deceive Europe by sweet words in the Jewish question and to ruin us in the railway matter [. . .]. We have proof that in these two questions we are confronted by a general conspiracy of all the Rumanians—from the Prince to the last deputy—against the interests of Europe.”²³ Irrespective of the perspective (of the international champions of Jewish

emancipation or its Romanian opponents) and of the projected interests (of Europe or Romania), it is clear that the “questions” of the Romanian railways and Jewish rights had become inseparable.

In discussions on the questions of Jewish emancipation and the railway concession, colonial anxieties came to the fore, and Articles three and seven of the 1866 Constitution were also bundled together. Addressing the Parliament, Alecsandri pondered the “questions that Europe had to decide at the [Berlin] Congress,” determining that they infringed on “the interdiction enshrined in our Constitution regarding colonization with foreign peoples. For how could canceling Article seven be compatible with maintaining Article three, when the first imposes Jewish colonization and the second prevents any kind of colonization.”²⁴ As the modification of Article seven of the Constitution only allowed for individual naturalization following a complicated procedure, the agreement between Romania and Germany on the railway concession (which the Romanian state bought from German investors at significant cost) in 1879 led to international recognition of its independence and the failure of the efforts aimed at Jewish emancipation.²⁵ For a new generation of Romanian anti-Semites who entered politics in its wake, it came to represent “*the greatest triumph of the imperative of the national idea in Romanian political economy*.”²⁶ The ubiquitous rhetoric of a “Jewish invasion” and international Jewish pressures that threatened Romania’s sovereignty, which infused parliamentary debates around Article seven of the Constitution and the Strussberg concession, pushed the “Jewish question” at the intersection of the “national question” and the “social question.” As Andrei Sorescu notes, these were the two main questions whose solving “was framed as a quintessential form of exercising the agency of the nation-state, and proof of its very existence.”²⁷ By zooming in on these multiple entanglements, we can grasp the existential salience and ubiquity of anti-Semitism in the Romanian public space.

The Conveyor Belt: A. C. Cuza, Populism, and the Radicalization of Romanian Anti-Semitism

Following independence, late nineteenth-century Romanian anti-Semitism became ever more mainstream, acting as a “cultural code,” to use Shulamit Volkov’s influential interpretation of the origins of modern anti-Semitism in imperial Germany.²⁸ This development overlapped with the increasing contestations of Romania’s emulation of the Western liberal model, visible since the 1860s but gaining more traction toward the century’s end. Rather than being specific to Romania or Eastern Europe, as often argued, these were aligned and synchronous with contemporary critiques of liberalism in countries of the European core.²⁹ Such contestations took various forms, from Marxism to an agrarian populism that could lean both to the left and to the right. Irrespective of their political orientation, they offered a sharper critique of the mismatch between expectations of accelerated development

and lingering realities that pointed to its many failures: in Romania, the optimistic mid-century self-representation as “Belgium of the Orient” became a running joke by the turn of the century.³⁰ Similarly, the uncontested “national interest” of the parliamentary debates on the railway concessions raised questions about the representatives of the “nation” being invoked and the actual private interests behind the putative “national” one. In a parliamentary speech in 1895, A. C. Cuza conceded:

You made another improvement: transport infrastructure. You, when you travel on the main lines in sleeping cars, you must think that it is a great improvement that railways have been built in our country. I acknowledge that railways are a great improvement, but it is also true that they have not benefitted peasants but landowners, although they were built mostly with the peasants’ labor.³¹

A one-time Socialist turned Conservative, Cuza practiced a new type of politics, corresponding to a radical authoritarian right that was emerging at the time in Europe. Those espousing such ideas combined an exclusionary, racist variant of nationalism with a putative social redistributive agenda and a populist concern for the “common people,” pitched against allegedly alienated elites.³² In Romania, the distinction between peasants, increasingly seen as the authentic representatives of the nation, and the ruling classes (*clasele dirigente*), associated with foreign interests, became an enduring one. For Cuza, foreign interests were consistently linked to the “Jewish question,” ever more clearly articulated in a meta-narrative of a master plan of world domination to which Romania’s geographical location, demography, and social structure rendered the country particularly exposed. Claiming that the ruling elites of a state where anti-Semitism was official state policy—curtailing the rights of the Jewish minority while allowing them a partial and tightly controlled participation in the economy—were acting in the service of Jews might seem a bridge too far, even for Cuza. However, this was made possible by the already-established nexus of corruption, colonial anxieties, and xenophobia that the “Jewish question” had come to conjure.

With the country’s main infrastructural project, the railway construction, completed by the time Cuza was first elected to Parliament in 1893, he was convinced “that the railways, which costed enormous amounts of money, extorted mostly from the work of our peasant, profited mostly the ruling classes, landowners and leaseholders for transporting bread, the rich for more handiness in the long journeys they undertake, while causing the peasants a double prejudice, both material and moral.”³³ Replacing peasants’ traditional haulage by horse-drawn carts, it had left them idle during the winter months, depriving them of income and pushed them instead to spend their time in taverns. In 1897, Cuza co-founded, with A.D. Xenopol (1847–1920), a prominent historian and virulent anti-Semite, the League against Alcoholism. For Cuza, alcoholism was linked to the corrupting Jewish influence affecting the Romanian countryside, whereby peasants were turned to “the murderous vice of drink” by foreign (or, more explicitly, Jewish) tavern-owners.³⁴ Tantamount to “the

systematic poisoning of our population, especially in Moldavia,” alcoholism also invoked the specter of colonization, prompting associations with “the extinction of the Indians [sic!] in North America, once so proud.”³⁵ His proposal for a full state monopoly on alcohol sales occasioned yet another attack on the state and the ruling elites. If “the tavern is today the most powerful means of exploitation of our working classes,” this happened “*with the knowledge and consent of the competent [authorities]*” who chose to abandon the rural population “at the discretion of tavern-keepers, most of them foreign, who exploit it as they please.”³⁶

This persistent dichotomy between the ruling elites and the peasantry, representing at once the majority of the population and the “authentic nation,” was consistently deflected by Cuza and like-minded politicians unto “the Jews.” In turn, this conveniently displaced the turn-of-the-century “social question,” a euphemism for the dire material situation of the peasants, allowing the extractive elites to insulate themselves from the social consequences of their exploitation. These were deflected onto a vulnerable minority, doubly exposed to the exclusionary policies of the state and to popular wrath and ingrained patterns of prejudice, prompted by the Jews’ occasional role as middlemen between landlords and peasants in the rural economy.³⁷ “Reprobate foreign leaseholders, parasitical beings who only exist by exploiting others’ work” had been an object of Cuza’s wrath since the 1890s. As Jews took over agricultural estates, “that once thriving class of Romanian leaseholders disappeared and with it, understandably, all other Romanian elements [. . .]. Today, everyone who is a master in the countryside, from the inhuman and insidious leaseholder to the cellarer who sells with a false measure, is a Jew, and the Romanian is the slave who sustains with his hard labor these swarms of foreigners who have swooped upon the country.”³⁸ After the great peasant revolt of 1907, where anti-Semitic instigations had also played a role in its outbreak in Moldova, Nicolae Iorga, the country’s foremost historian, claimed that “Jewish leaseholders” had “undoubtedly provoked the agrarian agitations.” They were “exploiters who did not shy away even from the assassination of their defenseless serfs”; as the peasant revolts were “directed against the rural exploitation, practiced with the greatest cynicism by Jewish leaseholders, and not against Jews as a race or religion, they were thus not an anti-Semitic movement.”³⁹ For both Cuza and Iorga, the “Jewish question” caused an inversion between the Romanian ruling elites and the Jews, portraying the latter, despite glaring evidence to the contrary, as masters of the country, and the Romanians either as hapless agents unwittingly doing the Jews’ bidding or as corrupt politicians selling out the national interest. Moreover, in a pattern frequently encountered with anti-Semites, they blamed the victims for instigating outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence. Both aspects would later feature prominently in the rhetoric of Romania’s interwar fascist movement.

In Cuza’s imagination, rural exploitation was not just a “social question,” but one directly linked to colonization. “In Moldova, almost all the estates are in the hands of the Jews, settled in the villages as veritable colonies.”⁴⁰ These “colonies”

within Romania were financed by international Jewish colonization associations. Consequently, the representation of the “Jewish leaseholder” accommodated both extractive and settler colonialism: “Romanians cannot compete with the Jews in *leaseholding*, lacking as they do the cheap capital that *Jewish colonization societies* provide to Jewish leaseholders with minimal interest rates.”⁴¹ Projected as a threat to the very existence of the Romanian nation, this colonization of the countryside was linked to yet another *topos* characteristic of the fin-de-siècle *Zeitgeist*, that of “degeneration”: “The exploitation of the usurer leaseholder and the liquor spiked with vitriol poured by the Jewish tavern-keeper will soon bring about the degradation of the landed population, so that half the country will belong to the Romanian people in name only.”⁴² Cuza’s campaigns against alcoholism were thus undertaken both in the name of public health considerations and as a form of national defense against alleged colonization.

In the passage cited earlier, we encounter again the anxiety related to foreign capital and the absence of domestic resources for Romania’s modernization project that we observed in the parliamentary debates around railway concessions. As Dorian Bell argues in the case of nineteenth-century France, in an age of global capitalist and imperial expansion, “Jews [. . .] offered a ready-made metaphor for capital’s growing dialecticization of the local and global.”⁴³ This is a useful corrective against potential exoticizations of the Romanian story or its ascription within the confines of “area studies” dealing with a “backward,” late modernizing Eastern Europe. As the case of France—a frequent reference and example of “degeneration” in Cuza’s publications on the dangers of alcoholism—shows, the emergence of modern anti-Semitism projecting “the Jew” as a figure of “racial scalability” was by no means limited to the European periphery. “Racial scalability” is defined by Bell as “the tendency of racializing logics to change scales in an effort to resolve contradictions internal to the logics themselves,” “whereby contradictions untenable at one scale (the national) radiate outward toward attempted resolution at another (the imperial or global).”⁴⁴ Despite its indisputable particularities, the trajectory of anti-Semitism in turn-of-the-century Romania was very much inscribed in the European *Zeitgeist*, with its own anxieties related to corruption, degeneration, and national decline. If France and Belgium had been the two invoked models during the railway concession debates, it is not so much the case that Romanian elites looked to different models by the early twentieth century, but rather that the model of “Western” liberalism had itself changed and was being contested.

If the situation Cuza identified in the countryside was dire, that in the cities was even worse. Here, Jews were purportedly “absolute masters over all economic activity: over trade, the professions, industry, getting richer while we get poorer.”⁴⁵ According to Cuza, Romanians had been “eliminated” from these occupations, so that in Iași, Moldova’s largest city, “*tradesmen* are 16 percent of Romanian nationality and Jews eighty percent; Romanian *artisans* are twenty-five percent and Jews sixty-eight percent; Romanian *functionaries* are ninety percent and Jews only two

percent.”⁴⁶ He concluded that this economic structure had direct political consequences, as the electoral system based on property qualifications favored the rich, rendering this an argument against Jewish emancipation, which would have allegedly allowed them to become the country’s political elite. Even in the absence of emancipation, due to the fact that “*trade and industry fell from the hands of Romanians*, who thus came to be in a state of dependency, more or less direct, from the government, public spirit had to gradually become corrupt.”⁴⁷ Here, Cuza criticized Romania’s bloated public administration that—as elsewhere in South-East Europe—had increased exponentially during the nineteenth century as a consequence of state-building and top-down nationalizing projects. This was linked to corruption and rendered as *funcționarism*, “a local iteration of the French ‘*manie des fonctions*’” that referred to the “ethnically-Romanian middle-class youths’ imagined propensity to disdain enterprise and join the ranks of a state bureaucracy, dependent upon political patronage and threatened by unemployment.”⁴⁸ Indeed, Cuza argued that “politics—in a country where trade and industry are agonizing [. . .]—*through the fact that it is the only monopoly reserved to the natives* against the foreigners who acquired everything, had to become itself an industry, a trade, an occupation all the more lucrative as the layer of those who are involved in politics is thinner and divided into ever more numerous political groupings.”⁴⁹

Funcționarism, which came to be seen as a major pathology affecting the Romanian society, was fueled by a long-standing anxiety related to the perceived absence of a native Romanian middle class, exacerbated as a late-developing and slow-emerging one found itself in competition with ethnic minorities. The Greek and Jewish minorities were singled out, with the latter replacing the former as a perceived threat by the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ An article related to fluvial infrastructure, published in the very first issue of *Neamul Românesc*, decried the situation in the port city of Galați on the Danube, dominated by foreigners, arguing for the Greeks’ displacement by the Jews in dominant positions: “In these times of democracy, when numbers want to replace everything, Jews prove that numbers are not always everything. A minority compared to the Greeks, they replace them day after day in banks and in the big [business of the] cereal export. Soon the Greek element will find itself entirely defeated by the more recent element in Galați, the Jews.”⁵¹ Invoking *funcționarism*, the author claimed that “the Romanian element here constitutes more of a *colony of functionaries*,” even those “of very recent origin, and whose new citizenship does not prevent them from maintaining links, more durable and more useful, with their real nation.”⁵² The situation in Galați was rendered even more difficult by the presence of the European Commission of the Danube, which constituted “*a state within the state*.” With trade and politics subordinated to the interests of foreign powers, and a “comic” situation whereby “upstanding people, former members of Parliament, humiliate themselves and plot to obtain an *honorific* title of consul of *Persia* or *Guatemala*,” Romanian life in the city was confined to its slums, its “*high-life*” being entirely dominated by foreigners.⁵³ Here, we can recognize the

familiar nexus of corruption, colonial anxieties, and xenophobia at work at the interplay between the local demographic situation and the international control allegedly exercised by foreign powers over infrastructure critical for the Romanian state.

For Cuza, the Romanian middle class had been “annihilated by foreigners in Moldova, and the contact with Jews in business corrupted it instead of educating it.”⁵⁴ Those responsible were not the Jews themselves, their actions often described in military terms as “invasion,” “encirclement,” and “conquest,” but rather a corrupt Romanian political class that had surrendered the national interest for personal gain and was often in the payroll of the Jewish “enemy.” Drawing on the case of “the Talmudic family Abramovici,” “a criminal Jewish tribe” which sold the carcass of cattle that died of a contagious disease to peasants in the village of Talpa, Cuza saw the press coverage of the ensuing trial and the verdict as “characteristic for our *administration*, corrupted by the Jews; for our *justice system*, ruled by politicians in the service of criminal Jews; and for our *press*, at the order of Jewish tendencies.”⁵⁵ Coining a term, “Jewified,” that in post-war fascist rhetoric came to refer to ethnic Romanians allegedly working in the interests of Jews and hinting at the anti-national character of the National Liberal Party, Cuza claimed that “under the *national-liberal* Government, the administration of counties and villages is left to the most dangerous Jewified, who shamelessly exploit the Romanians’ interests.”⁵⁶

The shrill tone of such accusations was occasionally punctured by more sober reflections, which invoked the peculiarities of Romania’s modernization to account for the absence of a middle class. Romania had “*broken the elementary law of progress*, in two ways, equally damaging: first, our development was *delayed*, having been prevented, for many centuries, from the deployment of our natural attributes; second, it was *rushed*, having been forced to appropriate, in the course of a few decades, the progress that other countries had made in the course of hundreds of years.”⁵⁷ Anticipating scholarship that emphasizes (self-)perceptions of “lag” in nationalism in Eastern Europe, Cuza concluded that “we are thus today victims of both *delay* and *haste*, which alone explain our state of inferiority toward the people of the West.”⁵⁸ In his *longue durée* analysis of the problems of Romania’s modernization, Cuza approvingly cited authors who opposed colonization and the encroachment of foreign capital during the nineteenth century: the 1860 pamphlet of Dionisie Pop Marțian (1829–1865) on German colonists discussed by Andrei Sorescu in this thematic cluster, Simion Bărnuțiu’s (1808–1864) “school of nationalism,” Titu Maiorescu’s (1840–1917) opposition to “forms without substance,” or the 1866 petition of A. D. Holban (one of the foremost opponents of foreign concessions in the debates on the building of Romania’s railways) against Jewish citizenship and his opposition to the “virus of Judaic internationalism.”⁵⁹ The motto of his second publication was a quote from a founder of the Conservative Party, Petre P. Carp (1837–1919), who told Parliament in 1879: “The evil is serious today, Jews are masters over our economic production . . .”⁶⁰ The implication was that these voices that had sounded the alarm about the perils of the “Jewish question” had not been listened to,

and that “greatest nationalist victory” of 1879 (the blocking of Jewish emancipation) was not followed up with more decisive action.

Despite the continuities with his nineteenth-century predecessors, Cuza's tone had changed, from anxiety to alarm or even panic. Time was running out, as Romania faced a “*national catastrophe*”: “Jews will keep getting stronger, will acquire complete control of the economic functions of our national organism and one day, with help from abroad and the efforts of Jews within, we will find ourselves confronted with the ‘*inexorable necessity*’ and we will perish.”⁶¹ Faced with a coordinated attack from within and without, Romania appeared doomed. No longer just threatened with colonization, Cuza concluded in 1915 that “capitalist societies, most of them foreign” disregarded “all our economic interests and all the laws of the country, as if they were in a black colony in Africa”; as a result, “the country has been transformed in a colonial territory subject to savage exploitation, to the devastation, in the literal sense of the word, of entire regions.”⁶²

The infrastructure built with such efforts in the nineteenth century was useless for the national interest. Echoing the earlier opponents of the railway project, Cuza claimed that, as an agrarian country, Romania needed roads, not railways, which only benefited the elites and facilitated foreign encroachment.⁶³ Moreover, they had decayed and become a hazard: “due to lack of maintenance, the railways are deteriorating; accidents multiply, because of broken material and exhausted personnel.”⁶⁴ Another infrastructure, fluvial transport, faced “destructive competition that cannot be tolerated” from foreigners and neighboring countries, which reaped all the benefits of the Romanian state's efforts to develop it, with the collusion of Romanian elites.⁶⁵ In a discussion of yet another critical infrastructure in early twentieth-century Romania, that of oil, more explicitly colonial arguments were put forth: “Foreign societies that come to us not from Africa, nor from Australia, but from the heart of civilized Europe [. . .] believed they could treat us like the natives of Africa and Australia, having brought in our country a vandalic exploitation, corruption, and disinterest for the country that benefits their capitals.”⁶⁶ In these twentieth-century musings, we witness the insistent return of the nexus of corruption and colonial anxieties (or panic), all the more inextricably connected to the Jews.

In an interesting formulation, Cuza saw Jews' main “function” as that of “agents of circulating products.”⁶⁷ If we recall Brian Larkin's influential definition of infrastructure as “the architecture for circulation,” “networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space,” we can read Cuza's paranoid fantasies as his projection of “Jews” as an alternative infrastructure, one that, by the early twentieth century, had “hacked” into the one the Romanian state had built over the course of the nineteenth.⁶⁸ Imagined as a tightly connected network with ramifications far beyond the country's borders, Jews acted as a proxy—at different scales, from that of the village to that of the county, region, nation, or Europe—for the threats that opening to global capitalist flows posed for Romania. Nowhere is this more visible than in the ubiquitous notions of their privileged (even

“unlimited”) access to foreign capital, that much-needed and much-resented scarce resource that at times seemed to elude and at others to overwhelm Romanian elites.

As mentioned earlier, A. C. Cuza, Nicolae Iorga, and their fellow travelers in the Nationalist-Democratic Party neither summoned these questions of corruption, colonialism, and anti-Semitism out of thin air nor established the nexus that saw them as both related to one another and intimately imbricated with infrastructural projects. All these were firmly in place during the 1879 debates around Jewish emancipation, when “Strussberg” had become the signifier that was able to simultaneously recall them. They did render them more strident, more salient, more urgent, turning anxiety into paranoia and presenting an imagined, rhetorical menace as an existential one. They also rendered both “corruption” and “colonialism” more poly-semantic. The former no longer referred (just) to political corruption or the despised Phanariote legacy modern Romania had sought to leave behind, but encompassed notions of moral and even physical corruption of Romanians’ minds and bodies, linked to concerns about degeneration that were characteristic of the European *Zeitgeist*. The latter no longer saw Jews as a vanguard or agents of foreign powers whose diplomatic pressures placed Romania in a quasi-colonial position, but as colonizers proper, operating through multiple channels, internally and internationally, that coalesced toward the same “plans” for the “invasion,” colonization,” and “conquest” of Romania. Their solution at this time, advocating cooperation of the “national element” above party interests, remained within democratic (if no longer liberal) bounds; although by the eve of World War I, Iorga was already anticipating the solution that the legionary movement would put forth in the interwar period, by arguing that “Romania can only be saved in one way: through its moral regeneration, through its will to regenerate.”⁶⁹

The “Corrupt Colony” and the “Resurrection of the Nation”

In his 1936 memoirs, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, founder and undisputed leader of the Legion of the Archangel Michael until his death in 1938, acknowledged his inspiration by the two representatives of turn-of-the-century Romanian nationalism and the co-founders in 1910 of Romania’s first explicitly anti-Semitic party, A. C. Cuza and Nicolae Iorga: “The essence of these articles [of Iorga and Cuza] comprised the manifestation, in a higher form, of the three ideals of the Romanian people: 1) *The unity of all Romanians*; 2) *The emancipation of the peasantry through land redistribution and political rights*; 3) *The resolution of the Jewish problem*.”⁷⁰ The passage encapsulates the three fundamental “questions” that Romanian nation-builders faced in the nineteenth century and the continuity of the Legion’s ultra-nationalism with earlier iterations. Post-World War I Romania was an entirely different state from the pre-war one, however: as Greater Romania, its territory and population doubled, but the previously ethnically homogenous state

where Romanians made up 92 percent of the population in 1912 now incorporated numerically significant ethnic minorities, making up 30 percent of the population.⁷¹ Moreover, the three “questions” appeared to have been “solved” by the Union of 1918, the electoral law of 1919 that provided for universal male suffrage, the land reform of 1921 that entailed a more extensive land redistribution than anywhere else in Central and Eastern Europe, and the embedding of Jewish emancipation in the Constitution of 1923, making Romania the last country in Europe to emancipate its Jewish population.

Ethnic minorities were also primarily urban, educated, wealthy, imperial elites that had previously been in charge of the state administration in the newly acquired provinces. As such, the Romanian state embarked on an aggressive nationalizing project, which, typical of the patterns identified by Ernest Gellner, focused primarily on education, in an attempt to create a homogenous and centralized national culture.⁷² This translated into an unprecedented expansion in educational facilities that tripled the number of students enrolled in universities after the war.⁷³ With many sons of peasants attending university and experiencing the urban environment for the first time, universities were sites where the more radical nationalist organizations in interwar Romania developed. While the students who created them presented themselves as an alternative to the corrupt ruling political elites, their ties to the countryside rendered them more attuned to the peasants’ lived experiences.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the persistence of the socio-economic and political problems (from severe poverty to endemic corruption) characteristic of pre-war Romania was doubled by a continued dependence on foreign capital.⁷⁵ Consequently, a national and nationalizing state that had initially enjoyed widespread support from Romanians increasingly came under attack as the economic crisis affected the peasantry and the urban poor. In such a context, the targeting of “foreigners” (often a code word for “Jews”)—associated with the former imperial elites and conflated with the prevalence of foreign capital—represented important political capital.

If the “questions” were inherited by the legionary movement from its nationalist predecessors, its proposed “solution” was not. First, it was *one* rather than several separate “solutions,” entailing a fascist radical transformation and regeneration of Romania, a palingenetic drive expressed in the typically religious language of the Legion as “the resurrection of the nation in the name of the savior Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶ This was a significant departure from the practice of earlier querists, who still believed in the existence of multiple, if entangled, solutions, and in the questions’ internationalization as a way of solving them. Second, although the questions were to be solved in the Romanian context, the “solution” was seen as transcending it and having world-historical significance. Legionary rhetoric was replete with references to the relevance of their revolution for Europe or the world, “synchronic with the postwar European political movement” and superior to it, indicative of the extent to which this constituted a compensation mechanism for the trauma engendered by Romania’s backwardness and peripherality vis-à-vis its permanent reference point, the “Western” models.⁷⁷

Third, if the “Jewish question” had acquired meaning in nineteenth-century Romania at the intersection of the national and social questions, legionary ideology conferred upon it a centrality that made the solving of the latter two conditional upon its resolution. Consequently, Codreanu could state in 1937 that “[t]he historic mission of our generation is the resolution of the Jewish problem. All our battles over more than fifteen years have had this purpose, and all efforts henceforth will have this purpose.”⁷⁸ In doing so, he was both fully inscribed in an anti-Semitic tradition that had defined the “Jewish question” and breaking with it by envisaging a total (and *final*) solution that would redeem Romania from the curse of foreign dependence and internal corruption.⁷⁹ The Legion had been, after all, established from Codreanu’s break with his former mentor and godfather, A. C. Cuza, and Nicolae Iorga, reverently cited in 1936, ended his life in a hail of legionary bullets, murdered by a vengeful legionary squad in 1940, during the movement’s time in power. Thus, as Holly Case writes about Hitler as “question bundler,” “the Final Solution was no perverse coda to the age of questions, but rather its fullest realization.”⁸⁰

To argue for a complete, radical break with the Romanian politics of the day and to propose its own version of anti-political politics, the Legion had to proclaim it unredeemable. In one of the first issues of the first legionary periodical, the movement’s second-in-command, Ion I. Moța (1902–1937), proclaimed: “We are not doing politics and we have not done that for a single day in our lives. We have a religion, we are the slaves of a faith.”⁸¹ With corruption endemic to Romanian politics, individual examples abounded, and legionaries were tirelessly exposing them, especially those of their nationalist, anti-Semitic rivals. Their opponents were portrayed as acting in the interest of Jews.⁸² This allowed the legionaries to condemn the “Judeo-cuzist-liberal-masonic group in which all the enemies of the Romanian nation have placed their last hope,” criticize the membership of other extreme nationalists in masonic lodges, and denounce the rival radical right party led by A. C. Cuza as “*representing the old world*” and “*fraternizing with the foreigner enemy*.”⁸³ Corruption, whether in the form of shady deals between politicians and industrialists or in the pursuit of positions in the public administration—whereby someone like Nicolae Iorga and all of his children held not one, but several full-time paid jobs with the Romanian state—was relatively easy to document.⁸⁴ Against these examples, the legionaries’ reputation as “incorruptible” contributed significantly to their popularity, especially among non-elite segments of the population.

However, the Legion’s denunciation of the corrupt nature of politics entailed a wholesale rejection not only of the entire contemporary Romanian political establishment, but also of democracy itself as a political system that breeds corruption through the incentive structure it presents to rent-seeking elites holding temporary, potentially non-renewable office. In Codreanu’s words, “*money, the press and votes* decide over life and death in democracy. Jews have all these, and, through them, the Romanian political parties become simple tools in the hands of the Judaic power.”⁸⁵ *Politicianism* (a Romanian term only partly translatable as politicking) was Codreanu’s preferred

term for interwar Romanian politics, encompassing both its rampant corruption and the alleged connection to the “Jewish question,” two issues that legionaries saw as inseparable. According to Codreanu, “[t]he Romanian people will not be able to solve the Jewish problem unless it first solves the problem of its *politicianism*.”⁸⁶ The concept subsumed and accommodated disparate semantic content, acting at once as the movement’s main conceptual antagonist and the prime motivation for engaging in what it alternatively described as apolitical or anti-political politics. Party politics was thus subject to wholesale condemnation—although the legionaries participated in elections with a political party of their own. Overlapping a generational dimension over this fundamental dichotomy, in line with the legionary self-representation as a movement of youth, “the slogan of the young generation [had] to be: no young man will ever enter through the gates of a political party” and those who did were considered “traitors” of their “generation and of the nation.”⁸⁷ Since the “Jewish question” was inextricably linked in the legionary imagination with both earlier and contemporary colonial anxieties, *politicianism* had to be part and parcel of an alleged Jewish plan of conquest and colonization. Consistent with the legionary re-definition of political questions as ontological, *politicianism* was eventually associated with an entire human typology, seen as responsible for “*creating this filth, this moral scum*: the politician who no longer has anything in common with the nobility of our race, *who dishonors us and kills us* [. . .]. Of all the evils that the Jewish invasion has brought us, this is the most terrible!”⁸⁸

This radicalization of the condemnation of corruption and the alleged corrupting Jewish influence (which legionaries traced in the economy, politics, culture, and the arts as sapping the moral substance of the “Romanian nation”) was directly linked to colonialism. By the early twentieth century, Jews were no longer accused of colluding with potential colonizers (Austrian, Hungarian, German, or Russian) and acting as their “vanguard,” but of *being* the primary colonizers, with all other “enemies” of the Romanians mere tools in their service. In his response to Lord Rothermere’s editorial “Hungary’s Place in the Sun,” Ion I. Moța dubbed the Englishman—the owner of the *Daily Mail* and a sympathizer of both Italian Fascism and German National Socialism—a “Jew.”⁸⁹ For the Romanian translator of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the myth of the Jewish “world conspiracy” informed all the Legion’s “fascist negations” (anti-liberalism, anti-communism, anti-conservatism),⁹⁰ rendered as facets of a broader, “anti-colonial” discourse.

The Legion’s anti-Semitism was thus fashioned as an “anti-colonial” rhetoric. In the legionary imagination, from capitalism through socialist internationalism to cosmopolitan liberalism, all these were propagated by the “Jews,” as anti-national forces that the Legion was meant to combat. In his doctoral dissertation, Moța argued against the principle of collective security, and identified “the black hand [. . .], the same plot against nations and Christianity [. . .], i.e., Jewish freemasonry” as accounting for the existence of the League of Nations.⁹¹ The legionary commander Alexandru Cantacuzino (1901–1939) saw “Jews” as responsible even for Catholic universalism, with internationalism described as the “monstrous

amalgamation of Catholicism, communist internationalism, and Judaism.”⁹² The outcome of Romania’s alleged “colonization” by the Jews was not limited to economic exploitation: as Codreanu argued in his first parliamentary address, if successful, this “invasion” would result in the eventual extermination of Romanians, “exactly the same thing that was done to the Red Skins in America.”⁹³ Thus, the representation of “the Jew” in legionary ideology could link international colonial anxieties and internal colonialism, while simultaneously standing for the two different types of “colonization” with which Jews were associated in legionary ideology: extractive and settler colonialism. And if the former vision constituted in many respects a continuation and a radicalized version of previous nineteenth-century anti-Semitism, it was the latter notion, of a “Jewish conquest,” that conferred legionary anti-Semitism its murderous impetus, the “eliminationist drive” that allowed its fascist “license to hate” to escalate into a “license to kill.”⁹⁴

Conclusion

The introduction of the representation of “the Jew” as a figure of external agency allowed the legionaries to present themselves as an ultra-nationalist movement in opposition to and opposed by a political establishment that was itself national and nationalist: its opponents in the interwar Romanian governments were depicted as either “blind” to the influence of the Jews or “traitors” in their service. Such an interpretation allowed for radical denunciations of the political establishment without inflicting damage to the notion of a harmonious and unitary “nation.”

Romania’s omnipresent corruption was also externalized and rendered “colonial,” both by projecting it back to the foreign Phanariote rule and especially by labeling it the result of the nefarious actions of the Jews, imagined as present-day foreign rulers whose power knew virtually no limits. In doing so, the legionaries adapted earlier nineteenth-century tropes and conceptual associations, rendering the link between corruption and colonialism both more explicit and more salient. Since the problem was redefined as one not with the Romanian elites but with democracy as a political system, its corrupt and colonial nature meant that “the system” could not be reformed, and that only the revolutionary overthrow of the “corrupt colony” could bring about the “resurrection of the nation.” This “anti-colonial” dimension in legionary ideology was a continuation of earlier nineteenth-century colonial anxieties, but the “solution” envisaged was much more radical. In legionary rhetoric, it would dispense with Romania’s democracy altogether, while contemplating the elimination of “Jews,” acting as the primary anxiogenic figures able to conjure the nexus of colonialism and corruption. However, as this article has shown, rather than indicative of a dramatic change in the nature of Romanian anti-Semitism during the interwar period, this was the outcome of a process of cumulative radicalization of nineteenth-century civilizational anxieties that had been conveniently displaced unto “foreigners” and “Jews.”

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Notes

1. The use of the denomination Legion of the Archangel Michael (*Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*) rather than the Iron Guard (*Garda de fier*) is justified on two accounts. First, the Legion was established on 24 June 1927, before the Guard, founded on 12 April 1930. Second, the Iron Guard was initially designed as an umbrella organization intended, according to Codreanu, “to combat Judaic communism, in which the ‘Legion of the Archangel Michael’ and any other youth organizations could enter, across party affiliations.” Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* (Sibiu: Totul Pentru Țară, 1936), 377. Since no other organization joined, the two denominations came to designate the same group. The Iron Guard was banned and officially dissolved in 1933 and has not formally existed since. See Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 4; Armin Heinen, *Legiunea ‘Arhanghelul Mihail’: o contribuție la problema fascismului internațional*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006), 357. Heinen shows that proportional to the population, calculated before taking power, its membership (272,000 members or 1.5 percent of the population in 1937) was higher than that of both the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP; 1.3 percent in 1933) and of the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF; 0.7 percent in 1921). Stanley Payne ranks it third, following the NSDAP and the Hungarian Arrow Cross, taking into consideration the elections of 1939 for the latter, when they obtained 25 percent of the vote (in a coalition with other national socialist parties in Hungary). Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 275–77.

2. Heinen, *Legiunea*; Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 280; Francisco Veiga, *Istoria “Gărzii de Fier,” 1919-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului*, trans. Marian Ștefănescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993).

3. Raul Cârstocea, “The Role of Anti-Semitism in the Ideology of the “Legion of the Archangel Michael,” 1927-1938” (PhD Thesis, University College London, 2011).

4. Andrei Sorescu, “‘The Same Causes Occasioning the Same Effects’: The ‘Jewish Question,’ the ‘Chinese Question’ and the Global Precedents of Exclusion in Late Nineteenth Century Central Europe,” *Journal of Global History* 19, no. 2 (2024): 281–300; Andrei-Dan Sorescu and Raul Cârstocea, “The (Great) Numbers Game: Demographic Anxieties and Quotas in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Romania and the Global Antisemitic Imaginary,” in *Quotas: The “Jewish Question” and Higher Education in Central Europe, 1880-1945*, eds. Michael Miller and Judith Sapor (New York: Berghahn Books, 2024), 67–109; Andrei Sorescu, “The Perils (and Promise) of German Colonization: Civilizational Hierarchies and Anxieties in Nineteenth Century Romania,” in this thematic cluster.

5. Silvia Marton, “De la construction de l’Etat au racisme: judéophobie et antisémitisme en Roumanie avant la Grande Guerre,” in *Antisemitismus im 19. Jahrhundert aus internationaler Perspektive/*

Nineteenth Century Anti-Semitism in International Perspective, ed. Mareike König and Oliver Schulz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 203–25. For a biography of A. C. Cuza with a focus on his anti-Semitism, see Horia Bozdoghină, *Antisemitismul lui A.C. Cuza în politica românească* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2012).

6. Holly Case, *The Age of Questions: Or a First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), xv.

7. *Ibid.*, 4, 6.

8. See, for example, William A. Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991); Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Anti-Semitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, trans. Charles Kormos (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991); Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1999); Constantin Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities: The Making of Romanian Citizenship, c. 1750–1918* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Liviu Neagoe, *Eutopia: Concepte, identități și istorii românești* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2023); Andreas Pfützner, *Die rumänisch-jüdische Frage: Die Entstehung einer europäischen Anomalie (ca. 1772–1870)* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2024).

9. Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 2–10; Raul Cârstocea, “Uneasy Twins? The Entangled Histories of Jewish Emancipation and Anti-Semitism in Romania and Hungary, 1866–1913,” *Slovo* 21, no. 2 (2009): 66.

10. Keith Hitchins, *The Rumanians: 1774–1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 5–57.

11. Vlad Georgescu shows how the Greek word *chiverneo* (to govern) mutated in the Romanian *chiverniseală* (getting rich quickly). Vlad Georgescu, *The Romanians: A History*, ed. Matei Călinescu, trans. Alexandra Bley-Vroman (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), 78.

12. Constantin Iordachi, “From Imperial Entanglements to National Disentanglement: The ‘Greek Question’ in Moldavia and Wallachia, 1611–1863,” in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, ed. Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 67–148.

13. Raul Cârstocea and Maarten Van Ginderachter, “Smallness and the East-West Binary in Nationalism Studies. Belgium and Romania in the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *The Politics of Smallness in Modern Europe. Size, Identity and International Relations since 1800*, ed. Samüel Kruizinga (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 55–72.

14. Andrei Rădulescu, *Influența belgiană asupra dreptului român* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1931); Charles-Étienne Lagasse, “Le Modèle Constitutionnel Belge,” *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review* 8, no. 1 (2008): 13–14; Silvia Marton, “‘La Belgique de l’Orient’ et Les Chemins de Fer: Les Raisons d’une Comparaison: La Construction Politique de l’État-Nation Dans Le Parlement Roumain (1866–1871),” *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review* 8, no. 1 (2008): 27–44.

15. “Constituțiunea din 1866,” http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.act_act_text?id=37755 (accessed 17 November 2023). See also Andrei Sorescu, “The Perils (and Promises) of German Colonization.”

16. As examined by Silvia Marton, “Shades of Dependency and the Discourse on ‘Corruption.’ Railway Concessions in Romania in the Nineteenth Century,” in this special cluster.

17. Marton, “La Belgique de l’Orient,” 42.

18. *Ibid.*, 38.

19. A. D. Holban, *Considerațiuni Generali asupra Chestiunii Strusberg* (Iassy: Tiparul Tribunei Române, 1871), 21.

20. Abigail Green, “The Limits of Intervention: Coercive Diplomacy and the Jewish Question in the Nineteenth Century,” *The International History Review* 36, no. 3 (2014): 473–92; Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 371.

21. Marton, “Shades of Dependency”; Holban, *Considerațiuni*, 42.

22. Vasile Alecsandri, “Discurs ținut în ședința senatului de la 10 Oct. 1879, cu ocazia revizuirii art. 7 al constituțiunei,” *Ecoul Moldovei*, 7, no. 132 (1898): 2.

23. Stern, *Gold and Iron*, 384.
24. Alecsandri, "Discurs ținut în ședința senatului de la 10 Oct. 1879," *Ecoul Moldovei* 7, no. 135 (1898): 2.
25. Carol Iancu, *Jews in Romania 1866-1918: From Exclusion to Emancipation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 112; Constantin Iordachi, "The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of 'Non-Citizens' in Romania, 1866-1918," *European Review of History* 8, no. 2 (2001): 157–86; Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities*, 265–399.
26. A. C. Cuza, *Studii economice-politice, 1890-1930* (Bucharest: Editura Casei Școalelor, 1930), LXIII. Emphasis in the original; all emphases are in the original, unless specified otherwise.
27. Andrei Sorescu, "Visions of Agency: Imagining Individual and Collective Action in Nineteenth-Century Romania" (PhD Thesis, University College London, 2018), 320.
28. Shulamit Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code. Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23 (1978): 25–45.
29. Raul Cârstocea, "Synchronous Nationalisms—Reading the History of Nationalism in South-Eastern Europe between and beyond the Binaries," *National Identities* 24, no. 5 (2022): 492–95.
30. See the homonymous satirical weekly published since 1903. Lafit, "Belgia . . . Orientului," *Belgia Orientului* 1, no. 1 (1903): 2.
31. A.C. Cuza, *Țăranii și clasele dirigente* (Iași: Tipografia Națională, 1895), 32.
32. Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 35–70.
33. Cuza, *Țăranii și clasele dirigente*, XXXIII.
34. Ibid, LV-LVI.
35. A. C. Cuza, *Monopolul alcoolului: discursuri rostite în ședințele Adunărei deputaților din 7 Martie și 22 Noembrie 1894: expunere de motive și proiect de Lege pentru monopolul vinderei alcoolului* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1895), 130, and A.C. Cuza, *Lupta în contra alcoolismului în România* (Jassy: Tipografia H. Goldner, 1897), 11.
36. Cuza, *Țăranii și clasele dirigente*, LV.
37. Irina Marin, "Raubwirtschaft and Colonisation. The Jewish Question and Land Tenure in Romania in 1907," in *Modern Antisemitisms in the Peripheries: Europe and its Colonies, 1880-1945*, ed. Raul Cârstocea and Éva Kovács (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2019), 427–85.
38. A. C. Cuza, *Meseriașul român*, 2nd edition (Iași: Editura "Cartea Moldovei" Ath. Gheorghiu, 1893), 155, 23.
39. Nicolae Iorga, "În chestia evreiască," *Neamul Românesc* 4, no. 88 (1909): 1401–02. For the 1907 peasant revolt and its entanglements with anti-Semitism, see Irina Marin, *Peasant Violence and Antisemitism in Early Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
40. A. C. Cuza, "Rostul cooperației în România," *Neamul Românesc* 4, no. 105 (1909): 1675.
41. Ibid, 1677.
42. Cuza, *Meseriașul român*, 27–28.
43. Dorian Bell, *Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 28.
44. Ibid, 9, 19.
45. Cuza, "Rostul cooperației în România," 1675.
46. Cuza, *Meseriașul român*, 83.
47. Ibid, 85.
48. Sorescu, "Visions of Agency," 53, 28; Andrei Sorescu, "Funcționarism: la rhétorique de la corruption morale et institutionnelle au XIXe siècle en Roumanie," in *Moralité du pouvoir et corruption en France et en Roumanie, XVIIIe-XXe siècles*, ed. Olivier Dard, Silvia Marton and Frédéric Monier (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 2017), 83–97; Andrei Florin Sora, *Servir l'État roumain. Le corps préfectoral, 1866-1940* (Bucharest: Editura Universității București, 2011), 124–25. For a similar argument about nineteenth-century Serbia, see Siniša Malešević, "The Mirage of Balkan Piedmont: State Formation and Serbian Nationalisms in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Nations and Nationalism* 23, no. 1 (2017): 129–50.

49. Cuza, *Meseriașul român*, 85.
50. Andrei Sorescu, "Inventing a Prosthetic Bourgeoisie: Romania and the Aromanians, 1848–1906," *Nationalities Papers* 50, no. 4 (2022): 661–65, 671–75.
51. O. G., "Din Galați," *Neamul Românesc* 1, no. 1 (1906): 3.
52. Ibid, 1.
53. Ibid, 2–3. English in the original for "high-life," befitting the author's general tone of bitter irony.
54. A. C. Cuza, *Scăderea poporației creștine și înmulțirea evreilor în orașele României. Cause și remedii* (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia Neamul Românesc, 1910), 77.
55. A. C. Cuza, "Jidanii în presă. 'Voința Națională' ca organ al intereselor jidovești," *Neamul Românesc* 3, no. 82 (1908), 1287.
56. Ibid, 1290.
57. Cuza, "Rostul cooperației în România," 1674.
58. Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism," *Slavic Review* 64, no. 1 (2015): 140–64; Cuza, "Rostul cooperației în România," 1674.
59. Cuza, *Studii economice-politice*, LV.
60. Cuza, *Meseriașul român*, 7.
61. Cuza, "Jidanii în presă," 1291–92.
62. Cuza, *Studii economice-politice*, 763.
63. Cuza, *Țăranii și clasele dirigențe*, 32.
64. A. C. Cuza, "'Ai noștri,'" *Neamul Românesc* 1, no. 82 (1907): 454.
65. Ioan Mihail, "Cartelul Navigațiunii Fluviale Române cu societățile similare străine," *Neamul Românesc* 7, nos. 12–13 (1912): 199.
66. H., "Iarăși petrolul și naționalii," *Neamul Românesc*, 1, no. 81 (1907): 438.
67. Cuza, *Țăranii și clasele dirigențe*, XXVIII.
68. Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, no.1 (2013): 328.
69. "Presa Ieșeană. Ce ar fi trebuit să fie și ce este. Idei dintr'o conferință ținută la Iași de N. Iorga," *Neamul Românesc* 7, nos. 15–16 (1912): 233.
70. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 13–14.
71. Hitchens, *Rumania*, 290.
72. Despite the intentions of the Romanian state, this process was much more contested and negotiated in practice. Gábor Egry, "Negotiating Post-Imperial Transitions: Local Societies and Nationalizing States in East Central Europe," in *Embers of Empire. Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918*, ed. Paul Miller and Claire Morelon (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 15–42; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).
73. Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation-Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 234.
74. Raul Cârstocea, "Students Don the Green Shirt. The Roots of Romanian Fascism in the Anti-Semitic Student Movements of the 1920s," in *Alma Mater Antisemitica. Akademisches Milieu, Juden und Antisemitismus an den Universitäten Europas zwischen 1918 und 1939*, ed. Regina Fritz, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe and Jana Starek (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 39–66.
75. Hitchens, *Rumania*, 368.
76. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 425. Roger Griffin defines generic fascism as "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism." Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993), 26. The "new consensus" among scholars of fascism with regards to theoretical interpretations to fascist ideology is centered around this definition. For religious anti-Semitism in interwar Romania, see Ionuț Florin Biliuță, "Sowing the Seeds of Hate. The Antisemitism of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the Interwar Period," *S.I.M.O.N.—Shoah: Intervention, Methods, Documentation*, 3, no. 1 (2016): 20–34; Ionuț Biliuță, "The 'Jewish Problem' in the Light of the Scriptures: Orthodox Biblical Studies and Antisemitism in Interwar Transylvania," in *Modern Antisemitisms in the Peripheries*, 237–54.

77. Mihail Polihroniade, "Rostul 'Gărzii de Fier,'" *Calendarul*, 18 July 1932; Mircea Eliade, "De ce cred în biruința Mișcării Legionare," *Buna Vestire*, 17 December 1937.

78. Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste* (Madrid: Colecția Omul Nou, 1951), 227.

79. As Case notes, the "Jewish question" only exists for anti-Semites and in connection with anti-Semitism. Case, *The Age of Questions*, 118–19. That explains why its "resolution" through Jewish emancipation could not have been satisfactory for interwar Romanian anti-Semites.

80. Ibid, 124, 134.

81. Ion I. Moța, "La Icoană," *Pământul Strămoșesc*, 1 August 1927.

82. Eugen Weber, "Romania," in *The European Right*, ed. Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 527; Valentin Săndulescu, "'Sămânța aruncată de diavol': Presa legionară și construirea imaginii inamicilor politici (1927-1937)," *Studia Universitatis Petru Maior, Series Historia* 7 (2007): 153–74.

83. Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, 43. "Cuzist" refers to the followers of A. C. Cuza, the leader of the rival anti-Semitic radical right party in interwar Romania. Consiliul Național pentru Studiarea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), Documentary Fund, File 16501, Vol. 1, 108–36; Ion I. Moța, "Legiunea și LANC," *Axa*, 1 October 1933.

84. Constantin Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice, Vol. 3 (1 iulie – 31 decembrie 1937)*, ed. Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Editura Machiavelli, 2001), 133, 160–61, 187, 220, 232–35, 257, 304–10, 319–20; *Buna Vestire*, 7, 8, 9, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 October 1937 for cases of corruption mentioned in the space of one month alone in the legionary daily.

85. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 156.

86. Ibid, 186.

87. Ibid, 189.

88. Ibid, 306.

89. Ion I. Moța, "O vorbă ardelenescă pentru 'lordul' Rothermere—'Ungaria mare' și planurile Jidănești," *Pământul Strămoșesc*, 1 September 1927. For Lord Rothermere's fascist sympathies, see Arnd Bauerkämper, "Transnational Fascism: Cross-Border Relations between Regimes and Movements in Europe, 1922–1939," *East Central Europe* 37, nos. 2–3 (2010): 219.

90. Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 6–7.

91. Ion I. Moța, *Liga Națiunilor: idealul, viciile și primejdia ei* (Bucharest: Institut de arte grafice "Bica," 1930), 19–20.

92. Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Între lumea legionară și lumea comunistă* (Filipeștii de Târg: Antet, 2000 [1937]), 43.

93. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cuvântare la mesaj* (Câmpulung-Muscel: Tipografia Gh. Vlădescu, 1932), 6.

94. Aristotle Kallis, *Genocide and Fascism: The Eliminationist Drive in Fascist Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 115.

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