

## CHAPTER ONE

### *THE LEGACY OF THE "ANCIEN RÉGIME"*

In April 1964 the Rumanian Communist Party issued the celebrated *Statement on the Stand of the Rumanian Workers' Party Concerning the Problems of the International Communist and Working-Class Movement*.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental thesis expounded in that document is the right of all Communist and workers' parties and of the socialist states to "elaborate, choose, or change the forms and methods of socialist construction" in accordance with the "concrete historic conditions prevailing in their own countries. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Given these premises, if one bears "in mind the diversity of the conditions of socialist construction, there are not nor can there be any unique patterns and recipes; no one can decide what is and what is not correct for other countries or parties."<sup>3</sup> Both the justification and explanation for the adoption of the "independent Rumanian course," for the Rumanian rebellion against Soviet dictates and continuous interference in the country's internal affairs, are contained in this key paragraph. Indeed, there can be no meaningful analysis of the process of continuity and change in contemporary Rumania without consideration of the "concrete historic conditions" inherited and altered by the Rumanian Communist Party since the end of World War II.

Paramount in the unenviable legacy of the old regime was the threat of Russian imperialism. This factor per se was far more significant than the existence of a state of war between Fascist Rumania and Communist Russia which permitted Russian military intervention in 1944. Even a cursory review of the history of Russo-

<sup>1</sup> *Declarație cu privire la poziția Partidului Muncitoresc Român în problemele mișcării comuniste și muncitorești internaționale adoptată de plenara lărgită a C.C. al P.M.R. din aprilie 1964* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1964). Revised English translation: William E. Griffith, *Sino-Soviet Relations, 1964-1965* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1967), pp. 269-296. (Hereinafter in the footnotes it is cited as *Declarație*.)

<sup>2</sup> *Declarație*, pp. 286-287.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

Rumanian relations reveals a constant Russian interest in incorporating the Rumanian provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia into the Russian empire or, failing this, exerting political domination over the Rumanian lands.<sup>4</sup> Significant in this context, however, is the fact that Russia's imperialistic designs were, at least until the nineteenth century, frequently endorsed by Rumanian leaders and that friendship with Tsarist Russia was sought and advocated by a considerable segment of the politically conscious population. Rulers like Gheorghe Ștefan or Dimitrie Cantemir, members of the "Russian parties" of the eighteenth century, and even later supporters of political and military alliances with Russia were indeed prepared to accept *de facto* if not *de jure* Russian sovereignty in Moldavia or Wallachia. It is, of course, true that after the revolutions of 1848, particularly the attainment of national independence in 1877 and the establishment of the "Old Kingdom" in 1881, resistance to Russian domination increased among Rumanian politicians. But it would be erroneous to assume that this was an all-prevalent attitude even after the Tsarist annexation of Southern Bessarabia in 1878. The loss of Rumanian territory was naturally opposed by all political parties, but such diverse factors as traditional ties among conservative landed aristocracies, Russian membership in the Triple Entente, and support of Rumanian national aspirations in Transylvania permitted all but the rabid irredentists to overlook the "mutilation of Moldavia" and seek whatever assistance may have been needed for the attainment of their diverse socioeconomic and political goals.

The possibility of cooperation with Russia, however, became remote after the establishment of the Bolshevik order. After World War I the fear of revival of Russian imperialism assumed new dimensions because of Moscow's avowed determination to regain Bessarabia—annexed by Rumania in 1918—and generally to expand the frontiers of communism. The official apprehension even filtered down to the masses, fearful of communism, with the result that Russia was soon regarded as Rumania's main enemy. It is noteworthy, however, that the majority of the population showed little concern over the possibility of recovering Bessarabia other

<sup>4</sup> In the absence of any authoritative study of Russo-Rumanian relations the reader is referred to the somewhat superficial, but informative, monographs by Petre Constantinescu-Iași, *Relațiile culturale romino-ruse din trecut* [The Rumanian-Russian Cultural Relations in the Past] (Bucharest: Editura Academici, 1954), and Stefan G. Graur, *Les relations entre la Roumanie et l'U.R.S.S. depuis le traité de Versailles* (Paris: A. Pedone, 1936). (Hereafter the latter is referred to as Graur, *Relations*.)

than in the context of the broader Russian Communist threat. If most leaders of the interwar years stressed the dangers of territorial revisionism, it was because their political *raison d'être* was generally equated with the maintenance of the Greater Rumanian state. Unwilling or unable to carry out major programs of socioeconomic reform, conservative politicians from Alexandru Averescu to King Carol II assigned greater priority to the maintenance of the country's territorial integrity than to satisfying the economic demands of the peasantry and working class. Their domestic policies were aimed at circumventing reformist influences, their foreign alignments at containing the revisionists headed by Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas the theoretical justification for political inaction failed to appease the dissatisfied, the corollary equating of Russian territorial revisionism with expansion of Bolshevism was more persuasive. With few exceptions the population of Rumania, even if generally disappointed at the policies of venal, incompetent, indecisive, and unrepresentative leaders, opposed Communist solutions to their varying problems. Clearly the land-hungry and downtrodden peasantry rejected the principles of agrarian reform advocated and executed in the Soviet Union. The urban professional classes and bourgeoisie showed no sympathy toward Moscow, and even the industrial workers preferred the indigenous solutions propounded by social democrats to the Russian formulas advanced by the Communists. Only among the oppressed minorities, particularly the Jewish intelligentsia, and the poorer industrial proletariat were supporters of Russia to be found. The constant anti-Russian and anti-Communist propaganda was not lightly dismissed; in fact, it provided the broad rationale for assumption of power by the most virulent exponents of militant nationalism and anti-Bolshevism, the Iron Guard, after the involuntary cession of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to Russia in 1940. Thus, paradoxically, those who had invoked the Russian and Communist menace as justification for their regressive policies were either ousted by or joined with the extremists in a common but futile effort to destroy the Soviet Union in alliance with Nazi Germany.

In retrospect, it may well be asked whether the fear of Communist Russia was justified and whether an accommodation would

<sup>5</sup> On these points consult the most comprehensive and sensitive analysis of Rumanian developments in the interwar years, Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 3-222 (hereafter cited as Roberts, *Rumania*).

have been possible. In answering this question it is essential to differentiate between immediate and long-range threats to the territorial and political stability of Greater Rumania. The evidence, scanty as it is, would tend to confirm the generally accepted conclusion that settlement of the outstanding territorial questions would not per se have removed the obstacles to a meaningful accommodation. Bessarabia, in the last analysis, was a political football to the Soviet Union, an instrument for expanding its sphere of influence into southeastern Europe. Whether it sought to intimidate the Rumanian government through the issuance of ultimatums, as in 1919, or the staging of "peasant revolts," as in 1924, or whether it dangled the carrot of peaceful settlement through actual or possible negotiations—as it did in 1924 and 1936—Russia expected far-reaching political concessions as the price of a formal agreement.<sup>6</sup> And this price was always too high for Rumanian negotiators, as it invariably amounted to the establishment of a potential basis for Russian penetration. Ultimately, Russia's true long-range intentions vis-à-vis Rumania were revealed in the discussions related to the determination of spheres of influence in Europe conducted not with the Rumanians but with Rumania's alleged friends or allies in 1939. The reannexation of Bessarabia (enlarged to include Northern Bukovina) demanded from France and Great Britain and agreed to by Germany was necessary to provide a steppingstone for the eventual establishment of a "Russian zone" in Eastern Europe.

On the other hand, the evidence also shows that if Russia's long-range aims were indisputably clear, she did not pose an immediate and direct threat to Rumania in the interwar years either through possible military intervention in Bessarabia or through subversion by the Rumanian Communist Party. The latter is particularly important since the relationship between the Kremlin and the Communist movement in Rumania was a barometer of Russia's intentions and, more immediately, the root cause for Rumania's current independent course. Albeit for different reasons, the policies of Moscow and Bucharest toward the Rumanian Communists coincided in their ultimate aim—the *de facto* liquidation of the party.

Indeed, one of the most significant legacies of the old regime was

<sup>6</sup> Graur, *Relations*, pp. 57–157. Ghita Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania 1944–1962* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 22–23, 51–52 (hereafter cited as Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*), provides interesting addenda and corrigenda.

the absence of a viable Communist party.<sup>7</sup> In retrospect, it may be argued that the outlawing of the Rumanian organization in 1924, less than three years after its formal establishment, was a major political error. The party, from its inception, was unrepresentative of the proletariat and enjoyed only minimal support in the factory and village. Its "revolutionary" potential and activities were insignificant, its ties with Moscow weak. The banning of the organization, ordered in retaliation for Russia's refusal to recognize Rumania's rights to Bessarabia, was exploited by Moscow only for propaganda purposes. This Russian attitude cannot be explained only in terms of inability to assist the Rumanian Communists in 1924. Rather it would appear that the Kremlin had already written off the Rumanian organization as an instrument for political revolution in Rumania and had found alternate means for implementing its immediate and long-range goals. Indeed, the history of the Rumanian Communist movement and its relationship with Moscow between 1924 and 1944 reveals a deliberate Russian policy of purging the ever-changing Rumanian Central Committee and of ignoring its political decisions, such as they were.<sup>8</sup>

The reasons for Russia's policies are not difficult to discern. They are ultimately related to Moscow's determination to assign the Rumanian party only an auxiliary role in the attainment of Soviet goals in Eastern Europe. The Russian decision was only partly based on realization that the Rumanian organization did not command the support of the masses. That situation could have been at least somewhat remedied by promoting programs more attractive to the Rumanian peasantry and working class. Even if dogmatism precluded major alterations in Communist theory and practice to con-

<sup>7</sup> Regrettably, the history of the Rumanian Communist movement remains obscure. The most comprehensive official survey, Institutul de Istorie a Partidului de pe lângă C.C. al P.M.R., *Lecții în ajutorul celor care studiază istoria P.M.R.* [Lessons to Guide Students of the Rumanian Workers' Party History] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1960), leaves too many questions unanswered. (Hereafter this is cited as Institutul de Istorie, *Lecții*.) The several corollary collections of documents, most notably Partidul Comunist din România, *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist din România* [Documents from the History of the Rumanian Communist Party], 2nd edition (Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură Politică, 1953), are too fragmentary to allow the piecing together of a meaningful story. Ionescu's synopsis comprising the introductory chapter to *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 1-68, is most valuable but too brief.

<sup>8</sup> Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 1-34, 41-46. A detailed indictment of Moscow's interference in Rumanian Communist affairs during this period was provided by Nicolae Ceaușescu himself in his speech on the occasion of the Rumanian Communist Party's forty-fifth anniversary on May 7, 1966 (*Scinteia*, May 8, 1966).

form to Rumanian conditions, no such impedimenta can explain Moscow's failure to modify the national and social composition of the Rumanian party's leadership. For it is indeed noteworthy that the party's Central Committee and leading cadres were from the very beginning dominated by Jewish intellectuals and representatives of disaffected national minority groups and that, moreover, only limited efforts were expended on recruitment or promotion of Rumanian workers and "working peasants" into positions of power. A careful study of the Moscow-ordered changes in the party's leadership reveals a constant pattern of replacing defective tools with new or reconditioned Soviet instruments, regardless of Rumanian conditions and reactions. It mattered little to the Kremlin who carried out the functions assigned to the Russian front organization, the Rumanian Communist Party; blind obedience was the only criterion. The conducting of clandestine propaganda among factory workers, penetration of the village, staging of demonstrations, publication of antifascist tracts, and assumption of the role of defenders of peace and democracy apparently required no national or rigid class identification. It is indeed remarkable, and revealing, that a Marcel Pauker or Dobrogeanu-Gherea was succeeded by a Iosif Chişinevski or Vasile Luca; that an Ana Pauker, Boris Ştefanov, Remus Koffler, Iosif Rangheţ, Petre Borilă, or Ştefan Foriş was invariably more trusted and hierarchically above a Nicolae Ceauşescu, Miron Constantinescu, or Alexandru Birlădeanu.<sup>9</sup> When taken in conjunction with such factors as the minimal Russian reaction to the bloody repression of the party's greatest achievement, the railway workers' strike of 1933, and indifference for the fate of the leaders of that "Griviţa rebellion," headed by Gheorghiu-Dej, it is possible to reach the conclusion that to Moscow the notion of a viable Rumanian party acting in the interests of the Rumanian masses in accordance with "objective Rumanian conditions" was intolerable even during the interwar years. That this was the case during World War II has been clearly demonstrated by recent documents and public disclosures by the present leaders of the Rumanian Communist Party.<sup>10</sup>

Moscow's attitude toward the Rumanian Communist movement reflected the conviction that replacement of the existing political order was unattainable by Rumanian means alone. Because such

<sup>9</sup> Much insight can be gained from a study of the data contained in Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 40-46 and 350-357, in Institutul de Istorie, *Lecţii*, pp. 289-299, and particularly in *Studii*, XVI, No. 1 (1963), devoted exclusively to the events of 1933.

<sup>10</sup> See in particular Ceauşescu's speech in *Scînteia*, May 8, 1966.

radical political action would have had to be ultimately carried out under Russian auspices, the generalship of the operation had to be entrusted to the Kremlin and its most reliable agents, the non- and anti-Rumanian leaders comprising the so-called "Rumanian bureau" in Moscow.<sup>11</sup> A *de facto* branch of the Russian Communist Party, one of the several foreign groups of that organization, it consisted of the most trusted and servile experts on Rumanian Communist affairs. Throughout the interwar years this Moscow-based and Russian-oriented bureau included at one time or another such "kept women" as Ana Pauker, Boris Ștefanov, Leonte Răutu, Petre Borilă, and others who would be periodically transferred to Bucharest in positions of key responsibility in the Rumanian party. And it was this nucleus, occasionally purified and reinforced, that acted as the "Rumanian general staff" until its wholesale move to Rumania in 1944. The dedicated servants of Moscow lacked identification with Rumania per se. If they advocated social reform, it was primarily to further Russian propaganda rather than Rumanian national ends. This divorcement between social reform and national purpose was indeed detrimental to the cause of the party and was so recognized by at least some of its Rumanian members.

On the basis of still somewhat fragmentary evidence it may be asserted that men like Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, the foremost Rumanian member of the Central Committee in the thirties, and Nicolae Ceaușescu and Grigore Preoteasa, significant figures in the Communist youth movement of those years, had more pronounced "domesticist" leanings than the representatives of the Moscow bureau.<sup>12</sup> This was known and exploited for tactical reasons by the Kremlin during the short years of advocacy of antifascist "democratic fronts." It is noteworthy that a considerable segment of the Rumanian intellectual community and the dissatisfied peasantry responded to the patriotic and reformist appeals of these Rumanian Communists with much greater enthusiasm than to those of confirmed agents of the Kremlin. But it is equally significant that no matter how sincere the motivations of these men might have been, their political effort was frustrated. The traditional non-Rumanian personnel and interests of the

<sup>11</sup> Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 10, 79-81.

<sup>12</sup> Institutul de Istorie, *Lecții*, pp. 345-361; Al. Gh. Savu, "Folosirea de către P.C.R. a campaniei alegerilor parlamentare din iunie 1931 în vederea stringerii legăturilor cu masele" [The Use by the Rumanian Communist Party of the Parliamentary Election Campaign from June 1931 with a View to Strengthening Relations with the Masses], *Studii*, XV, No. 1 (1962), pp. 39-66; Titu Georgescu, "Activitatea comitetului național antifascist (1933-1934)" [The Activity of the National Antifascist Committee], *ibid.*, XIV, No. 2 (1961), pp. 323-352.

Communist movement were stressed in discrediting the "new orientation" as a Soviet maneuver. This ammunition, most virulently utilized by the right-wing political parties, virtually destroyed the organization in 1940 when it was put *hors de combat* by the action of its sponsors and the reaction of its fiercest opponents. Ruined by its endorsement of the Hitler-Stalin pact and the seizure of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina by the Soviet Union, the party was *de facto* dismembered by the Iron Guardist regime. The known leaders of the Rumanian movement, if not already incarcerated, were either jailed or placed under house arrest. The only exceptions were the Bessarabian contingent, the few initiated who were in that province at the time of the annexation, the resident members of the Moscow bureau, and Ana Pauker, exchanged for Corneliu Codreanu's father. The division between the expendable, incapacitated front men and the reliable, reinforced Moscow group was evident on the eve of Rumania's entry into the war on the side of Nazi Germany.

The defeat of the Rumanian organization proved to be a Pyrrhic victory first for its Rumanian and some twenty years later for its Russian opponents as well. The rounding up of the few active members of the illegal organization in 1940 was as symbolic of the failure of the several Rumanian regimes of the interwar period as the banning of the party in 1924. For evidently if the Communist movement per se had but few followers, the need for socioeconomic and political reform—inherent in the misapplied and misinterpreted Marxist doctrine—had been long recognized by the majority of the population of Greater Rumania. The inability of all governments and political parties active between 1918 and 1944 to provide meaningful solutions to the urgent desiderata of the nation provided, on the one hand, the rationale for communism at the end of the Second World War and, on the other, the specific "concrete historic conditions" referred to in the *Statement* of April 1964.

Among the most troublesome elements of the historic legacy left by the old regime were the unresolved agrarian problem, with the corollary mass dissatisfaction of the peasantry, and the nationality question with its ugly anti-Semitic and anti-Hungarian manifestations. Whereas not all political organizations may be equally blamed for their failure to provide satisfactory reform programs, it is evident that none, whether holding office or in opposition, sought to resolve the enormous contradictions and conflicts built into the socioeconomic structure of the Greater Rumanian state. As gener-



ally recognized, the principal domestic issue was the peasant.<sup>13</sup> The medieval inheritance of a largely illiterate, "neoserf," Rumanian peasantry may have defied solution even by the most reformist of rulers. Those of Greater Rumania satisfied themselves with implementing the inadequate provisions of the agrarian reform wrested from the monarchy during World War I in a manner essentially detrimental to the peasants' interests. The politicians' reluctance to incorporate the peasantry fully into the country's economic and political life is most readily explained by their determination to prevent the peasant from gaining political power. This attitude, fully comprehensible in terms of the social composition and political philosophy of the leading parties, was at best shortsighted; at worst—given the rulers' inability to satisfy the peasants' economic needs—it exacerbated the traditional, residual antagonisms between town and village, between landlord and serf. Moreover, as they were operating on the premise that Greater Rumania was the creation and possession of the Wallachian and Moldavian aristocracy, its descendants and protégés, and, to a considerably lesser extent, the "unionists" of the newly acquired territories, the Bucharest politicians pursued the retrograde policy of disguising their unwillingness to undertake meaningful socioeconomic reform under the banner of supranationalism. Thus not only was the "underdeveloped" Rumanian peasant neglected but also the more advanced Hungarian or Saxon agriculturist was abused.

It is true that the agrarian crisis which tormented Rumania in the thirties was not due wholly to the inadequacies of domestic policies. It is also true that the peasantry's preferred solutions to their economic difficulties, centering on acquisition of additional land, were more often than not unsound and unrealizable in terms of the country's general economic requirements and orientation. However, the deliberate political isolation of the peasantry, failure to improve agricultural techniques, maintenance of backward social and cultural standards, in short the crass neglect of the village, were not conducive to winning the allegiance of the masses or modernizing the socioeconomic structure of the country. The antirural policies and programs of the interwar years were not a monopoly of the Communist, social democratic, conservative, and other political organizations favoring accentuation of industrial development or maintenance of large latifundia. To a lesser degree even the

<sup>13</sup> On the Rumanian agrarian problem and its political aspects consult Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 89-222.

alleged friends or representatives of the peasant, the National Liberal and the National Peasant parties, did relatively little to improve the status of the Rumanian masses during their respective turns in office. Under the circumstances the two major political organizations gradually lost the confidence of the peasant, who turned more and more toward the monarchy or exponents of radical reform programs. In the thirties King Carol II, the Iron Guard, and even the Plowmen's Front were effectively competing with the National Peasant Party for the allegiance of the masses.

Dissatisfaction, in the interwar period, was not limited to the rural population; it was also prevalent in the city. The root cause for this phenomenon was the irrational exploitation of the country's vast economic resources by those in power. True to their philosophy that Greater Rumania was the patrimonial estate of its architects, the Bucharest "power elite," particularly that congregating in the dominant National Liberal Party, pursued a policy of milking the country and dividing the spoils for its immediate benefit.<sup>14</sup> In the twenties the Brătianu family, their industrialist and financial friends, the top echelons of the bureaucracy, and a large retinue of lesser relatives, acquaintances, and officials were jealously guarding and selfishly devouring the national nest egg. The related discriminatory treatment of Hungarian and Jewish commercial, financial, and industrial interests and protectionist trade policies—justified in terms of Rumanian supremacy and national interest—stymied economic progress. The industrial workers were treated shoddily as were the rank and file of the state and private bureaucracy. The Liberals' policies and practices, deplored by the population at large, were also vociferously condemned by an unusually large number of rival political parties. Regrettably, most political organizations had no reformist tendencies; their paramount aim was replacing the National Liberals before the well ran dry.<sup>15</sup> To attain this goal a multitude of theoretical reform programs were propounded; all except those of the Communists, social democrats, and certain peasant organizations emphasized the preservation of national territorial integrity and development of Rumania

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94–129. An excellent brief discussion of Rumanian political problems and mores in the interwar years is contained in Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars, 1918–1941*, 3rd edition (New York: Archon Books, 1962), pp. 198–216.

<sup>15</sup> The official programs and doctrines of the various political parties are conveniently summarized in International Reference Library, *Politics and Political Parties in Rumania* (London: International Reference Library Publishing Company, 1936).

for the Rumanians. Moreover, few parties were above compromise with the opposition or the monarchy, since even half a loaf was better than none. In this deplorable political climate little could be achieved, and excesses became inevitable particularly after the start of the world depression. As the competition for the ever more meager spoils increased, so did popular dissatisfaction and corollary political adventurism and right-wing radicalism.

In any mass indictment of Rumanian political parties and of the prevalent political prostitution, several exceptions must be made. Except for minor political groupings, offshoots of the National Liberal and National Peasant parties, which displayed a modicum of political integrity, and except for the social democrats and Communists, all were in one form or another either guilty of collusion with the monarchy, with fascist or protofascist organizations, or of forgoing political promises and reformist principles upon assumption of power. The National Liberals, who dominated the political scene during the interwar years, were hardly above reproach. First under the Brătianu dynasty, later under Gheorghe Tătărescu, they neglected the public interest and undertook virtually no reforms. More significantly, perhaps, they were the initiators of the doctrines related to national supremacy and self-sufficiency which were perpetrated in more virulent forms by the right-wing opposition. Yet, being the party of the Rumanian bourgeoisie and former latifundiaries, it never engaged in the irrational and politically fatal behavior of the extremists. Nor is it possible to exonerate the National Peasant Party for its abysmal failure in the interwar years.<sup>16</sup> As the organization of the peasantry, of the urban reformist intelligentsia and professional classes, of the national minorities seeking equality of rights, of the majority of those opposed to the National Liberals, it held out—in the twenties and thirties—the greatest hope for reform in Rumania. But during its turn in power between 1928 and 1931 it disappointed most of its supporters by pursuing policies not dissimilar to those of its predecessors. With allowances made for such formidable factors as the international economic crisis and royal interference, the socioeconomic and political reform programs advocated by the party's "left-wing" "peasant" contingent were severely circumscribed by the conservative "national" wing led by Iuliu Maniu. Reformism could never transcend the "national interest" framework imposed by Maniu, and this deficiency led to the further

<sup>16</sup> For a judicious appraisal of the National Peasant Party's ideology and policies consult Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 130-169.

weakening of the organization after Maniu's falling out with King Carol II and subsequent conclusion of the much-criticized electoral pact with the Iron Guard in 1937.

The ranks of the disappointed and discontented grew after the National Peasants' failure to fulfill the expectations of their supporters, and the dissatisfaction and cries for reform were not silenced by the Tătărescu regime that followed. Under these conditions the true exponent of national extremism, the fascist Iron Guard, offered its program for "national reconstruction."

Rumanian fascism cannot be explained in terms of the anti-Semitic and anti-Communist tradition alone; indeed, it is comprehensible only as a nationalist social reform movement.<sup>17</sup> Anti-Semitism was fundamental to the doctrine of the Iron Guard. But this inheritance from its parent organization, the League of National Christian Defense, could not per se account for the widespread support enjoyed by the Legionaries in the thirties. The appeal of the Iron Guard ultimately rested in its providing the peasantry, urban proletariat, intellectuals, businessmen, and industrialists with an apparent solution to their problems within an acceptable ideological framework. Conditioned by constant bombardment with chauvinist, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist, anti-Russian, and anti-Hungarian propaganda by most political organizations and the press, a substantial segment of the Rumanian population, frustrated by the failures of "traditional" political parties, was prepared to join the reformist crusade advocated by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and his followers. In general, apart from the industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals, civil and military servants who were banking or gambling on Hitler's victory, the supporters of the Guardist organization regarded the Legionaries not as agents of Nazi Germany but as Rumanian patriots bent on satisfying their socioeconomic needs. It is difficult to determine the depth of the Guardist roots in the country at large before the downfall of King Carol in 1940, since the monarchy had sought to provide a comparable reform program in the late thirties. But it is clear that the Guard had a substantial following from as early as 1937, as evi-

<sup>17</sup> Codreanu's own writings, contained in Corneliu Z. Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari* [For the Iron Guard] (Bucharest: "Totul pentru Țară" [All for the Fatherland], 1937), should be read in conjunction with Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 223-241, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Sous Trois Dictatures* (Paris: Vitiano, 1946), pp. 277-326, and Eugen Weber, "Romania," in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 501-574.

denced in that year's elections, and did enjoy broad support at the time it drove King Carol into exile in the summer of 1940. It is also noteworthy that even after the removal of the Legionaries from power by Marshal Ion Antonescu, early in 1941, the repudiation of the Guardist methods did not necessarily mean abandonment of their ideology or program. In fact, both doctrine and program were perpetrated under Antonescu's fascist regime with a remarkable degree of success.

In its simplest terms the Iron Guard advocated the removal of all corrupt politicians, destruction of the economic power of the Jews and redistribution of their assets among the Rumanian population, broad land reform, rational utilization of the country's vast economic resources, and a crusade against Rumania's mortal enemy, Communist Russia—the friend and protector of Jews and other national groups inimical to Rumanian interests—in alliance with Nazi Germany. It is true that not all members, followers, or sympathizers subscribed to all aspects of this program. Thus the peasantry was far more concerned with agrarian reform than with anti-Russian crusades. The intellectuals were generally interested in the political reform program and the chauvinistic aspects of the doctrine without subscribing to the pro-German orientation of the movement. Only a hard but influential core of the oppressed proletariat, younger peasants, underpaid civil servants, commissioned and noncommissioned army officers, and high school and university students, with wide contacts in the village, endorsed the most radical aspects of the "Christian crusade" propounded by the Guardist high command.

This does not mean that the majority of the Rumanian people were devoted fascists in the thirties and early forties; but it is evident that, whether fully understood or not, fascism was the most acceptable of the alternatives presented to the dissatisfied Rumanians in those years. The other choices, besides those offered by the major political parties prior to their suppression by King Carol in 1938, were royal dictatorship or one or another form of socialism.

Superficially there was little to choose between the dictatorships of King Carol and the fascists, but in reality the differences were profound.<sup>18</sup> Although the King had been a contributing factor to political immorality and more directly concerned with his personal enrichment and that of his entourage since coronation in 1930, he cannot be held responsible for destruction of the democratic politi-

<sup>18</sup> On the royal dictatorship, its nature and purposes, see Roberts, *Rumania*, pp. 206-222, and Pătrășcanu, *Sous Trois Dictatures*, pp. 21-231.

cal process or for the country's economic plight any more than most party politicians. That he provided no moral leadership nor actively sought the improvement of political practices is unquestionable. But even though he failed to set standards above those current in interwar Rumania and was unwilling to emulate contemporary Western constitutional monarchs, thus demeaning the royal office, still his actions were so much in keeping with Rumanian political mores that singling him out for blame is not historically justifiable. In fact, the King, by virtue of his position, became a constructive force in political life and did so—to be sure, belatedly—at a time of extreme economic and political difficulties. The effectiveness of his “monarcho-fascist” regime, set up to provide a united political front to cope with the country's socioeconomic problems and the threat of unadulterated fascism, domestic and foreign, can best be measured by the determination of the Iron Guard and Hitler to remove him from power. His proposed agricultural reforms, modest though they were, enjoyed a definite degree of popularity in the villages. His precarious attempts to balance German influence against the traditional French and thus ultimately to ensure Rumania's neutrality were welcomed by much of the Francophile intellectual and professional community. Ultimately, all those fearful of pure fascism were among his supporters. It is true, however, that the support given Carol was more in the nature of a choice between two evils. And it is precisely because of the contradictions inherent in the royal dictatorship that the true fascists were able to overthrow him without risking meaningful popular reaction. It is, however, important that the institution of the monarchy as such was preserved in 1940 not only because it was traditional, historically associated with Greater Rumania, and generally desired by the peasantry but also because Carol's successor, King Michael, endorsed the fascist program and was accepted by the majority of the Rumanians as the honorary leader of a palatable, if not ideal, program of political action and socioeconomic reform.

In contrast, the socialist alternatives presented to the dissatisfied in the thirties were largely theoretical. The social democrats had a respectable following among the working class, but the size of the proletariat was small.<sup>10</sup> The number of intellectuals who were sympathetic to socialist programs may have been fairly large, but as

<sup>10</sup> The most authoritative statement on the social democratic movement in Rumania is by C. Titel Petrescu, *Istoria Socialismului în România* [The History of Socialism in Rumania] (Bucharest: “Cugetarea,” 1944).

the Social Democratic Party had virtually no support from the peasantry and nationalists—and consequently was unable to gain political power at the polls—actual identification was nominal. The fate of the Communists, as described, was even worse. However, the Transylvanian Plowmen's Front, a pro-Communist splinter group of the National Peasant Party and member of the Communist-dominated Popular Front of the mid-thirties, attracted a surprisingly sizable following in those years. The land reform program, based on principles of equalitarian distribution and peaceful cooperation among peasants regardless of nationality, was particularly popular in Northern Transylvania, as evidenced by the electoral results of 1936.<sup>20</sup> Still it is most doubtful that, even if it had been permitted to continue its activities, the Plowmen's Front could have effectively competed with the fascists or even with King Carol for the allegiance of the masses. The Vienna *Diktat* of the summer of 1940, assigning Northern Transylvania to Hungary, cut the ground from under the Plowmen's Front as much as the restitution of Bessarabia had ruined its Communist allies. And as both factors had also been most instrumental in the removal of King Carol, the fascists were free to cope with the country's problems all by themselves.

A re-evaluation of the fascist period, particularly under Antonescu, would indicate that its achievements have been generally minimized and that the extent of its rejection by the population has been grossly exaggerated.<sup>21</sup> Antonescu was both an efficient and enlightened dictator compared to his European counterparts of World War II. His reformist measures in agriculture and industry—though they were inspired largely by military necessities—were effective and held out the prospect of further improvement at the war's end. The anti-Russian crusade, at least through the stage of reconquest of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, was endorsed by the political leaders of the "traditional parties," including the National Liberal and National Peasant, and generally met with mass approval. Only as defeat became apparent, as the losses of manpower reached unexpected heights, as the country's economic gains were erased because of excessive military demands, German pilferage, and Allied bombings did the base of his support shrink. Nevertheless, even in defeat Rumanian fascism, in its reformist and

<sup>20</sup> Institutul de Istorie, *Leştii*, pp. 362–370.

<sup>21</sup> In this connection see Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu; Die deutsch-rumänischen Beziehungen 1938–1944*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden; Franz Steiner, 1965), pp. 89–235.

extreme nationalist aspects, was not dead. And as politicians began to desert the sinking ship after Stalingrad, they did not necessarily change their views or habits concurrently with their affiliations. To all but the social democrats, "progressive" peasant organizations, and certain survivors of the decimated Communist movement, nationalism and anticommunism remained the ideological framework for any immediate and long-range alteration of Rumania's political and socioeconomic patterns and orientation. The masses shared at least one of the politicians' apprehensions—fear of Communist Russia. Thus, in the troubled days of military withdrawal from the Soviet Union and simultaneously the rapid advance of the Russian forces toward Rumania's borders, a variety of solutions and compromises were being sought by those who at one time or another had been in Antonescu's camp—except by the Marshal himself—all based on the realization that the national, or nationalist, tradition was in grave jeopardy. It was in these chaotic moments that the Rumanian Communists were summoned to political action by Rumanian political figures and by Moscow. The Communists' task was a thankless one.