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Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania. By Roland Clark. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015. 288 pp.

Holy Legionary Youth by Roland Clark is an outstanding piece of scholarship on the Romanian fascist movement known as the Iron Guard. Following in the footsteps of reputed researchers such as Armin Heinen, Bela Vago, and Radu Ioanid, Clark joins the younger generation's chorus of new voices in the study of Romanian Fascism led by Constantin Iordachi, Oliver Jens Schmitt, and Valentin Săndulescu. Distancing himself from the "palingenetic" twist introduced by Roger Griffin or George L. Mosse's cultural turn, Clark's book boldly concentrates on the social underpinnings of the Romanian fascist movement and the collective dynamics of different professional groups (painters, priests, writers, intellectuals) listed in the Iron Guard's rank-and-file. Working from the perspective of the history of the everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*), Clark seeks to show "fascism as an everyday practice" and to consider "how legionaries performed fascism and how being fascist marked legionaries socially" (p.6). In his depiction of the "illiberal subjectivities," Clark also investigates "the emotional energy they [the legionaries] invested in political activism and the extent to which they allowed legionary discipline to shape daily routines" (p.6) in order to clarify the social extent of legionary activism and the sheer obsession of legionaries with almost ascetical discipline. Bridging gaps in conflicting historiographical approaches and relying on a sophisticated theoretical underpinning ranging from the historiography of Fascism to systematic and liturgical Orthodox theology, Clark's book offers the reader a subtle yet comprehensive narrative account of what it meant to be a member of the Iron Guard in interwar Romania.

One of the strong points of the book is the overwhelming and indeed unmatched amount of archival research undertaken by the author in Romanian archives, both central (Arhivele Nationale Istorică Centrale, Arhiva Consiliului National pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității) and regional, as well as in the generous archival funds held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the National Archives in Washington D.C. Together with these valuable archival documents, the large collection of interwar publications (newspapers, books, propaganda leaflets, etc.), oral history accounts, and a large array of memoirs penned by former legionaries masterfully convey a complex and broad picture of the Iron Guard's everyday life from bottom to top and the fascist, anti-Semitic developments from the early 1920s up to the early 1950s in Romania.

The book's structure is well balanced and the chapters provide both a clear-cut analytical framework and empirical analysis of the archival sources, the contemporary press, and the secondary literature. Among the most original chapters are "Youthful Justice" (pp.28–62), "Elections, Violence and Discipline" (pp.95–121), and "Salvation and Sacrifice" (pp.184–215). The first two discuss the early stages of the ultranationalist young generation's anti-Semitic build up from early 1920s up to the early 1930s and the social construction of its appeal to the masses. The third focuses on "clerical activism" (pp.190–193) and describes the biographies of a few legionary clergymen and their ties to the movement. Addressing the question of why Orthodox clergymen and theologians got embroiled in the violent, xenophobic turn beginning in the early 1920s, the author emphatically states that, "because of the political leanings of their professors, theology students were at the forefront of anti-Semitic agitations" (p.190). Nevertheless, one question arises concerning the 1930s fascist activism of the Orthodox clergy: apart from the infectious influence of charismatic university and seminary professors, such as Grigore Cristescu (1895–1961), Nichifor Crainic (1889–1972), and Dumitru Iliescu-Palanca (1903–1963), what other explanations are there for the fact that the Orthodox priests and theologians mentioned by Clark publically supported the Iron Guard? Was it for the socio-cultural reasons that appealed to all the Orthodox clergymen, or were there local and individual dynamics? Also, following the argument presented in the theoretical framework envisaged by the author in the introduction, one is prompted to ask what sort of social practices these clergymen engaged in when performing as fascists, in addition to familiar case-studies of public funerals of legionary martyrs, religious commemorations of the dead (*parastase*), and the blessing of crosses erected by the legionaries. Did they behave as regular fascists or did they act differently from other legionary professional groups because of their constant self-awareness of their clerical vocation?

When writing about the logic of self-sacrifice in the context of the funeral of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin (Iron Guard leaders killed in the Spanish Civil War in 1937), the author makes a compelling argument concerning the complex relationship between legionary martyrdom and Orthodox rituals: "Legionaries not only stated that church and nation were identical communities that were represented most perfectly by their movement; they enacted these relationships by using Orthodox funerary rituals to commemorate legionaries as national heroes. Legionary nationalism did not replace religious communities with national communities. Through ritual commemorations it reinforced the Orthodox Church as national, and the nation as Orthodox" (p.210). Although these ideas, which involved a symbolic overlap

of the nation and the Church, were actually present in the Transylvanian context in the nineteenth century, Clark makes a valuable and original remark related to the symbiotic relationship between legionary and religious nationalism in interwar Romania. As noted by the author, in their search for public legitimization and as a means of augmenting their mass-appeal, the legionaries engaged in rituals that were shared with the Orthodox clergy, even when these public ceremonies were funerals and commemorations for the dead. This bolstered the social relevance of the Orthodox Church for both the members of the Legionary movement and the wider public. The legionaries behaved in this way towards the Orthodox clergymen in order to recall and to reemphasize the importance of so-called organic (what might in other contexts be referred to as native) tradition, the popular religiosity of the Romanian people, and the constant referral to religious rituals and Orthodox symbols in the social memory of the Romanian nation, an initiative favoring the Iron Guard's utopian dreams of totalitarian political power.

Clark's assumption that the nineteenth-century Orthodox Church from the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia supported the spread of nationalist movements (p.12) finds little support in the secondary literature on the subject. A more vigorous effort on Clark's part in his discussion of the alleged precursors of the fascist movement in Romania would perhaps have been necessary in order to present some of his claims more persuasively. Some of his contentions remain unsupported and hypothetical. For the scholar of European Fascism, the absence of a historiographical essay in the introduction is a regrettable shortcoming. Although the author offers insights on the secondary literature on Fascism by shifting his attention towards the works of Roger Griffin, George L. Mosse, Michael Mann, and others, he fails to provide the reader with an analytical assessment of the secondary literature, both foreign and Romanian, on the Iron Guard. He does not make clear how his inquiry builds upon previous research and monographs or how, in its search for originality, the present work relates critically to previous undertakings in the field.

A relevant contribution to the field of fascist studies, *Holy Legionary Youth* opens new research avenues for students of European Fascism and Eastern European history. Highly interdisciplinary, analytically comprehensive, and informed by a prodigious array of both primary sources and secondary literature, Clark's book is a much-awaited reading for researchers, university professors, and students alike. It will serve as a useful teaching tool for undergraduate and graduate classes on the interwar history of Eastern Europe, the genesis of interwar anti-Semitism, and everyday life under totalitarian regimes.

Ionuț Biliuța