1 Ethnic Nationalism and Genocide

Constructing "the Other" in Romania and Serbia

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In cases of extreme forms of violence, there is a pattern: there is "us" – the superior, almighty us – and there is "them", the inferior, dangerous "them" who must be eliminated. My intention is not to reduce genocide to something simplistic but rather to underline, or more precisely to raise, a significant question: how does someone become "the other", the deadly enemy who pose such a great threat to one's identity, security, and purity? In what circumstances does such a situation occur? In the twentieth century, particular groups in Romania and Serbia who have been identified as the enemy, the threat, or simply the dangerous "other" have been subjected to policies of discrimination, exclusion, and in the end extreme mass violence. In both cases, Romania and Serbian leaders justified their genocidal policies with nationalist arguments – to protect and preserve national identity and the uniqueness of the nation (supposedly based on religion or ethnicity). In order to understand why and how "the other" was constructed, it is important to look at nationalism, the main "provider" of characteristics, labels, and stereotypes in describing the enemy. The next chapter by Busch provides a further, more conceptual illustration of this process.

Instead of defining the nation simply as an "imagined community",[1] the outcome of "standardized homogeneous high cultures supported by central power structures",[2] the "one of many traditions invented by

1 In his book, Benedict Anderson emphasizes a cultural perspective of the nation to which he gives an imaginary nature. For him, the nation is an artifact, an imagined political community. The imagination of the nation was made possible by three events: the decline of the belief that there is a sacred text that irrevocably embodies truth; the decline of the belief that "society was naturally organized around and under high centers-monarchs"; and the development of the idea of "homogeneous, empty time". These historical happenings were accompanied by print-capitalism, which played a significant role in the development of print-languages. The print-languages laid the foundations for national consciousness in three ways: they created unified fields of exchange and communication that went beyond Latin; they built up the image of antiquity necessary to the idea of the nation; and they created languages of power different from the older administrative vernaculars. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1991)

2 Ernest Gellner offers a sociological perspective on the nation. According to Gellner's thesis, nations can be defined in terms of will and culture. "Nations are definable when general social

political elites",[3] or constructing the idea of the nation around the concept of *ethnie*,[4] I have decided to approach the topic in terms of a process, the process of nation formation. In my opinion, subjectivists are idealistic, and their thesis not only underestimates the power and the constraints of the concepts they are analyzing but also fails to address nations outside of the Western civilization. At the same time, objectivists do not succeed in seeing nations as dynamic processes, as entities that change and develop continuously. The concept of the 'nation formation process' attempts to solve these shortcomings by emphasizing, first and foremost, that we are dealing with a long-term process that never ends. It is a gradual process in the sense that it does not affect various classes in society at the same time. And third, it is ambivalent: there are periods in which, besides national identification, other identities (regional, class, religious, or family) will compete or interfere with national identity. Within this process, five aspects are relevant: integration, the spread of a standardized culture, identification with the nation, the nation as a political body, and nation formation as a process of inclusion-exclusion. This chapter focuses on the latter two phases.

In terms of timelines, this chapter refers to Greater Romania established between the First World War and the Greater Serbia project of Slobodan Milosevic. In this phase, nationalism was no longer an intellectual or middle class affair; it became a mass movement. Nationalist ideas were turned

conditions have led to standardized homogeneous high cultures supported by central power structures and spread among populations". For Gellner, it is nationalism that engenders nations and not the other way around: "it invents nations where they do not exist"... O'Leary Brendan, "On the Nature of Nationalism: An Appraisal of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Nationalism", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Apr., 1997): 191-222.

3 For Eric Hobsbawm, nation is a recent concept, "the product of historical, particular, inevitably local and regional experiences". He distinguishes between two concepts of the nation: democratic-revolutionary and nationalist. For the former, the central concept is sovereign citizenship, while for the latter political entities that contain the formula state-nation-people have to be created. Eric Hobsbawm in John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 76-83, 177-184.

4 Anthony Smith defined the nation as "a named human community residing in a perceived homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a distinct public culture and common laws and customs for all members". He identifies two types of ethnic communities in pre-modern times: lateral and vertical, which explain the different routes by which nations have been created. In the first case, modern nationhood is achieved through the bureaucratic state, while in the second case national autonomy is obtained through a secular intelligentsia who fights against a hostile state. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, *Nationalism,* 113-122, 147-154. Having also the ethnic element at the core of his thesis, John Armstrong argues that modern nations are the product of a "longer cycle of ethnic resurgence and decline over the *longue duree*"... John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, *Nationalism,* 132.

into policies; nationalism became the ideology of the leaders who, once in power, had all the mechanisms necessary to implement genocide. The ideas and concepts that were developed in the first three phases of the process of nation formation, plus the context of war and internal crisis, were the necessary conditions for constructing the image of "the other" as "something" that had to be eliminated.

First Phases in the Process of Nation-Formation in Romania and Serbia

Conquered, occupied, and contested for centuries by various empires, Romanians and Serbs struggled to establish what they considered to be the real Romanian and Serbian states. Their collective awareness was triggered by religion, language, and historical boundaries. These characteristics made them aware that they were part of a social group and, most importantly, made them feel they were somehow "unique" within the region they lived. Romanians spoke a Latin language in an area dominated by Slavic people, while Serbs were Orthodox Christians surrounded by Catholic and Muslim neighbours. The ethnic characteristics on which the collective awareness emerged in the fourteenth to seventeenth century were put forward in a systematic, scientific way by historians, poets, and the clergy in the eighteenth century. At a time when Romania and Serbia were part of multinational empires, its citizens enjoying few or no rights even though they represented the majority within their territories, culture and education became the only way to express Romanian and Serbian identity. Influenced by the Enlightenment, Romanian and Serbian intellectuals and clergy attempted to spread the ethnic characteristics of their nations by promoting the Romanian language, editing textbooks, writing poems in the Serbian spoken language, or promoting the Serbian myths through church paintings. This was an early phase of what would later become the Romanian and Serbian standardized culture.

Identification with the nation can occur unconsciously or it might be furthered by individuals or institutions; the two do not, however, exclude each other. In both cases under scrutiny, identification with the nation first came unconsciously in situations of conflict, or more precisely revolt – revolt against the bad conditions that peasants had to endure under the rule of a different ethnic group. One might ask why ethnic and linguistic elements prevailed in the nations of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. The majority of the population was living in rural areas, and society was

largely agrarian. For an oppressed, dominated, uneducated class such as the Romanian or Serbian peasants, "freedom meant the ability to use their own land without impediment, not a parliamentary regime".[5] In terms of language, "the vernacular of any small nation fighting for its independence is automatically regarded as the language of liberty".[6] Intellectuals and politicians consciously furthered what started as an unconscious process, triggered by the uprisings in the nineteenth century. They did so by fighting for the recognition of the spoken language. Through their theories and ideas they gave shape to an ethnic, ideological concept of the nation.

By the time Jews, Muslims, and Croats became "the other", Romania and Serbia had already had a history of ethnic nationalism, a period in which the legendary past – determined by centuries of domination and oppression by various empires – played a major role in defining Romanian and Serbian identity. Furthermore, the resentment and frustration accumulated under occupation led to the development of an ethnic consciousness perceived as the only alternative to national survival within multinational empires. But ethnic nationalism does not lead to genocide by itself; it needs some "favorable", short-term conditions. Ethnic characteristics did prevail in Romania and Serbia, but it was only in 1940-1945 and 1985-1995 that ethnic nationalism triggered genocidal policies. What made that possible was an interaction between long-term conditions (the presence of ethnic legacy and the perpetuation of ethnic features over time) and short-term conditions (situations of extreme crisis). The next section of this chapter focuses on the period in which most of the anti-Semitic and racist ideas were put forward and spread within society. These ideas, within a context of insecurity, made possible the construction of "the other". The phase under scrutiny is the one that sets up the "playground" for future mass violence in Romania and Serbia.

Who Are We? Where Are We? Ethnic Nationalism and its Approach of "the Other"

Romania

After the First World War, Romania had to face several social and political changes; beginning in 1918, Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Moldavia,

5 Miroslav Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-Buildings in Europe", *New Left Review*, I/198, March-April 1993: 16.

6 Ibid., 17.

and Wallachia all became part of the new state, Greater Romania. With the new territories (Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia) that joined the independent Romania of 1878, the population and the territory of the new state almost doubled.[7] This would have been the perfect moment for Romania to turn from ethnic nationalism to civic nationalism, given the diversity of the population. However, this did not happen due to important social, cultural, economic, and political factors. The country remained predominantly rural, with only 20% of the population living in urban areas; 72.3% of Romania's general population was working the land, only 9.5% worked in industry, and 18.2% were involved in tertiary sectors like commerce, banking, public services – "a bureaucratically rather than industrially oriented population".[8] Another important thing: in the three provinces that were added after the war, the urban population was predominantly non-Romanian; Romania was still a nation of peasants.

After the end of the war, Romanian authorities promoted a process of modernization that included land reform and universal male suffrage. The latter introduced two new categories to the electoral field: the peasants and the Jews. These revolutionary initiatives made possible the "mental modernization"[9] of large parts of the rural population, but in reality the authorities were not ready to support them; they gave land to the peasants but did not provide them with the necessary tools and other means to work their new properties. Furthermore, they offered the right to vote to all Romanians, but the political parties failed to represent the newcomers in the political arena. This failure can also be explained by the way in which the elites decided on these very important measures. During the war, the Romanian Army suffered substantial losses in terms of number of soldiers. People from home had to be mobilized in one way or another; this is why the measures were aimed mainly at the peasants. Pragmatic reasons rather than the need to modernize society were behind the decisions of the Romanian elite.

7 In 1919, Romania's population increased from 7,771,341 to 14,669,841. The Jewish population represented the third minority group, representing 4% (728,115) of the Romanian population after the War. Hungarians were the first minority, representing almost 8% of the population; Germans were the second with 4.1%. Other minorities living on Romanian territory were the Russians, Bulgarians, and Gypsies. See Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle 1918-1930* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 8-11.

8 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania,* 9.

9 Armin Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2006), 35.

Another policy targeting the peasants was education, as it was perceived as a method of national mobilization in a society where nationalism was mainly an intellectual issue or political program. In her work, Irina Livezeanu (1995) has focused on this particular aspect, on the "acquisition of cultural and educational institutions by the Romanian state and local elites in order to elucidate the problems of unification, nation building and nationalism".[10] Education was the path from *ethnies* to modern nations:

> For the peasants, schools of all levels were the road to full nationhood and, thereby, to a higher social status, to a bureaucratic white-collar job, and to a higher living standard and more personal power. By advancing into the urban world of high culture previously dominated by foreigners, the Romanian peasant could bring Greater Romania closer to the nation-state ideal… the new generation regarded the conquest of the urban areas and the acquisition of elite positions as a national mission.[11]

The Romanian state aimed to reform education in such a way as to develop the local middle class that was to replace the existing foreign one in order to create a Romanian elite that would change the urban-rural balance. This was, in E. Weber's terms, a process of turning peasants into Romanians. Even though well-intended, the Romanian educational policies ended up fuelling the populist nationalist discourse. According to the logic of the Romanian authorities, peasants were educated so they could come to town and occupy different positions, held at that point by a minority, mainly Jewish.[12] What was going to happen with this minority? Where were they supposed to go?

10 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania,* 17.

11 Ibid., 302.

12 At the end of the nineteenth century, the culture developed by intellectuals focused on the village, where the peasant was the core of Romanian nationalism and intellectuals perceived themselves as their representatives and defendants. The outcome was the establishment of negative stereotypes regarding the foreigner: the Turk (pagan, invader); the Pole (arrogant, invader); the Hungarian (oppressor); and so on… Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991), 4. Negative stereotypes were also employed for the 'internal' foreigners: the Jews and the Greeks. The former were used by the leaders of Romanian Principalities in 1780 to stimulate urban development and became "the catalyst for the consolidation of nationalism and a stimulus to national awakening" in the nineteenth century. Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail*, 4. In a society where minorities were used in the intellectuals' self-victimizing discourse, making them responsible for the decline in the national economy and culture, the Jews "succeeded" in distinguishing themselves from the other minorities when they were accused of being guilty for exercising a bad influence on

After 1918, with the emergence of the two new political constituencies, peasants and Jews, political parties faced an identity crisis. Ultimately they failed to represent the population and thus laid the grounds for a critical analysis of the political system. With the ban of communist parties in 1924, "the political left lost its capacity to contribute to the defining of the nation, and the national discourse was effectively delivered into the hands of the right".[13] Not even the party formed by Nicolae Iorga and A.C. Cuza[14] succeeded in overcoming the social and political changes. Their ideas, their nationalism, and their anti-Semitism were "out of date". The internal and external changes ensured the establishment of a "new generation" of nationalists who "in the crisis situation and frustration that they themselves felt personally, were the first who would start formulating a solution to the existing problems".[15] This new generation was represented by students motivated by Professor Cuza's lectures. It is precisely from among these students that the fascist movement, the Iron Guard, would take shape.

While Cuza had an important impact on the new generation and especially on its leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the real mentor of this

Romanians through their economy and religion. Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s,* p. 8.

13 Katherine Verdery in Barkey, "Negotiated Paths to Nationhood: A Comparison of Hungary and Romania in the Early Twentieth Century", 526.

14 Nicolae Iorga and A.C. Cuza established the Democrat Nationalistic Party in 1910. In 1920, Cuza and Iorga split, as the former along with the new generation considered Iorga's nationalism out of date and unable to adapt to the new changes. Cuza and Iorga were part of an intelligentsia that suffered from the low prestige of Romanian culture. Convinced that the generation of 1848 failed in their process of nation-formation, they focused on rediscovering the roots of a national culture; this is why they turned to the past, to the national values of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and developing a cult of the past. Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail*, 72-80. They resurrected cultural characteristics such as common origins and a glorious past portrayed in the fights against the Ottoman Empire and religion. Iorga, considered the greatest Romanian historian, built his nationalist ideology around the traditional values of rural life and opposition to modernization. He accused Jews of economic domination and degradation of the nation's spirit. Cuza associated the program for the revival of Romanian spiritual values with the fight against Jews (Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 23). For Iorga, anti-Semitism was a component of nationalist ideology to which he remained faithful; he never embraced the anti-Semitic extreme forms as Cuza did. For professors such as Cuza and his colleagues, after First World War "anti-Semitism became a political program, a philosophical and aesthetic creed" (Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 32). While Iorga perceived the existence of Jews as a historical fact, a population that might be assimilated if willing to embrace the language and Romanian culture and also to be guided towards productive activities, Cuza, Vasile Conta, and their successors were much more radical. From their point of view, a Jew would always be a foreign person and there was no place for him within the Romanian nation.

15 Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy. The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (London: Hurst& Co., 2007), 55.

generation was philosopher Nae Ionescu. Along with Nichifor Crainic, he became the representative of the new nationalism constructed around Orthodoxy as the core element of the Romanian ethnic spirit. The constructive, cultural nationalism of Nicolae Iorga, which focused on the development of native values within the framework of a peasant state,[16] was replaced by the idea of a totalitarian state that would secure "ethnic creativity" and the promotion of Christian values.[17] Ionescu and Crainic were also the fathers of the neo-anti-Semitic ideology. In Ionescu's view the national character was offensive and imperialist; these two characteristics ensured, in his view, the survival of a nation. Furthermore, the latter was justified in the sense that its purpose was to fulfil God's will, meaning a new spiritual form of life; in this equation any foreigner represented the Devil since their ideal was in opposition with "our" God[18]; for him to be Romanian meant to be Orthodox. The Jews in Ionescu's thesis were the alien body, hostile to Christian values, whose ethos was not derived from the Bible but from the Talmud, which encouraged their separation from the other nations[19] and emphasized the rational, material aspect.

Crainic's nationalism was much more focused on Jews than the nationalism promoted by Ionescu. The main elements of his theory were *autochtonism* and *Romanianism*; the former referred to one's own land, state, homeland, nation[20], underlying the idea of ownership and the separation between what is "ours" and the "intruders". With respect to the latter element, *Romanianism* was defined by the spiritual dimension: the Eastern Christian Orthodoxy and the "religious mystique". It is precisely this Christian theology that offered Crainic enough arguments for the elimination of Jews from Romania's social and intellectual life. He proposed the "de-Judaization" of Jesus and the Bible and emphasized the aim of the Christian world to struggle against Judaism – "... Today Europe is stirred by the war of the Talmud against the Gospel of Christ... Judaism has won success after success, and its progressive domination in the world is blinding it to its limitations".[21] For Zigu Ornea (1999), Crainic's and Ionescu's anti-Semitism was fundamentalist based on theological arguments. If one looks back at the first anti-Semitic ideas put forward by Eminescu, Iorga, and Cuza at the end of the nineteenth

16 Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 57.

17 Ibid., 59.

18 Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail*, 167.

19 Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 105-107.

20 Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: the Nineteen Thirties*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 87.

21 Nichifor Crainic in Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 98-99.

century and the beginning of the twentieth, one will notice that with these new intellectuals there was a shift in focus from the economy to religion; the Jews were, first and foremost, a religious threat, a minority who was endangering the supposed "essence" of the Romanian nation.

Nae Ionescu was indeed the mentor of the young generation of nationalists; however, its spokesman was Mircea Eliade who at the end of 1920s had assembled a heterogeneous group of intellectuals around himself; among them were also other important personalities of Romanian cultural life such as Constantin Noica and Emil Cioran. The central elements in their writings were *Romanianism, Orthodoxism* and *Ethnicism;* they emphasized ideas such as the Christian spirit, religious mysticism, "mystical revolution" and "new spirituality". Eliade was perhaps the best at stressing the importance of Orthodoxy within the Romanian nation: "Orthodoxy is, to us, true Christianity… We must be Christian to find a meaning to life. We want an effective Christianity that is the result of an experience, fresh, heavy with meaning, sparkling with gifts".[22] With respect to the Jewish minority, Eliade expressed the same fear that was to be found in most of the writings from those times; a fear generated by the supposed "ethnic danger" coming from the Jews: "From the war onwards, the Jews have invaded the villages of Bukovina and have got absolute majority in all of the towns of Bessarabia… And if you stay on the Bucegi mountains you can no longer hear people speaking Romanian; they speak Yiddish".[23]

Inspired by Hitler's Germany, Emil Cioran saw nationalism as essentially fanatic and exclusivist.[24] In comparison with Eliade, who kept out the violent negative references against the Jews from his writings, Cioran formulated all the charges against Jews with "sharpness and plasticity".[25] For him, Jews were traitors and a "mortal enemy of every other nationalism":[26]

> The Judaic invasion in the last decades has made of anti-Semitism the essential feature of our nationalism… We, as humans, cannot get closer to them because the Jew is first Jew and afterwards man… In whatever they do, Jews are unique, they are matchless in the world, bent as they are under a curse for which only God is responsible. If I were a Jew, I would commit suicide on the spot.[27]

22 Mircea Eliade in Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right,* 132.
23 Ibid., 389.
24 Ibid., 92.
25 Ibid., 107.
26 Emil Cioran in Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 107-109.
27 Emil Cioran, *Schimbarea la fata a Romaniei* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2001), 128-144.

Ionescu, Crainic, and the young generation represented only one segment of Romanian society – the nationalism and anti-Semitism of intellectuals. Their ideas and beliefs, which were heavily promoted in the journals, magazines, and newspapers that they owned, were not accessible to everyone. How, then, did national ideas become so popular? How did they spread among the population inhabiting the Romanian territory? In order to find an answer to these questions, one has to study the student movements of the 1920s and to examine the first people who came into contact with the ideas promoted first by professors such as Cuza and afterwards by Ionescu: the students.

The history of the student movements of the 1920s is basically the history of the Romanian fascist movement which was to gain power in 1940 and which was responsible for the first killings, tortures, and extreme forms of violence against the Jewish population. Livezeanu explains that the origins of the Iron Guard can be traced to the universities, which were responsible for the emerging national elite in Greater Romania. Between 1922 and 1927, the nationalist movement remained limited to the universities, where there was an outburst of anti-Semitic prejudices.[28] Students were dissatisfied with the overcrowding and competition for insufficient resources, which translated into a complaint against the large number of minority students, especially Jews. Romanian students had to compete with them not only for a place at university but also afterwards for a position in different fields: "the fact that Jewish students formed the largest national minority in the general university population legitimated for many ethnic Romanians the most frequent nationalist demand for limiting their number".[29] The student national movement became known not only for its violent character but also for the problem it raised: the perceived threat that Jews posed to the ethnic Romanian population. Within the educational process of "fashioning" a truly Romanian elite, a minority occupying the universities and different jobs was seen as a significant impediment. The way in which the liberals, conservatives, and other politicians dealt with this issue in the interbellum period was the students' main source of anger, revolt, and dissatisfaction.

Among these students, there was one who succeeded in gaining the admiration and support of his colleagues as well as professors. His name was Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. A student of Cuza, together they established the National Christian Union and the League of National Christian Defense (LANC) in 1922; these were not political parties but rather national movements. In 1927, Codreanu decided to split from his professor, and from within

28 Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail*, 100.

29 Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania,* 246.

LANC he formed the Legion of the Archangel Michael later known as the Iron Guard movement. Codreanu believed he was chosen by God to guide Romanian people to the right path; for him, the Jew was responsible for the crisis faced by the monarchy, the Church, and the family – all of which stood for the values he cherished. The Jew incorporated everything that Codreanu hated, especially democracy and communism:

> Democracy makes Rumanian citizens out of millions of Jews, making them equal with Romanians, giving them the same legal rights. Equality? What for? We have been here for thousands of years with plow and weapon in our hands; with our labors and blood. Why equality with those who have been here for only one hundred, ten, or even five years? Let's look at the past: We created this state. Let's look at the future: We Rumanians are fully responsible for Greater Rumania. They have nothing to do with it. What could be the responsibility of Jews, in the history books, for the disappearance of the Rumanian state?[30]

Codreanu's ideas were not new; his discourse was similar to the one advanced by Crainic and Ionescu. "Codreanu was the apostle of a cause, not its theoretician or ideologist".[31] Nevertheless, he did introduce the idea of the *new man* portrayed as hard-working, correct, a man of action, a fighter, a person who puts the nation above all his personal needs.[32] He opposed the Romanian politician, or more precisely the general perception of the Romanian politician of the 1930s, who was corrupt and interested only in his own welfare. With regard to anti-Semitism, the fascist movement introduced a new label for the Jew, namely Bolshevik:

> When I say communists I refer to Jews… the situation of peasants from Bessarabia did not improve after the union. The Russian rule was replaced by the Jewish one; for 12 years it is exploited by the communist Jews; they are like leeches on the fagged out body of the peasant.[33]

For the legionnaires, the fight against the Jewish threat became a national mission. They "shifted the emphasis from social and protectionist economic

30 Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari* (*For Legionnaires*) (Bucuresti: Totul pentru Tara, 1937), 220-221.

31 Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 139.

32 Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail*, 100.

33 Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari* (*For Legionnaires*), 201-203.

demands to radical, revolutionary measures designed to settle the Jewish question";[34] one of these measures was the transfer from *numerus clausus* to *numerus nullus* in order to achieve "total purification".[35]

The movement was fully sustained by Ionescu and the young generation of intellectuals. The former adhered to the movement in 1933 and became its ideological spokesman offering his moral and political support. Eliade embraced and promoted the *national messianism* and the *new man*, which symbolized the Iron Guard's spirit[36] and raised the movement to the rank of national revolution.[37] Noica, probably more than Eliade and Cioran, was a great supporter of the Iron Guard. He praised the movement's aspirations – a better country, another type of ideal man for the Romanian nation – and believed in its mission to secure the revival of legendary Romania.[38] The relation between intellectuals and the Iron Guard was one of symbiosis. While intellectuals found in the movement the national and spiritual setting characteristic for their philosophy, the Guard was able to employ their literary talent. For intellectuals, the Legion was a sort of a project in the sense that they tried to implement their theories as much as possible; Eliade and Noica "tried to spiritualize the movement and blur or embellish its violent aspects".[39]

But it was not the support coming from intellectuals that made the Iron Guard the third largest party in the 1937 elections. The Iron Guard's shift from a movement to a political party was also the moment in which nationalism became a mass movement; this was when nationalism reached its last mass-phase, according to Miroslav Hroch. I believe the period of 1918-1930 was an experimental period in which elites tried to to accommodate themselves to the new social and political changes and find solutions to the challenges they brought. This was the period that parties started to readjust their policies; the problem was that they were doing it not for the sake of the population but for the sake of keeping power. It was also the time that nationalism became popular among students. Several national movements were established, followed by the creation of a number of right-wing parties including those of Cuza and Iorga. The failure of the elite to respond to the social and economic changes led to a wave of disappointment and frustration among the population, who perceived the Romanian politicians

34 Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 65.
35 Ion I. Mota in Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 65.
36 Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 91.
37 Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right,* 185.
38 Constantin Noica in Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right,* 196-199.
39 Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism,* 139.

as being corrupt and having no consideration for their problems. Codreanu's discourse addressed these very people; but he did more than just talk. He turned his attention from students to what he considered the heart of the Romanian nation: the peasantry, the new political class who obtained the right to vote in 1918 but still felt unrepresented by the existing parties.

It was not through political discourse that Codreanu gained the support, the sympathy, and the votes of the peasants; he used his own image for that, and he also referred to traditions, symbols, and leaders from medieval times. Codreanu and the members of his movements began visiting Romanian villages, often on horseback and wearing traditional clothes and sporting long hair like young Romanian peasants. Their look resembled that of a romantic hero, a *haiduc*.[40] At the same time, their clothes were supposed to remind people of the Moldavian or Wallachian military leaders who fought against the Ottoman Empire. It was not long before Codreanu came to be called the *Captain.* Sometimes the campaigns did not even involve a speech, only short visits that included marching and singing patriotic songs.[41] Concrete political statements are hard to find in Codreanu's speeches; he used a metaphoric language in which he always made reference to God, to how Romanians were on the wrong path, and how the only salvation were the young, uncorrupted generation; only then would Romania become beautiful like a "golden sun".[42] Like Eminescu and Iorga, the legionnaires harked back to medieval times, a "moment of greatness and national glory"; but in comparison with Iorga who wanted to build schools in the memory of Romanian leaders, the legionnaires built churches.[43] Political discourses were also replaced by action: Codreanu called on legionnaires to go to villages and help peasants with the harvest, with building roads and bridges, and with "assassinating corrupt officials and prominent minority figures".[44]

These were more or less the men who turned a national student movement into a political party that eventually gained power in 1940. They had the support of one of the most important intellectuals, of the Church, and of almost 16% of the population based on the 1937 elections (the Liberal Party obtained 35% and the National Peasant Party 20%). They promoted an exclusive nationalism and the idea that an ethnic pure nation could only

40 Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919-1941: Mistica ultranaţionalismului* (*History of the Iron Guard, 1919-1941: The Mistique of Ultra-Nationalism*), (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1993), 84.

41 Ibid., 112-113.

42 Heinen, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail*, 121.

43 Ibid., 123.

44 Mark Biondich, *The Balkans: Revolution, War and Political Violence since 1878* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 124.

be achieved within a totalitarian state, the future National-Legionnaire State. For them, the Jewish population was a threat and an impediment to the establishment of such a state; the Jews posed a "deadly danger" to the Romanian nation. They manipulated the feelings of insecurity, frustrations, and dissatisfaction of the population and presented a scenario in which "the Jew" was responsible for all the bad things that occurred.

Serbia

Before analyzing the establishment of Yugoslavia, it is worth mentioning the two other moments in history that have been extremely significant in the process of Serbian nation-formation and the construction of "the other": the Balkan Wars and the Second World War, both of which were characterized by extreme forms of violence. The two Balkan Wars (1912 and 1913) were not only about the victory of Christians against Muslims or about national goals or simply greed; they entailed village-burning, atrocities, and mass violence. While the First World War and its aftermath portrayed the existing demarcations between Serbs and Croats and the arrogant attitude towards other people such as Muslims, the Second World War demonstrated the violent aspect of the existing situation. While the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had managed to keep the conflict between Serbs and Croats to the level of ideas and policies, what happened after 1939 was connected to extreme forms of violence, a sort of preamble to what would take place almost fifty years later.[45] Given this background, we can conclude that the genocidal policies implemented in the 1990s were, to a certain degree, already familiar to both Croats and Serbs.

45 Three main forces dominated the period 1940-1945: Ustasa, the Croatian fascist movement engaged in constructing an ethnically pure Croatia, in which the "Jewish question" was accompanied by the "Serbian question"; the Serb Chetniks; and the Partisans. The latter two launched themselves in a civil war to complete "the panorama of murderous chaos that filled Yugoslav canvas". Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Books, 1999), 403. Mass crimes were perpetrated by Croats against Serbs and by Serbs against Muslims, and vice versa. In Bosnia, at that time part of the Independent State of Croatia, the Ustasa embarked on a "cleansing process". According to the Croat nationalists, the Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina were perceived as "Croats of Muslim faith, brothers in the struggle against the Serbs" (Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999,* 494). In the round-ups and executions of Serbs living in Bosnia, the Ustasa also used groups of Muslim traders and landowners willing to work with the Croatian fascist movement. To take revenge, Chetniks killed civilians – most of whom were Muslims, not Croats – "between two and three thousands Muslims were killed in Foca, including children and women, many of whom were routinely raped beforehand" (Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999,* 494). Serbs were stigmatized by Croats on grounds of culture and religion; they were denied citizenship and subjected to genocidal policies.

The civil war of 1941-1945 resulted in the victory of the Partisans and the establishment of 45 years of communism; the myth of national unity perpetrated by the 1918 Kingdom of Yugoslavia was replaced by a new concept. The new Yugoslavia was constructed around the ideas of "Brotherhood and Unity". The new state was made up of six republics: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Slovenia, and two autonomous regions that were part of Serbia – Kosovo and Vojvodina. In this communist establishment, Marshal Tito perceived any form of national self-assertion as a threat to the state; "instead of accommodating legitimate expression of national identity, his preferred solution was to suppress it".[46] The first serious dispute between Serbs and Croats occurred in 1967 and had to do with language. Briefly put, Croat intellectuals contested the Novi Sad Agreement which made Serbo-Croat the literary language; they argued that by considering the Serbian variant the literary language, the Croatian language was just a regional dialect.[47] Differentiating one's identity linguistically was proof that "self-definition by language retained its force as an expression of identity"[48] in the Balkans.

The events of 1967 culminated in the Croatian Spring of 1971 in which the country "was swept by waves of popular national euphoria".[49] The authorities' response to this national euphoria was full-scale suppression, which drove nationalism underground. The same policy was applied to Serbian nationalism. It was only after Tito's death that nationalist ideas would emerge again. But Tito did more than just suppress the two nationalisms; he tried "to neutralize one nationalism by pitting another against it".[50] Following this logic, Tito eroded Belgrade's constitutional dominance by offering more power to the two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. Another important decision taken by the communist leader that would provoke disagreement and dissatisfaction, especially among Serbs, concerned the Muslims; in 1961, they were officially recognized as an ethnic category, and in 1971 they were recognized as a nationality.[51]

Serbs reacted immediately to the Croatian demands regarding language; they argued that if Croatia wanted cultural or any other type of autonomy,

46 Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999,* 574.

47 Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Yale University Press, 1997), 145-146.

48 George Schopflin, *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe* (London: Hurts&Co., 2000), 355.

49 Judah, *The Serbs,* 146.

50 Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999,* 574.

51 Ibid., 148.

then they should grant the same right to Serbs living in Croatian territory. The Serbian nationalist intellectuals of the 1960s were united by "self-consciousness belonging to a particular generation, imbibed with traditional national values and a particular vision of the Serbian national question, forged by their experience of the Second World War".[52] One member of this generation was Dobrica Cosic, the person responsible for the national revival of 1980. He was also the first to raise the "Kosovo question". In a speech in 1968, Cosic underlined:

> We cannot pretend not to see the widespread sense in Serbia of worsening relations with Albanians, the dread felt by Serbs and Montenegrins, the pressures to emigrate, the desires of the intelligentsia to leave Kosovo, the lack of equality... The chauvinist mood and nationalist psychosis among Albanians is not seen in its real dimension; the irredentist and separatist mood and desires in parts of the Albanians population are being underestimated.[53]

While Cosic was drawing attention to the situation in Kosovo, historian Jovan Marjanovic criticized the proclamation of a Muslim nation. Most of the changes that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, such as acknowledging the Muslim nationality or elevating the autonomous regions to the status of constitutive elements of the federation with equal powers as the six republics, made Serbs feel disadvantaged and led to the strengthening of nationalist feelings. All these brought into the national discourse a theme that would become central in the 1980s: "the communist stab-in-the-back". The idea was promoted by Professor Mihailo Djuric, who emphasized that:

> Serbs were unfairly accused of centralism and unitarism, whereas, in fact, centralism had been implemented after the war in order to prevent the raising of the question of national responsibilities for the genocide that had been carried out against the Serbs during the Second World War.[54]

The speeches, disagreements, or debates such as the ones mentioned above were more a criticism of the Yugoslavian communist regime. Many of these intellectuals were former partisans or people who believed in the construction

52 Jasna Dragovic-Soso, *"Survivors of the Nation": Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism* (London: Hurst, 2002), 36.

53 Ibid., 40.

54 Mihailo Djuric in Dragovic-Soso, *"Survivors of the Nation"*, 44.

of a Yugoslavian identity: "along with their initial leftist leanings, the fusion of Serbian national identity and sense of Yugoslav belonging conditioned them to see in the new system a way of bridging the national differences".[55] The disappointment and the unequal way in which they felt Yugoslavian authorities were treating constituent members made them turn back to Serbian nationalism. This says much about how weak the process of nation-formation was at the level of Yugoslavia; people considered themselves first and foremost Serbs or Croats and secondly Yugoslavians. This can be explained by the lack of any political and cultural freedom as well as the lack of public debates about significant and painful episodes from the past, such as the genocide committed by Croats. In this way, the authorities gave nationalists, intellectuals, and politicians the perfect weapon to manipulate the population and to build their discourses around feelings of fear and insecurity.

Tito died in 1980, leaving behind a political vacuum that eventually led to a political crisis. Without Tito, it was hard to maintain "brotherhood and unity" in Yugoslavia. His death raised the question of how Yugoslavia should be organized. In addition, there was the problem of the economy; by 1980, the country had accumulated an external debt of USD 19 billion. Moreover, the process of transforming Yugoslavia from a rural society to an urban-industrial one began late, developed slowly, and faced several problems. "[B]y 1967, over 2.5 million peasants had left the countryside but it was still home to 48% of the Yugoslav population… in the mid-1960s the cities approached saturation point".[56] There was also the issue of the social gap between the rural and urban populations to consider. The difference was also between North (Croatia and Slovenia) and South: "Serbia's unemployment rate in 1980 was at 17-18%, while Slovenia maintained near full employment until 1989 and Croatia's rates stayed under 10%".[57] The first signs of crisis came precisely from the region that Cosic had warned the authorities of in his 1968 speech. A riot of Albanian students in Pristina over the quality of the food in the canteen turned into a movement with a political character. People from Kosovo demanded equality with the other nationalities in Yugoslavia and called for the Republic of Kosovo.

The death of Tito gave more freedom to critics of the regime; his death was followed in Serbia by "de-Titoisation and revision of history".[58] Kosta Cavoski followed this trend; he argued that the Yugoslav nations were not

55 Dragovic-Soso, *"Survivors of the Nation",* 36-37.
56 Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999,* 588.
57 Dragovic-Soso, *"Survivors of the Nation",* 66.
58 Ibid., 77.

treated equally, with Slovenes and Macedonians being the winners and Serbs the losers. In a crisis, people tend to turn to the past and to their origins. When Romanian intellectuals tried to underline the unique character of their nation, they looked to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Serbs also rediscovered the past after the death of Tito. In communist Yugoslavia, history was rewritten, and certain episodes were deleted from the history books, including the genocide committed by Croats against the Serbs. In an epic novel, Dobrica Cosic looked back on the First World War and portrayed the Serbs' struggle in the war. The purpose of the book was to emphasize the tragic destiny of Serbia, a nation fighting for liberty and greatness, which had often "been deceived and fooled and blinded itself to accomplish tasks that went beyond its capabilities".[59] But Cosic did more than just victimize the Serbian nation, he contested the idea of the brotherhood of the South Slavs – "with his idea of Serbs having won the war but lost the peace, Cosic implied that the creation of Yugoslavia, instead of a larger Serbian state, had been a mistake".[60]

"Yugoslavia: a mistake" was not the only theme developed by intellectuals; genocide also became a favorite topic. For nationalists, the genocide perpetrated by Croats and Muslims against Serbs was just another source of self-victimization. Serbs were eager to draw attention to fascist Croatia and the killing it sanctioned but there was no mention of the Serbs' own violent episodes against Muslim and Croats. But intellectuals did more than just promote the theory of Serbs being betrayed by Croats and Muslims. They did something even more dangerous: they emphasized the idea of the supposed "continuity of Croatian genocidal intention towards Serbs". The "pioneer" of this was a professor of Belgrade University, Vasilije Krestic. Also focusing on the theory of exploitation, he suggested that an ethnically pure Croatian state was a plan that Croatian leaders had been plotting to achieve for centuries; the Ustasha genocide against Serbs, therefore, "was deeply rooted in the consciousness of many generations".[61] By 1988, genocide was a central theme in the media. Explosive language, broad generalizations, and photos from the war portraying dead and mutilated bodies were employed in order to provoke a full shock effect.[62] This was maybe the most important role of intellectuals. They provided Milosevic with all the material he needed to give people the feeling of insecurity and fear which he later exploited to his advantage.

59 Dobrica Cosic in Dragovic-Soso, *"Survivors of the Nation",* 92.
60 Ibid., 92.
61 Vasilije Krestic in Dragovic-Soso, *"Survivors of the Nation",* 112.
62 Dragovic-Soso, *"Survivors of the Nation",* 113.

Within the section of "nationalism's revival" in Serbia, the last paragraph goes to the Serbian *Memorandum* from 1986. This brings into discussion names already mentioned in this chapter, such as Cosic and Krestic. The document drawn up by members of the Serbian Academy, entitled by the media "A Proposal for Hopelessness", was basically another way of underlining how endangered, threatened, and jeopardized the Serbian nation was. The threat was seen as coming from Croats and Muslims, who were responsible for leaving "the last remnants of the Serbian nation" in Kosovo after being faced "with a physical, moral and psychological reign of terror".[63] While Muslims were accused of pushing and forcing Serbs out of Kosovo, Croatians were considered responsible for discrimination and forced assimilation. The document was actually summing up all the theories and ideas developed by intellectuals beginning with the 1960s and culminating in the 1980s. Nevertheless, they did bring something new: the "physical, political, legal and cultural genocide"[64] that Kosovo Albanians were experiencing by the Serb people. Even though the *Memorandum* was the perfect example of a dangerous, radical nationalistic discourse promoting an exclusive Serbian nation and formulating some very serious accusations, it did not state the idea of a "Greater Serbia". The idea was not mentioned but it does not mean that people did not think about it.

In his book *The Dark Side of Democracy*, Michael Mann argues that no matter how bold the demands in the Memorandum were, Serbs wanted more. This category of Serbs was mainly represented by rural Serbs, "privileged but vulnerable public sector workers", returning Serb refugees and "threatened *precani* Serb communities". Basically, they were people suffering from the recession and decentralization, people whose status made them feel insecure and sometimes endangered. They wanted more than just talks and autonomy; they wanted "a Serb rule extended over all areas where Serb minorities lived in Kosovo and border areas of Croatia and Bosnia".[65] In other words, this would be "Greater Serbia", an idea formulated clearly not by intellectuals or people but by one politician – Slobodan Milosevic. After Tito's death and all the changes that this implied, Milosevic became aware of the force and power of nationalism, switching from communist ideology to nationalist ideology.

63 Excerpts from the *Memorandum* in Judah, *The Serbs,* 159.

64 Quote from the *Memorandum* in Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy. Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 365.

65 Ibid., 365.

As in the Romanian case, the leader received the support of numerous intellectuals; they saw in him the right man for Serbia, the one able to solve the problems of the Serbian nation. Eager to obtain and maintain power, Milosevic had no problem in replacing communism with nationalism and Yugoslavia with "Greater Serbia". An extremely important moment in this process of transformation is Milosevic's visit to Kosovo Polje[66] in 1987. The speech he held there among angry, scared, insecure Serbs presented him as their protector. In a few words, Milosevic laid out several national ideas: the fighting characteristic of Serbs ("it was never part of Serbian character to give up in the face of obstacles. To demobilize when it's time to fight"[67]); the Serbs' right to live in Kosovo, a right defined in terms of land, memories, and traditions ("You should stay here for the sake of your ancestors and descendants. Otherwise your ancestors would be defiled and descendants disappointed"[68]). Almost one year later, the Serbs from Kosovo gave Milosevic another lesson. In April 1987, Milosevic organized a session of the Communist Party concerning the situation in Kosovo. On that day, 3,000 Serbs from Kosovo gathered in front of the Parliament; they demanded the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy. The crowd eventually left, but its presence there showed Milosevic that "an angry crowd could unsettle the Yugoslav leadership".[69] Both episodes – the incident with the Serbs from Kosovo and the *Memorandum* of 1986 – demonstrated how nationalism was embraced by the "masses", moving it to phase C in Hroch's terms. But what guided these people was a nationalist ideology constructed not only around myths, historical boundaries, and memories but also around fear and security issues. Once Yugoslavia disintegrated, groups started to fear each other.

66 Intimately connected with the Serbian Kingdom is the myth that would later be used by nationalists: the myth of Kosovo Polje. The episode is portrayed as the great Serbian defeat and the beginning of centuries of Ottoman oppression; in Serbian history (or more accurately, mythology), Kosovo is both the historic homeland of Serbs and the medieval Serbian Kingdom, the heartland of Serbia but also the place of their "greatest national tragedy" [Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide. Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 193]. Vuk Karadzic wrote one of the best epic songs regarding the battle, "The Downfall of the Serbian Empire". Briefly put, the epic tale portrays how the prince Lazar of Serbia lost the fight against the Ottoman Empire due to the betrayal of one of his lords. Furthermore, it emphasizes Lazar's choice for the empire of heaven, which is everlasting, over the empire of the earth; this is in essence the explanation employed to explain the Ottoman oppression.

67 Slobodan Milosevic in Laura Silber and Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin, 1995), 37.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

The purpose of this chapter was to stress the most important national ideas that were promoted a few years before genocide took place, ideas that showed the ethnic path the nationalists took in the process of nation formation. By looking at the political, cultural, and economic factors, to which I added the national legacy of former generations of intellectuals, I have tried to explain why Serbian and Romanian elites stuck to ethnic nationalism. I presented the progress of nationalism in its three phases: the promotion of nationalist ideas by intellectuals, the way in which these ideas influenced or shaped future leaders, and the population's embracing of these ideas. Romanian or Serbian leaders managed to mobilize people around their nationalist ideology by exploiting and exaggerating some realities. Romania was largely a rural society, with most of the Romanian population living in the countryside, and had a foreign middle class; Serbia was less developed than Croatia and Slovenia and did lose some of its power and influence once the two provinces gained more or less the same rights as the six other republics. Nevertheless, it was not the fault of the Jews, the Croats or the Muslims that the state of affairs in Romania and Serbia was as it was. It was, however, precisely those situations that strengthened the feelings of insecurity and frustration. The first to exploit these feelings were intellectuals who themselves experienced them; whether they wanted to be part of a greater Romanian culture or see justice done in Serbia, the intellectuals took up the three themes Sémelin considers to be central in genocides: identity, purity, and security. They used them to "fabricate ideological constructions of the enemy, starting from myths and fears peculiar to that society".[70] They strengthened the ethnic nationalism that had already been taking shape for almost a century and a half. The next stage was the projection of these constructions onto the political scene, "culminating" in the transformation of these ideas into genocidal policies.

70 Semelin, *Purify and Destroy,* 53.