GOD, MYTHOLOGY, NATIONALISM AND ROMANIAN IDENTITY:

THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

by

Kenneth Allen Adams

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

Spring 2016

ProQuest Number: 10156501

ProQuest 10156501

Published by ProQuest LLC (2016). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

GOD, MYTHOLOGY, NATIONALISM AND ROMANIAN IDENTITY:

THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

by

Kenneth Allen Adams

Approved: _____
D. Heyward Brock, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: _____
Jeffrey L. Richardson
Interim Director of Liberal Studies

Approved: _____
George H. Watson, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Approved: _____
Ann L. Ardis, Ph.D.
Senior Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Wallachia, Moldova, and Transylvania, the ancestral principalities of modern Romania, shared a common language, church affiliation (Orthodox), and a number of cultural mythologies associated with the Roman conquest of ancient Dacia to which today's Romanians trace their lineage. Although ruled by foreign occupiers until the mid-19th century, the three principalities resisted cultural assimilation and maintained an enduring Romanian national identity which finally found political expression in the formation of the modern state of Romania.

Romania was unique among other Central European States (CSS) in that the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) served not only as a religious body, but more importantly as the driving force behind unifying the cultural nation with the political state through the common bonds of language and historic mythology which specifically identified Romanian ethnicity. The dominating presence of religious symbols in state institutions provided fertile ground for development of extremist movements and intolerance of religious and ethnic minorities, but through the turmoil of Romania's political fortunes, the ROC has endured as a powerful force in preserving Romanian identity, particularly during the 1945-1989 period of Soviet occupation and subsequent communist rule.

This thesis seeks to make clear the connections between national/ethnic identity and religious tradition in Romania, particularly regarding the Romanian Orthodox

Church and its collaborations with extremist political parties, the Communist Party, and the significance of sacralized politics since the Romanian Revolution of 1989. Source material has been drawn from literature pertaining to Romania's general history, its political evolution, and analyses of the ROC's role in shaping Romanian society through a variety of political climates. I have gained further insights from several visits to Romania, where I have had numerous opportunities to gain anecdotal insights from a number of Romanian scholars and average citizens to put the fascinating and at times tragic history of the country into a clearer, more personal focus.

Chapter 1

ROMANIAN HISTORY: WALLACHIA, MOLDOVA, TRANSYLVANIA

At the beginning of the 18th century, the area comprising Transylvania and the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia was the locus for conflicts of interest between three empires: the Hapsburg, the Ottoman, and the Russian (Cinpoes, 25). Each of the three powers was bordering one of the regions and the competition for expanding their area of influence was fierce. As Katherine Verdery observes in Cinpoes, the agents of each imperial power were working to consolidate and centralize imperial rule, thus undermining provincial nobilities. The result differed in the Ottoman and Hapsburg dependencies. In the former, the Romanian nobility lost power to the agents of the Ottoman Sultan, known as the 'Phanariots.' In multi-ethnic Transylvania however, Hapsburg centralization undermined a nobility that was Hungarian, creating a context that favored the rise of a new elite among the Romanians (Cinpoes, 25).

Romanians in Transylvania benefitted from the centralizing policies of Joseph II (1780-1790), who undermined the dominance of the three nations in Transylvania: the Magyars, the Szecklers, and the Saxons. He aimed to strengthen the unity of the territories in the Empire by setting common laws, a uniform system of government, and a common language of administration (German) for the whole Empire. He also continued the reforms begun by his mother, Empress Maria Theresa, regarding religious toleration and the emancipation of serfs. These changes stirred opposition from the three privileged nations. Shortly before his death, Joseph II revoked most of his reforms, except for those

concerning serfdom and religion which in Transylvania led to the restoration of the three-nation system. Romanian nationalists in the province viewed with approval Joseph II's encouragement of education and his formal recognition of the Orthodox Church. By undermining the Hungarian nobility in Transylvania, he also implicitly made it possible for Romanian intellectuals to pursue the recognition of their nation (Cinpoes, 26).

In the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, under pressure from the Russian Empire, which aimed to consolidate its influence in the region, the Ottoman Empire was forced to make some concessions to the Tsarists power, which ultimately eroded the Ottoman control over them. Russia displayed a somewhat contradictory policy toward the two provinces, imposed by its goals regarding the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, it sought the support of the Phanariot princes and other ecclesiastical leaders in Constantinople, promising them an important role in Southeastern Europe after driving away the Turks. On the other hand, it created a fertile soil for the national aspirations of the people in the region and their rising against Ottoman rule (Cinpoes 28-30).

After the Russian-Ottoman Akkerman Convention in 1826, the Ottomans abandoned the appointment of Phanariot princes. In fact, the Ottoman Empire effectively ended the appointment of the Phanariot after Tudor Vladimirescu's and Alexander Ypsilantis' anti-Ottoman uprisings in 1821. The Greek movement led by Ypsilantis aimed at creating instability in the area, forcing Russia to intervene and leading to the Greek liberation from the Turks. The one led by the minor Wallachian boyar Vladimirescu raised much more enthusiasm among the rural population, as it promised reform and liberation from the excesses of the indigenous boyars and Phanariot rulers. However, forces under Vladimirescu had over-estimated Russia's willingness to support

an anti-Ottoman movement. Due to pressure from Great Britain and France, the Ottoman

Empire reached an agreement with the native boyars, which maintained the Ottoman

suzerainty, but which reinstated the rule of domestic princes. These provisions of the

Convention reaffirmed Russia's prerogatives as protector of Moldavia and Wallachia and

showed its determination to withdraw the Romanian principalities from Ottoman

suzerainty. Ottoman disregard for the Convention led to the Russian-Ottoman War

(1828-1829) and the eventual Adrianople Treaty (September 2-14, 1829), which

strengthened the Russian protectorate in the area. Consequently, the Sultan was forced to

accept the administrative autonomy of Moldavia and Wallachia (Georgescu, 39).

With the decaying Ottoman Empire and Russia fighting for control over Moldavia

and Wallachia, and with the changes in Transylvania, which allowed Romanians there to

conceive an improvement of their status within the Hapsburg Empire, the political

impasse favored the emergence of intellectual elites who voiced their political concerns.

The nationalist revolution sweeping Western Europe during this time offered Romanian

intellectuals in the three principalities both a model and the language to express their

ideals in a nationalist form. The French Revolution, in particular, offered a model as it

created for Romanians and other peoples a single 'revolutionary mentality' and a

'catalyst' by 'providing the common denominator for the formation of nationalities', and

the language, by shaping the nationalist discourse (Georgescu, 41-43).

It was under these circumstances that nationalism emerged at about the same time

in the three provinces, and created a similar response among the elites in the three

regions, despite the fact that, at least initially, the political goals of the elite in

Transylvania differed from those of Wallachia and Moldavia. The first step was the

assertion of their identity and the claim for political rights: independence from the Ottoman Empire in the case of Moldavia and Wallachia, and equal rights within the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the case of Transylvania. The elites in all three provinces shared ideals of national unity and eventually led them to form the Romanian State that included first Moldavia and Wallachia and, after WWI, Transylvania as well.

In Transylvania, Romanians were still considered a tolerated ethnie. Members of the intellectual elites there were part of the educated clergy while the large majority of Romanians were illiterate peasants, and a Romanian land-owning nobility that could have provided leadership in an agrarian society had disappeared. The leaders of the Romanian-speaking population in Transylvania, who had acted as middlemen between Hungarian nobles and Vlach (Romanian-speaking) commoners in the past, had either been absorbed into the Magyar nobility or had receded into the mass of Romanian peasants. By contrast, in Wallachia and Moldavia, they evolved into an indigenous nobility. In the absence of Romanian political institutions, the clergy of the Orthodox and Uniate churches assumed the leadership of the movement for national enlightenment: no other group or class possessed comparable cohesion and prestige. The clergy concentrated their efforts on asserting the right of the Romanian clergy, nobility, and commoners to be granted the same status and benefits as those belonging to the other three 'nations' – Hungarians, Saxons, and Szecklers (Cinpoes 32-35).

Notwithstanding its enthusiasm for all things Western, Romania in 1878 had little in common with the states of Western Europe. The level of economic development was low and almost pre-capitalist in nature. Industry accounted for only 3% of employment (compared with over 30% in Germany) (Light, 4). The degree of urbanization was

similarly low: only around 15% of the population lived in towns (compared with over

30% in France and around 70% in Britain). Most of the Romanian population at this time

lived in rural areas and worked in agriculture. However, conditions in the countryside

were almost feudal in nature due to the dominance of large, absentee landowners.

Romania became a unified Kingdom in 1881. King Carol, a Hapsburg German

prince, manipulated a quasi-democratic political system whereby two political parties

(Conservatives and Liberals) shared power at the pleasure of the King. The

Conservatives tended to represent large land owners. The opposition Liberal party

promoted the interests of smaller property owners, the emerging middle class, and civil

service workers. Both parties ignored the interests and welfare of the peasant class

(Light, 5).

The new monarchy achieved a significant period of political and economic

stability. The state's infrastructure was expanded with the establishment of a national

bank, stock exchange and the Romanian Academy, and the nation gave higher priority to

primary and higher education. Because of external threats to its sovereignty, the armed

forces were significantly strengthened.   Overall, the country enjoyed steady economic

development which generated public support for the monarchy. Duncan Light comments

on the state's burgeoning national values in the period:

> The period after 1878 was one of confidence and creativity in
> cultural life. New newspapers and journals were established and
> many writers, poets, dramatists, literary critics, artists, and
> musicians rose to prominence. At the forefront of this cultural
> revival was the 'Junimea' society, founded in Iasi, which nurtured
> and encouraged some of Romania's finest writers, among them the
> 'national poet' Mihai Eminescu and the dramatist Ion Luca
> Caragiale. Members of Junimea were skeptical about the ruling
> elite's enthusiasm for all things Western and the literary critic Tiru
> Maiorescu famously coined the expression 'form without

substance' to describe the formal but superficial imitation of Western models. (Light, 4-5).

The problem of the peasants remained unresolved. In 1907, peasant anger sparked a spontaneous uprising over land shortages and abject poverty. The government responded to the outbreak by killing thousands of peasants, but the King and ruling political parties eventually instituted agrarian reforms. These authorities also instituted additional reforms through pressure from peasants who fought with the Romanian Army in the Second Balkan War and observed better living conditions of their counterparts in Bulgaria. In the Balkan War Romania increased its territory when Bulgaria ceded Southern Dobrogea.

Romania's allegiance to Germany (an outgrowth of Carol's family ties to German royalty) halted after the death of the King and succession of his son Ferdinand to the throne. Ferdinand joined in the Triple Entente (France, Britain, and Russia) declaration of war against Austria-Hungary in exchange for a promise of territorial gains, including Transylvania, Banat, and Bucovina.

Unfortunately, Romania was effectively conquered by Germany in late 1916. Later in 1918, when the defeat of Germany and Austria-Hungary was apparent, Romanian armies entered Bucovina and Transylvania. Romanians in Bucovina and Transylvania joined in union with Romania with a proclamation in the Transylvanian town of Alba Iulia on November 28. These territorial additions doubled both the country's area and population in what was now known as Greater Romania.

After the war, Romania's ruling elite was faced with the task of organizing and consolidating the much-expanded state. Since the peasantry had valiantly fought in the Romanian Army during the war, and increasingly considered themselves as citizens of

Greater Romania, their demands could no longer be ignored. Legislation introduced by the Liberals in 1921 brought about long overdue reforms, notably universal male suffrage and agrarian restructuring in which the large estates were broken up and the land redistributed among the peasantry. One of the casualties of rural reform was the Conservative Party, which disappeared from the political scene in 1922. With it also went the two-party system that had been the bedrock of political life since independence.

During the interwar period, Romania came to resemble a multi-party democracy, though electoral fraud persisted as an accepted practice and two parties dominated: the Liberal Party and National Peasant Party (Light, ibid, 9-10).

Greater Romania was more ethnically diverse than predecessor states of the region, but seventy-two percent of the population was Romanian. And though there were significant Hungarian, German, Jewish, Ukrainian, Russian, and Bulgarian minorities, Greater Romania was built on the doctrine of the 'unitary state.' As a result, there was no official recognition of regional identities or non-Romanian minorities. Instead, the emphasis was on assimilating the minority populations to the territory via a highly centralized administration that permitted no local autonomy. Romanians replaced Hungarians employed in public sector jobs in Transylvania, and the centuries-old local administration mechanisms of the German (Saxon) community in Transylvania were dismantled (Georgescu, 58-63).

Expansion of Romania considerably increased the country's economic potential. The much enlarged agricultural area enabled Romania once again to become a major producer and exporter of grain, and by the 1930s Romania was the fifth largest agricultural producer in the world. The state introduced new policies to encourage and

support the development of new industry, and during the 1920s and 1930s Romania had one of the highest industrial growth rates in the world. Food processing was the largest industry, with other notable sectors including oil production and refining, metallurgy, chemicals, engineering, textiles, and forestry.

However, for all of the achievements of Greater Romania, the state was increasingly destabilized by internal developments. The rise of the extreme Right played a key role. During the 1920s, a Moldavian law graduate, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, had founded the 'Legion of the Archangel Michael,' a movement dedicated to the regeneration of Romania. The Legion's platform was nationalist, anti-Semitic, and anti-European in nature. By promoting a noble, idealized vision of Romanian peasantry, the movement stressed the superiority of native Romanian values, especially those derived from Romanian Orthodox Church traditions. The Legion appealed to a broad spectrum of Romanian society: those disillusioned with corrupt and ineffective parliamentary politics and who were attracted by the discipline and authoritarian approach of the Legion; others who supported the Legion's anti-Semitic and anti-Communist stance; still others who saw it as the only political movement concerned with improving the situation of the peasantry. Many of the leading intellectuals of the day were drawn to the Legion for its stress on indigenous rather than European values. The Legion's political ambitions took shape with the establishment of the Iron Guard in 1930 (Livezeanu, 45-57).

At the same time, Romania's imperfect parliamentary system came under attack from King Carol II. Given his authoritarian tendencies, Carol's sympathies were with the Right, and he tacitly supported the Iron Guard. Consequently, the Legion was able to become an increasingly active political force, frequently resorting to violence to achieve

its ends. Legionnaires assassinated the Prime Minister in 1933. The movement became ever more hostile toward the King, who recognized that he could exert little control over it. Consequently, on December 10, 1938, Carol declared a Royal Dictatorship -- an event that is widely regarded as marking the inglorious end of Greater Romania. All political parties apart from Carol's 'National Renaissance Front' were dissolved, and Carol attempted to stamp out the Legion, resulting in the imprisonment of Codreanu. The Legionnaires responded by assassinating another Prime Minister in 1939 and continuing to destabilize Carol's regime (Livezeanu, 62).

World War II

Romania under King Carol II declared itself neutral when the Second World War broke out to preserve cordial relations with France, Britain, and Germany.   With the fall of France, however, Romania faced the unenviable choice of either siding with Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Soviet Union. Romania's neighbors added to Carol's dilemma as they were now in a position to reclaim territories unwillingly surrendered after the First World War. In June 1940, Stalin (with Hitler's agreement) demanded the annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina. Carol had little choice but to accede. In August, the Vienna Diktat forced Romania to cede Northern Transylvania to another of Hitler's allies, Hungary (which had never accepted the loss of Transylvania and had long sought its recovery). In September, Bulgaria reclaimed Southern Dobrogea. Greater Romania was now essentially dismantled. For Carol, these territorial losses were a blow from which he never recovered. Facing mounting hostility, the King granted dictatorial powers to an army officer, General Ion Antonescu, before abdicating and fleeing the country, leaving the throne to his son Mihai.

Although Antonescu was not naturally sympathetic to Germany, his main concern was to restore internal order after the chaos of Carol's dictatorship and the Iron Guard's excesses and to preserve Romania's territorial integrity as far as possible. Romania, therefore, allied itself with Germany and, in an attempt to satisfy the demands of the Legionnaires, Antonescu brought the Iron Guard (which now enjoyed Nazi support) into government to form what was known as the 'national legionary state.' The Legionnaires proved unreliable partners and frequently resorted to violence, much of it directed at Romania's Jewish community. In early 1941, Antonescu moved decisively against the Iron Guard: many of its members were imprisoned (some were executed), and the movement itself was outlawed. The short-lived national Legionary state came to an end, and Antonescu ruled alone by a military dictatorship. Thereafter, Romania fought with the Germans on the Eastern Front. Romanian armies recaptured Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina but pushed on further eastward into Soviet territory reaching Odessa in the Crimea and fighting alongside the Germans at Stalingrad. In these territories, Nazi policies toward the Jews were implemented: many Jews were killed in summary executions while over 150,000 were deported to camps where most died. Antonescu's approach toward the Jews was ambivalent. Although he was certainly anti-Semitic, he ignored German orders to deport the Jewish population of southern Romania, where most all Jews survived (in the Hungarian-controlled parts of Transylvania, Jews were deported to death camps in Poland). By the end of the war, the Jewish population was around 350,000, out of a population of 650,000 before the war (Light, ibid, 12-13).

Following the German defeat at Stalingrad, Romania's fortunes changed dramatically. The Red Army pushed westward and by 1944 had re-taken Bessarabia and

Bucovina. By this stage, Antonescu was looking for ways to leave the war but was unable to agree to terms with the Allies. In May 1944, the Soviet Union invaded Romania. Facing total occupation by the Red Army, King Mihai organized a *coup d'etat* against Antonescu on August 23, 1944 and changed Romania's allegiance by declaring war on Germany. Within a week, Soviet forces had arrived in Bucharest, taken control of the country, and with the Romanian army entered northern Transylvania to wrest the territory from German control. Though by the end of the war Romania had regained control of Transylvania by treaty, Bulgaria reclaimed Southern Dobregea, and the Soviet Union annexed Bucovina into Soviet Ukraine and Bessarabia into the Soviet Republic of Moldova.

Chapter 2

FASCISM AND THE IRON GUARD: THE RISE OF NATIONALISM

Nationalism has a major impact on politics. Examining politics and the state will show that nationalism can function in very different contexts as a powerful ideological tool, which is used to achieve various political goals. Identity myths (of origins, continuity, etc.) do play an important role in securing political allegiance and strengthening nationalism. Furthermore, nationalists use myths politically to rally support in the name of a nation they claim to be representing. This thesis argues that nationalist discourse in Romania, regardless of the country's radical swings in political context, has changed very little over time. Idealized national myths and a sharp distinction between the identity of the Romanian 'self' and the non-Romanian 'other' consistently lies at the heart of this discourse. To borrow Craig Calhoun's words, "it is no more possible to explain nationalism on the basis of ethnicity alone than on the basis of state-formation or any single putative cause" (Cinpoes, 4).

In Romania, religion and a strong ethnic identity played complementary roles in the emergence of nationalism. Traditionally, ideological differences between religious authority and nationalist movements generated a great deal of mutual suspicion; therefore, certain cases of collaboration between nationalist movements and religious authority were clearly constructed on a pragmatic basis when both parties oppose the same enemy: the state (Cinpoes, 6-7, and Gillet, 48).

In such cases – and Romania, as will be shown, is one of them – religion can serve as a powerful marker of national identity, together with the claimed common origins and history. In Romania, the clergy has often gone far beyond reluctant and interest-driven collaboration with nationalist movements. In Transylvania, for example, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the religious elite was, in fact, the driving force behind nationalist movements. Later, in the inter-war period, the relation between nationalism and the Christian Orthodox religion in Romania came to be regarded as intrinsic, a relation between whole and part, where religion represented a fundamental aspect of national identity. Moreover, many priests were, for example, members of the extreme right movement the Iron Guard. Surprisingly, even during the period of Communist nationalism, the Christian Orthodox Church maintained certain privileges – it was still acknowledged, for example, as the national religion (Sima, 89).

Nationalism and fascism have been used (particularly in the 20th century) as synonyms. However, it is important to understand the distinction between the two terms. Many contemporary historians and political scientists argue for the elimination of the word fascism from the lexicon of textbooks. Similar to some other words that define elements of edgy political structures (e.g. 'reactionary,' radical,' 'anarchy'), misuse of the term 'fascism' in newer and broader connotations has erased or compromised its original, historical essence (Stanley Payne, 146).

Benito Mussolini, dictator of Italy beginning in 1922, was the creator of the original fascism model and emphatically declared that it "was not for export from Italy." Fascism was thus originally understood to "describe a particular political, and, to some extent, cultural, economic and social- system of a specific geographical area in a

delimited period- Europe between the wars" (Stanley Payne, 237-239).   Clearly, there

were vital differences between fascism and ruthless authoritarian regimes that captured

power in Central and Eastern Europe after WWI.

Italian Fascists considered themselves political pioneers, creating a new concept

of a wholly disciplined state, dedicated to resurrecting glory days of the past -- real or

imagined -- or to achieving contemporary pre-eminence for their race.

However, the fascist phenomenon in Europe was complex: for example, fascist theory

was ostensibly nationalistic, yet as it took root in various countries, its proponents

heralded it as an international political/social system destined to compete with and

replace both communism and Western democracy.   Ironically, fascism was conceived as

a counterweight to Soviet Bolshevism and socialist threats in western, industrialized

nations. But it quickly spread to agrarian, quasi-feudal central and eastern European

backward countries, including Romania.

Seemingly contradictory, fascist theory promulgated revolutionary restructuring

of politics, governing, and society while its propaganda and rituals largely invoked

visions and traditions of a mythical past. These contradictions and complexities cannot

be glossed over. Rather, they must be studied on an individual country basis, giving

significance to the unique national characteristics that formed fascist identities and

practices.

To understand Romania and the Iron Guard, one must be careful to understand

and acknowledge the differences between the fascism of central and eastern Europe and

that of western Europe. Further, one must steadfastly trace original fascist theoretical

foundations and subsequent fascist reality. And, most important, the evolution of fascism

from its iterations of the 1920s/1930s to its World War II manifestations is critical to following the emergence and practices of the Iron Guard.

By the late 1960's, the epithet "fascist" had come to be used indiscriminately to describe a political style, or to serve as a sweeping accusation against diverse political movements. Concerned by this misappropriation of the term, Stuart Woolf contacted colleagues around the world to solicit objective analytical essays for inclusion in his 1969 political anthology *European Fascism* (Woolf, 26-30).

The first comprehensive study of Fascism in Europe, it has a detailed analysis of its roots, its extraordinary strength, and appeal between two world wars, and its prospects in contemporary Europe. I was fascinated by reading accounts of Fascism's various manifestations in Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Finland, Norway, Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and my country of research, Romania.

To place Romanian, Iron Guard, and ROC politics into perspective, it appears clear that European history, particularly surrounding WW I, essentially guaranteed the emergence of the Iron Guard. This argument is based on how external military, diplomatic, and financial factors triggered internal antagonisms in Romania, with particular emphasis on the history, leadership, ideology, and culture of the Iron Guard.

Further, the role of the Orthodox Church, combined with fear of renewed occupation and conquest, drove Romanians into a fascist state of mind. A unique characteristic of Romanian fascism emerged with the incorporation of Orthodox Christianity into the political doctrine and structure of the Iron Guard, which swiftly gained support from the fervently religious rural population of Romania. Indeed, the potency of religious symbols in Iron Guard propoganda persuaded populations most

15

prone to its manipulation that objection to the movement's aims was tantamount to an affront to God. Widespread claims of alleged miracles in Romania during the rise of the Iron Guard bolstered faith-based superstitions to mold believers of Christ into believers in fascism, thereby exploiting and subverting the most important element of Romanian cultural continuity. (Woolf, 98-110)

My contention is that in Romania in the 1920s-40s God was brought into an unholy alliance with the fascist movement as a result of Church failure to address false doctrine. The blood of the cross was allowed to justify political spilling of innocent blood by a radical fascist party, the Romanian Iron Guard.

Chapter 3

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND NATIONALISM

This study makes clear the association of national identity and religious tradition in Romania, particularly regarding the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) and its relations with extremist political parties, the Communist Party, and the contemporary significance of sacralized politics. In comparison with other Central Eastern European states, Romania has been particularly prone to the phenomenon of state sacralization – a blending of nationalist politics and religious tradition where the state assumes the role of moral and social arbiter. In this context, the ROC has at times struggled to maintain its ethical authority over the populace, and to preserve such relevance and influence it has often acted as an agent of the state. This uncomfortable alliance has operated against a backdrop of an intensely-felt national identity among the Romanians. After generations of foreign dominance, Romaninans are quick to reject the "otherness" of non-Romanian ethnic, linguistic, or religious traditions.

Therefore, this study seeks to highlight the role of the ROC as it carried the banner of Romanian national identity as it maneuvered the turbulent political currents of the early to mid-20th century. Today, the Church serves more as a source of affirmation of true "Romanian-ness" than exclusively as an object of piety. Such affirmation has allowed a majority of Romanians since the 20th century to delegate to the state moral and social authority which were formerly Church matters (Romocea, 135-140).

How nations perceive themselves, and how outsiders view them, is fundamental to understanding why national history (in its factual and mythical dimensions) is essential to the agenda of nationalists. National myths and national heroes of Romania serve as a basis for defining what constitutes true Romanian ethnicity. Nationalists have used myths and national heroes as the justification to protect the national essence against foreign intervention. The ROC has functioned as a repository for the mythical, and sometimes biblical, interpretation of national life while the state uses such nationalist tropes to assert its role as protector of the Romanian identity. Within this context, civil and religious discourse have for many years crossed mutually porous borders.

The Romanian Orthodox Church, which after the 1989 revolution escaped communist totalitarian control and interference, is today challenged by dual trends toward local and global secularization, and the confrontation of its history of collaboration with the state in its myriad forms. Religious symbolism in Romania today is still largely intertwined with symbols of the nation – a reflection of a consistent quest for nationalist identity and survival, particularly in periods of economic downturn or foreign hegemony.

The Growth of Nationalism in Romania – Historical Context

After World War I (WWI) religion as part of the cultural life seemed the most preeminent element cutting across separate territories that sought the attainment of a nation-state. Therefore, "state power promoted the language, culture, demographic preponderance, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the core nation" (Cinpose, 92).

The nationalist goal to include all Romanians in a Greater Romania was finally possible following the decay of Romania's neighboring Imperial rulers after WWI. The Romanian Parliament ratified the union of Romania with Banat, Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transylvania on December 29, 1919. Meanwhile, the ROC promoted the mainstream political interpretation that Orthodoxy represented the essence of Romanianism -- an imagined shared identity superseding the identities of the regions mentioned above (Stan and Turcescu, 43). After the union, the population and the territory of Romania almost doubled, altering the religious affiliations of the new territory, particularly in Transylvania, where Romanians divided loyalties between Greek Catholic and Orthodox traditions, and the large Hungarian minority was divided between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

Tensions between the ROC and the Greek Catholic Church grew, especially after the signing of the Concordat between the Romanian state and Vatican in May 1927. These developments led to a struggle between the Greek Catholics and the ROC as the true keepers and protectors of the Romanian faith. The intrinsic link between Orthodoxy and Romanian national identity consolidated around this time, and it has been suggested that after the creation of *Greater Romania* the ROC "borrowed, and eventually monopolized, the Transylvanian Greek Catholic's nationalist discourse centered on the Latin character of the Romanian language and descent" (Stan and Turcescu, 729).

Clerical disputes between the main religious entities, increased secularization, and the country's financial difficulties set the stage for lower clergy within the ROC to align themselves with right-wing extremist groups. Many young theology graduates, who saw the Church as a means to climb the social ladder, recognized the political crisis

creeping across Europe. Many of them subsequently embraced the tenets of the

Archangel Michael's Legion (later transformed into the Iron Guard), which combined

Orthodoxist and nationalistic elements. Almost 2000 priests became Guard members,

and four of them were elected senators to the Parliament in 1937 (Leuștean, (2007), 730).

The ROC administrative hierarchy did not agree with the political involvement of

the Church, maintaining loyalty to King Carol II. In 1937, the Octavian Goga

government came to power by using an attractive slogan: "God, King, and Nation." In

the following year, Carol II established a royal dictatorship which included the ROC's

hierarchy at its core, and Patriarch Cristea became head of the government. Iron Guard

leaders were subsequently arrested, imprisoned, and executed later that year (Leuștean,

(2007), 731-733).

In June 1940, Romania (through the influence of Ribbentrop-Molotov

arbitration) received an ultimatum from the Soviet Union to withdraw from Bessarabia,

which subsequently became the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova until the fall of

Communism in 1989-1992. In August of 1940, a separate German-Italian arbitration

decided that northwest Transylvania would be part of Hungary. Following these

territorial losses, Romanian Field Marshal Ion Antonescu seized power, and King Carol

II subsequently abdicated to his young son, Michael I. Antonescu immediately

dissolved the National Legionary State and arrested over 9,000 members of the Iron

Guard, 422 of whom were priests and 19 cantors (Leuștean, (2007), 734). Under

Antonescu's command, the Romanian army advanced to the east front, won back

Bessarabia, and with the German Sixth Army, went as far as Stalingrad in the hope of

recovering Transylvania (Case, 331).

Tensions at this time between the ROC and the state stemmed from their separate, competing aims for political and ecclesiastical power. They both exploited nationalistic and religious sentiments to assert their authority more firmly on Romanian society. The democratic opposition in Romania, together with King Michael, deposed Antonescu on August 23, 1944. Romania then turned arms against Germany and fought alongside the Red Army, advancing through Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Post-war peace settlements enabled Romania to recover northwest Transylvania, but not Soviet held Bessarabia and northern Bukovina (Leuştean, (2007), 735).

By 1946, the Soviets had revitalized the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Soviets did not want to leave the territory of Romania, and they claimed complete control of the country, even in ecclesiastical matters. Among their first demands was the removal of all opposing clergy and their replacement with clerics sympathetic to Soviet ideals. The following year a leftist group of communists---under suspicious circumstances--- won a majority of 84 percent of the seats in Parliament ((Leuştean, (2007), 735). The Communists seized complete control of the country. King Michael abdicated by force later that month, which gave way to the creation of the Romanian People's Republic.

In August the same year, the Soviets banned all foreign schools, closed all religious schools, and issued a law which regulated the principle of religious freedom in a grudging nod of tolerance of deeply ingrained religious practice among the citizenry. As a matter of survival, many within the ROC heirarchy acquiesed to the takeover and excluded those (like Nicolae Popovici, Bishop of Oradea) who opposed it (Leuştean, (2007), 737).

On October 21, 1948, Patriarch Marina celebrated the "union" of the Greek Catholic Church with the ROC in the Alba Iulia Cathedral as a symbolic gesture in recognition of the Uniate Church's 250th anniversary. As a result, the Greek Catholic Church (viewed by the Communists as an agent of the West) was completely abolished, most of its leaders died in prison, and the ROC assumed most of its properties (Leuştean, (2007), 738).

Marina was able to resolve the conflict between the communists and the opposing voices in the Church, to create the *Social Apostolate*, a collection of principles for adapting the Church to political reality. This directive was meant to reconcile the Church's mission of servitude and the tenets of socialism imposed by Soviet decree, to the effect that the Church's ultimate object of service was to the state (Leuştean, (2007), 41-42). The notion that serving the state's aims should be interpreted as an ecclesiastical principle was unique to the ROC among other churches in Romania, and the Communists seized upon the ROC's close bond with the populace to exert its prerogatives. Meanwhile, the communist government ordered the Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, and Baptists to unite in the Federation of Protestant Cults (Stan and Turcescu, 23).

The word *Patria* (Fatherland) is one of the most frequently used words in the Social Apostolate writings of Marina. Interpretation of its parallel concept, Patriotism, meant that the Church embraced Romanian national identity and opposed the cosmopolitanism of the Catholic Church, an instrument of Western colonialism. In such a revised view of patriotism, the West posed a threat in its rejection of Christian equality, fraternity, and social justice principles that communist ideology purported to embrace.

Orthodox theologians engaged further in revisionist doctrine with the assertion that there was no separation between Church and state in the Bible, and that "the Redeemer proclaimed the obligatory fulfillment of both citizen and religious duties" and that the State is a God "desired" institution. Thus the state was pleased with the Church's new dogma which the people accepted in their obedience to the ROC (Stan and Turcescu, 83-87).

South East European Orthodox Churches submitted to the state's authority swiftly in contrast to the resistance mounted by Protestant and Catholic Churches elsewhere in Central Europe. Many among the Romanian high clergy ignored the collaboration of the ROC with the regime for fear their objection would endanger their freedom or lives. The effects of religious oppression were clear to average Romanians, as it became obvious in communist Romania that national survival (and, of course, servitude to Soviet influence) took precedence over religious matters (Leuștean, (2009), 126).

In 1972, the official doctrine that communist dictator Ceaușescu adopted was called Dacianism (in recognition of the ancestral ethnicity of modern Romanians). This doctrine was invoked to justify the historical precedence of Romania over its neighbors. The regime transmitted scientific "doctrine" of Daco-Romanian continuity as an undeniable historical truth, and the ROC was complicit in the promotion of the nation as a home belonging only to 'true' Romanians (Gillet, 167).

The ethnic principle adopted by the ROC excluded not only non-Romanians but also Romanian Greek Catholics. To be a full Romanian, one needed to be an Orthodox,

and to be an Orthodox one needed to be a Romanian. Otherwise, one could only be a second-rank citizen belonging to the world of "others" (Gillet, 170).

The ROC entered the national debate of the 19th century under the auspices of foreign domination. This geopolitical situation and its position as the majority Church led it to become an agent of nationalism, which altered its image and its theological approach to the nation. The ROC tried to have exclusive relations with the state and tried to marginalize the other churches as non-national. It is obvious that theology shaped the religious-nationalist alliance, but it is equally valid to claim that nationalism influenced theology.

Romanian Nationalism and the Church

Peter Sugar has asserted that Eastern European nationalism differed from Western European nationalism, even though it shared the same anticlericalism, constitutionalism, and egalitarian orientation (Sugar, 171).

Sugar identifies four representative groups of nationalism: bourgeois, aristocratic, popular, and bureaucratic. The bourgeois is characteristic of the western countries and at some level of Czech and Slovenian nationalism; the aristocratic model is characteristic of Poland and Hungary; the popular model is descriptive of Serbia and Bulgaria; the bureaucratic model represents Romania, Greece, and Turkey. Nationalism in Romania, though it also had a noble class (the boyars), was reactionary and due to its division into three territories (Transylvania, Moldova, and Wallachia) found irredentism (justification for reclamation of territory based on historic or ethnic precedent) as a common goal (Sugar, 175).

Since the ethno-religious fusion was relatively new and in response to the state's use of religious symbolism in its propoganda, the ROC started to prosletyze on themes of a mythical religious unity of the past in an effort to gain protected status within the regime. Such preferential treatment never materialized however, since the state paid only lip service to the Church and its traditional place in society (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1).

Still, the nation-states relied on the traditional churches to enhance their legitimacy. In Romania, religion and language (and the myths they spawned), decipherable more and more in ethnicity, came to provide the harmony the nationalists were seeking (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 6). In their aim to promote such harmony, however, the nationalists blurred significantly the lines between historical fact and the ostensibly noble messages of national mythology. Strong as mythology may be in the Romanian psyche, distorting history through mystification to justify current political aims amounts to manipulation. As Lucian Boia states in his History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness, myth is a "belief that animates a people", specific to all nations and following a universal typology, mystification is "a crude process… a matter of lying, deception and deliberate misinformation" (Boia, *History*, 3). The nationalists under this construction sought to elevate commonly held ethnic beliefs to the level of historical fact.

Indeed, historical fact and religious tradition are often difficult to separate in Romania, as the ROC itself promulgated much of the Romanian national mythology to the point where history is interpreted according to a common understanding of national lore. Building upon this situation, Romanian history textbooks, especially during communism, tended to focus on heroes and their sacrifices. Nationalists reinterpreted

random historical events and characters to form a narrative which "proved" an historical national unity (Boia, 20). Karnoouh posits that Romanian elites looked to the past to mystify history as a means to create common bonds with the West and thereby dispel Western perceptions of the Romanian people as barbarians (Karnoouh, 95).

More significantly, the nationalists exploited Romanian Orthodoxy as the most visible component which distinguished Romanians from other ethnicities. Seizing upon a growing nationalist identity between the world wars, nationalists sought to strengthen the connection between Church tradition and history (including its mythological dimensions). With the vision of such an ethnically, culturally, and religiously bound society, marginalization of Hungarians, Jews, Germans and even those of Russian Orthodox heritage was justified as they were not truly Romanian (Boia, 22).

Attempts at fusing Orthodoxy with ethnicity took on a physical as well as metaphorical dimension, particularly after 1955 when the ROC embarked upon a campaign to strengthen mythical connections with the national past. Under state sponsorship, the Church set about vast construction projects in monasteries (most symbolically at the burial site of Michael the Brave's head) and in areas with large concentrations of Hungarians. Such physical manifestations of ethnically-charged Church/State hegemony became effective tools in quelling dissent among minority populations (Leuștean (2009), 132 and Șincan, 200).

Chapter 4

ROMANIAN COMMUNISM AND THE CEAUSESCU DICTATORSHIP

Overlooked in analyses of World War II were decisions made by the Allies that hurt Eastern Europe. The most egregious one as far as Romania was concerned was the famous 'percentages' agreement made at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, which divided Europe into Western and Soviet spheres of influence. Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill secretly agreed to give the Soviet Union a free hand in Romania. In return, Stalin agreed that his country would stay out of Greece. Romania was now an occupied country and the USSR lost no time bringing the country under Soviet control and installing the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) with total power. The Party had been founded in 1929 but never achieved more than a marginal position in Romanian political life. It now had the authority to rule and to shape Romania's future. With Soviet military, secret police, and political operatives working in conjunction, Romania was subjected to intimidation, manipulation of the democratic process, and outright violence. In March 1945, the first Communist-dominated government was formed. Blatantly forged elections in November 1946 gave the Communists and their allies over 80% of the counted votes. King Mihai was the last remaining obstacle to a complete takeover of power. On New Year's Eve 1947, the King was forced at gunpoint to abdicate, and the People's Republic of Romania was proclaimed.

The Communists set about establishing a complete political, economic, social, and cultural transformation of Romania. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was a Romanian

leader as ruthless as he was cynical. He pursued a policy of undeviating loyalty to Stalin, making Romania the most pliant of the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe. Many of the leaders of the pre-war democratic parties were executed or imprisoned. Single-party rule made the PCR the only political voice in power in Romania. Mines, industries, transport, banks, cinemas, and health institutions were nationalized in 1948-49. Private land ownership was also abolished in 1949, and the process of agricultural collectivization began. In 1951, the Romanian market economy was abolished and replaced by Soviet-style central planning. The government introduced the initial Five Year Plan that summer. Following Stalin's economic theory, industrialization was seen as the key to modernization. Successive plans provided for extensive investment in heavy industry.

Romanian national values and history were completely revamped. Education was re-organized to emphasize Marxist principles. The regime instituted censorship, and thousands of schoolbooks considered unsuitable were destroyed and withdrawn from curricula. Romanian history was totally re-written to stress the Slavic (particularly Russian) influence on Romanian development. At the same time, Western influences were downplayed or denied altogether. Even the Romanian language was revised to make it appear more Slavic and less Latin in origin. This re-writing of history greatly exaggerated the role of the PCR in the country's past. Perhaps the best example was the re-interpretation of the 1944 coup that deposed Field Marshal Antonescu. The PCR claimed sole credit for the overthrow and established August 23 as Romania's National Day during the Communist period.

Most important, because the Communist regime lacked legitimacy and popular support, a powerful internal security service – the Securitate – was needed to maintain

civil order. Many citizens who opposed the regime or who were considered in any way to be suspect – including those associated with the Antonescu era, landowners, intellectuals, students, members of non-Romanian minorities, and peasants who had resisted collectivization – were either sent into internal exile or put to work in forced labor camps. An estimated 180,000 people worked in such camps by the early 1950s, the most notorious of which was the Danube-Black Sea Canal Project. Within a short space of time, the Romanian population was terrorized into acceptance of, and submission towards, the Communist regime.

After Stalin's death in 1953, Romania maintained a policy of total loyalty to the Soviet Union. However, in the 1960s, a Soviet planner proposed an economic division within the Soviet bloc whereby some countries would specialize in industry and others in agriculture. Romania was allocated a predominantly agricultural role, which was unacceptable to the country's Communist leadership. This proposal was later abandoned, but it caused a major change in Romania's relationship with Moscow. Dej started to distance Romania from the Soviet Union and to stress Romania's national interests instead. This resulted in a campaign of 'de-Russification' and the re-writing yet again of Romanian history to reassert Romanian national values. In 1964, the leadership issued a 'declaration of independence' which asserted Romania's right to determine its own course of development.

Nicolae Ceausescu, a little-known apparatchik, succeeded Dej upon his death in 1965. One of Ceausescu's first actions was to re-name the country the Socialist Republic of Romania. The new General Secretary appeared young and energetic and prepared to embrace change toward a more open and liberal Romania.   He denounced the excesses

of the Dej era, censorship was relaxed, and Western newspapers were available in Bucharest. Western films and television programs appeared, and even a Pepsi-Cola bottling plant opened in 1968. Ceausescu continued Dej's policy of maintaining Romania's independence from the Soviet Union, most spectacularly demonstrated in August 1968 when the Soviet Union, supported by forces from other Warsaw Pact countries, invaded Czechoslovakia to crush the 'Prague Spring'. Ceausescu called a rally in Bucharest during which he denounced the invasion as an act of Russian aggression. This defiance brought massive and apparently genuine popularity within Romania.

When Ceaușescu came to power in 1965, he tried to consolidate his power and continued relations with the ROC by visiting churches and monasteries and signing their golden books. The Church pragmatically strengthened its advocacy of a mythical national past as a means of survival under the atheistic principles of the regime, largely by reaffirming commitment to the Social Apostolate of 1948. Notions of servitude to the Church (which embodied the national past) as an extension of servitude to the State allowed the Church to adapt itself, however uncomfortably, to Communist doctrine (Leuştean, (2009), 187).

Nationalism achieved its highest degree of influence by the early 1970s, when the study and creation of popular culture and Romanian folklore became sanctioned elements at universities and other educational institutions. The ROC played a central role in invigorating the nation's youth in a drive to restore a distinct and exclusive national culture. Communist leadership, though by policy atheist, harnessed the power of the Church over the populace and continued its collaboration with the ROC as a means of bolstering its political objectives (Karnoouh, 183-184).

Set against this seemingly positive reinforcement of national identity and a burgeoning pride in Romanian culture, Ceausescu failed to live up to the promise of the staunchly nationalistic rhetoric which characterized the early years of his rule. Following a visit to China and North Korea in 1971, he implemented a new wave of censorship and repression, while building the foundation of an absurd personality cult. Propagandists heaped praise upon the dictator as the true representative of national wisdom and genius, while Party historians depicted him not only as a kindred spirit with founders of the Romanian nation, but also as the descendent of generations of heroes who fought for Romania's independence. The party's image makers even brought Ceausescu's wife Elena into the mythical discourse, casting her as a chemist of world-wide fame even though in reality she never completed an academic degree. Ceausescu steadily concentrated power among his family, and he continually rotated second-tier officials to prevent the establishment of any alternative power base.

Ceausescu sought to strengthen his personality cult in 1980 when he celebrated with great fanfare the 2050th anniversary of the founding of the *unitary* and *centralized* Dacian state. While publicly reinforcing his commitment to the Communist Party, socialist ideals, and Romanian national identity, he sought also to optically align himself with a noble national history through a series of calculated photographs with representations of national heroes. He also resorted to an increasingly strident and xenophobic nationalism which was directed particularly at the non-Romanian minorities (especially Hungarians) within the state. Under the slogan 'Romanians must be masters in their own home' the regime set about assimilating its minorities and moved Romanians into towns with a large Hungarian population. Hungarian language schools

were closed or marginalized; Hungarian graduates were assigned jobs in overwhelmingly Romanian areas. As a result, many Hungarians and Germans chose to emigrate rather than remain in Romania (Deletant, 226).

Ceaușescu's excesses notwithstanding, Romania has also immersed itself in the myth of innocence. When the nation finally triumphed over history and gained independence from foreign dominance, nationalists argued that this was possible due to the ROC's "two millennia" Christian tradition. Consequently, when communists came to power nationalists argued that historical personalities from Burebista, the old Dacian king, to Ceaușescu were essential in preserving the national identity and in building Romania. When Communism disappeared in 1989, nationalist politicians and the Church reheated and modified all national myths, beginning with the myth of Romanians' anti-Communism.

Chapter 5

1989 REVOLUTION

As Communist regimes toppled throughout Central and Eastern Europe in the autumn of 1989, only Romania under Ceausescu seemed prepared to resist. Indeed, events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall were not even reported in Romania. But in western Romania, the population had access to Hungarian and Yugoslav television and had been able to follow wider events in the region. On December 15, 1989, a protest broke out in the western city of Timisoara against the removal of a dissident Hungarian priest. Romanians joined Hungarians in what quickly amounted to a full-scale insurrection. The regime's response was characteristically brutal: Ceausescu's troops opened fire on demonstrators, killing and wounding hundreds.

Believing that he had contained the uprising, Ceausescu called for a public support rally on December 21. Speaking from the same balcony from which he had made his famous 1968 speech, the dictator was jeered and heckled by the crowd, and the astonishment of the feeble old man was broadcast live on television. Crowds gathered in the streets, and during the night the security forces opened fire, killing 49 people and injuring over 450. The following day, protesters stormed the Central Committee Building inside which Ceausescu had taken refuge, forcing the dictator and his wife to flee from the roof by helicopter. Forces loyal to Ceausescu opened fire on the crowds while the Army declared itself on the side of the people and joined the revolution. The dramatic street fighting that followed was caught by television crews from around the

world, making what happened in Romania the world's first televised revolution. A group describing itself as the National Salvation Front, led by a veteran Communist, Ion Iliescu, took power ostensibly in the name of the people. The Front proclaimed commitment to pluralist government, free elections, the establishment of a market economy, and respect for the country's minorities. Meanwhile, the Ceausescus had been captured: they were tried by a military kangaroo court and executed immediately by firing squad. The video of their deaths was repeatedly shown on Romanian television on Christmas Day, to convince all in the country that Ceausescu's regime had come to an end. Over 1,000 Romanians had lost their lives in the course of the revolution, and a further 3,000 were injured.

Soon after the Ceausescus' overthrow, rumors circulated that what had happened was not a mass popular revolution, but a pre-planned *coup d'état* by a group of reform-minded Communists intent on overthrowing Ceausescu but not abandoning Communism. Romanians started talking about the 'stolen' 'unfinished' or 'so-called' Revolution. Many of the events of December 1989 are still clouded with confusion, and the complete details of what happened may never be fully known. The fact remains that the Romanian people mobilized to overthrow a particularly unpleasant dictator and bring about a major transfer of power. The events set Romania on the course to a new, but uncertain future.

Since its spectacular 1989 televised revolution, Romania has spent most of its political transition struggling with its past. These confusing times confirmed what international political scientists labeled 'Romanian Exceptionalism,' a pattern dissimilar from other Central European Countries (Light, 14-15). Even with the signing of the Accession Treaty with the European Union in 2005, Romania has not fully separated

from its Communist past. Though the nation has succeeded in becoming a consolidated democracy, former Communist elites continue to dominate political discourse (Light, 16).

Once on the path toward democracy after the 1989 revolutions, the Churches in CEE faced new problems as they attempted to redefine their role in the vacuum of power and the radical political and social transformations to follow. The new promise of modern European identity threatened the Church's traditional hold over society as it appeared in the early phase of post-communism as an obsolete institution when compared to the inclinations of the European Union.

Based on their previous partial role of national defense, the national churches claimed special treatment from the state. The Orthodox Church in Romania has official recognition of its status and indeed bears the designation "National Church" (which the Orthodox Church, in particular, views as an entitlement stemming from its historical advocacy of the national culture). This title was supposed to secure its participation in political decisions without the regular bargaining and negotiation that characterizes democratic life.

After the fall of communism, the CEE countries as a whole also experienced a transition from the collectivistic and totalitarian model of life to the individualistic and economically-driven image of man. The national Churches were ingrained in the older model but after the emergence of a liberal democratic mode of politics in 1989 they once again saw themselves as defenders of their nation at any price. Such a stance often put them at odds with the states, which were adopting the UN's Human Rights mandates, as well as NATO's and the EU's political agenda. The state once again resembled an enemy

while the nation resembled a friend. After 1989, the myth-making element of national history designated all that happened in the post-revolution period as the period of regeneration, following the Communist era of national decay (Conovici, 327).

The Romanian Orthodox Church and Democracy

Soon after 1989, the ROC rapidly claimed that it always fought against communism and became very assertive in using nationalistic propaganda. (Gillet, 13-15) The political instability of Romania in the first two years after 1989 added to the public's general confusion about both the meaning of the revolution and the meaning of democracy. Given the tendency to meld religious tradition with an ethnic or national identity (particularly in Romania), most citizens continued to associate Orthodox Churches in Central Eastern Europe with obedience to the state. Accordingly, the ROC re-asserted its influence in all of the elements of society from which it had been officially banned by the Communists: schools, the military, the penitentiary system, and in social welfare work. Building upon its earlier campaign of new building construction under the Communist regime, the Church set about erecting new church buildings, religious monuments, and roadside crosses. The Church also exploited loosened restrictions on mass media with messages to promote its influence on social issues and more significantly in political life, where Orthodox symbols and ceremony as well as the appearances of ROC heirarchs were carefully inserted within political discourse (Conovici, (2007), 786).

The 1991 Constitution sanctioned religious instruction in schools and the re-opening of confessional schools (schools administered by the Church with curricula based on Church doctrine) closed under the Communist regime. In 1996 priests and

theology graduates were exempted from the military service and Easter and Christmas were recognized as national holy days. Paradoxically, the State Secretariat still restricted religious freedom by granting religious recognition in a vague and inconsistent process, with only 18 groups acknowledged as denominations and some 385 faiths, organizations, and foundations registered but without any state financial support. The ROC however, received preferential treatment, and indeed continued in its designation as de facto National Church (Stan and Turcescu, 27-28). The ROC's preferential position is more easily understood in light of the fact the the State Secretariat was comprised largely of graduates of the Facuty of Orthodox Theology. Not surprisingly, decisions regarding salaries and distribution of funding favored the ROC, which also benefitted from special appropriations of state funds (Stan and Turcescu, 28-29).

Though the ROC already enjoyed symbolic status as the National Church, Patriarch Teoctist and the Church heirarchy pressed for recognition of this position by law. He made clear his vision of returning the Church to its traditional place at the center of Romanian national identity:

> The history of the Romanian people is intertwined with the history of
> the Orthodox Church, the only institution which has lasted since the
> birth of the [Romanian] people. Whoever denied that the church is the
> national church should deny the unitary character of the Romanian
> state (Conovice, ibid, 788).

Such assertions of the symbiosis of the Church with Romanian ethnicity and the majority-Church argument have justified the ROC's claim to represent the entire nation, while minority Churches have supported a more relaxed pluralist view, more compatible with democratic values. In its restrictions on religious freedoms, the Secretaritat's promotion of the ROC as the national Church is at odds with democratic principles, since

it tacitly excludes a number of faiths from freedom to worship and in some cases criminalizes their practices (Conovici, ibid, 790).

Religious adherence and changing secular priorities collided in 1993 when, as a condition of admission to the Council of Europe, Romania was ordered to modify eleven of its laws to align them with European standards. The European demand to decriminalize homosexuality provoked the ROC to vigorously defend the existing law which criminalized homosexuals in Romania. Realizing that opposition to homosexuality was prevalent among Romanians (opinion polls as late as the 1990s revealed suspicion or outright opposition to homosexuals), the Church seized upon this theme as the cornerstone of its political engagement in the first ten years after communism. (Ramet, 167-168) In a delicate compromise, the government sought the approval of both the ROC and the European Council, decriminalizing homosexuality in private but retaining a ban on public displays of homosexuality (Ramet, 167-168). Despite the Church's considerable and enduring influence on the citizenry, the compromise measure was ultimately repealed, and homosexuality was fully decriminalized (Stan and Turcescu, ibid., 51-52).

The most recent census in Romania showed that a remarkable 99.96 percent of the population claim membership in an officially recognized religious organization, while only 0.03 percent declare themselves atheist, and 0.01 percent as having no religious affiliation. Among national institutions, ROC membership comprises 86.8 percent of Romanians, the vast majority of whom state that they have full trust in the Church and 44 percent of whom claim to attend Church at least once a week or more. When compared to other nations with a high concentration of religious followers,

Romania was the most favorable nation towards the EU, and among the population at large Romania was the most pro-European country with 64 percent of the population in support of membership according to a 2006 poll (Rogobete, (2005) 18).

As a consequence of the ROC's central position in Romanian society, Rogobete further states that religious traditionalism in its inexorable connection with nationalism is making the Church and its subjects somewhat resistant to democratic pluralism, although recently the ROC has shown signs of establishing cooperation with other religious groups. It is more difficult however to accurately assess the ROC's approach to modernity and plurality since there are numerous (and in some cases opposing) opinions among church leaders (Rogobete (2003), 25).

The discussion over secularization of society is particularly relevant today, as religious leaders grapple with establishing the proper role for their institutions in an increasingly globalized, humanistically-focused society. Daniel Payne identifies religious fundamentalism or nationalism as the alternative paths religious leaders have chosen in confronting this reality, and along with Peter Berger argues that Churches are better served by "becoming ecclesial subcultures in a pluralistic society" (D. Payne, 133).

Payne argues further that religious leaders globally have reacted to secularization either by resorting to religious fundamentalism or nationalism (D. Paynre, 135). Both choices, which seem to be looking for an establishment of their traditions, appear to have adverse effects, and Peter Berger proposed instead that Churches could better approach secularization by accepting it, and by "becoming ecclesial subcultures in a pluralistic society" (Peter Berger, quoted in D. Payne, 135). Payne further delineates the Church,

the State, and Society as distinct cultures, and argues that the ROC, to remain relevant as a modern social alternative apart from secular political structures, should operate within its own realm independent of governmental privatizing efforts. (D. Payne, 144)

As for recent political discourse, nationalist sentiments remain strong despite policy objectives aimed at a more inclusive ethnic/religious stance. The world has lately witnessed at numerous junctures the phenomenon wherein a nation seeks to embrace ethnic/religious diversity, while a concomitant rise in anti-immigration sentiment emerges. In the past decade, Prime MinisterAngela Merkel of Germany and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, as visible examples, have been forced by popular will to accommodate majority nationalist idealogy despite the EU's stated policy of tolerance. Although the European political outlook in theory promotes a trans-national spirit of equality and inclusiveness, the historical pull of nationalist fervor and the modern culture war it engenders are difficult to overcome.

As this study has demonstrated thus far, the problem of reconciling nationalist/religious tradition with the prerogatives of the EU is particularly acute in Romania, given the ROC's continuing influence and history of marginalizing those of non-Orthodox traditions (and hence, non-Romanians). With the assumption that the Church represents the majority of the population and is the standard-bearer of the Romanian ethnic essence, many in the hierarchy of the ROC consider the Church's mission to serve national interests in addition to its role as Christ's earthly embodiment. This has led some members of the lower clergy to take a more activist stance, for instance in an attempted revival of a far-right Legionary movement in 2001 (Stan and Turcescu, 50).

The structures which govern nationalistic fervor within the ROC are complex and stem from the competition of Byzantine Orthodox and Roman Latinity, which cast Romania in the role of descendent of the Byzantine Empire in the case of the former, and as a "chosen nation" designated by the latter to counter the 'barbaric' influences of the Slavs and other "invaders." As a composite institution, the ROC has traditionally viewed itself as a preservationist of higher (and distinctly Romanian) sacred ideals among its Slavic neighbors (Smith, 31).

Given this weight of authority and its connection to ethnic identity, it comes as no surprise that religious affiliation is seen as an essential element of national identity in Eastern Europe. Julie Mertus and Kathryn Minyard Frost have revealed the deeply-rooted connection of religion to national identity in a comparative study of Romania, Ukraine, and Poland:

> Only national identity counts, an identity based on a 'nature' that cannot be approached rationally. A person's religion is a matter of 'natural identity.' That is Romanians are said to be 'naturally' Orthodox; Ukrainians also 'naturally' Orthodox but of a Ukrainian Orthodox variety; and Poles, 'naturally' Roman Catholic. In other words authentic Romanians and Ukrainians are Orthodox and an authentic Pole is Catholic. Those who step outside their national designations, for example those who choose a new religion or a minority religion- are deemed traitors to the group (Mertus and Frost, 65).

Indeed, at moments of political uncertainty, religious nationalism can take on a xenophobic cast within national borders, and Romanians in the interwar years were susceptible to suspicion (and in some cases violence) against the perceived "others," ostensibly in the name of the Church though the ROC did not openly condone such acts. Recent activity by radical fringe groups lends evidence to the notion that nationalist bigotry is not merely a thing of the past.

Apart from nationalist Church influences, the political landscape after the 1989 Revolution has shown some signs of a more inclusive approach to governance. In 1996, the Democratic Magyar Union of Romania Party gained parliamentary seats as part of a coalition, marking the first time in the nation's history where the dominant ethnic minority was recognized in the official political sphere. The party has been a part of governing coalitions ever since, even against a backdrop of tensions between Romanian and Hungarian ethnicities which continue to simmer. With fears in the air that the collapsing Soviet Union and the invigorated Hungarian minority could contribute to territorial losses, overtly nationalist partisans found expression in two small but vocal political parties, România Mare (The Greater Romania) Party and Vatra Românească (the Romanian Fireside) of Transylvania. Both were explicitly xenophobic, and aimed most of their rhetoric at the Hungarian and Roma populations as well as Jews, intellectuals, and advocates of the market economy (Rady, 137). Neo-Legionary activity emerged in the post-communist era on the fringe of political discourse, encouraged in part by suggestion among some of the ROC hierarchy to canonize Legion leaders such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Ion Antonescu. The movement's efforts to disparage liberalism and Western-style democracy were born of the nationalist notion that Romania and its people were ordained by history to pursue a "civilizing mission" in Europe (Rady, 137-138).

Along more mainstream lines after the Revolution were the National Salvation Front Party, led by former Communist Ion Iliescu, the National Liberal Party, and the Christian Democrat National Peasant Party. Iliescu harshly criticized the latter two parties as too eager to embrace Western commerce and values, but after his election as

President in 1990 he softened his anti-Western rhetoric as he realized the need for aid from these sources to shore up the Romanian economy. The Christian Democrat National Peasant Party was the most vehement opponent of communism during the Soviet era and closely tied to the Greek Catholic Church. Its leader, Corneliu Coposu, a Greek Catholic himself, believed strongly that modern Europe held the key to Romania's future fortunes, while initiating domestically a number of measures aimed at restoring property and property rights seized by the Communist regime and also the ROC (Gillet, 328).

Following the 1989 revolution, the ROC found itself in an unprecedented vacuum of power and even at the present struggles to define its role as protector of Romanian identity in the face of the EU's pan-European outlook. While the Church existed in somewhat familiar surroundings in succeeding post-revolutionary governments (administered mostly by former Communists), the move in recent years toward EU accession has begun to erode the primacy of Romanian ethnicity among citizens in favor of a re-emerging devotion to Europeanism. In the past, the Church has shrewdly adapted itself to the prerogatives of governments on both the left and right ends of the political spectrum, a circumstance these powers were happy to exploit in recognition of the ROC's grip on the population. As secularist mandates of the EU begin to permeate ever more facets of Romanian life, only time will tell how the Church's influence in matters of nationalist doctrine will play out. However, as my visits to Romania (particularly Transylvania) have shown, the Church's influence over religious life remains strong (at least in non-urban areas), and concerns among those I have spoken with over joining modern Europe as a threat to the essence of Romanian identity mirror the Church's

uncertain future in preserving for new generations both the reality and mythology of

Romania's proud but troubled past.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY

While Romanians proudly trace their heritage to the Dacian tribes assimilated by Roman conquest in the second century of the Common Era, a specific Romanian ethnic identity began to emerge during the 19th century as nationalist forces bristled under Hapsburg authority. With the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire following WWI, Romania finally achieved independence and the essential outlines of its modern borders, but through these political re-alignments the ROC remained the dominant religious body in the region. This proved significant as homogenization of the nation became a central political objective from WWI onward (Brubaker et al, 45-46).

Through longstanding tradition, the Romanian Orthodox Church has been in a unique position of influence over subjects who firmly identify themselves along ethnic lines, to the point where Church doctrine has often assumed the status of national law for 'true' Romanians. Positioned as it is between Western and Eastern manifestations of Christianity, the ROC has exerted its control through a mixture of ceremonial practices of both sides of the schism, and with a mixture of historical and mythical constructions to define the essence of Romanian ethnicity and its attendant national identity. Though the Church's autonomy has been challenged at moments of political crisis, the institution has adapted itself pragmatically to accommodate changing political whims while maintaining its hold on the majority of the population. Indeed, both the Church and the various ruling governments have exploited religion, language and geographical affinity as the primary

45

characteristics of Romanian ethnic identity as a means of establishing a strong sense of national pride in addition to religious and civic fealty (Schifirnet, 112). Nationalist political movements, often with collaboration of the Church, have likewise appropriated these essential elements of ethnicity along with folkloric tradition (and more ominously ethnic superiority) to justify territorial claims and political objectives. Both Church and governmental agencies have relied upon a largely mythical interpretation of Romania's past, re-inventing history to proclaim Romanians as a "chosen people" who have endured invasion and cohabitation with the "others" only through the strength of their faith (Bellah, 371-386).

Under such narratives, the Church after WWI rededicated itself to a nationalizing mission, at the expense of its traditional provinces of morality and salvation, and often in unholy and self-serving collaborations with the state. With the establishment of national cultural outlets such as schools and museums, the state with Church support could set about homogenizing the population along nationalistic lines. As part of this campaign to establish a monolithic civic religion, the ROC (under its mantle as the "National Church") sought to suppress minority religions on the basis that they did not represent 'true' Romanians, thereby providing justification for marginalizing Hungarians, Jews, Roma, Germans, Slavs, and other ethnic minorities (Bellah, 371-286).

An even more discomforting alliance between Church and State emerged with the rise of the Legion of the Iron Guard in the interwar period. Founded upon pseudo-religious notions of Romanian ethnic purity, Legionnaires counted among their membership a large number of ROC clergy, and when the movement's leader Ion Antonescu came to power during WWII he seized upon the Church's moral authority

over the populace to promote nationalist agenda. The Church seemingly turned a blind eye to the excesses of this agenda, which included brutal oppression and indeed extermination of ethnic minorities during Romania's alliance with Germany.

After WWII, the Soviet Union essentially annexed Romania as part of the Warsaw Pact, and the ROC (which under the atheistic tenets of Communism could have been a target for destruction) managed to adapt itself to the new political reality through adoption of the Social Apostolate which emphasized obedience to the state as a religious principle. Like previous ruling entities, the Communists found the ROC useful as a unifying force within the country, and as a repository for Romanian history and culture (though often of a revisionist variety) the Church could be counted upon to lead its flock in the desired political direction. Collaboration of this sort continued through the Ceausescu dictatorship, under which nationalist fervor reached a peak in the early 1970s before economic decline and growing political unrest across the Soviet sphere toppled the regime in 1989 and prompted Romania to look to Western Europe as its new haven.

Following the 1989 revolution, the Church faced a new challenge as an emergent liberal ideology sought to secularize state affairs and diminish the ROC's traditional influence. In the political turmoil of the 1990s and early 21st century, however, neither conservative nor progressive governing entities have denied the unifying power of the Church – indeed, religious symbolism continues to function on the level of common language among Romanians and serve as a useful tool in persuasion toward seemingly contradictory purposes as Romanians once again grapple with issues of national identity within the EU context.

The Church today is confronted with a more insidious threat within its subjects. Despite nationalistic anointing by both the ROC and its state collaborators through generations, Romanians are acutely aware of disparity in modernity and prosperousness with Western European states, and in recent years have been focused upon throwing off the dark vestiges of their backward Communist past. As in the West, the drive toward modernization in Romania runs along secularist paths which challenge the legitimacy of Church involvement in state affairs, and as a relevant force in other dimensions of society. The secularist prerogatives of the EU have at times directly challenged the ROC's authority (as in the case over decriminalization of homosexuality), and are likely to prevent the scale of religious/political hegemony the Church has previously exerted over its subjects who are now largely committed to embracing European values.

This is not to say, however, that the ROC has receded significantly from the Romanian cultural landscape. With more than 86 percent of Romanians claiming membership in the Church in the most recent census, the society is clearly connected at least in name with what many would still regard as the "National Church." Nationalist identity is still a strong current in Romanian politics even as the nation accedes to the European Union, and the ROC is likely to remain a potent symbol to define "Romanian-ness" within the broader union of states. As in the past, the Church is likely to adapt to political realities, even if acquiescence somewhat diminishes the priority of Christian ethics in favor of a unifying national identity, a reliable place where those identifying themselves as Romanians can relate to an enduring and familiar religious/ethnic kinship.

In this context, the Church's mission of defending the 'sacred' takes on a much broader meaning as it has throughout Romania's turbulent (and often tragic) past. The

term has applied at various times not only to theological discussion, but in the political realm as well in the sense that obedience to the state is parallel to obedience to the Church. Whether the Church reverts ultimately to a primarily religious body or evolves further into a protector of Romanian national identity is uncertain. But despite the ROC's questionable alliances with governing bodies, political movements (with a seeming denial of brutality used to further political aims), and opportunistic exertion of its moral authority over subjects, the Church will doubtless survive current and future political upheaval in its typically pragmatic manner.

REFERENCES

Bellah, Robert. *The Broken Covenant*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Boia, Lucian. *History and Myth in the Romanian Consciousness*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001.

Brubaker, Rogers, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox and Liana Grancea. *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Case, Holly. *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II*. PaloAlto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Cinpoes, Radu. Nationalism and Identity in Romania: A History of Extreme Politics from the Birth of the State to EU Accession. New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010.

Conovici, Iuliana. *Orthodoxy in Post-Communist Romania vol. 1*. Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2009.

Conovici, Iuliana, "Aspects of the Romanian Orthodox Church's Public Discourse after 1989" *Romanian Political Science Review*, VII, no. 3 (2007).

Deletant, D. *Romania Under Communist Rule*. Iasi: Center for Romanian Studies, 1999.

Gillet, Olivier. *Religion and Nationalism: The Ideology of The Romanian Orthodox Church Under the Communist Regime*. Bucharest: Compania, 2001.

Georgescu, V. *The Romanians: A History*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1999.

Hobsbawm, E.J. and T. O. Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Karnoouh, Claude. *Inventing the People's Nation*. Cluj-Napoca: Idea Design and Print, 2011.

Leuştean, Lucian. "'For the Glory of Romanians': Orthodoxy and Nationalism in Greater Romania, 1918-1945." *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 4 (September 2007).

———. *Orthodoxy and the Cold War: Religion and Political Power in Romania, 1947-65*. Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Light, Duncan. "Modern Romania: An Historical Overview." In *The EU & Romania – Accession and Beyond*, edited by David Phinnemore. London: Federal Trust for Education and Research, 2006.

Livezeanu, Irina. *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania, Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle 1918-1930.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Mertus, Julie, and Frost, Kathryn. "Faith and (In)Tolerance of Minority Religions: A Comparative Analysis of Romania, Ukraine and Poland." Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 36:1-2 (Winter-Spring 1999).

Payne, Daniel P. "The Challenge of Western Globalization," in *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe: Selected Papers of the International Conference Held at the University of Leeds, England, in June 2001*, edited by Jonathan Sutton. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2003.

Payne, Stanley G. *A History of Fascism 1914-1945.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

Phinnemore, David, ed. *The EU and Romania – Accession and Beyond*. London: Federal Trust for Education and Research, 2006.

Rady, Martyn. "Nationalism and Nationality in Romania." In *Contemporary Nationalism in East Central Europe*, edited by Paul C. Latawski. New York, NY: St. Martin's, 1995.

Ramet, Sabrina. "Orthodox Churches and the 'idyllic past,'" in *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, edited by Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Rogobete, Silviu. "Morality and Tradition in Post-communist Orthodox Lands: On the Universality of Human Rights, With Special Reference to Romania." Paper presented at Annual Meeting of American Political Scienc Association, August 28-31, 2003.

Rogobete, Silviu. "Some Reflections on Religion and Multiculturalism in Romania: Towards a Reappraisal of the Grammar of Traditions," in Silviu Rogobete and Andrew Otchie, *Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Europe*, (30 November – 2 December 2005)

Romocea, Cristian. *Church and State: Religious Nationalism and State Identification in Post-communist Romania*. London: Continuum, 2011.

Schifirneț, Constantin. "The Orthodox Church in Post-Communist Romania," in *Church and State: Religious Nationalism and State Identification in Post-communist Romania*, edited by Cristian Romocea. London: Continuum, 2011.

Stan, Lavinia, and Lucian Turcescu. *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania (Religion and Global Politics)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Sima, Horia. *The History of the Legionary Movement*. Bucharest: Legionary Press, 1995.

Șincan, Anca. "From Bottom to the Top and Back," in *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe,* edited by Bruce R. Berglund and Brian Porter Szücs. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010.

Sugar, Peter. "Nationalism in Eastern Europe," in *Nationalism*, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Woolf, Stuart .J., ed. *European Fascism*. New York: Vantage Books, 1969.