

# A Priest in the “Romanian Action”

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Dr. Titus Mălaiu

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*“The success of an organization based on the national Christian program is absolutely safe.”*

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WHEN 19 Romanian intellectuals met in Cluj, on 23 June 1923, to lay the foundations of a new organization, the “Romanian Action,” they had already undergone a process of ideological clarification and had thoroughly assessed the political and social timeliness of their undertaking. Several previous meetings and, above all, the public success of the conferences they had delivered in Transylvanian towns convinced them that they were treading the right course.<sup>1</sup>

What was needed was an organization with a well-devised program, which should be positioned outside the existing political parties in order to capture and harness the energies unleashed in society over the past few months, during the large student demonstrations.<sup>2</sup> Such student protests had gradually been organized in all the university centers in the country, but the outbreak of these manifestations had taken place in November 1922, right there, in Cluj, in the dissection halls of the Faculty of Medicine. This and the subsequent events, which kept the students away from the lecture theaters throughout the academic year 1922–1923,<sup>3</sup> led some of their profes-

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sors, their leaders and other public figures in the city to join the ranks of the newly founded structure. The local and regional significance of these events (for the entire Transylvania) could not pass unnoticed. A new type of nationalism was born here, with different accents and overtones from that practiced in the decades leading to the year 1918, when Transylvania's union with Romania was accomplished. The new institution received the name "Romanian Action," the implications of this choice being self-evident. It was time Romanians mobilized themselves and defended their own interests, for a change, taking the example of the Allies and, particularly, of the French, their ancient brethren, with whom they were united by virtue of their shared Latinity and civilization and who had founded the Action Française more than two decades before. The influence of the French spirit on Romanian culture took a different shape now. Although the original was not explicitly invoked at any moment, its impact was quite obvious, in terms of both the name of the political movement and the program it adopted. At least some of the founding members were familiar with the European movement of political ideas, from which they extracted those that best fit their own intentions. These ideas had already imposed themselves on the market, representing the most cogently articulated form of such intentions.<sup>4</sup> In 1923, the other political programs outlined by the same ideological family were still very recent, unverified and too little known about.

The Romanian academics and lawyers looked up, in fact, to another group of intellectuals. They did not simply copy a name and a program, but adopted and adapted them. The famous watchword (desideratum) of *integral nationalism*, which appeared in the French version, became, in their interpretation, "a great and vast program of intransigent nationalism," leveled against external enemies but, most of all, against internal foes. Whereas for one of the founders of the Action Française (Henri Vaugois), the three powers that had morally ruined the French Republic were "the Freemason spirit, the Protestant spirit and the Jewish spirit"<sup>5</sup>—to which Maurras was to add the "metics" (*métèques*) in the formula of "the four confederate estates" that destroyed the essence of Frenchness on a daily basis—,<sup>6</sup> for the "Romanian Action" the identification of the enemy was to prove more vague in one sense and more accurate in another.

The programmatic declaration published in the first issue of the journal with the same name<sup>7</sup> makes reference to "petty-hearted Romanian elements" which, to satisfy their vanity and greed, do not hesitate to associate "at times with enemies within and without," jeopardizing thus the higher interests of the state. Next, reference is made to "elements foreign to our race" which, "by virtue of an external, rather than a profound, spiritual assimilation, claim to have become Romanian." Without them being named as such, this description targeted the Jews, who had acquired citizenship in the Romanian state only in the context of the peace regulations from the aftermath of World War I, which had just been

ratified by the Constitution adopted in March 1923. An even more trenchant and explicit formulation is found in the next paragraph: “We will fight to weaken the economic, cultural and political power of the foreign element, especially of the Jewish element, bringing it down to a just proportion.”<sup>8</sup> The Oath that the members of the group took becomes even more expressive (through the juxtaposition of a pejorative term and the promise of compliance with the law): “We will fight against the enemies of the Romanian Nation within and without, *especially against the Yids*, with every means and in every possible legal way.”<sup>9</sup>

This post-emancipation anti-Semitism (the emancipation of the Jews), which had begun to manifest itself several decades before in France, became the common denominator of the two “Actions.” The movement in Transylvania gradually added more local nuances to that common denominator. It was inevitable that the two movements would share certain tenets: neither “intransigent nationalism,” nor “integral nationalism” would have been conceivable without anti-Semitism.<sup>10</sup> While the emergence of the French original was indelibly entwined with the outbreak of the “Dreyfus affair,”<sup>11</sup> the beginnings of the corresponding phenomenon in Cluj must be related to the undertow of the student movements that took place during that academic year. The very provision inserted in the program with regard to the struggle for reducing the share of the foreign element, “especially of the Jewish element, [and] bringing it down to a just proportion” was, in fact, merely an extension, at the “economic, cultural and political” level, of the by now famous *numerus clausus*: the student protesters had ardently clamored that it should be applied in the distribution of places in higher education.

There were also pillars of the Maurrasian doctrine that were not taken over in the programmatic declaration of the new organization, such as the necessity of restoring the monarchy or of the Catholic Church and Catholic values to their rightful place in society. The reasons were obvious: Romania was, at that time, a monarchy, but it was also a country with a majority Orthodox population. However, we cannot omit the fact that in all the political formulas that the “Romanian Action” was to give rise to, loyalty to the monarchy would always be invoked as a major objective.<sup>12</sup> As regards the possible valorization of the Catholic influence, things were slightly different here compared to the rest of the country: in Transylvania there was an important Romanian Greek-Catholic community, with an already well-consolidated elite.

Among the first aims that the “Romanian Action” set out to accomplish in its political activity in the public sphere, there was one which, paradoxically, would eventually lead to its dissolution. This was not seen as a calamity; on the contrary, it was regarded as the fulfillment of a higher need: the unification of the “nationalist current,” for “the common good of the Homeland and the Nation.” Advanced negotiations, in this sense, with the “National Defense League

under the leadership of Mr. A. C. Cuza” had already been announced (for the autumn of 1924).<sup>13</sup>

Before setting off towards the political party that had been launched in Iași,<sup>14</sup> in March 1924 (three months before the one in Cluj), and that was led by the notorious anti-Semitic professor and before becoming “one body and one soul” with it, the “Romanian Action” was to pick up a local flower on the way. This was the Social-Christian Group, based in Gherla, whose members were to join the ranks of the organization from Cluj in February 1925. This entailed organizational and doctrinal consequences. The announcement of the merger was made by the so-called defenders of *intransigent nationalism* and *integral Christianity*, and the changes were published in the following order: 1. The official name of the organization became the “Romanian Action, a National-Christian organization”; 2. Article 1, paragraph I of the statutes was amended as follows: “A national and Christian movement shall be launched outside the framework of the political parties, a movement of Romanians everywhere—in the ethnic sense of the word—regardless of sex, confession, religion and social class”; 3. Two members were co-opted in the provisional Central Committee, “Dr. Titus Mălăiu, academy professor from Gherla and Dr. Alexandru Ciplea, academy professor from Gherla.”<sup>15</sup>

The organization had received a second fundamental doctrinary foundation. Besides *intransigent nationalism*, *integral Christianity* fully defined its essence now. The aforesaid article from the Statutes also contained at least two significant details: first, *Romanians* should be understood in the ethnic sense (not in that of nationality!, for those who had just acquired it might have demanded recognition as such); second, those Romanians should not be differentiated by confessional or religious criteria. Unlike some representatives of extreme right-wing ideologies, who recognized only Orthodoxy as capable of delivering true Romanians (see Nichifor Crainic, for instance), the Transylvanian National-Christian organization imposed no such restrictions. On the contrary, it had just included among its leaders two “academy professors from Gherla,” that is, two professors from the Greek-Catholic Theological Academy.<sup>16</sup> This detail had actually been omitted from the official statement. It was, in fact, a strategy of preventing the Orthodox from becoming hostile to the movement and of averting the loss of the Greek Catholics’ support. These were, after all, the two large audiences the movement counted on in its quest for adherents and, ultimately, for votes. The title of the editorial published in the journal issue announcing the arrival of the new group indicated the two terms in opposition (the “Yids” v. the Church), reinforcing this idea in the text itself: “Whatever the confession, the church is an element of order and moral authority that is essential to sound advancement.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, the organization received reinforcements in the fight against the true enemies (the minorities, the “Yids”) and this support came

from men of the church, that is, the institution (or the institutions) that had defended the values of the nation and of Christianity every so often in history.

Of the two theologians co-opted in the leadership, Titus Mălăiu was the one who assumed the role of compiling a doctrine for the new direction and was an active presence in the political organization. He detected the absence of a Christian component in the main political trends of the time (“in the conceptions of the Romanian political programs today, the Christian ideal is altogether absent”). This component was also lacking in the program of the Romanian National Party, the main political force in Transylvania. It was precisely the element that, in his opinion, would guarantee the party’s success: “The *success of an organization* based on the national Christian program is absolutely *safe*”<sup>18</sup> (emphasis his).

**F**ROM THE very first moments of his commitment to this cause, in writing or in deed, the young theologian became one of constant contributors to the mouthpiece of the party and participated in its various political activities. Still, who was Titus Mălăiu? Born in 1893, in Năsăud County (at Leșu), in the family of a notary (with many ties to the priestly milieu), he attended the gymnasium in Năsăud in the years 1904–1912. During this period, he was orphaned of both parents (when he was only 11 years old) and, under the influence of his religion teacher, who was none other than Alexandru Ciplea, he decided to become a priest. He studied theology in Oradea and Budapest (1912–1916) and obtained his doctorate in theology in Vienna in 1919.

For Titus Mălăiu, that year, poised on the cusp between worlds, bore witness to several happy events in his life: his marriage and ordination as a priest, as well as his appointment to the Department of Philosophy and Sociology at the Theological Academy in Gherla. Here he contributed to launching the official publication of the diocese, *Curierul creștin*, and it was from here that he was transferred to the Ministry of Religious Confessions and Arts in Bucharest in 1922–1923, as deputy director. The summer of 1924 dealt him a harsh blow, as his wife passed away. At the age of only 31 years, the priest became a widower with two small children.<sup>19</sup> This was the point in Titus Mălăiu’s life that coincided with his entry into politics and these were the professional qualifications he had to offer: he was a young and promising professor and theologian, with some experience in popularizing journalism, and had worked for the central administration for a brief period, at the Ministry of Religious Confessions and Arts.

His priestly, theological training transpires from the first articles he signed as a contributor to the official mouthpiece of his political party. In what we might call an “Easter Sermon,” Mălăiu combated those who would question the triumph of Christ (without naming the “perfidious Jews” or making aggressive or defamatory comments about them)<sup>20</sup> and, in an attempt to legitimize

his recent political options, he immediately made a statement that might be surprising (at first glance): “All true Romanians follow a single banner, the banner of Christianity. Surely, through Christ our Lord—the man who is truly risen from the dead—we hope to accomplish the resurrection of our nation, which *is carrying the torch of Western civilization at the gates of the Orient*” (emphasis ours).<sup>21</sup> For *this* nationalist, the salvation of the nation was not grounded in autochthonism and the rejection of Western influences, but precisely in the cultivation of these influences. It was an idea that the school of thought of the Greek-Catholic Church, well known as the Transylvanian School, was not unfamiliar with. Quite the contrary.

This westward gaze was not uncharacteristic of Titus Mălăiu. It was an inherent reflex, rather. Something was good, valuable, acceptable if it was confirmed, verified, produced in the West. The same perspective defined the National-Christian political trend he had adhered to: “One remains deeply impressed by this phenomenon, which is encountered not only here, but in so many *enlightened countries*. There is a worldwide trend, and we Romanians are part of its electric circuit.” Here is a reason for pride: we are on a par with the civilized, “enlightened” world, and this is an occasion for us to gain confidence and power “when we see that others are also driven by the holy National Christian ideal.” France, Belgium, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Yugoslavia are listed as examples and confirmations of the Romanian nation’s correct choice.<sup>22</sup> This overview of the situation in other countries has yet another reason: it outlines a feature that may become extremely useful for the Transylvanian organization. Because “in all these similar battles waged on the political front in different countries, we can identify a common note. Namely, nowhere is National-Christian politics made. *Aconfessionalism* is a genuine characteristic of politics.” The conclusion goes without saying: “That is why it would be utterly wrong to give the ‘National-Christian Action’ the name of ‘National Orthodox, or Uniate, or Catholic Action.’” This message must be understood by the Orthodox and the Uniate clergy and they must clarify their “attitude towards the new organization.” If for no other reason, then because “it would be tragic and reprehensible if a political action that is Christian through and through met the opposition of the Christian clergy.”<sup>23</sup> As he was a priest himself, Mălăiu was very well aware of the influential impact “this social body” can exert on believers, who periodically turn into voters. That is why Mălăiu could not miss the opportunity to send a double message: to the priests, in order to draw them into the new organization; and to his organization, which was urged to take into consideration the persuasive potential of the priesthood.

Titus Mălăiu did not use only references to imaginary journeys (literary, ideological and political) to the West. Some of these journeys were all too real and concrete, helping the publicist to convey and communicate various experiences:

“The Romanian pilgrimage to Rome was a happy occasion, enabling us, the 150 Romanian pilgrims, to see that in fascist Italy a hand of steel keeps the national consciousness awake, in full dignity,” or that “fascism is policing the observance of Christian mores, as in Italy today swearing and a woman’s exposed cleavage are prohibited under severe penalties.” The dismantling, “with military rigor” of masonic societies and other organizations, the legal prohibition of divorce and other such “achievements” of the regime led the traveler to conclude, full of admiration and gratitude: “What a sublime exhortation for us, Romanians of noble Latin origin, that we should also fight with dignity to defend ‘Romanianism,’ taken in a genuine sense, just like Italian fascism defends the life of its country, pithily expressed through the word *italianità*. During the Romanian pilgrims’ journey through Venice, Florence, Rome, up to Naples and Valle di Pompei, the fascists of Mussolini were their intimate and inseparable friends.”<sup>24</sup>

Titus Mălăiu placed his skills as a priest and theologian, but also as a sociology and social psychology professor in the service of his organization. More precisely, he combined them, finding not only good justifications for the decisions of the organization, but also suggesting future courses of action and objectives to be fulfilled: “We shall mold the national and Christian public opinion in the country, in our homeland.” How? “With the entire apparatus of the legitimate means of modern propaganda.” This reference to modernity may seem surprising, but it is reiterated in the article published by Titus Mălăiu. He was clearly influenced by Gustave Le Bon, the specialist in the psychology of the masses, who had noticed a mutation that was underway in the new times, when public opinion had come to represent a genuine force in society. Shaping (using) this public opinion in the desired direction was vital. It was a goal for which many more means than, “for instance, a journal” had to be set into motion. The teachings of the Apostle Paul, used to propagate, this time, not Christianity but the National-Christian doctrine, “relentlessly, under all circumstances, both with good cause and without cause,” were worth taking into account. They deserved consideration as a peaceful (non-violent and, ultimately, Christian!) alternative to more radical methods of imposing a concept, as had happened elsewhere. “In Mussolini’s country evil was so great that terrorist actions had to be taken in order to nip it in the bud. We believe that terror is not required here and that our conscious struggle, within the frame of the law, will suffice. The National-Christian trend in Romania must be a movement that upholds order.”<sup>25</sup>

At the time when Mălăiu wrote such articles, the process of unification was following its course in the nationalist movement, even though not all the opinions inside the movement converged and not all encounters with the partners from the Christian National Defense League (CNDL) took place in the best conditions. “Ion Zelea Codreanu is visiting Cluj, coming to the ‘Romanian Action,’ as Secretary General of CNDL and as A. C. Cuza’s envoy. He is making a terrible

impression with his frivolous and infantile antics. The youth are pushing for a deal with A. C. Cuza and for a merger between the two movements.”<sup>26</sup> The existence of certain differences of opinion was proved by the successive rounds of meetings between the two sides and by the dissimilarities of program and representation that an analysis of the published documents may reveal.

On the days of 12 and 13 April 1925, “representatives with full powers of the Nationalist Christian Democratic Party, based in Iași, united with the Christian National Defense League, based in Bucharest, and the ‘Romanian Action,’ based in Cluj, which also comprises the former Socialist-Christian Party, based in Gherla, met under the chairmanship of Prof. A. C. Cuza, at his residence.” Acknowledging that they were “governed by the same doctrine, they decided: 1. Our aforementioned organizations shall come together in a political party called the National-Christian Action (NCA), with the headquarters in Bucharest, under the presidency of Prof. A. C. Cuza; 2. The leadership of the National-Christian Action shall be entrusted to a committee consisting of eight members, headed by the president. Four of the members of this committee shall be appointed by the Christian National Defense League and four by the ‘Romanian Action.’”<sup>27</sup>

Titus Mălăiu was one of the signatories of this act of union and he became secretary general of the new party, as well as a member of the executive committee. In this party, the older (by now) “Romanian Action” maintained a prominent place, made visible by the inclusion of part of its name in the new designation and in the parity representation in the new committee. The particle “Christian” had been useful, of course, to the program of the “Romanian Action.” Now, at the time of this unification, the coincidence of doctrines between the signatories was evident.

The political program that was made public on this occasion introduced significant clarifications in two of its chapters. When *Minority Matters* were brought into discussion (Chapter IX), a distinction was made between the “native minorities and the Yids.” A series of measures were stipulated for the latter, with a view to “solving the Jewish matter, even to the point of completely ousting the Yid element from the country.”<sup>28</sup> This surpassed the objectives previously assumed in this regard by the “Romanian Action.” As for the *Church Matters* (Chapter VI), the prospects the program envisaged were more than encouraging for the church to which Titus Mălăiu belonged: “In the history of our nation, the two national churches have stood in for the National State. They have the same merit in ensuring our ethnic and cultural preservation. The nation must be thankful to the national churches and elevate them to their due authority and importance in public life.”<sup>29</sup> Without being named as such (Orthodox or Greek Catholic), the two churches were placed, without discrimination, on a par.

The above quotation (referring to the two national churches) was reiterated, word for word, in the “Program of the Christian National Defense League,”



published in the autumn of the same year.<sup>30</sup> In other respects, however, things stood differently. From spring to autumn, the balance of forces between the two movements had changed. A. C. Cuza was no longer so willing to be generous and emphasized his supremacy (as a star of nationalist politics, with a well-known reputation) and the hegemonic position of his party in the Act of Union signed in Bucharest, on 18 September 1925. In that document it was stated that the representatives of the Christian National Defense League, of the National-Christian Action and of the Romanian National Fascia had “decided the following: 1. Our organizations, mentioned above, *shall merge* into the political, economic and cultural organization entitled the Christian National Defense League, with the headquarters in Bucharest, under the chairmanship of Professor A. C. Cuza, based on the doctrine, the program, the statute and the regulations of the Christian National Defense League. By virtue of this act, the organizations the Christian National Action and the National Romanian Fascia *shall cease to exist*.”<sup>31</sup> This was the act that announced the death, at least from a formal perspective, of the “Romanian Action.” Some of its members were among the signatories of the document, attesting the fact that they had acquiesced to this important step: Dr. Valeriu Pop, I. C. Cătuneanu, Dr. Valeriu Roman and Dr. Titus Mălăiu. Some members left the movement, disgruntled by the turn things took after that moment.<sup>32</sup> Mălăiu maintained his position as a member of the Central Executive Committee.<sup>33</sup>

The changes also became evident on the frontispiece of the gazette announcing them. After months in which *Înfrățirea românească* (The Romanian Brotherhood) had been published with the subtitle “A journal of science and social matters” (so as to temper down the harsh response of the authorities, which had banned its publication in the past, on account that it supported a movement that infringed the constitutional order), it now became a “publication of the Christian National Defense League.” The front page featured a “Proclamation to the country,” signed by A. C. Cuza. The layout, the emphases, the content of the document and the tone of writing—all of these indicated the new direction, the new desiderata. This was an all-encompassing (at least at the level of intentions) and, in places, delirious anti-Semitic manifesto, reminding us why one of the researchers of right-wing politics in Europe described Cuza as a Romanian “sub-Drumont” (by comparison with the French original, Édouard Drumont), who practiced a “fanatic, repetitive and sterile” anti-Semitism.<sup>34</sup> A few excerpts from this text are, we believe, enlightening: “This war in which Yids from across the world are fighting, tooth and nail, against the Romanian nation will, by its very nature, last for as long as we still have Yids among us. . . . The parties, which have given rise to the Jewish problem through their very vicious structure can never truly be ‘parties.’ . . . The ousting of the Yids is not a ‘party’ matter, but a national matter. That is why the League is not a party, but a national brother-

hood. . . . Romania belongs to the Romanians! . . . Romania can only belong to the Romanians by eliminating the Yids,” etc.<sup>35</sup>

With messages like these, through which the new (old) organization wished to position itself above the existing political parties, as the voicer of a national need, the Christian National Defense League undertook extensive propaganda actions in several Transylvanian counties in the autumn of 1925. There were forthcoming elections (local elections were held in February 1926, while general elections took place that same year). Hence, the League had to form and consolidate its presence in the territory. In November A. C. Cuza visited in person several localities in Transylvania, much like the founder of a country, who had come to take the new territories into possession. The appellatives with which he was greeted placed him either among the great historical figures, or among the apostles.<sup>36</sup> Odes were dedicated to him<sup>37</sup> and various regional leadership members of the CNDL filed in a procession to welcome him. In the villages or the towns through which they passed, the leaders of the communities came to meet them. Among them, priests were virtually a constant presence,<sup>38</sup> whether they were Orthodox or Greek Catholic, coming to greet them separately or together. In some cases, these priests welcomed the guests on behalf of the local people and,<sup>39</sup> above all, they carried out an action that marked the climactic moment of the meeting, namely, they performed the ceremony of consecrating the flags.<sup>40</sup> The messages that the CNDL had brought these villagers and townspeople were not only verbally expressed (the most powerful and concise of these messages was echoed in the slogan “Christ, King and Nation!”); they were also encapsulated in a palpable object that was invested with symbolic meaning: the swastika flag bearing their organization’s name. In many cases, these priests kept hold of this treasured object, as proof that they were presidents of their organizations;<sup>41</sup> at other times, they were just leadership members.

A memorable episode took place on Saturday, 21 November 1926, in Cluj, at the sports arena of the city, in front of “about 5,000 people” and in the presence of A. C. Cuza. The by-now customary flag consecration service was celebrated by “Rev. Spătaru (Gk. Orth.) and Rev. Moldovan (Gk. Cath.)” This was extremely unusual in the relations between the two confessions and did not pass unnoticed. “We note with great satisfaction that the representatives of the two national churches have performed service together for the first time in a religious ceremony, namely, in that of the League.”<sup>42</sup>

**T**ITUS MĂLAIU had correctly sensed the human capital value that priests could bring into such a nationalist-Christian organization and their capacity to overcome the differences between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, in the name of the national cause. He became aware of this at the scene of the place as he was always a participant in the great tours of the CNDL in Transylva-

nia. He gave countless speeches at these meetings, as a talented orator who had acquired experience with the sermons he had delivered.<sup>43</sup> His merits were not overlooked and in the elections of May 1926 he was at the top of his party's list in Bihor and Sălaj counties, without, however, becoming a parliamentarian.<sup>44</sup>

While he participated in a large deployment of forces in the territory, Mălăiu also found the time for new contributions to the journal. His topics were adapted to the watchwords of the day, but he approached them with the instruments of an erudite scholar.<sup>45</sup> In mid-1926, there was a sort of hiatus in Rev. Mălăiu's activity within the nationalist movement. We do not know (yet) if such an apparent withdrawal had anything to do with the events that occurred in France and at the Vatican in the autumn-winter of 1926.

Several tense episodes and disputes between the representatives of the Action Française and those of the Catholic Church pushed things to the brink of a fracture. On 20 December 1926, Pius XI's papal address expressed a disavowal of the movement: "Catholics are not allowed to actively adhere to those ideologies that place party interests above religion, making it serve their own interests."<sup>46</sup>

Could this prohibition have reached Rev. Mălăiu and his colleagues? Insofar as Titus Mălăiu was concerned, such a withdrawal from an organization that fit the Pope's description could only be formal and ... very provisional. The commitment he had made to the cause of Christian nationalism in the early 1920s was to prove long lasting, finding ever newer ways of manifestation.

(Translated by CARMEN-VERONICA BORBÉLY)

## Notes

1. See "Cuvântul Acțiunii Românești către cetitor," *Acțiunea românească* (Bucharest) 1, 1 (1 November 1924): 1.
2. This is how one of the founders evoked the moment and its significance: "The initiative of a group of intellectuals from Cluj, aiming to channel the students' movements towards a constructive activity; Ciortea, Professor Iuliu Hațieganu, I. I. Cătuneanu, Iuliu Moldovan, Coriolan Tătaru, Valer Roman, Valeriu Pop, etc. After numerous meetings, they set up an organization that was independent of the parties, called the 'Romanian Action,' with a well-defined statement of purpose. The first public meeting was held in Cluj December 1923, in the Memorandum Hall, which was packed full." Valeriu Pop, *Amintiri politice* (Bucharest: Vestala, 1999), 189.
3. For the events of the years 1922-1923, see Maria Ghitta, "The 1922-1923 Student Revolt at Cluj University and its Anti-Jews Aspect," *Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Jerusalem) 1-2 (54-55) (2005): 91-108.
4. As is known, Ernst Nolte regards the Action Française as one of the great classics of European fascism (with certain nuances and reconsiderations), emphasizing the

- “high intellectual and political standing” of the organization’s leadership and “the enormous capacity of attraction and influence it exerted especially in France, but also in Italy,” particularly after 1908, the year when its own newspaper was founded. See Ernst Nolte, *Fascismul în epoca sa: Action française, Fascismul italian, național-socialismul*, trans. (Bucharest: Vivaldi, 2009), 201, 204.
5. Apud Jacques Prévotat, *L’Action Française* (Paris: PUF, 2004), 11.
  6. See also Pierre Birnbaum’s comments on this topic, “*La France aux français*”: *Histoire des haines nationalistes* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), 93 sqq.
  7. On 1 November, a bimonthly journal bearing the same name and having the same program as the organization began publication—again, like in the French case in the beginning. The successive bans imposed by the authorities on its publication led to several changes in the title of the journal, but not in its content or affiliation. See also Maria Ghitta, “*Acțiunea Românească* (1923–1925): The Circumstances of Its Establishment,” *Transylvanian Review* 17, 2 (2008): 93–103.
  8. “Cuvântul Acțiunii Românești,” 1.
  9. The Oath of the “Romanian Action,” *Acțiunea românească* 1, 1: 2.
  10. Colette Capitan Peter, *Charles Maurras et l’idéologie d’Action Française* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 78.
  11. Prévotat, 10.
  12. Article 2 of the first Chapter of the Christian National Action stipulated the “Protection of the constitutional monarchy, headed by the glorious dynasty founded by King Carol I.” See *Înfrățirea românească* (Cluj) 1, 1 (1 May 1925): 1. Article 1 of Chapter 1 of the Program adopted by the Christian National Defense League continued the sentence above as follows: “out of the belief that royalty is not a fleeting form of government, but the best form of State organization and the only one that is congenial to the spirit and the tradition of the Romanian people.” See *Înfrățirea românească* 1, 11 (1 October 1925): 5.
  13. “Cuvântul Acțiunii Românești,” 2.
  14. One of the participants described the events that took place in Professor Cuza’s home on 4 March 1924: “The problem concerning the name of the organization that was to come into being was raised there. Captain Lefter suggested: the National Defense Party, like in France. It sounded good to me. Professor Cuza added—not a party, but a league, the Christian National Defense League. That was it.” Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* (Sibiu: Ed. Totul pentru Țară, 1936), 118–119. What should be noted, once again, is how appealing the French models were for the elites in Romania. The episode is also recorded in Horia Bozdoghină, *Antisemitismul lui A. C. Cuza în politica românească* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2012), 81.
  15. “Se strâng rândurile,” *România Întregită* (Cluj) 1, 4 (15 March 1925): 1.
  16. The Theological Academy operated at Gherla, where the see of the Greek-Catholic Diocese was located at that time. In 1930, the diocesan residence was moved to Cluj. Silvestru Aug. Prunduș and Clemente Plăianu, eds., *Cardinalul Iuliu Hossu*, (Cluj-Napoca: Unitas, 1995), 70–86.
  17. Valeriu Pop, “*Jidani și Biserica*,” *România Întregită* 1, 4: 1.
  18. Titus Mălăiu, “*Prin cruce la lumină*,” *România Întregită* 1, 4: 6.

19. Marius Mălai, *Istoria renumitei familii Mălai din Transilvania, Leșu, județul Bistrița-Năsăud: Repere genealogice (1689–2005)* (Cluj-Napoca: Napoca Star, 2007), 154–170; Ironim Marțian, “Canonicul dr. Titus Mălai (1893–1978),” *Virtus Romana Rediviva* (Cluj-Napoca) 8 (2004) : 33–35.
20. After World War II, faced with accusations regarding its own responsibility for the manifestations of anti-Semitism and for the Holocaust, the Catholic Church removed this reference from the Liturgy of Good Friday. For ample talks held during the preparations for and the works of the Second Vatican Council, see Jules Isaac, *Genèse de l'antisémitisme: Essai historique* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy 1956), 125; *Fifteen Years of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue 1970–1985* (Rome: Città del Vaticano, 1988); *Visions of the Other: Jewish and Christian Theologians Assess the Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994).
21. T. Mălaiu, “Hristos a Înviat!,” *România Întregită* 1, 6 (15 April 1925).
22. T. Mălaiu, “Aconfesionalismul politicei noastre,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 1, 5 (1 July 1925): 8.
23. *Ibid.*, 8–9.
24. *Ibid.*, 8.
25. T. Mălaiu, “Formați opinia publică!,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 1, 9 (1 September 1925): 5–6.
26. Pop, *Amintiri politice*, 189.
27. “Un moment istoric: Unirea organizațiilor naționaliste,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 1, 1 (1 May 1925): 1.
28. “Programul politic al Acțiunii Național Creștine,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 1, 1 (1 May 1925): 4.
29. *Ibid.*, 3.
30. See “Programul Ligei Apărării Național Creștine,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 1, 11 (1 October 1925): 7.
31. “Act de Unire,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 1, 11 (1 October 1925): 4.
32. This is how Valeriu Pop presented the events: “The founding of the National-Christian Action, the dissolution of both Romanian Action movements and of the CNDL. The recognition of Cuza as a leader. Cuza did not respect the agreement and did not dissolve the CNDL. The disgruntlement of some Romanian Action members and their withdrawal from the movement...” Pop, *Amintiri politice*, 189.
33. *Înfrățirea Românească* 1, 11: 10.
34. Eugen Weber, *Dreapta românească*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, trans. (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1999), 48.
35. A. C. Cuza, “Chemare către români,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 1, 11: 1–4.
36. See, for instance, the articles I. C. Cătuneanu, “A. C. Cuza în Ardeal” and Caius Bardoși, “Bine ai venit,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 2, 2 (15 November 1925).
37. Iustin Ilieșiu, “Bine Ați Venit,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 2, 3 (1 December 1925). A note from the editorial staff states that “this poem was read by the poet . . . on 7 November 1925, when Prof. A. C. Cuza walked on Transylvanian soil for the first time.”
38. Wherever a priest happened to be absent, the fact was registered as an exception and as a betrayal. This was the case in Bistrița, for instance: “This is the only place in our triumphant tour where we had the opportunity to notice the pro-Jewish attitude of

- Mr. Petrinjel, archpriest, Dr. Pahone, attorney, and Mr. Bejan, bank director, a subject we shall return to.” “Intrarea triumfală a dlui A. C. Cuza,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 2, 2: 11.
39. In Ilva Mică: “We stopped by the school, where the welcome speech was delivered by Rev. Bal. Prof. A. C. Cuza replied.” At Rebrîșoara: “Rev Archpriest Anton Precup received us and wished us a warm welcome.” *Ibid.*, 10.
40. At Bârgău: “On 7 November this year, at 9 am, the first tricolor flag adorned with the ‘swastika’ of the Christian National Defense League in Transylvania was consecrated in the Romanian Orthodox church, against the chimes of the tolling bells. The divine service was officiated by Revs. Archpriests Dan Eliseu and Suceava, the latter delivering a speech on this occasion...” *Ibid.*, 9.
41. “After this, the flag of the League in Năsăud County was consecrated, in front of the Greek-Catholic church, the flag being then entrusted to Rev. Greabu, president of the local organization...” *Ibid.*, 11. At Maier “Mr. Cuza bestowed the presidency of the CNDL local committee on Rev. Iuliu Ciorba.” At Feldru “the local committee was set up, the leader being the parish priest, Rev. E. Ștefănuț”. At Ilva Mică: “Rev. Bal was elected delegated-president of the CNDL Committee.” *Ibid.*, 10.
42. “Drumul triumfal al dlui profesor A. C. Cuza în județul Cluj și Someș,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 2, 3 (1 December 1925): 10.
43. See also “Marele turneu de propagandă a LANC din Cluj și în județul Someș,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 2, 2: 14–15.
44. See “Candidații noștri,” *Înfrățirea Românească* 2, 14 (15 May 1926). In those elections, the CNDL obtained approximately 5% of the votes in the national elections, with 10 MPs.
45. One of his articles is entitled “Cursa ce ne-o întinde pansemitismul” (published in *Înfrățirea Românească*, 15 November), while the other is “Jidanul rătăcitor” (*Înfrățirea Românească*, 15 March 1926).
46. Apud Nolte, 221.

## Abstract

A Priest in the “Romanian Action”: Dr. Titus Mălăiu

19 Romanian intellectuals met in Cluj, on 23 June 1923, to lay the foundations of a new organization, the “Romanian Action,” an organization with a well-devised program, which should be positioned outside the existing political parties in order to capture and harness the energies unleashed in society over the past few months, during the large student demonstrations. The famous watchword (desideratum) of *integral nationalism*, which appeared in the French version, became, in their interpretation, “a great and vast program of intransigent nationalism.” The organization had received a second fundamental doctrinary foundation. Besides *intransigent nationalism*, *integral Christianity* fully defined its essence now. Of the two theologians co-opted in the leadership, Titus Mălăiu was the one who assumed the role of compiling a doctrine for the new direction and was an active presence in the political organization.

## Keywords

“Romanian Action,” Action Française, nationalism, antisemitism, confession, Dr. Titus Mălăiu