

Reluctant Allies? Iuliu Maniu and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu against King Carol

II of Romania

Introduction

Iuliu Maniu is today regarded as the principle upholder of democratic and constitutional propriety in interwar Romania. As leader of the Romanian National Peasant Party throughout much of the interwar period and the Second World War, he is generally considered to have tried to steer Romania away from dictatorship and towards democracy. Nevertheless, in 1947 Maniu was arrested and tried for treason together with other leaders of the National Peasant Party by the communist authorities. The charges brought against Maniu included having links to the ‘terrorist’ and fascist Romanian Legionary movement (also known as the Iron Guard). The prosecutors drew attention not only to the entry of former legionaries into National Peasant Party organizations in the autumn of 1944, but also to Maniu’s electoral non-aggression pact of 1937 with the Legionary movement’s leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. The pact had been drawn up to prevent the incumbent National Liberal government manipulating the elections of December 1937. Maniu had subsequently acted as defence witness at Codreanu’s trial in 1938.¹ Since the legionaries were regarded by the communists as the agents of Nazism in Romania, Maniu was accordingly accused of having encouraged the growth of German influence and fascism in Romania.² Maniu was sentenced to life imprisonment and died in Sighet prison in 1953.

Possibly no single act of Maniu’s interwar career was more condemned within Romanian communist historiography than his electoral pact with the allegedly Nazi-

¹ Marcel-Dumitru Ciucă (ed.), *Procesul lui Iuliu Maniu, Documentele procesului conducătorilor Partidului Național Țărănesc*, 3 volumes, Bucharest, 2001, vol. 2, part 1, doc. 2, pp. 10-69, (10).

² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, part 2, doc. 88, pp. 131-51.

backed Codreanu. According to this communist version of history, Maniu's action in signing the pact was morally unjustified since the Legionary movement with whom he collaborated was marginal to Romanian politics and the agent of Nazi Germany.³ The years since the 1989 Romanian revolution have, however, witnessed Maniu's rehabilitation within Romanian historiography which now stresses Maniu's struggle for democracy and constitutionalism in pre-First World War Transylvania and subsequently against the dictatorial regimes of King Carol II, General Antonescu and the Soviet occupiers.⁴

The post-1989 Romanian literature rehabilitating Maniu, as well as other recent Romanian histories of interwar politics, have not, however, included any substantial detail on the links between Maniu and the Legionary movement leading up to, or beyond, the 1937 election pact. Such works have confined themselves to little more than the immediate political events surrounding the signing of the pact in November 1937.⁵ The same is true of Western analyses of Romanian interwar politics.⁶ Within the secondary literature, therefore, Maniu is portrayed as seeing the pact with Codreanu as a necessary evil to prevent King Carol II and the National

³ See, for example, Lucrețiu Patrașcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi*, Bucharest, 1970, p. 106; Florea Nedelcu, *De la restaurație la dictatura regală*, Cluj-Napoca, 1981, pp. 202-3; Gheorghe Ioniță, 'Doi aliați electorali Maniu – Codreanu – 25 noiembrie 1937 – pactul de "neagresiune" P.N.Ț. – Garda de Fier', *Magazin istoric*, nr 9 (42), September 1970, pp. 60-64 (61).

⁴ Gabriel Țepelea and Nicolae Paraschiv (eds), *Iuliu Maniu în fața istoriei*, Bucharest, 1993; Victor Isac, (ed.), *Iuliu Maniu. Testament moral politic*, Bucharest, 1991, see esp. pp. vii-xiii; Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Viața politică și procesul Iuliu Maniu*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 196. Two notable biographies of Maniu have also appeared since 1989: Ioan Scurtu, *Iuliu Maniu. Activitatea Politică*, Bucharest, 1995 and Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu. Naționalism și democrație. Biografia unui mare român*, Bucharest, 1997.

⁵ See, for example, Ionițoiu, *Viața politică și procesul Iuliu Maniu* pp. 126-34; Scurtu, *Iuliu Maniu*, pp. 85-94; Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 132-7; Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria românilor în timpul celor patru regi (1860-1947)*, 4 volumes, Bucharest, 2004, *Carol al II-lea*, vol. 3, pp. 216-8; Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu*, pp. 318-25.

⁶ Armin Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation*, Munich, 1986, pp. 346-6; Larry L. Watts, *Romanian Cassandra: Ion Antonescu and the Struggle for Reform, 1916-1941*, Boulder CO, pp. 147-57; Henry L. Roberts, *Romania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, New Haven, 1951, p. 191.

Liberal government falsifying the elections scheduled for December 1937, but nothing more.⁷

This article will argue that Maniu did indeed have close links with the Legionary movement which extended beyond the signing of the 1937 electoral pact. It will examine Maniu's relations with Codreanu and his continuing involvement with the legionaries in 1938, the year of Codreanu's death. The article draws on previously unutilized Romanian archival sources, especially those of the ministry of the interior, the gendarmerie and the directorate general of police. It also draws upon political memoirs of interwar politicians published in Romania since 1989. Of particular importance amongst these are the memoirs of the politician Constantin Argetoianu who, although close to King Carol, was himself a signatory to the 1937 election pact.⁸ These hitherto unexamined sources reveal, however, that Maniu's links with the Legion and Codreanu were closer and longer standing than the available secondary literature implies. The sources suggest a genuine sympathy between Maniu and Codreanu based upon common aims. These included the need to fight against the corruption and dictatorial tendencies of the National Liberal Party and King Carol. Maniu and Codreanu tended to couch this fight in terms of traditional Christian morality versus contemporary immorality.

Iuliu Maniu and his Adversaries: the National Liberals and King Carol II

Maniu had risen to prominence as one of the leaders of the Romanian National Party of Transylvania before the First World War. Although he had been an advocate of the union of Transylvania with Romania in 1920, he quickly found himself at odds with the National Liberal Party which dominated the political scene in interwar

⁷ See, for example, Keith Hitchins, *Romania, 1866-1947*, Oxford, 1994, p. 419.

⁸ Constantin Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, 7 vols, 2 February 1935 – 22 November 1939, Bucharest, 1998-2003.

Greater Romania. National Liberal governments were noted for high levels of electoral manipulation and corruption and for economic 'clientism'. When the National Liberals were brought to power in 1922, Maniu contested the legality of the election and he remained an adversary of the party throughout the decade and beyond.⁹ It was largely as a result of the National Liberal government's increasingly authoritarian tendencies that the Romanian National Party fused with the Peasant Party, which had been founded in the Old Kingdom of Romania in 1918 by Ion Mihalache. The National Peasant Party was thus created in 1926 with Maniu as party president.¹⁰ In 1928 a National Peasant government came to power, headed by Maniu, and two years later Prince Carol returned to Romania from his Parisian exile. In 1925 Carol had renounced his right to the Romanian throne, in favour of his son Prince Michael, due to his estrangement, and subsequent divorce, from his wife, Princess Elena. He had also refused to renounce his mistress, Magda Wolf, known as Madame Lupescu.

In 1930 Maniu, as minister president, favoured Carol's return to the throne rather than rule through the regency council which governed in Prince Michael's name. Maniu demanded, however, that Carol should be reconciled to Princess Elena and sever his relations with Madame Lupescu. Carol's refusal to accept these conditions led to Maniu's resignation as minister president in October 1930.¹¹ With Maniu's departure from government, rumours of an impending royal dictatorship began to circulate in Bucharest.¹² Grigore Gafencu, a member of the National Peasant

⁹ For an examination of Maniu relations with the National Liberals in the 1920s, see Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu*, pp. 140-65.

¹⁰ See Maniu's speech, 'Viața politică în primii ani ai României Mari', explaining the reason for the fusion of the Peasant Party and the National Party in Isac (ed.), *Iuliu Maniu. Testament moral politic*, pp. 21-3.

¹¹ For the early years of Carol's reign and his relations with Maniu, see Paul D. Quinlan, *The Playboy King: Carol II of Romania*, Westport, Connecticut, 1995, pp. 107-34.

¹² Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien*, p. 160.

Party, noted in his diary in December 1930 with regard to Carol: '[will there be] a constitutional or a dictatorial regime? The personal regime attracts him: Alexander of Serbia, Mussolini ... He has noticed, however, the use of parliament for foreign consumption'.¹³

Immediately upon his return to power, Carol began exploiting powers vested in him by the 1923 constitution to appoint members of the so-called 'camarilla' to government posts and thereby undermine the parliamentary system.¹⁴ The camarilla was an informal, and non-constitutional, advisory body to the king consisting of palace favourites (politicians, diplomats, army officers and industrialists) which quickly began to influence Romanian politics. Among this group, Madame Lupescu emerged as Carol's most trusted adviser. Members of the camarilla also had extensive, and often shady, business interests.¹⁵ The camarilla, and Madame Lupescu's influence upon the king, rapidly became the focus of widespread criticism. Moreover, Lupescu's Jewish origins, and those of other prominent members of the camarilla, such as the industrialist Max Aușnit or the financier Aristide Blank, only added to the controversy in a country where anti-semitic feeling was widespread. For the Romanian public, the king's Jewish mistress, who meddled in politics and had driven away the rightful queen, quickly became 'the symbol of absolute evil'.¹⁶

Maniu, briefly minister president again from October 1932 to January 1933, failed to reconcile Carol with his wife Elena, or to secure the dismissal of one of Carol's favourites, Colonel Gavrilă Marinescu, as police prefect of Bucharest.¹⁷ This proved to be Maniu's final attempt at cooperation with the king. He now emerged as

¹³ Stelian Neagoe (ed.), *Grigore Gafencu. Însemnări politice, 1929-1939*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 19.

¹⁴ Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947*, p. 385.

¹⁵ Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, p. 71.

¹⁶ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green-Shirts and the Others: a History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania*, Stanford, 1970, p. 277.

¹⁷ Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, p. 145-6.

the spokesman of the opposition to the camarilla, and to Madame Lupescu, and in defence of constitutional government. In January 1933, Maniu made his first attack on the camarilla in the press.¹⁸ He also resigned as president of the National Peasant Party in the belief that his adversarial relationship with Carol was detrimental to the future of the party. Ion Mihalache now became president.¹⁹

Carol, meanwhile, sought to exploit the existing divisions between members of the National Peasant Party in order to isolate Maniu. The National Peasant Party remained a 'hybrid', with ideological differences between members of the former National Party and the Peasant Party still apparent. Party members were also divided in their attitudes towards Carol and the question of a possible royal dictatorship. Armand Călinescu emerged as a strong supporter of Carol's plans and developed good contacts with the royal palace. Iuliu Maniu and his circle of primarily Transylvanian followers remained opposed to Carol's schemes, and thereby came into conflict with the Călinescu circle.²⁰ Carol directly intervened in the party's affairs in order to drive a wedge between Călinescu and Maniu. In July 1936, for example, Gavrilă Marinescu, the police prefect of Bucharest, intimated to Călinescu that the king was not averse to Ion Mihalache coming to power as head of a National Peasant government provided that the 'Maniu issue' could be resolved.²¹ Carol also encouraged the Transylvanian Alexandru Vaida-Voevod against Maniu, in an effort to draw away some of Maniu's Transylvanian support.²² In 1935, Carol, with the aid of Marinescu, took advantage of Vaida's expulsion from the National Peasant Party over

¹⁸ Scurtu, *Iuliu Maniu*, p. 73.

¹⁹ Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu*, p. 225.

²⁰ Miroslav Osztóics, 'Constituirea și evoluția grupărilor în sînul partidului Național Țărănesc', *Acta Musei Napocensis*, vol. 32, nr 2, 1995, pp. 305-21.

²¹ Neagu Cosma, *Culisele Palatului Regal. Un aventurier pe tron. Carol al II-lea (1930-1940)*, Bucharest, 1990, p. 248.; Al. Gh. Savu (ed.), *Armand Călinescu, Însemnări politice, 1916-1939*, Bucharest, 1990, p. 312. In 1933-4, Carol also attempted to use the so-called Skoda scandal to undermine Maniu. See, Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu*, pp. 248-51, 260-2.

²² Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, pp. 195-6.

the issue of the *numerus valachicus*²³ to help Vaida found the ultra-nationalist Romanian Front (*Frontul Românesc*). Through this, Carol hoped to weaken the National Peasant Party and to control elements of the growing nationalist right-wing in his favour.²⁴

Carol also exploited differences of opinion amongst members of the National Liberal Party in his 'divide and rule' tactics towards the political parties.²⁵ The so-called 'young liberals' around Gheorghe Tătărescu, supported the king's plans for dictatorship. Tătărescu headed the government between January 1934 and December 1937. There was, however, a dissident section within the National Liberal Party led by the historian Gheorghe Brătianu, which opposed the king and Tătărescu's plans for dictatorship. In early January 1935, Gheorghe Brătianu and Maniu began forging links for common action against the royal camarilla.²⁶ Brătianu was to be one of the three leading signatories of the 1937 electoral pact, together with Maniu and Codreanu.

Carol and the Romanian Legionary movement and the movement's first links with Maniu

The Legion was a pro-monarchist organization in origin and was the first mass-movement to show open support for Carol on his return to Romania in 1930.²⁷ Carol reciprocated by following a policy of alternately supporting and suppressing the movement. He hoped to take advantage of the Legion's growing influence over the

²³ The purpose of the *numerus valachicus* was to provide 'positive discrimination' in favour of the Romanian majority in the country's institutions and economy. Maniu strongly disapproved of the measure.

²⁴ Hitchens, *Rumania, 1866-1947*, pp. 383-4.

²⁵ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, pp. 34-5.

²⁶ Arhivele Naționale Sediul Central (National Archives, Headquarters Bucharest, hereafter Arh. Naț), Casa Regală, dosar nr 6/1935, p. 1. Letter from Ion Sân Giorgiu to His Majesty, Bucharest, 10 January 1935.

²⁷ Quinlan, *The Playboy King*, p. 146.

country's nationalist youth to bolster his dictatorial ambitions.²⁸ He was also prepared to cooperate with the Legion against their common enemies. Carol may even have been a co-conspirator in the Legion's assassination of the Liberal minister president, I. G. Duca, who did not support Carol's plans for dictatorship, in December 1933.²⁹

Following Duca's murder the Legion was dissolved. In the new elections scheduled for December 1933, Codreanu ordered his followers to vote for Maniu, if they lived in Transylvania, and for Gheorghe Brătianu in the Regat.³⁰ Maniu, for his part, quickly came to the support of the Legion. The dissolution of the Legion, and the brutal clampdown on the movement thereafter, was regarded as illegal by all the main political parties and Maniu and the National Peasant Party were amongst those who complained to the authorities. At the trial of Duca's murderers, known collectively as the *Nicadori*, in April 1934, a number of prominent politicians, including Maniu, testified in the Legion's favour.³¹ In the same year, Carol, Lupescu and Tătărescu attempted to poison Codreanu.³²

By 1935, therefore, the Legion was increasingly taking up an openly anti-Carolist position. In February 1935 the Legion staged a demonstration outside the royal palace in Bucharest in support of Dr Dimitrie Gerota, who had been imprisoned for writing an article attacking the decadence and shady dealings of Carol and the camarilla. Gerota had also called for a republic.³³ In October 1935, the first direct contacts were established between the Legion, Iuliu Maniu and Gheorghe Brătianu for

²⁸ On Carol's early relations with the Legion, see Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael"*, pp. 240-1, 252-62.

²⁹ For the arguments for and against Carol's involvement in Duca's murder, see Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, pp. 164-6.

³⁰ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste 1927-1938*, Munich, 1981, Order of 10 December 1933, pp. 15-17.

³¹ Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael"*, p. 258.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 311.

³³ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, p. 185.

a common stand against the Crown.³⁴ Codreanu was not to meet Maniu in person until November 1937 and thus it was Nae Ionescu, professor of philosophy at Bucharest university, who represented the Legion at this meeting.³⁵

With the first direct links now established between Maniu and the Legion, Maniu and Codreanu's criticism of Carol's entourage was made known in a circular of November 1935.³⁶ On 27 November, the politician Constantin Argetoianu noted in his diary that the circular 'shows a serious evolution of the Iron Guard towards Maniu's programme and away from the king and his entourage'.³⁷ A week earlier, Argetoianu had spoken with the legionary student leader, Traian Cotigă, who informed Argetoianu that as a result of the persecutions and arrests which had followed Duca's murder in 1933, the movement no longer regarded itself as monarchist.³⁸

The following year saw further contacts between Maniu, his supporters and the legionaries. In early September 1936, Maniu met up in person with Codreanu's second-in-command, Ion Moța, at the Athenée Palace in Bucharest.³⁹ In late October, General Cihosky, a member of the Maniu circle, met up with the student leader Gheorghe Furdui. Cihosky informed Furdui that Maniu had 'total admiration for the Iron Guard and awaited from them a symbolic gesture' which would prove to everyone that the Legion was 'one of the most moral' movements in the country.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, these links were receiving both praise and criticism from elements within the Legion. Some legionaries who retained a monarchist position were

³⁴ Ibid., p. 312.

³⁵ Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu*, p. 269.

³⁶ Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael"*, p. 312; Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, pp. 69-70. Circular nr 10, Bucharest, 26 November 1935.

³⁷ Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 1, pp. 174-5, 27 November 1935.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 171, 20 November 1935.

³⁹ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 3/1936, p. 42, 7 September 1936.

⁴⁰ Arh. Naț., Casa Regală, dosar nr. 36/1936, Note on a conversation between General Cihosky and Gh. Furdui, president of the National Union of Christian Students of Romania, 25 October 1936.

unhappy at Maniu's attacks on the camarilla. Codreanu, however, had forbidden legionaries from criticizing Maniu and had even dismissed a number of legionary commanders who had done so.⁴¹ At a meeting of senior legionaries held in Bucharest in July 1936, however, Maniu received fulsome praise and declarations of loyalty for his struggle 'to reintroduce honour and morals into political life'. National Peasant leaders of a 'leftist' disposition, however, such as Virgil Madgearu and Ion Mihalache, as well as the pro-Carolist Armand Călinescu, were condemned.⁴² In the Transylvanian capital, Cluj, legionaries had made threats against Madgearu following a decision by a number of National Peasant leaders to dissolve the Legion if the party came to power. Maniu had apparently promised the legionaries that he would intervene on their behalf with the National Peasant Party on this issue.⁴³

While a number of National Peasant Party leaders condemned Maniu's links with the Legion, Zaharia Boilă, Maniu's nephew, had apparently written a newspaper article in praise of the Legion.⁴⁴ Many in the National Peasant Party felt, however, that Maniu's high-profile campaign against the camarilla was prejudicing the party's chances of gaining power. On 28 June 1936, Maniu delivered a speech at Vințul de Jos in which he examined, and found wanting, the state of the country under the current administration. He criticized the camarilla in general and Madame Lupescu in particular. 'The truth is', he said, 'that she casts a dark shadow over the holy figure of His Majesty the King' and he demanded the return of the rightful queen, Elena.⁴⁵ Ion Mihalache, the party president, regarded the speech as likely to tear the party apart

⁴¹ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 9/1935, pp. 75-81, 6 February 1936.

⁴² Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 2/1936, pp. 191-3, 9 July 1936, A discussion between legionary leaders.

⁴³ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 3/1936, p. 3, General Directorate of the Police, nr 2650, 1 September 1936, Note on the National Peasant Party and the former Iron Guard.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Discursul domnului Iuliu Maniu rostit la Vințul de Jos în ziua de 28 iunie 1936*, no place of publication, no date, pp. 50-9 (55).

between Maniu's supporters and those, such as Armand Călinescu, who remained loyal to Carol.⁴⁶ On 6 July, Călinescu noted in his diary that as a result of Maniu's speech, sources in the palace now regarded the National Peasant Party's chances of coming to power as slim. 'Maniu's campaign has ruined everything', he wrote.⁴⁷

The early months of 1937 were to be decisive in pushing Maniu and Codreanu closer together. On 13 February, the funeral of two senior legionaries, Ion Moța and Vasile Marin, who had died fighting on the nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War, took place in Bucharest. King Carol was greatly affected by the signs of massive public support for the movement shown as the train bearing the coffins of Moța and Marin halted at stations across Romania, as well as by the huge legionary and popular presence at the funeral in Bucharest.⁴⁸ Carol feared that the level of popular support for the Legion was now a very real threat to the monarchy. He invited Codreanu to the palace following the funeral and demanded that Codreanu appoint him as head of the Legion with Codreanu to serve as minister president in a new government. Codreanu flatly refused.⁴⁹

Following Codreanu's refusal to give up the leadership of the movement, the king greatly feared the combined strength of the Legion and Maniu.⁵⁰ To make matters worse, Carol's brother, Prince Nicolae, was also forging links with Maniu and the Legion.⁵¹ Nicolae was in conflict with Carol over his refusal to recognize Nicolae's marriage to a Romanian commoner. In April 1937, Nicolae was forced to

⁴⁶ Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu*, p. 272.

⁴⁷ Călinescu, *Însemnări zilnice*, p. 308, 6 July 1936.

⁴⁸ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin, (hereafter, PA), Politische Abteilung IV: Po 5, vol. 1, 5.36-8.37, German Legation in Bucharest to the Foreign Ministry, daily report nr 669/37, 11 March 1937, signed Fabricius.

⁴⁹ Șerban Milcoveanu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu altceva decât Horia Sima*, 2 vols, Bucharest, 1996, vol. 1, pp. 97-8.

⁵⁰ Argetoianu noted this in his diary on 18 February and again on 30 March 1937: Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 2, 1 January – 30 June 1937, Bucharest, 1999, pp. 77, 151.

⁵¹ Nicolae Rauș (ed.), *Carol al II-lea Regele României, Însemnări zilnice, 1937-1951*, 5 volumes, Bucharest, 1995-2001, vol. 1, 11 March 1937-4 September 1938, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 32-4, 31 March 1937.

renounce his right to the throne and go into exile. The Legion produced a leaflet in defence of Nicolae, contrasting the Christian, and Romanian, origins of Nicolae's wife, with the non-Christian origins of Carol's mistress.⁵² With such clear evidence of the Legion's growing power and insubordination, Carol decided to destroy Codreanu and the Legionary elite. He created the post of minister of public order for Gavrilă Marinescu, chief of police in the capital, who proceeded to draw up a list of thirty senior legionaries, headed by Codreanu, to be assassinated.⁵³

As a consequence of this threat on his life, Codreanu sought an alliance with Maniu. In a circular of 4 March 1937, Codreanu made his admiration for Maniu very clear, warning his followers against the nationalist newspaper *Porunca Vremii* which had recently published an article attacking Maniu. The Legionary movement, Codreanu wrote, did not share the paper's views and he went on to describe Maniu as 'a correct man, and of moral conduct, in a country which is dying every day from immorality'.⁵⁴ In the same month, Codreanu met Zaharia Boilă, Maniu's nephew, in Bucharest and requested his first face-to-face meeting with Maniu. Codreanu asked that Maniu be informed that he had been condemned to death by Carol and that he wished 'to make an alliance with Maniu against King Carol'. Codreanu explained that he did 'not want to come [to power] through revolution or a coup. I want to conquer government by peaceful means – the same as Hitler – through elections, obtaining a majority in parliament'. Boilă agreed to relay this message.⁵⁵ Maniu, however, left for Paris in May 1937 and did not return to Romania until the autumn. Consequently, Maniu did not meet up with Codreanu in person until November 1937.

⁵² Arh. Naț., Casa Regală, dosar nr 12/1937, p. 7, 11 April 1937, Circular nr 67, Bucharest.

⁵³ Călinescu, *Însemnări zilnice*, pp. 338-9, 1 March 1937.

⁵⁴ Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, Circular nr 62, Bucharest, 4 March 1937, p. 129.

⁵⁵ Zaharia Boilă, *Amintiri și considerații asupra mișcării legionare*, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pp. 51-5 (55).

A meeting between one of Codreanu supporters and Maniu did, however, take place in April 1937. On 12 April, Șerban Milcoveanu, president of the National Union of Romanian Christian Students (*Uniunea Națională a Studenților Creștini Români*) attended a meeting of student leaders in Transylvania to which Maniu had been invited.⁵⁶ Milcoveanu had been charged by Codreanu to ask Maniu to make a common front with the Legion to bloc Carol's path to dictatorship. At the meeting, Maniu explained that he had been following Codreanu's career since the early 1920s. While he agreed with Codreanu that the interests of the nation required collaboration against the common danger, he asked that Codreanu should contemplate three important differences between them before any agreement was reached. These were, first, Codreanu's known desire for an alliance with Germany and Italy, whereas he, Maniu, was a supporter of the Franco-British connection. Secondly, Maniu pointed out that Codreanu had a preference for dictatorship, while he supported democracy. Finally, Maniu said that he totally rejected the use of violence outright, unlike Codreanu who responded to the government's violent suppression of the movement with violence of his own. Nevertheless, despite these potential points of conflict between Maniu and the legionaries, at the end of the meeting Maniu took Milcoveanu's arm, as Codreanu's representative, and said 'together we will do great and beautiful things for the country'.⁵⁷ With a full understanding between Maniu and Codreanu not yet concluded, however, the Legion set about strengthening its links with Gheorghe Brătianu, originally established in 1935. On 22 April 1937, an

⁵⁶ The meeting had been organized by Zaharia Boilă and Ion Banea, legionary leader in Transylvania. For this information, and what follows, I am grateful to Dr Șerban Milcoveanu for the interview he gave me on 26 October 2002. I would like to thank Dr Milcoveanu for allowing me to speak to him on several occasions during 2002 and 2003. During this time, he gave much evidence of Codreanu's admiration for Maniu. As president of the National Union of Romanian Christian Students, Dr Milcoveanu worked with Codreanu from 1936 to 1938.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Șerban Milcoveanu, *Cum am cunoscut și ce-am înțeles de la Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, no place of publication, no date, pp. 36-9 (39).

agreement was reached between the Legion and Brătianu for a plan of action to prevent a Carolist dictatorship.⁵⁸

Codreanu's admiration for Maniu, however, and his desire to bind him more closely to the Legion on a permanent basis, was reflected in one of his circulars of September 1937. In this, Codreanu commanded his followers to rally around Maniu and take his advice in the event of his death in the forthcoming election campaign.⁵⁹ Codreanu confirmed this in February 1938 following an attempt by the authorities to assassinate him. Codreanu directed his followers who had witnessed the attempt 'to go to Iuliu Maniu and do as he tells you' in the event of a successful attempt on his life.⁶⁰

The 1937 electoral non-aggression pact

With the four-year term of the Tătărescu government due to come to an end, elections were scheduled for 20 December 1937. The government was duly dissolved on 14 November and Carol asked Ion Mihalache, as head of the National Peasant Party, to form a government. Carol's condition for the creation of a Mihalache government, however, was collaboration with former National Peasantist Vaida-Voevod, now leader of the Romanian Front, as well as the exclusion of the 'leftists' National Peasantists, such as Virgil Madgearu, from the government.⁶¹ Such terms proved unacceptable to Mihalache and he was forced to step down. On 15 November, the king called upon Tătărescu to form a new government to co-ordinate the elections.

⁵⁸ Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael"*, p. 347.

⁵⁹ Arh. Naț., Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 17/1937, p. 62, Mobile Brigade I, Agent 1377, nr 2200, 18 September 1937.

⁶⁰ Șerban Milcoveanu, 'Testament politic a lui Corneliu Z. Codreanu' in Milcoveanu, *Cele cinci testamente istorice*, pp. 16-26 (22). According to the Transylvanian Legionary Horațiu Comaniciu who was in contact with Maniu during the Second World War, Maniu had received a letter from the Legionary senate several years previously in which Codreanu's wish that the legionaries should follow Maniu in the event of his death had been repeated. See, Horațiu Comaniciu, *In lupta neamului (Amintiri)*, Consiliul Național Român, no place of publication, no date, p. 294. See also Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael"*, p. 346.

⁶¹ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, pp. 159-74.

The electoral campaign began on 19 November and the Legion immediately began working to create a mood in favour of Maniu amongst their supporters. The Legionary leadership argued in favour of parallel action in the forthcoming election between the movement's political wing, All for the Country (*Totul pentru Ţară*) and Maniu. They presented Maniu to their followers as 'unique amongst the old politicians as a man of character' and argued that the Legion should follow his policies 'with regard to the moral regeneration of the country'.⁶²

On 23 November, following Mihalache's disastrous attempt at cooperation with the king, Maniu became the National Peasant Party's president once again.⁶³ On the same day, Maniu gave a speech to the party describing the deplorable state of the country. Romania was, according to Maniu, already effectively a dictatorship, rather than a constitutional monarchy, due to censorship and the now almost permanent state of emergency and martial law.⁶⁴

Although, as we have seen, Codreanu had initially approached Maniu for some form of election collaboration in March 1937, it was Maniu who now made a public appeal for a pact, to which Codreanu and Gheorghe Brătianu responded.⁶⁵ Negotiations between the three men, which led to the signing of the non-aggression pact, took place between 20 and 24 November in Bucharest at the house of Dr Gerota, who had denounced the camarilla and called for a republic in 1935. He now mediated this first face-to-face meeting between Maniu and Codreanu. During these discussions, Maniu argued that the country was in a state of 'moral collapse' and suggested collaboration between the three leaders on the basis of constitutional

⁶² Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 13/1937, p. 25, Section I-a, nr 32, 20 November 1937.

⁶³ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, pp. 162-73.

⁶⁴ Gabriel Țepelea and Nicolae Paraschiv (eds), *Iuliu Maniu în fața istoriei*, Executive Committee, Speech given by Iuliu Maniu, 23 November 1937, pp. 141-56.

⁶⁵ Interview with Dr Șerban Milcoveanu, 26 October 2002.

principles 'to remove all those who interpose themselves between the Crown and the country'. Codreanu, who made his admiration for Maniu evident during the meeting, urged that collaboration 'be accomplished as soon as possible'. The party leaders agreed that their 'constitutional bloc' would seek to reverse the current state of emergency and censorship, before proceeding to 'remove all those personalities who take part in the camarilla'. Moreover, if the government were to dissolve the political wing of the Legion, All for the Country, Maniu proposed that the National Peasant Party should also withdraw from the elections and begin a joint fight against the government. Revolution, although not desirable, was not to be excluded if the government were to force the issue.⁶⁶

The pact was signed by Maniu, Codreanu and Brătianu on behalf of their respective parties on 26 November. The pact was not an ideological coalition, as all the parties were to run on separate lists and retain their own party programmes, but an agreement to prevent electoral misconduct by the Tătărescu government and to ensure free elections. The three signatories were to establish 'mixed committees of supervision and intervention' in each provincial capital to that end. The signatories also agreed that if any of them were to come to power, they would apply the harshest penalties against public officials guilty of electoral misconduct. The three also agreed that their respective parties should concentrate their joint efforts against the government during the campaign period and not turn against each other through acts of violence or use of derogatory language. All parties were to be allowed free

⁶⁶ Vasile Arimia, Ion Ardeleanu, Alexandru Cebuc (eds), *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc. Documente 1926-1947*, Bucharest, 1994, doc. 35, 26 November 1937, 'Agreement between the head of the Legionary movement, president of the National Peasant Party, president of the National Liberal Party (Georgist) for a pact of non-aggression in the parliamentary elections', pp. 173-4; Arh. Naț., Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 17/1937, pp. 77, Mobile Brigade I, Agent 1377, nr 3151, 26 November 1927.

expression of their party programmes. The pact was to last a maximum of thirty days only.⁶⁷

Although the pact was meant to cover the whole of Romania, it did not apply to Dolj county, where former foreign minister Nicolae Titulescu was standing as a National Peasant Party candidate.⁶⁸ Titulescu had been responsible for dissolving the Legion following Duca's murder in 1933, but was now seeking reconciliation with the ever-more popular Legion through the mediation of Maniu. Titulescu claimed, in an article in the newspaper *Universul*, that he had no involvement in the dissolution of the Legion in 1933, arguing that this had been the work of minister president Duca.⁶⁹ Codreanu's reaction to this was to exclaim that 'with Titulescu we can conclude only a pact of aggression'.⁷⁰ In due course, a number of other parties averse to the dictatorial tendencies of the Tătărescu government joined the pact. These included Argetoianu's Agrarian Party, the Social Democrats, General Averescu's People's Party, the Maghiar and German parties and the Jewish bloc. Notwithstanding the communists' subsequent accusation that Maniu had collaborated with fascists in 1937, Romanian Communist Party ordered its members to vote for Maniu in the December elections!⁷¹

In the days following the signing of the pact, Codreanu and Maniu made a number of statements to the press. In the 28 November edition of the main legionary

⁶⁷ Boilă, *Amintiri*, pp. 61-3; *Buna Vestire*, 27 November 1937, 'Acordul Iuliu Maniu – Corneliu Zelea Codreanu – Gheorghe Brătianu'; Arimia, Ardeleanu, Cebuc (eds), *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc. Documente 1926-1947*, doc. 35, 26 November 1937, 'Agreement between the head of the Legionary movement, president of the National Peasant Party, president of the National Liberal Party (Georgist) for a pact of non-aggression in the parliamentary elections', pp. 173-4; *ibid*, pp. 172-3, doc. 34, November 1937; Scurtu, *Iuliu Maniu*, pp. 86-7.

⁶⁸ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, p. 174.

⁶⁹ PA, Politische Abteilung IV, Po5, Rumänien. Innere Politik, Parlaments und Parteiwesen, vol. 2, 9.37 – 1.38, pp. 53-5, German Ministry, Bucharest, 15 December 1937, daily report nr 3534/37 – IA5 – Contents: Titulescu and the Iron Guard. To the foreign ministry, Berlin. Fabricius; Dov Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers, 1933-1940*, Durham and London, 1989, p. 111.

⁷⁰ Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 3, 30 November 1937, (p. 257).

⁷¹ Boilă, *Amintiri*, p. 65.

daily, *Buna Vestire*, Codreanu described the purpose of the pact as being to ensure free elections and confirmed that the pact would only last until the end of the elections. He described Maniu as a man ‘with a soul as clean as that of a youth of our generation’.⁷² Two days later in a statement to the foreign press, delivered through *Buna Vestire*, Maniu confirmed that the pact had been necessary because ‘all Liberal Party elections have been characterized by corruption, terror, the interference of the forces of the state’ and by what he referred to as ‘physico-moral violence’. ‘The present government’, he concluded, ‘is an arbitrary government which has falsified the national will. It is a personal government of the king’.⁷³

In the same issue of *Buna Vestire*, Codreanu pointed out some of the ideological differences between himself and Maniu. In what was to become Codreanu’s statement of allegiance to the Axis, and taken as ‘evidence’ of his links with the Nazis during his trial in 1938, he declared that ‘within forty-eight hours of a Legionary movement victory, Romania will have an alliance with Rome and with Berlin’. He declared himself in opposition to Maniu’s pro-Western foreign policy position and belief in democracy. He also rejected Maniu’s policy of tolerance towards the country’s ethnic minorities, stating that he stood for ‘justice without tolerance’ and added that ‘the Legionary movement will bring justice to the Romanians’.⁷⁴ Codreanu’s statements were probably meant to allay the fears of some of his supporters who disapproved of the pact with the National Peasants and assure them that All for the Country’s election policies remained unchanged. It was for this

⁷² *Buna Vestire*, 28 November 1937, ‘Interview with Corneliu Zelea Codreanu about the accord regarding free elections’.

⁷³ *Buna Vestire*, 30 November 1937, ‘Iuliu Maniu about the causes and character of the pact of non-aggression’.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, ‘Statement of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu’.

reason that Codreanu had demanded that the election pact should be limited to thirty days.⁷⁵

Elements within the National Peasant Party also raised their voices against the pact, especially given the Legion's hostile attitude towards certain members of the party. Earlier in November, *Buna Vestire*, had waged a campaign against Ion Mihalache and the 'leftists' in the National Peasant Party, accusing them of links with the Comintern and the desire to establish a Popular Front government in Romania.⁷⁶ Consequently, the National Peasant Party's executive committee had only agreed to ratify the pact under the threat of Maniu's resignation as party leader. Armand Călinescu, who had accepted Maniu's reappointment as president of the party on condition that the Royal House was not brought into politics, now refused to collaborate with Maniu.⁷⁷

With the election campaign well underway, the Tătărescu government began a propaganda campaign against Maniu and Codreanu.⁷⁸ On 12 December, Tătărescu personally attacked Maniu in a radio broadcast, but refused permission for Maniu to make a public response. Codreanu reacted by publishing a defence of Maniu on 15 December. He denounced the government's refusal to allow Maniu to respond to the verbal attacks on him as "a cowardly act".⁷⁹ A number of Maniu's speeches, including one attacking Madame Lupescu's political influence, were censored in the newspapers. On the 13 December, Tătărescu threatened to have Maniu arrested.⁸⁰

The Tătărescu government also brought the forces of the administration to bear on the opposition. The state of emergency was maintained in many localities and

⁷⁵ Boilă, *Amintiri*, p. 61.

⁷⁶ See, for example, *Buna Vestire*, 14 November 1937.

⁷⁷ Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael"*, p. 350.

⁷⁸ Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, p. 218.

⁷⁹ Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste*, p. 225, 'A public protest', 15 December 1937.

⁸⁰ Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 3, p. 259, 1 December 1937 ; p. 267, 7 December 1937 ; p. 277, 12 December 1937 ; p. 280, 13 December 1937.

demonstrations forbidden.⁸¹ Gavrilă Marinescu, sub-secretary of state at the ministry of the interior since March 1937, as well as police prefect of Bucharest, maintained direct links with county prefects in order to curb the opposition. In a direct attack upon the legionary election campaign, the government forbade propaganda activity by students. A number of senior legionaries, including Gheorghe Clime, president of All for the Country, were deprived of their Romanian citizenship by the government for having fought in the Spanish Civil War without government approval. Without Romanian citizenship, they were unable to stand for election. In such cases where a legionary was unable to stand as an All for the Country candidate, supporters were told to transfer their votes to the National Peasant Party.⁸²

Such circumstances of government heavy-handedness could only have been sanctioned by Carol himself. On 15 December Argetoianu wrote in his diary that ‘public opinion is increasingly against the king from day to day’. At the same time, he observed that Maniu’s popularity was growing ‘due to his outbursts against Lupescu’.⁸³ A few days later, Argetoianu noted that the popularity of the National Peasant Party had been ‘resurrected since the re-election of Maniu as president of the party’. Both in Maniu’s native Transylvania and in Bucharest, potential voters were being drawn to the party by his ‘continued and courageous anti-camarilla declarations’.⁸⁴ Election day itself was to show, however, that it was the Legion which was by far the most popular movement in Romania.

⁸¹ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, p. 228.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7.

⁸³ Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 3, p. 284, 15 December 1937.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 289, 18 December 1937.

The December 1937 election

Despite the government's best attempts to subvert the electoral process in its favour, the National Liberals failed to win the election on 20 December 1937. Argetoianu's diary entries reveal that it was the Legionary movement which emerged as the most popular of the non-government parties. On 21 December, the day after the election, Argetoianu was woken at 6 am by a friend at the ministry of the interior with the election results thus far. The government (Tătărescu's Liberals) had polled 32% of the vote, with the National Peasant Party at 18% and the Legion (All for the Country) at 22% of the total vote. The following day, 22 December, Argetoianu recorded that the government had not published the election results at 5 pm on 21 December, 'as promised', or on the morning of 22 December. He commented that this delay in publishing the results was 'without precedent in our political annals' but also that 'there is something else without precedent in Romanian politics. The government has lost the elections', by failing to win the necessary 40% of the vote through which it could take the majority of seats in the parliament. 'From what we know up to now', added Argetoianu, 'the most votes, after the government, are for the Iron Guard – then, very close, the National Peasants.' He noted later on 22 December that the ministry of the interior had finally published the results. 'They are false', he wrote, with the percentages manipulated for all the parties.⁸⁵ The final statistics as published by the government were 35.92% for the National Liberals, 20.40% for the National Peasants and 15.58% for All for the Country, and 3.89% for Gheorghe Brătianu's liberals.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 3, pp. 295-7, 21-22 December 1937.

⁸⁶ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, pp. 238-9. According to the German minister, Fabricius, All for the Country polled more than 23% of the vote in Bucharest: PA, Politische Abteilung IV, Po5, Rumänien. Innere Politik, Parlaments und Parteiwesen, vol. 2, 9.37 – 1.38, pp. 98-101, German ministry Bucharest, 28 December 1937, daily report nr. 3675/37 – IA5 – Contents: Parliamentary election in Romania. To the foreign ministry, Berlin. Fabricius.

When the results were made known to the general public, they were apparently received with jubilation. ‘First’, wrote Argetoianu, ‘because of the universal antipathy towards the Tătărescu government. Then, and this fact must be underlined, because of the success of the Iron Guard. The sympathy which the Legionary movement enjoys is thanks to nothing other than a reaction against the dishonest and corrupt government, from top to bottom, under which we live ... in all social classes, the man most cursed is not Tătărescu, but the king’.⁸⁷

On the night of 23 December, Călinescu, who had left the National Peasant Party, met with Octavian Goga to discuss the formation of a new government.⁸⁸ Carol planned to bring Goga to power as head of a National Christian Party government, even though the party had only won 9.15% of the vote in the election.⁸⁹ Goga, joint leader of the anti-semitic National Christian Party together with A. C. Cuza, was a supporter of the king and friendly with Madame Lupescu. Carol had been instrumental in the creation of the National Christian Party in 1935. Carol’s diary entry for this period reveals that he foresaw that a National Christian government would be too unstable to be of long duration. He would then be ‘free to take stronger measures which will free me and the country from the tyranny ... of party interests’.⁹⁰ Moreover, Carol hoped to undermine the Legion by pitting it against A. C. Cuza’s followers within the National Christian Party, who were the sworn enemies of the Legion.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Argetoianu, vol. 3, *Însemnări zilnice* p. 299, 23 December 1937.

⁸⁸ Călinescu, *Însemnări zilnice*, p. 362, 23 December 1937.

⁸⁹ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, p. 238.

⁹⁰ Carol al II-lea, *Însemnările zilnice*, vol. 1, pp. 129-35 (134), 2 November – 31 December 1937.

⁹¹ Michel Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe: Memoirs of Prince Michel Sturdza, Former Foreign Minister of Romania*, Boston, 1968, pp. 103-4; Paul A. Shapiro, ‘Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: The National Christian Party in Power, December 1937-February 1938’, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 8, nr 1, spring 1974, pp. 45-88, (72).

On 22 December the three main signatories of the electoral pact, Maniu, Codreanu and Gheorghe Brătianu, met up in Bucharest. Codreanu declared his wish to resume his liberty of action owing to the opposition to the pact in some quarters of the Legionary movement. Maniu, however, wished to continue with the collaboration, saying that he and Codreanu's followers should take to the streets and 'not come home until the king has brought somebody amongst us to power'. He added that he was 'indifferent as to whom, so long as the regime is parliamentary'. Codreanu replied that he believed the king and his supporters had been thoroughly beaten, while Maniu was of the opinion that the king's forces would quickly regain the initiative. To Codreanu's decision to leave Bucharest to go skiing in Predeal in the Carpathian mountains, Maniu exclaimed that 'it is not a time for rest of sport'.⁹² This was, however, not to be the final collaboration between Maniu and Codreanu.

The new Goga government was sworn into office on 28 December. Armand Călinescu became minister of the interior, with Gavrilă Marinescu as his deputy. The parliament itself, however, which had been elected on 20 December was never to meet, and Carol promised Goga new elections immediately upon his appointment. Carol believed that the National Christian Party, with the help of new election laws, could profit from the rising nationalist tide to ensure its (and his) domination over a suitably emasculated parliament.⁹³ Thus, on 18 January 1938, Goga announced the dissolution of the non-existent parliament elected on 20 December. New elections were scheduled for 2 March, with campaigning to begin on 6 February.⁹⁴

Campaigning, however, got off to a violent start when serious fighting broke out between the legionaries and their government rivals, the supporters of A. C. Cuza

⁹² Boilă, *Amintiri*, pp. 66-7.

⁹³ The German minister, Fabricius, reported to the German foreign ministry on 29 January that Carol wanted 'an outwardly democratic system, to impress England and France': Shapiro, 'Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania', p. 82.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

in their para-military guise as the *Lancieri*, Călinescu's ministry of the interior security forces and the police. The disturbances left two legionaries dead, and 52 wounded and 450 arrested.⁹⁵ As a result, on 7 February the legionaries reported that Codreanu was considering renouncing electoral participation. Before doing so, however, he proposed to consult with other opposition leaders, foremost Maniu.⁹⁶

Indeed, despite the expiration of the 1937 election pact, the bond of sympathy between Codreanu and Maniu and many of their supporters was not broken and the possibility of collaboration continued. In late December 1937, some members of the National Peasant Party had apparently been discussing a new electoral pact 'and even a much closer collaboration for the future with All for the Country'.⁹⁷ In late January 1938, however, members of the National Peasant Party's left-wing demanded that Maniu should not conclude another electoral pact with Codreanu. Maniu agreed that he would not renew the pact with Codreanu unless the pact were to be extended to other opposition groups. He duly opened negotiations with opposition party leaders to discuss ways of guaranteeing free elections on 2 March 1938.⁹⁸

It has been argued that Maniu's article in the National Peasant Party daily newspaper *Dreptatea* on 29 January 1938 in which he took a position against Codreanu's pro-German foreign policy position, as well as his anti-legionary memorandum to the government of 6 February was the definitive parting of the ways between Maniu and Codreanu.⁹⁹ They can better be seen, however, as tactical declarations, made to dispel any rumours of a possible renewal of the pact with

⁹⁵ Shapiro, 'Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania', pp. 82-3.

⁹⁶ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr. 19/1938, p. 20, Detective Corp, Section I-a, nr 4, 7 February 1938.

⁹⁷ Arh. Naț., Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, dosar nr 8/1937, pp. 221-6, (224) Inspectorate General of the Gendarmerie, Gendarmerie Service, Report on the morale of the population following the change of government.

⁹⁸ Arh. Naț., Direcție Generăla a Poliției, dosar nr. 121/1938, p. 8, C.D., nr 1449, 31 January 1938, no. 553, conf.

⁹⁹ For this line of argument, see Scurtu, *Iuliu Maniu*, p. 90.

Codreanu. In this way, Maniu was able to open discussions with the National Liberal Party, which was utterly opposed to the Legion, for the creation of a new bloc to coordinate action in the new election campaign. Maniu was prepared to work with the National Liberal Party, which was now led by Constantin I. C. Brătianu, who disapproved of the king's dictatorial plans, rather than Carol's ally, Gheorghe Tătărescu. On 6 February, the day Maniu issued his anti-legionary memorandum, he met up with Constantin Brătianu. This change of leadership in the National Liberal Party also led to Gheorghe Brătianu's fraction rejoining the party on 11 January. It was Gheorghe Brătianu who subsequently took charge of the negotiations with Maniu on behalf of the National Liberals.¹⁰⁰ Events were to show that Maniu had, however, by no means ruled out the possibility of further cooperation with Codreanu.

Codreanu, as we have seen, had decided immediately after the legionary deaths on 6 February to consult with Maniu, but any further collaboration between Maniu and Codreanu was postponed owing to an unforeseen event – an offer of collaboration made by the minister president Octavian Goga. Following the violence of 6 February, Goga feared that Cuza and Călinescu's terror against the Legion was endangering the running of the elections which he still hoped to win. He thus asked the legionary Mihail Sturdza to arrange a meeting with Codreanu.¹⁰¹

Goga and Codreanu met up on the night of 8/9 February in Bucharest at the house of Ion Gigurtu, minister for industry and commerce in the Goga government and a legionary sympathizer. Goga and Codreanu agreed that although the Legion would still have candidates for the election itself, they would withdraw from the campaign and help the National Christian Party to win the election. For Goga, collaboration with the Legion made a far-right victory at the elections almost a

¹⁰⁰ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, pp. 336-43; Ionițoiu, *Viață politică și procesul Iuliu Maniu*, p. 173.

¹⁰¹ Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe*, pp. 104-5.

certainty, while Codreanu obtained the protection of the Goga government against Călinescu and Cuza.¹⁰²

It has been argued that it was as a result of this understanding between Goga and Codreanu that Carol dissolved the Goga government and established the royal dictatorship.¹⁰³ In reality, Carol had already taken the decision to set up a dictatorship under the nominal leadership of the Orthodox patriarch, Miron Cristea, by 7 February. The planned government was to include Călinescu as minister of the interior and all former minister presidents as ministers without portfolio.¹⁰⁴ Goga's pact with Codreanu, however, gave Carol the necessary excuse to force Goga's resignation on 10 February and to declare the creation of a new government of 'national unity'. Carol's assumption, correct as it turned out, was that the short-lived National Christian government had sufficiently discredited Romanian parliamentary system so that the governments of the Great Powers would accept the installation of a royal dictatorship. Not only had the country witnessed high levels of violence, but within days of its appointment, the anti-semitic legislation of the National Christian government had led to Jewish passive resistance within Romania and complaints by the French, British and US governments.¹⁰⁵

The installation of the new government of national unity on 10 February immediately brought Codreanu and Maniu back into close collaboration. On 10 February, Carol invited all former minister presidents and party leaders to enter the new government. Of all Carol's former minister presidents, only Maniu and Goga refused to join. Codreanu alone of all party leaders was not invited into the new

¹⁰² Ibid; Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, pp. 375-80; Shapiro, 'Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania', pp. 83-4.

¹⁰³ Scurtu, *Iuliu Maniu*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁴ Watts, *Romanian Cassandra*, p. 171; Călinescu, *Însemnări zilnice*, p. 376, 7 February 1937.

¹⁰⁵ Shapiro, 'Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania', pp. 72-81; Quinlan, *The Playboy King*, p. 185.

government.¹⁰⁶ On the same day Maniu and Codreanu met up to discuss the new regime in Bucharest. The two decided that in the event of a direct threat to their interests by the new government, the Legion and the National Peasant Party would form a coalition. Moreover, in the event of either Codreanu or Maniu's death, the followers of the deceased leader should join the remaining leader and give him their unconditional loyalty in order to 'retain the unity and strength of the bloc'.¹⁰⁷ In a meeting between Codreanu and his followers later the same day, it was confirmed that Maniu would carry out any actions against the government in agreement with Codreanu and in parallel with the Legion.¹⁰⁸

In a meeting with his supporters a week later, Maniu described his understanding with Codreanu as an unwritten 'gentlemen's agreement'. There was to be no collaboration regarding political programmes between the Legion and the National Peasant Party, but rather an agreement 'for common action against certain circles, which, as is well known, are our enemies as well as those of the Legionary movement'. Maniu explained that in the meetings he had conducted with Codreanu he had stressed to him that if the Legion's pro-Axis foreign policy position could be renounced, together with the movement's belief in the racial struggle, 'a closer collaboration between the National Peasant Party and the Iron Guard would be possible'.¹⁰⁹

Carol, meanwhile, moved quickly to consolidate his position, declaring the 1923 constitution invalid on 11 February 1938. On the same day, he declared a state

¹⁰⁶ Carol made a subsequent attempt to lure Codreanu into the government, but Codreanu refused to participate: Quinlan, *The Playboy King*, p. 185.

¹⁰⁷ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr. 10/1938, pp. 64-80, (78-9), History of the Iron Guard. Although this document is undated, it was clearly written very shortly after the meeting described.

¹⁰⁸ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr. 19/1938, pp. 54-5, Detective Corp, Section I-a, nr. 4, 11 February 1938.

¹⁰⁹ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 19/1938, p. 90, Detective Corp, Section I-a, 18 February 1938.

of emergency and placed responsibility for maintaining public order in the hands of the military. The new constitution, published on 20 February, strengthened the royal powers and effectively turned the parliament into little more than a rubber stamp for royal decrees. A number of articles in the new constitution were aimed against the Legionary movement, including one which raised the voting age from twenty-one to thirty. Political parties were outlawed on 30 March.¹¹⁰

On 21 February, the day following the publication of the new constitution, Codreanu dissolved All for the Country. In this way, he sought to pre-empt the government's suppression of the movement and the imprisonment of his followers. The Legion was to continue as an underground organization. He did not, in any case, believe the royal dictatorship would be of long duration and that once political parties resumed a legal existence, the country would vote for the Legion. In the meanwhile, Legionary meetings were to continue in secret and the movement's archives and arms hidden.¹¹¹

Despite the suspension of overt political activities, Maniu and Codreanu retained close links. On 9 March 1938, Codreanu declared his willingness to work with Maniu if the king continued to suppress the movement or attempted to install a new National Liberal puppet government. In either event, the legionaries would carry out actions in conjunction with Maniu and his followers to overturn the new regime.¹¹² On 5 April, Argetoianu noted in his diary that party leaders proposed to make a common protest to the king against the outlawing of political parties. The evening before, Maniu and Codreanu had meet up but Codreanu had refused to sign

¹¹⁰ For the establishment of the royal dictatorship and the relevant legislation, see Scurtu, *Carol al II-lea*, pp. 230-57.

¹¹¹ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 19/1938, pp. 54-5, Detective Corp, Section I-a, nr 4, 11 February 1938; *ibid.*, dosar nr 1/1938, pp. 25-7, C. D., 24 February 1938; Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe*, p. 111.

¹¹² Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 1/1938, p. 62, Detective Corp, Section I-a, nr 19, 9 March 1938.

the protest.¹¹³ This was probably owing to Codreanu's unwillingness to work with the National Liberals who had been responsible for the suppression of the movement over the preceding years. A few days after his meeting with Maniu, Codreanu discussed with his followers the negotiations between the parties to create a common front. He explained that the Legion could not collaborate with the liberals. 'I have specified to Maniu', he stated, 'that if the opposition front can be made without the participation of the Liberals, then I will commit the movement to this front'.¹¹⁴

The government, meanwhile, had been preparing measures against the Legion, although a further assassination plot against Codreanu, following the dissolution of the Goga government, failed.¹¹⁵ On 14 February, Călinescu, as interior minister in the new government, declared his intention to intern up to a hundred and fifty senior legionaries.¹¹⁶ Subsequently, the *Anschluss* on 13 March intensified Călinescu's desire to eliminate the Legion, which he believed would benefit from Nazi Germany's increased influence in Central and South-East Europe. He therefore proposed to Carol the arrest of Codreanu and the movement's leaders.¹¹⁷

1938: The trial of Codreanu and Maniu's witness statement

Călinescu, like many of his contemporaries, believed that the Legion was backed by the Nazis. In view of Codreanu's pronounced pro-Axis foreign-policy position, this is not entirely surprising. This view of the Legion as a Nazi 'fifth-column' was, as we have seen, perpetuated during Maniu's trial and in subsequent

¹¹³ Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 4, p. 216, 5 April 1938.

¹¹⁴ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 1/1938, pp. 146-7, C. D., 7 April 1938.

¹¹⁵ Nedelcu, *De la restaurație*, p. 374.

¹¹⁶ Călinescu, *Însemnări zilnice*, p. 378, 14 February 1938.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 383-4, 12-13 March 1938.

communist historiography.¹¹⁸ Armin Heinen's history of the movement, based upon German archival sources, proves, however, that German support for the Legion before the late 1930s has been greatly exaggerated.¹¹⁹ Ironically, it was only after Codreanu's murder in November 1938, and the flight of many of his followers into exile in Germany, that the movement became heavily influenced by the Nazis. Even then, the Germans regarded the authoritarian and increasingly pro-German King Carol as the best guarantor of their interests in Romania.¹²⁰

Codreanu was arrested on 16 April 1938 on the charge of insulting a royal minister, the historian Nicolae Iorga. Thousands of members of the legionary elite were also arrested and imprisoned. On 19 April, Codreanu received a six month sentence for damaging Iorga's honour. Allegations of German support were, however, central to Codreanu's second trial, held between 23 and 27 May before a military court in Bucharest. He was accused of having formed a paramilitary organization in order to 'overthrow the existing social order' and having 'accepted foreign funds and entered into relations abroad' to that end. Codreanu was also accused of having written to Hitler in 1935 stating his wish to carry out a National Socialist revolution in Romania with German support. On 27 May, he was sentenced to ten years' hard labour.¹²¹

Maniu's biographer, Apostol Stan, has sought to play down Maniu's role as a defence witness in Codreanu's trial.¹²² Maniu was, however, clearly an important witness, pleading in Codreanu's favour and confirming that he did not believe

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Mihai Fătu and Ion Spălățelu, *Garda de Fier. Organizație teroristă de tip fascist*, Bucharest, 1980, p. 102.

¹¹⁹ Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael"*, pp. 322-45.

¹²⁰ Rebecca Haynes, 'Germany and the Establishment of the National Legionary State, September 1940', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 77, nr 4, October 1999, pp. 700-25.

¹²¹ Rebecca Haynes, *Romanian policy towards Germany, 1936-1940*, Basingstoke and London, 2000, p. 51.

¹²² Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu*, pp. 337-8.

Codreanu had been planning to overthrow the state. Furthermore, Maniu's statements reveal much about his attitude towards Codreanu, as well as the similarities and differences in their political positions.¹²³ During the trial, Maniu explained to the court why he had concluded the electoral pact with Codreanu in 1937. He confirmed that the ideology of the National Peasant Party and that of the Legion were 'categorically opposed' since the Legion was anti-democratic and anti-semitic. Nevertheless, there had been both a personal and political motive for his collaboration with Codreanu. Although Maniu had not known Codreanu personally until the conclusion of the pact, he had been following his career and activities very closely for some time. Maniu told the court that he had discovered in Codreanu 'sincerity in his actions, consistency and perseverance, qualities rarely found in our political life and amongst its leaders'.¹²⁴ Moving to the political motive behind the pact, Maniu explained that the Tătărescu government had been attacking not only 'the spirit of the constitution', but also what he referred to as 'the national dignity'. 'Codreanu and I', he explained, 'believe that respect for national dignity is necessary for a healthy national and state life'. Both he and Codreanu were agreed that 'the national idea is a vital factor in the advancement of a nation' and that it was the duty of the state to advance the position of the Romanian people. Although Maniu rejected Codreanu's anti-semitism, he concluded that with regard to the national issue, 'the fundamental idea is identical'.¹²⁵ The two were, moreover, agreed on the need for a return to Christian morality and 'the correct rules of private and public life' which were necessary for national well-being. 'For this reason', Maniu asserted, 'we were in

¹²³ For this, and what follows, see Kurt W. Treptow and Gheorghe Buzatu (eds), *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu în fața istoriei, vol 1, 'Procesul' lui Corneliu Zelea Codreanu*, Iași, 1994, pp. 108-11.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

agreement in an attempt to impose in private, social and public life, correctness, honour and Christian morality ...'.¹²⁶

Maniu's witness statement suggests that he saw the electoral pact, and his collaboration with Codreanu, as much more than a necessary evil. He identified with some of the Legion's core beliefs and admired aspects of Codreanu's character. Codreanu, after all, had begun his parliamentary career in 1931 on a platform of fighting political corruption, even before becoming an adversary of the king, the camarilla and the Tătărescu government and coming into direct contact with Maniu.¹²⁷ Codreanu personally apparently 'tried to lead a life of exemplary poverty, never setting foot in a cinema or tavern [and] insisted that legionaries must become a byword for correctness and sobriety'.¹²⁸ This this must have impressed the austere and somewhat puritanical Maniu, whose 'incorruptibility was in the sharpest possible contrast to the laxness and opportunism of Romanian public life'.¹²⁹ In his speech on resuming the presidency of the National Peasant Party in November 1937, Maniu suggested that part of the reason for the country's plight was because it had turned away from Christian morality and the church's commandments.¹³⁰ In the party's manifesto for the December 1937 elections, Christian morality was stressed, as well as the party's belief in 'truth, correctness and responsibility'.¹³¹

Maniu's statements during Codreanu's trial also make clear that he shared the latter's nationalist outlook. As Irina Livezeanu has written, 'the nation-building

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 109.

¹²⁷ Codreanu made his concern with political corruption apparent during his maiden speech in parliament: 'Cuvântare la mesaj Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in numele Gărzii de Fer', *Monitorul Oficial*, nr 14, 21 December 1931.

¹²⁸ Eugen Weber 'Romania', in Eugen Weber and Hans Rogger (eds), *The European Right: A Historical Profile*, Berkeley, 1965, pp. 501-73 (532).

¹²⁹ Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania*, p. 135.

¹³⁰ Isac (ed.), *Iuliu Maniu. Testament moral politic*, 'Speech on resuming the presidency of the party', pp. 165-73 (166).

¹³¹ Isac (ed.), *Iuliu Maniu. Testament moral politic*, 'National Peasant Party manifesto for the elections of December 1937', pp. 177-81 (180).

project ... was the declared goal of most mainstream politicians' in the interwar period.¹³² As a member of the Romanian National Party before the First World War Maniu had promoted the linguistic and political rights of the ethnic Romanians in Transylvania. In his famous speech given at Vințul de Jos in June 1936 in which he had condemned the camarilla and Madame Lupescu, Maniu stated that he was a democrat, but also 'a national democrat. I want a Romanian democracy'.¹³³ A number of other prominent members of the former National Party of Transylvania had gone on to become strident nationalists in inter-war Romania, including Octavian Goga and Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. Although Maniu categorically rejected the anti-semitism and anti-minority positions of Goga and Vaida-Voevod, the nationalist agenda of the National Peasant Party was greatly stressed during Maniu's presidency of the party. During his re-inauguration speech in November 1937, Maniu affirmed the national idea as being at the heart of the party's programme. While he strongly rejected anti-semitism, he nevertheless argued that the Romanian population needed to be raised to a higher political, social and economic level within the country and implied that it was the duty of the ethnic minorities to 'help the Romanian element'.¹³⁴

Maniu also shared with Codreanu concern for the country's small and impoverished working class. The Legionary Workers' Corps, first established in October 1936, was an important component of the Legionary movement. In his Vințul de Jos speech of June 1936, Maniu drew attention to the impoverishment of the workers, and that the fruits of their labours went into the hands of factory owners who were 'in large part of another nationality'. He stressed the need for large-scale social

¹³² Irina Livezeanu, 'Fascists and Conservatives in Romania: Two Generations of Nationalists' in Martin Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe*, London, 1990, pp. 218-40 (236).

¹³³ *Discursul domnului Iuliu Maniu rostit la Vințul de Jos în ziua 28 Iunie 1936*, pp. 30-1.

¹³⁴ Isac (ed.), *Iuliu Maniu. Testament moral politic*, 'Speech on resuming the presidency of the party', pp. 165-73 (170).

and economic reform in Romania and that parts of industry should be controlled by the state.¹³⁵ Following his conclusion of the ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ with Codreanu on 10 February 1938, Maniu informed his followers that he had told Codreanu that if the Legion could modify its pro-Axis foreign policy position and anti-minority programme, closer collaboration between the National Peasant Party and the Legionary movement would be possible ‘especially as there are certain demands with regard to the working masses which are common to both groups’.¹³⁶

1938: Maniu and the Legion during Codreanu’s imprisonment.

Given the degree of sympathy between Maniu and Codreanu, it is not surprising that Maniu and his followers continued to have links with the movement during Codreanu’s imprisonment. Indeed, in June 1938, the police reported that Aurel Dobrescu, one of the National Peasant Party leaders, had been circulating Maniu’s statement made at Codreanu’s trial amongst National Peasantists and legionaries.¹³⁷ This was clearly an attempt to ensure that links between the two movements were maintained despite the imprisonment of Codreanu. During the following months, legionary leaders began circulating the rumour that Maniu and Alexandru Vaida-Voevod would soon be reconciled and take action to improve the Legion’s situation. Maniu’s statements during Codreanu’s trial were also being disseminated by the legionaries, for example, in the villages around Timișoara in the Banat. The

¹³⁵ *Discursul domnului Iuliu Maniu rostit la Vințul de Jos în ziua 28 Iunie 1936*, pp. 28-36, (28).

¹³⁶ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 19/1938, p. 90. Detective Corp, Section I-a, nr 2, 18 February 1938.

¹³⁷ Arh. Naț., Direcția Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 121/1938, p. 47, Detective Corp, Section I-a, nr 3, 17 June 1938.

legionaries apparently hoped for the help of the National Peasant Party in a possible coup d'état against the royal dictatorship.¹³⁸

By the autumn of 1938, Maniu and the legionaries were intensifying their links in order to organize a broadly based opposition to the royal regime. In particular, Maniu's relations with legionaries from Transylvania were becoming especially close. In mid-October, police reported that Transylvanian legionaries were preparing public opinion for 'decisive action'. This was to begin on 1 December with legionaries participating in a rally in Alba-Iulia in Transylvania which was being organized by Maniu and his followers.¹³⁹ On 1 November, a meeting took place in Bucharest between Virgil Solomon, one of Maniu's supporters, and student legionaries from Transylvania. Solomon confirmed that throughout the coming weeks Maniu would be preparing public opinion for the mass-meeting to be held in Alba-Iulia. Maniu expected the legionaries to support him in this task.¹⁴⁰ A few days later, the police reported that young legionary intellectuals were strengthening their links with Maniu's younger followers in Bucharest through permanent contacts and regular exchange of views.¹⁴¹

At the same time, Maniu began arguing for the release of Codreanu and the other imprisoned legionaries. In October 1938, Maniu informed the palace that the *sine qua non* of any future National Peasant Party collaboration with a new democratic government would be a review of Codreanu's trial. Maniu apparently regarded the trial as 'the greatest disgrace and political monstrosity' and believed it

¹³⁸ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 23/1938, p. 159, Detective Corp, Section I-a, nr 4, 28 August 1938; *ibid.*, p. 211, Directorate General of the Police, Regional Inspectorate of the Police, Timișoara, nr 542, 8 September 1938.

¹³⁹ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 27/1938, pp. 129-30, Detective Corp, Group I-a, nr 1, 16 October 1938.

¹⁴⁰ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 35/1938, p. 282, Detective Corp, Group I-a, nr 9, 4 November 1938.

¹⁴¹ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 6/1930 (sic), p. 114, Detective Corp, Group I-a, nr 4, 7 November 1938.

would have ‘incalculable consequences in this country ...’. He also demanded that all other imprisoned legionaries should be released.¹⁴² A month later, Argetoianu recorded in his diary that a quarrel had broken out between Maniu, who wished to start campaign to free all the imprisoned legionaries, and Ion Mihalache, who regarded the legionaries as enemies.¹⁴³

Maniu’s efforts were to be of no avail, for on the night of 29/30 November 1938, Codreanu, together with thirteen other legionaries, was murdered by the authorities. During Carol’s state visit to Britain, France and Germany, a number of legionary bombings and anti-semitic attacks took place in Romania. Consequently, Carol gave his consent to Călinescu’s long-held plan to eliminate Codreanu once and for all.¹⁴⁴ Maniu’s reaction to news of the murders was one of outrage. He sent a letter to Carol in which he described the royal regime as ‘a murderous government’ and demanded the punishment of the culprits.¹⁴⁵ He also made a number of denunciations of the regime to the press, describing what he called ‘the massacre’ of Codreanu and his comrades as a ‘criminal action’ by the government to a Budapest newspaper.¹⁴⁶ He also condemned the Orthodox Patriarch, the nominal head of the royal government, in front of a group of journalists for having attended the Moța and Marin funeral in February 1937, but now allowing Codreanu and the thirteen legionaries to be buried

¹⁴² Arh. Naț., Direcție Generală a Poliției, dosar 121/1938, pp. 57-60 (58-9), General Directorate of Police, 22 October 1938, nr 1945, conf.

¹⁴³ Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 5, 1 July – 31 December 1938, Bucharest, 2002, p. 230, 23 November 1938.

¹⁴⁴ It seems that Carol may have been planning to assassinate Maniu, as well as Codreanu, in November 1938. On this, see Călinescu, *Însemnări zilnice*, p. 401, 13 November 1938 and Șerban Mîlcoveanu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu altceva decât Horia Sima*, vol. 1, p. 134.

¹⁴⁵ Boilă, *Aminitiri*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁶ Arh. Naț., Direcție Generală a Poliției, dosar nr 121/1938, pp. 67-8, General Directorate of Police, nr 2478, conf., 24 December 1938.

without a religious service and cracking down on the rest of the Legionary movement.¹⁴⁷

Following Codreanu's death, and the regime's renewed suppression of the movement, most of the Legion's leadership, including Horia Sima, the movement's new leader, fled into exile in Germany. This did not, however, end Maniu's links with the legionaries who remained in Romania, especially in Transylvania. In December 1938, the police reported that Maniu had given his followers in Transylvania permission to bring legionaries into the National Peasant Party.¹⁴⁸ This, of course, was in conformity with Codreanu's known desire for the legionaries to follow Maniu's advice in the event of his untimely death.

Conclusion

Not unnaturally, interwar National Peasant Party politicians who survived into the post-communist era have sought to play down Iuliu Maniu's links with the now utterly discredited Legion. According to Corneliu Copoșu, a relative of Maniu who became his political secretary and was interviewed in 1991, Maniu's political links with Codreanu and the Legion went no further than the signing of the 1937 election pact to prevent electoral fraud. Copoșu further remarked that Maniu maintained good relations with leaders of all the political parties.¹⁴⁹ It is, of course, undoubtedly true that Maniu, as a senior Romanian politician, would have retained close links with all important politicians. This was especially true in his fight against the dictatorial tendencies of the Tătărescu government and the subsequent royal dictatorship. In a

¹⁴⁷ Arh. Naț., Ministerul de Interne, Diverse, dosar nr 33/1938, pp. 28-31, Iuliu Maniu, president of the National Peasant Party, to a group of journalists on the occasion of a declaration of a new state of emergency.

¹⁴⁸ Arimia, Ardeleanu, Cebuc (eds), *Istoria Partidul Național Țărănesc. Documente 1926-1947*, p. 188, doc. 40, 9 December 1938, Security police note referring to relations between the National Peasant Party and the Guardist movement after the assassination of Corneliu Codreanu.

¹⁴⁹ Corneliu Coposu, *Dialoguri cu Vartan Arachelian*, no place of publication, no date, pp. 42-4.

meeting with politicians of other parties in October 1938, convened to make a joint demand to the king for a return to constitutional democracy, Maniu declared that ‘I am not a communist, social democrat or guardist [i.e. legionary]. I am a National Peasantist with democratic convictions and am against any dictatorship. I do not want a communist or guardist dictatorship. But I will work with guardists, communists, or social-democrats to concentrate all forces against dictatorship’.¹⁵⁰

It seems, however, that there was more than mere pragmatism in his relations with Codreanu and the Legionary movement. As we have seen, the two men shared a common Romanian nationalism and belief in Christian morality and the need to clean up the corruption which appeared to be endemic in Romanian political life. They regarded the National Liberal Party, the royal regime, and King Carol as working against the true interests of the Romanian people and as essentially immoral.

Moreover, Maniu seems to have found much to admire in Codreanu’s character, as he revealed in his statement as a defence witness in Codreanu’s trial in 1938. He regarded Codreanu’s moral probity to be in stark contrast to that of the majority of Romanian politicians and public figures. Thus, as the Transylvanian-born legionary Horațiu Comaniciu writes, for both Maniu and Codreanu, the 1937 electoral pact ‘was not just a passing measure. It was more profound than that’. Comaniciu, furthermore, describes Maniu as having a ‘parental concern’ for the Legionary movement.¹⁵¹

To return to the title of this article, therefore, Maniu and Codreanu were certainly not ‘reluctant allies’. Moreover, while Maniu’s belief in democracy was at

¹⁵⁰ Arimia, Ardeleanu, Cebuc (eds), *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc. Documente 1926-1947*, pp. 185-88 (187), doc. 39, 13 October 1938, Note by the security services regarding a meeting between Iuliu Maniu and leaders of some democratic organizations regarding measures to be taken regarding elections, the situation of the country and attitudes towards politics.

¹⁵¹ Horațiu Comaniciu, *In lupta neamului (Amintiri)*, *Consiliul Național Român*, no place of publication, no date, pp. (118, 294). From 1942, Comaniciu maintained direct links with Maniu and was responsible for the appeal of 26 August 1944 on behalf of the Legionary high command in Romania, encouraging legionaries to enter the National Peasant Party.

odds with Codreanu's anti-democratic political position, it seems that Maniu believed that the legionaries were capable of being brought into mainstream, constructive politics. On 15 December 1938, Maniu issued a memorandum to the royal government outlining the plight of the country under the royal dictatorship. The memo condemned one of the arguments used by the government to justify the royal dictatorship i.e. the danger to the country posed by the Legionary movement. Maniu argued that it was the repression of the Legion by the Tătărescu government and the creation of the Goga government which had led the legionaries to 'objectionable actions'. The electoral pact with the Legion was 'an act of great political foresight' which helped to 'prove that the Legionary movement could be channelled in the direction of sincere political work'.¹⁵² The strengthening of links between Maniu and the movement in 1938, especially in his native Transylvania, eventually led to Maniu's contacts with the legionary Horațiu Comaniciu from 1943 and the moves to bring elements within the Legionary movement into the National Peasant Party in the following year.¹⁵³ It could perhaps be argued that Maniu was naïve in his belief that the Legion could be tamed and channelled onto a fully democratic path.¹⁵⁴ The violent history of the National Legionary State between 1940 and 1941 would certainly appear to suggest this, although by then most of the movement's senior figures from the 1930s were dead. Thus, we are either forced to condemn Maniu for political naivety in his dealings with Codreanu and his colleagues, or we are left to

¹⁵² Cornel Grad, Doru E. Goron (eds), 'Documenta. Transilvania la 20 de ani după unire: Memorandumul românilor din Ardeal, Banat, Crișana, Satu Mare, Maramureș, prezentat de frunțașii P.N.Ț. regelui Carol al II-lea (15 decembrie 1938)', *Limes: Revistă trimestrială de cultură a Sălajului*, vol. 2, nr 1-2 (5-6), 1999, pp. 9-29, (20). The principal authors of the memorandum were Maniu and Mihai Popovici.

¹⁵³ Space has not allowed for a discussion of Maniu's links with the movement from 1938 onwards, but I plan to address this in a future article.

¹⁵⁴ Șerban Ghica, a former aide to Iuliu Maniu, confirms that Maniu admired Codreanu and that Maniu hoped to bring the legionaries towards a commitment to democracy. My thanks to Mr Ghica for allowing me to interview him on 27 September 2002.

ponder Maniu's comment, made at the meeting with political leaders on 13 October 1938, that the Legionary movement contained within it 'honourable elements'.¹⁵⁵

To this extent, it could be argued that there is an element of truth in the accusations made by Maniu's prosecutors during his trial in 1947 and in the subsequent communist historiography. Maniu certainly did have extensive links with Codreanu and the legionaries from the mid-1930s onwards. The communists, however, entirely failed to understand both Maniu's rationale and motives for good relations with Codreanu and the genuine popularity of the Legionary movement in 1930s Romania.

¹⁵⁵ Arimia, Ardeleanu, Cebuc (eds), *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc. Documente 1926-1947*, pp. 185-88 (187), doc. 39, 13 October 1938, Note by the security services regarding a meeting between Iuliu Maniu and leaders of some democratic organizations regarding measures to be taken regarding elections, the situation of the country and attitudes towards politics.