

**Project PN-II-RU-PD-2011-3-0014.**

**“The Intellectual Origins of anti-Semitism. Cultural Elements and Symbolic Representations in Interwar Romania”.**

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## **Abstract**

### *Scientific context and motivation*

In the interwar period, the Romanian nationalism was too many times confronted with the anti-Semitism. The “high” Romanian culture has been characterized by a powerful nationalist trend, with powerful xenophobia and anti-Semitic accents, which might not be reflected at the masses level. Nicolae Iorga, Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran – to remember only the elites – have all subscribed to different extents to the same nationalist trend, investing some radical political ideas with prestige and resistance in time. Following our previous research (i.e. doctoral thesis on “Mircea Eliade and the Romanian Right Extreme”), the present project intends to analyze the socio-historical, philosophical, cultural and symbolic aspects (and their representations: articles, books, radio or political discourses) of the “Jewish problem” in the interwar Romania, focusing especially on the study of the way in which this subject was understood and exploited by the elite members of the 1927 generation.

The Jewish problem in interwar Romania represented in the last period a subject which interested equally the historians, philosophers and theologians; numerous papers on this theme were published both in Romania and abroad. Also, there were organized round tables, symposiums and conferences on the subject of “the Jewish problem” and the involvement of some important Romanian intellectuals, elite members of the 1927 generation, in the elaboration of the obviously anti-Semite political right extreme movements ideology.

Among the most important volumes on this subject:

1. *Problema evreiască*, Volume edited by Fundația Culturală Ideea Europeană, Bucharest, 2006.

2. Ancel, Jean, *Problema evreiască în România 1933-1944*, vol.I-II/1-2, Bucharest, Hasefer, 2002-2003.
3. Ancel, Jean, *Documents concerning the fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust*, I-XII, New York, 1985-1986.
4. Ancel, Jean, *Bibliography of the Jews in Romania*, Tel-Aviv, 1991.
5. Butnaru, I. C., *The Silent Holocaust: Romania and its Jews*. New York, Greenwood, 1992.
6. Dorian, Emil, *Jurnal în vremuri de prigoană 1937-1944*, Bucharest, Hasefer, 1996.
7. Iancu, Carol, *Evreii din România (1866-1919)*, Bucharest, 1996.
8. Iancu, Carol, *Evreii din România de la emancipare la marginalizare. 1919-1938*, Bucharest, 2000.
9. Hancu, Dumitru, *Mărturii. „Chestiunea evreiască”*, Bucharest, 1996.
10. Kuller, Hary, *Opt studii despre istoria evreilor din România*, Bucharest, 1997.
11. Mendelsohn, Ezra, *The Jews of East central Europe between the two world wars*, Bloomington, 1983.
12. Melzer, Emanuel, *No way out. 1935-1939*, Cincinnati, 1997.
13. Neumann, Victor, *Istoria evreilor din România*, Timișoara, 1996.
14. Oișteanu, Andrei, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română*, Bucharest, 2001.
15. Voicu, George, *Teme antisemite în discursul politic românesc*, Bucharest, Ars Docendi, 2002.
16. Volovici, Leon, *Ideologia naționalistă și «problema evreiască» în România anilor '30*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995.

Starting from these (and other) sources, the intended research is interdisciplinary, covering the historical, philosophical, cultural and theological registers, and detecting the connection between them. We will follow the main stages of the legionary movement evolution (and its origins), insisting upon the anti-Semite themes present in the Romanian political-historical, philosophical or theological discourse, and performing at the same time a parallel analysis with this kind of movements in Europe (especially Germany's case and Martin Heidegger's position in the doctrine of Nazism). By all these, the project follows our PhD thesis (Mircea Eliade and the Romanian Right Extreme) and extends it with references to the sensible problem of anti-Semitism and also completes it, by bringing new information about the political implication of the interwar elites. Our studies on this theme – book *Mircea Eliade. Anii tulburi. 1932-1938*, Bucharest, EuroPress Group (doctoral thesis published in 2007) and several articles, among them

“Naționalismul lui Eliade sau ce înseamnă «să fii antisemit»”, in *Problema evreiască*, edited by Aura Christi, Fundația Culturală Ideea Europeană, 2006; “The Ideology of the Archangel Michael Legion and Mircea Eliade’s Political Views in Interwar Romania”, *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2008; “Eliade’s Romanian Past: Religion and Politics”, *Theory in Action. Journal of the Transformative Studies Institute*, Volume 3, No. 1, 2010, NJ, USA – will serve as a starting point and will be completed by this research.

Given the significance of the theme and the interest this has in the cultural milieus in Romania and the entire Europe, the proposed project will provide important data referring to the perception of this delicate problem, and the results acquired as a result of the proposed interdisciplinary research will contribute to the making of a resolute decision regarding the involvement of the Romanian intellectuals in the interwar period in the political right (extreme) movement and in the disputes on the “Jewish problem”. In certain cases, these will lead to the clarification of some intellectuals’ position towards this matter (Eliade, Cioran, Heidegger).

From the very beginning, we have to mention that political components from the thinking of elites of 1927 generation can’t be isolated from the philosophy of history, culture or the theme of “Românism” (i.e. “Romanianism”, many times confounded with “Ortodoxism”), which was the most important element in crystallizing a case against Jews. For this, we have in mind different sources, from National Archives (in Romania and Europe) to personal archives (containing inedited correspondence, unpublished articles, manuscripts) or special collections (like Eliade Special Collection from Regenstein Library, Chicago). Also, in order to obtain a full view of this contested subject, we intend to cover the articles signed by the elites of interwar Romanian culture in different newspapers and the memorialistic writings of that period and to compare those with similar trends and writings from Germany, to see how much and to what extent German model (its philosophical and political components) was assimilated in interwar Romania. From all these we can identify new aspects of the elite’s role in the rise of Romanian anti-Semitism. Our analyze will focus on comparison between the main trends in the epoch, and will follow the pattern opened by the above mentioned research in the area. The results of this study will materialize in edited volumes and anthologies of articles which will complete the actual image on this subject and will also open new problems.

The Jewish danger the Romanian intellectuals were writing about has become a leitmotiv of several public discourses. The Romanian elites have also assumed a national pedagogical role, and the political reflexes of such a gesture were to be expected. These were plenary manifested during the interwar period, in the political right extreme movements (culminating with the Legionary Movement) and then, in net anti-democratic political regimes (the Antonescu regime). The political solutions intended for the solving of the “Jewish problem” (withdrawal of the Romanian citizenship and of the civil and political rights, the institution of a *numerus clausus* or *numerus nullus*, “Romanization” of institutions and of the economy, the banishment of the Jews from Romania etc.) have finally become a political reality. For the achievement of such solutions, many outstanding intellectuals of the period had a significant role. The motivation for this proposed project lies in identifying and explaining the role of the elites in promoting and justification of the global anti-Semitism of Romanian interwar society.

### ***Objectives***

Focusing on intellectual elites and their political implication and role in promoting the anti-Semitism in interwar Romania, the main objectives of the project are the following:

General Topics for analysis:

- *The elites and the nationalism.* The implication of elites in ideology of political parties and their importance for disseminating the ideas.
- *The historical-political aspects of the “Jewish problem” in the interwar Romania;*
- *The philosophical-moral aspects and the treatment of the anti-Semitism problem;* the problem of the Orthodoxy and its role in defining the right movements.
- *The right extreme movements’ ideology* and the relationships between the intellectuals’ class and the politicians’ class. Cultural elements and symbolic representations of concepts used.
- *The role of the Romanian Orthodox Church* in this problem. The “Românism” (Romanianism) assumed as the most important element for a national identity.
- *Identity politics in interwar Romania* and a comparison with Germany’s Nazism
- *Romanian elites* (philosophers, historians, writers, theologians) drawn into politics and *their role in spreading the anti-Semite plague.*

- The extent to which the political decisions and the involvement of the intellectuals in the interwar Romania have affected the carrier and posterity. Study case: Eliade, Cioran and Romanian Right Extreme, plus a comparison with Heidegger and his implication in Nazism.

Specific Topics for analysis:

- The general problem of the relative *Jewish "over-schooling"*. A comparative overview of the development of educational investments of Jews and non Jews in secondary and higher education;
- *The impact of the educational market*: number and accessibility of schools of different levels for Jews and non Jews, preferential or discriminative admission policies of educational authorities, size, quality and outreach of Jewish school networks etc. (with reference to gender differences, cultural background, urbanisation, residential and regional origins and ties etc);
- *Differential options for educational tracks and study branches* (medicine, law, arts and sciences, technical, artistic and other vocational studies) and/or degrees, especially in higher education (doctorate, professional degrees);
- *Qualitative educational inequalities and discrepancies* between Jews and non Jews in their schooling trajectories: differences of academic performance, degrees and qualifications acquired, marks obtained in different study subjects.
- Jews and non Jews as affected by *public policies of education* and intellectual promotion: *numerus clausus*, segregation and discrimination in the educational market, differential availability of grants, scholarships or academic positions etc., variation of tuition fees, schooling facilities or disabilities grounded in religious practice (like the respect of Shabbat).
- *Mircea Eliade's political involvement* (as the chief of 1927 generation) and its importance in his later studies. We will insist especially on Mircea Eliade's Romanian past and we will analyze his intellectual evolution during the period 1934-1938, focusing especially on the two constants which have marked his religious and political development.

From the existing sources, we can sustain the role of elite in preparing and influencing the young generation in direction of extreme right ideology and anti-Semitism. Anyway, having in mind these objectives and analyzing the interwar newspapers, memoirs and correspondence, and also external sources (like archives or special collections), the proposed project intends to present a complete image of anti-Semite trends and the most important cultural elements and symbolic representations of the interwar elite's writings.

### *Career development*

Following our previous research (i.e. doctoral thesis on Mircea Eliade and the Romanian Right Extreme), the present project intends to analyze the socio-historical, philosophical, cultural and symbolic aspects (and their representations) of the “Jewish problem” in interwar Romania. We will focus especially on the elite members of the 1927 generation.

This is a multi-disciplinary venture based on survey methods, mobilizing methods and analytical schemes of comparative historical sociology of elites, cultural history and anthropology.

We will focus on existing sources (newspapers from interwar period and volumes published on this theme, including our previous research), but will also extend the research in National Archives (in Romania and Europe) or special collections (like Eliade Collection from Chicago) or inedited sources (correspondence, memoirs, etc.) in order to obtain an empirical study of intellectually elite groups. The focus of the study concerns the nature of anti-Semite elite groups at large, their alterations and transmutations as social clusters – size, professional composition, public standing and behavior –, their recruitment or selection in social and political space, their formation path in terms of schooling, advanced learning and careers, finally their public activities, especially the forms of creativity and performances they have displayed (be it intellectual, socio-political, scientific, artistic, journalistic or other). For this we will resort to the nominative identification of members of major anti-Semite elite groups – starting with those having gained certified reputation.

Our previous researches focused especially on Mircea Eliade and his political involvement. While studying Eliade, we discovered that he was not the only one involved in interwar politics and by this project we intend to enlarge the theme and to see how symbolic representations used by Eliade in his legionary articles were, in fact, borrowed from other elites, which had an important role in modeling the young interwar generation. We’ll have in mind the intellectual origins of these political ideas and their role in propagating the anti-Semitism. Specific cultural elements (like Orthodoxy or “Românism” or “new man” or exaltation of nationalism), their symbolic representations (the way in which all these concepts were camouflaged in cultural, political, ecclesiastic or literary discourses) and their historical-philosophical and cultural significance would be traced and then compared with similar manifestations from interwar Europe (especially with Heidegger’s involvement in Nazism).

Working on this project, we can gain knowledge and necessary experience and we can develop an independent research career and, of course, because of its interdisciplinary approach (from philosophy and history to political, religious and social representations) we can later extend the topic to identity politics and anti-Semitism in interwar Europe. The results of this project can be materialized in critical volumes (authored or edited), anthologies of articles, conferences (national and international).

### ***Impact, relevance and applications***

Beyond Romanian cultural tradition, the anti-Semite discourse was common in interwar Europe. More than that, many of Romanian expressions used to justify the preference for anti-Semite discourse were European. The confluences of ideas and the differentiations between academic and political levels in approaching the symbolism of anti-Semitism offer an important view on this subject and accentuate the role of elites in promoting these ideas (since the elite groups had access to latest studies and currents in epoch). But, with all these external influences, the Romanian anti-Semitism and the extreme right movement had very important and unique elements and these can be found in elite's discourses.

The expected impact of the proposed project is huge considering only the fact that many contemporary intellectuals, both in Romania and abroad, are interested in this subject – cultural elements and symbolic representations in Romania's interwar anti-Semitism – in a search for an objective answer about anti-Semite opinions of the elite groups.

### ***Results – Edited volumes***

**1. *Mircea Eliade between History of Religions and the Fall into History***, Edited by Mihaela Gligor, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012, 204 p., ISBN: 978-973-595-467-3.

**2. *Theodor Lavi în corespondență***, Edited by Mihaela Gligor and Miriam Caloianu, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012, 500 p., ISBN: 978-973-595-477-2.

**3. *Postlegomena la Felix Culpa. Mircea Eliade, evreii și antisemitismul, Vol. 1***, Edited by Mihaela Gligor and Liviu Bordaș, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012, ISBN: 978-973-595-489-5.

**4. *Postlegomena la Felix Culpa. Mircea Eliade, evreii și antisemitismul, Vol. 2***, Edited by Mihaela Gligor and Liviu Bordaș, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2013.