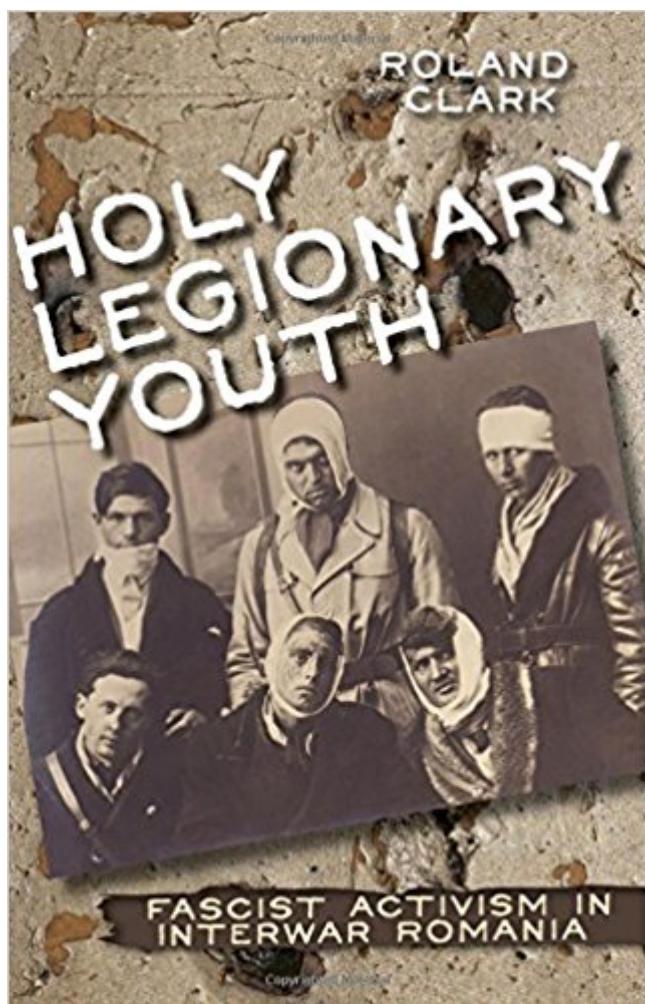


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# Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism In Interwar Romania



## Synopsis

Founded in 1927, Romania's Legion of the Archangel Michael was one of Europe's largest and longest-lived fascist social movements. In *Holy Legionary Youth*, Roland Clark draws on oral histories, memoirs, and substantial research in the archives of the Romanian secret police to provide the most comprehensive account of the Legion in English to date. Clark approaches Romanian fascism by asking what membership in the Legion meant to young Romanian men and women. Viewing fascism "from below," as a social category that had practical consequences for those who embraced it, he shows how the personal significance of fascism emerged out of Legionaries' interactions with each other, the state, other political parties, families and friends, and fascist groups abroad. Official repression, fascist spectacle, and the frequency and nature of legionary activities changed a person's everyday activities and relationships in profound ways. Clark's sweeping history traces fascist organizing in interwar Romania to nineteenth-century grassroots nationalist movements that demanded political independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It also shows how closely the movement was associated with the Romanian Orthodox Church and how the uniforms, marches, and rituals were inspired by the muscular, martial aesthetic of fascism elsewhere in Europe. Although antisemitism was a key feature of official fascist ideology, state violence against Legionaries rather than the extensive fascist violence against Jews had a far greater impact on how Romanians viewed the movement and their role in it. Approaching fascism in interwar Romania as an everyday practice, *Holy Legionary Youth* offers a new perspective on European fascism, highlighting how ordinary people "performed" fascism by working together to promote a unique and totalizing social identity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Roland Clark's *Holy Legionary Youth* is a truly remarkable book, one that brings the historiography of Romania's most prominent fascist movement, known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael or the Iron Guard, onto a new and higher stage. The book offers fascinating insights into the intricate connections between Romanian traditional religiosity and Legionary fascism. It was not only through the church-sanctioned antisemitism and sporadic participation of priests and ecclesiastical hierarchs in the movement that Legionarism was strengthened. •Vladimir Solonari,

H-Romania (March 2016) "A relevant contribution to the field of fascist studies, *Holy Legionary Youth* opens new research avenues for students of European Fascism and Eastern European history.

Highly interdisciplinary, analytically comprehensive, and informed by a prodigious array of both primary sources and secondary literature, Clark's book is a much-awaited reading for researchers, university professors, and students alike. It will serve as a useful teaching tool for undergraduate and graduate classes on the interwar history of Eastern Europe, the genesis of interwar anti-Semitism, and everyday life under totalitarian regimes." •Ionut Biliuta, Hungarian Historical Review (2016) "Establishing how the Legionary elite and their supporters lived, what they thought, and what were their shared attitudes towards the future of Romania, Clark substantially advances the field of European and Romanian studies of fascism. As such, there is no doubt that this study will provide a stimulus for future debate and research." -- Marius Turda, Slavic Review (Fall 2016)

"*Holy Legionary Youth* traces the origins and development of the Legion of the Archangel Michael in Romania, one of the largest and most enduring fascist movements in interwar Europe. Roland Clark has used voluminous new material from Romanian archives and libraries, including rare books and

complete runs of interwar newspapers, unpublished manuscripts and documents, and transcripts of interviews carried out with eyewitnesses to the events under consideration. Of particular importance are the police files in the Romanian national archives, which represent an unparalleled source for the history of the legionary movement." •Dennis Deletant, Visiting Ion Ratiu Professor of Romanian Studies, Georgetown University, author of *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-1944*

"In the original, intelligent, and well-researched *Holy Legionary Youth*, Roland Clark reminds us that fascism in interwar Romania was remarkable in several respects.

Using memoirs, oral histories, and most crucially, a truly impressive amount of research into Romanian police files, Clark gives us a portrait of the Legion of the Archangel Michael as a social

movement that mobilized activists, unleashed their energies, and shaped the understanding that they had of themselves. By joining the Legion and embracing its causes, a generation of Romanian youth came to know themselves as political actors, able through their words and deeds to shape the direction of Romanian society in ways that continue to reverberate even today. This exciting book is the richest study we have of Romanian fascism."•Paul Hanebrink, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, author of *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944*

Roland Clark is Assistant Professor of Modern European History at Eastern Connecticut State University. He is the translator of *The Holy Trinity: In the Beginning there was Love* by Dumitru Stăniloae.

This volume is a masterpiece of research and exposition on a subject that has too often been treated with bias from one opposing side or the other (i.e., the Legion or the Jews). I would give it five stars except for what I consider a strange lack of attention to the man who later became a world-renowned historian of religions and novelist, Mircea Eliade (see Index, p. 265, six references, plus p. 250). After his death, when his ties to the Legion first became widely known, his reputation suffered. Clark does not comment on this. Neither does he mention that Eliade was imprisoned with a number of Guardists and sympathizers for about five months in 1938 -- then released, and sent as an envoy to England in 1940, before the Guardists came to power. Etc., etc.

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