

# Transnationalizing fascist martyrs: an entangled history of the memorialization of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin in Spain and Romania, 1937–41\*

Francesco Zavatti 

*Södertörn University, Sweden*

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## Abstract

This article analyses the memorialization of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin, two Romanian Legionary movement volunteers who died while fighting for Franco in the Spanish Civil War, as an entangled history of Romanian and Spanish fascisms. The commemoration practices and narratives recounted in the Spanish and Romanian newspapers and archival sources from the period 1937–41 show that commemorating foreign ideological peers and appropriating symbolic elements of foreign fascisms in order to memorialize fallen comrades served as resources for legitimizing the struggle against domestic competitors. Although the totalitarian ambitions of Spanish and Romanian fascists remained unfulfilled, the Spanish–Romanian entanglement contributed to consolidating Moța and Marin as martyrs of transnational fascism.

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From the interwar era onwards, fascist martyrdom had a transnational dimension. The constant circulation of ideas and practices and, more generally, the contacts, exchanges and common experiences between fascist entities in the interwar and war years made transnationalism an integral part of fascist political projects. This meant that fascist martyrs were commemorated across borders by fascist ideological peers. As this article demonstrates, the 1920s and 1930s, with the sacralization of Italian Fascists and Nazis killed abroad in distinct and well-defined pantheons of commemoration, laid the foundation for the process of transnationalizing fascist martyrs. With the Spanish Civil War, the process gained unprecedented power among the international forces that supported Franco, with the sacralization of fascist martyrs intersecting different political projects. During the Second World War, de-territorializing fascist martyrs and presenting them as heroes of a common fight became an established model. Transnationalizing martyrs aimed to showcase fascists' commitment to advancing a common mission on a continental scale, transfiguring each national fight into a shared European idea. This was done by adopting foreign martyrs into national pantheons of commemoration, by commemorating comrades fallen in foreign wars through shared rituals and by adopting foreign elements into domestic commemorative narratives. Yet for each fascist group involved, transnationalizing fascist martyrs had different meanings, reflected in the construction of the fallen and in the frequency and durability of their commemoration. By understanding the transnationalization of fascist martyrs as an entangled history between foreign peers, this article shows that the practice of sacralizing foreign martyrs was part

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of the transnational fascist phenomenon, which was characterized by synergies but also misunderstandings and diverging goals between groups across borders. Like transnational fascism, this process lay at the perilous crossroads between the competition of each group for domestic legitimacy against competing forces and international diplomacy, which determined the frequency and durability of the martyrs' memorialization. The process represented the first step towards the de-territorialization of fallen fascists that have been consolidated and proliferated as global icons of fascism from the post-war period to the present day.

The case study presented in the second part of the article focuses on the commemorations held in Romania and Spain for Ion Moța and Vasile Marin, two volunteers of the Romanian Legionary movement who died in early 1937 while fighting in the ranks of the Francoist forces. It illustrates an entangled history resulting from the tensions between the cross-border activism of Romanian and Spanish fascists and their struggle against their respective domestic competitors in the context of hybridizing rightist political projects. The activities and narratives employed to commemorate Moța and Marin transnationally are contextualized within the relationship between the Legionaries and their Spanish ideological peers, as it unfolded from their early meetings in November 1936 to the fall of the National Legionary State in January 1941.

The commemoration of fallen comrades was one of the strategies that fascist movements and regimes employed for sacralizing their politics and presenting fascism as a new civic religion.<sup>1</sup> Sacralizing politics through a vast repertoire of aesthetic rituals served to consolidate the fascist ranks as a charismatic community<sup>2</sup> and establish the legitimacy of fascism against other competing forces in the national political arena.<sup>3</sup> For those aims, memorializing comrades who had fallen in defence of the new civic religion was a powerful instrument. Making use of a religious concept already exploited by nineteenth-century Romantic nationalism, the fascists presented their fallen as martyrs. Appropriating and adapting the cult of the fallen of the First World War, the fascists honoured their martyrs through solemn and ritualistic funerals that mixed military, political and religious symbols, and through mediatized sacralized eulogies that underlined the national value of self-sacrifice for the fascist cause.<sup>4</sup> The martyrs were constructed as fervent believers that the salvation of the homeland was possible through commitment to the fascist cause. They were presented as exemplary 'new men' who, faced with the overwhelming forces of malignant enemies, had consciously chosen to sacrifice their lives to save the nation.<sup>5</sup> Their memory was kept alive year after year, symbolizing the communion of spirits that their sacrifice had established between the living and the fallen, in rituals and narratives that bound together the sorrow of the loss and the duty felt by the fascists with regard to their mission.<sup>6</sup>

Sacralizing fascist martyrs also had an international dimension. This has been shown in relation to the international ambitions of Italian Fascism. The commemorations held for Nicola Bonservizi, leader of the *Fasci Italiani all'Estero* in Paris, who was murdered in 1924, established the model for commemorating Italian Fascists killed abroad, with

<sup>1</sup> E. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996).

<sup>2</sup> A. Kallis, 'Fascism, "charisma", and "charismatisation": Weber's model of "charismatic domination" and interwar European fascism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion*, vii (2006), 25–43.

<sup>3</sup> G. Mosse, *La nazionalizzazione delle masse. Simbolismo politico e movimenti di massa in Germania (1815–1933)* (Bologna, 1991), pp. 293–306.

<sup>4</sup> G. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 182–3.

<sup>5</sup> J. Casquete, *El culto a los mártires nazis* (Madrid, 2020), pp. 238–309; and J. Casquete, 'Martyr construction and the politics of death in National Socialism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, x (2009), 265–83.

<sup>6</sup> J. W. Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990).

a funeral held in their place of residence, the return of their remains by train with considerable spectacle and a second funeral held in Italy. This ceremonial, prepared in detail for Bonservizi by Benito Mussolini, was institutionalized and codified by the Fascist regime for those in its ranks who were killed abroad, and it also survived the dismantling of the *Fasci Italiani all'Estero*.<sup>7</sup> As shown by a case study focused on the memorialization of two other Italian Fascist martyrs who died abroad, the foreign elements contributed to empowering the martyrological narrative of the Fascist regime, decoupling the idea of martyrdom from the nation state and aligning it to Fascist ideals, with a view to conquering the hearts and minds of the Italian diaspora.<sup>8</sup> Like Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany exploited on an international scale the potential offered by comrades who had fallen abroad. For example, the spectacular funeral held in 1936 for Wilhelm Gustloff, leader of the Nazi Party in Switzerland, involved a funerary train trip from Davos, where he had been shot by a Jewish student, to his hometown in Mecklenburg. Recent research has brought to light the media internationalization of the commemorations and the political turmoil that the German-Swiss relationship underwent afterwards, highlighting that Nazi propaganda attempted to exploit the death of Gustloff as a sacrificial act that could be honoured only by the establishment of good German-Swiss relations.<sup>9</sup> Evidently, the handling of fascist martyrs on an international scale was a sensitive matter for each fascism's sacralized politics, but also for their regimes' diplomacy. In a qualitative leap that took place two years after Gustloff's funeral and projected the National Socialist political struggle into the international arena, the Nazi regime commemorated with full honours Ernst vom Rath, a junior officer at the German embassy in Paris, who had been killed by a Jewish assailant. This was a way of justifying its antisemitism and persuading global audiences that the German population was united behind Adolf Hitler. A few hours after vom Rath's death, *Kristallnacht* started. Large notices reading 'Revenge for the murder of vom Rath' were left on burnt synagogues and Jewish shops by S.A. militants in civilian dress. After the funeral in Paris had put the French government in an uncomfortable position, vom Rath's remains were transported back to Germany on a funeral train. At the theatrical funeral, Joachim von Ribbentrop declared that 'International Jewry', by killing vom Rath, had declared war on Germany, and that Germany had accepted the challenge.<sup>10</sup> In the context of the German military expansion that followed, commemorating comrades who had fallen for the cause in the newly conquered territories served to impose National Socialism as the new civic religion and to symbolize the adherence of the local populations to it. In the context of the occupation of Austria, the Nazis sacralized the memory of those who had died for the cause in previous years. The thirteen S.S. murderers of Engelbert Dollfuss had been hanged and cremated in 1934 by the Austrian authorities. After the *Anschluss*, they were declared *Ostmärkischen Freiheitshelden*. On the anniversary of the homicide of Dollfuss, masses were celebrated in their honour, in the presence of Nazi hierarchs, and their memory was spatialized all over Austria.<sup>11</sup> In the context of wartime fascist military occupations of foreign countries and the consequent paramilitary resistance, foreigners were accepted as martyrs of National Socialism and Italian Fascism in order to showcase the unity between occupiers and

<sup>7</sup> L. de Caprariis, "'Fascism for export'? The rise and eclipse of the *Fasci Italiani all'Estero*", *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxxv (2000), 151–83, at pp. 63–4.

<sup>8</sup> A. King, 'The battle for influence: commemoration of transnational martyrs in the Italian diaspora of the U.S. under Fascism', *Memory Studies*, doi: 10.1177/1750698020988774 (2021).

<sup>9</sup> M. Gillibert, *La propagande nazie en Suisse. L'affaire Gustloff, 1936* (Lausanne, 2008), pp. 25–60.

<sup>10</sup> S. Koch, *Hitler's Pawn: The Boy Assassin and the Holocaust* (Berkeley, Calif., 2019).

<sup>11</sup> G. E. R. Gedy, *Fallen Bastions: The Central European Tragedy* (London, 1939), p. 323.

occupied. For example, in Denmark, 2,000 Danish volunteers of the Waffen-S.S. who had died on the Eastern Front were sacralized as Danish national heroes who had chosen to wear the Nazi uniform in order to protect their homeland. Their funerals and newspaper necrologies were a desperate attempt to improve the perception of the country's occupation<sup>12</sup> using a form of propaganda that Nazi Germany had established all over Europe. At the same time, the foreign collaborationist organizations' fallen were also sacralized as fascist martyrs, in an attempt to present those collaborationist organizations as legitimate political projects of the occupied countries. For example, in 1943 the Italian Fascists in Tirana organized a state funeral for Ndok Gjeloši, militant of the Albanian Fascist Party, who had fallen victim to one of the numerous attacks of the Albanian resistance.<sup>13</sup>

The international dimension of the commemoration of fascists killed abroad and of foreigners as fascist martyrs, in which each case had different meanings, ultimately reproduced and expanded the domestic sacralized politics of each fascism outside the borders of its home state. In addition to this international dimension, there was a transnational dimension to fascist martyrdom, specific to the dialogue that the various fascist entities had established between them. While the international dimension of fascism was characterized by a unidirectional process of knowledge production through propaganda, cultural diplomacy and state diplomacy, the encounters between fascists and the influence of political projects from different countries instead engendered open-ended processes in which ideas from each fascism were de-territorialized, appropriated and adapted by the other fascist movements. Transnationalizing fascism also applied to the domain of sacralized politics: each fascism appropriated and adapted narratives, aesthetics and liturgies of commemoration from its foreign peers in order to strengthen its own national project. As shown by Ángel Alcalde, since the early 1920s, Italian Fascism had been regarded with admiration at a European level for its capacity to appropriate the symbols, practices and rituals of First World War veterans, and for establishing the idea that Fascism was 'the archetypal expression of the veteran spirit'. Other European fascisms adapted this strategy to their local contexts, where this was possible.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the processes of appropriation of the ritualized cults of fascist martyrs emerge in analyses of fascist political religions crafted by fascist entities other than Italian Fascism and National Socialism in the 1920s and 1930s. This indicates that the transnational circulation of models and ideas is more visible in the fascisms that had not fulfilled their totalitarian projects. For example, in the 1930s, the Falange Española (F.E.) and other small fascist groups, such as the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (J.O.N.S.), sought popularity by adapting concepts and rituals from the successful models of Italian Fascism and National Socialism to the Spanish context.<sup>15</sup> The appropriation of the Italian Fascist cult of the fallen is visible in their activities. In 1934, the first year of activity of the F.E., fifteen Falangists fell, killed by enemy fire. The Falangist leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who saw in Mussolini a guide to redeploying the Fascist experience in Spain,<sup>16</sup> organized their public commemoration, adopting the Italian Fascist rite of calling out

<sup>12</sup> A. Marklund, 'Under the Danish Cross: flagging Danishness in the years around World War II', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, xxxviii (2013), 89–110.

<sup>13</sup> A. Basciani, 'Volante, Giuseppe', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, c (2020) <[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-volante\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-volante_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/)> [accessed 12 Jan. 2022].

<sup>14</sup> Á. Alcalde, *War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 54–112, 225–33, 274–7; quote from p. 277.

<sup>15</sup> Alcalde, *War Veterans*, pp. 218–20.

<sup>16</sup> I. Saz, *Fascismo y franquismo* (Barcelona, 2001), pp. 69–72.

the names of the fallen, publishing the funeral orations in Falangist propaganda and establishing an annual Day of the Fallen to honour their memory.<sup>17</sup> The foreign model of commemorating comrades was considered a powerful resource, and consequently it was quickly appropriated and adapted by an inept Spanish fascist movement in search of legitimization.

Moving our attention to the numerous fascisms established in the radical ideological laboratory of Central and Eastern Europe, where the influences of Italian Fascism and German Nazism were complementary to the reciprocal influences,<sup>18</sup> the cult of fascist martyrs developed a robust autochthonous character and peculiar features due to the systematic persecution to which fascists in the region were subjected by the rulers of their states. In the successor states of Austria-Hungary, where victimhood nationalism developed as a common post-war cultural phenomenon and a means of justifying the reclamation of lost territories and failed attempts at independence,<sup>19</sup> claims of self-martyrdom were a powerful instrument for establishing legitimacy in the political arena. For example, in the Polish domains of Eastern Galicia, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (O.U.N.), which co-operated with and was receptive to the ideas and practices of Italian Fascism,<sup>20</sup> attempted to humanize its fallen terrorists as martyrs at the hands of the Polish authorities. The main function of praising fallen O.U.N. comrades in articles, songs, poems and icons was to integrate violence into everyday life and instil courage for further extremist actions.<sup>21</sup> With the Nazi occupation of 1941, these cults competed with those organized around the ‘victims of Soviet barbarity’, which were conceived by Nazi Germany as a means of mobilizing the population in favour of the goals of the Third Reich and against the political project of the O.U.N.<sup>22</sup> The influence of Italian Fascist ideas of commemoration, filtered through region-specific ritualistic approaches to death, is instead visible in the memorialization of fallen Ustasha militants. During the 1930s the majority of Ustasha members were exiled to Italy with the full support of Mussolini, who contributed to their reorganization. They constructed their exile as a form of martyrdom for the fascist cause, inaugurating a strategy of victimhood that became common among exiled Central and Eastern European fascists after 1945. With their return to Croatia in 1941, memorializing fallen Ustasha comrades in funerals and necrologies became a weapon, as they called for the racial extermination of the enemies of the Independent State of Croatia and of its Nazi and Italian allies.<sup>23</sup> These examples from Spain and Central and Eastern Europe offer only static pictures of transnational fascism’s diverging effects on each project’s commemorative liturgies and narratives, in a series of unidirectional

<sup>17</sup> Z. Box and I. Saz, ‘Spanish fascism as a political religion (1931–1941)’, *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, xii (2011), 371–89.

<sup>18</sup> C. Iordachi, ‘Introduction: fascism in interwar East Central and Southeastern Europe: towards a new transnational research agenda’, *East Central Europe*, xxxvii (2010), 161–213.

<sup>19</sup> C. Iordachi, ‘Fascism in Southeastern Europe: a comparison between Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael and Croatia’s Ustaša’, in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, ii: *Transfers of Political Ideologies and Institutions*, ed. R. Daskalov and D. Mishkova (Leiden, 2014), pp. 355–468, at p. 357.

<sup>20</sup> P. A. Rudling, ‘The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: a study in the manufacturing of historical myths’, *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies* (2017), 5.

<sup>21</sup> G. Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist. Fascism, Genocide, and Cult* (Stuttgart, 2014), pp. 75–6; and D. R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine* (Budapest, 2007), pp. 79–123.

<sup>22</sup> K. David, ‘Ancestors and martyrs: religious ceremonies of occupation and liberation in Ukraine’, *Ab Imperio*, iv (2020), 161–91.

<sup>23</sup> R. Yeoman, ‘Cults of death and fantasies of annihilation: the Croatian Ustasha movement in power, 1941–1945’, *Central Europe*, x (2005), 234–56.



influences. Following the entanglements between fascist projects in a diachronic manner instead may contribute to reconnecting diachronically each acquisition and borrowing of concepts and practices available on the international market of fascist ideas. It also serves to verify why and under what terms the dialogues between international peers produced transnational fascist martyrs, which I understand as martyrs shared by distinct fascist entities.

Entangled history works as a theoretical tool for reconnecting the memorialization that diverse fascist entities reserved for fallen foreign comrades and foreign sacrificial experiences in different historical circumstances and sociopolitical contexts. Fascism studies have pointed out the importance of looking at the transnational interactions of fascist movements and regimes, since these constantly influenced each other in an open-end process of hybridization.<sup>24</sup> The fascists inhabited an interconnected and at the same time divided universe that was composed of mutual admiration and grandiose but inconsistent plans for fitting together distinct national projects into an ambiguous ‘internationalism’. The tension between fascism ‘internationalism’ (and internationalists) and the distinct political projects of each fascist entity remained constant during the 1930s and 1940s. While the various attempts to export Italian Fascism had failed by the mid 1930s, the patterns of interaction, exchange and transfer between fascist regimes and movements, and between these and other conservative and reactionary forces, remained in place in a long series of personal contacts, financial supports, visits and cultural events. This was due to both the interests of the transnationalizers of each fascist entity and the pragmatic aims of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to establish their cultural superiority abroad.<sup>25</sup> The rise of Fascism and National Socialism had empowered and legitimized anti-liberal and anti-democratic movements and parties in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe. The widespread and dynamic circulation of radical ideas and practices gave way to processes of decontextualization and selective adaptation of those ideas and practices in new contexts, engendering hybridized entities that became new references for others.<sup>26</sup> The liturgies of Fascism and National Socialism were read with no systematic articulation by enthusiastic comrades abroad, who adapted what they considered beneficial for their political projects. In this way, practices, aesthetics and rituals compensated for the lack of a consistent ‘theory of fascism’. They signified the purity of fascist ideals and feelings that kept transnational peers together in a common ideological framework.<sup>27</sup> The interactions among fascists from different countries favoured a multipolar domain characterized by creative drawing on models of inspiration, which helped to reciprocally hybridize, develop and refine the other fascist, authoritarian and reactionary forces with a fluid ideology that survived the Second World War.<sup>28</sup> Considering transnational fascism as a network of actors who circulated ideas and models that were interpreted and appropriated across

<sup>24</sup> C. Iordachi, ‘Introduction’, 161–213.

<sup>25</sup> A. Bauerkämper, ‘Transnational fascism: cross-border relations between regimes and movements in Europe, 1922–1939’, *East Central Europe*, xxxvii (2010), 214–46.

<sup>26</sup> A. Kallis and A. Costa Pinto, ‘Conclusion: embracing complexity and transnational dynamics: the diffusion of fascism and the hybridization of dictatorships in inter-war Europe’, in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorships in Interwar Europe*, ed. A. Costa Pinto and A. Kallis (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 272–82; and A. Kallis, ‘The “fascist effect”: on the dynamics of political hybridization in inter-war Europe’, in Costa Pinto and Kallis, *Rethinking Fascism*, pp. 13–41.

<sup>27</sup> F. Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945* (Durham, N.C., 2010), pp. 111–12, 157–8.

<sup>28</sup> D. D. Roberts, *Fascist Interactions: Proposals for a New Approach to Fascism and Its Era, 1919–1945* (New York, 2016); and S. Ihrig, ‘The history of European fascism – origins, foreign relations and (dis)entangled histories’, *European History Quarterly*, xli (2011), 278–90, at p. 287.

different political and cultural systems helps to show the entanglements and the mutual constitution of fascism in each spatial context and the multiple roles played by its agents across borders.<sup>29</sup>

As shown by the similar political staging, symbolism and rituals performed by fascist entities at a global level, fascists were aware of their affinity with their foreign ideological peers. An entangled history approach to fascism, focusing on the relations between, across and through fascist movements and regimes, helps us grasp the interrelations between intertwined historical phenomena. This method highlights cross-border dynamics that the methodological nationalism of national history and the static approach of earlier comparative fascist studies are unable to reveal.<sup>30</sup> The relational approach highlights how the generic phenomenon of ‘fascism’ was perceived and operationalized across time and space while events were still unfolding towards unpredictable outcomes.<sup>31</sup> By focusing on relationships between hybridizing entities rather than enforcing ‘fascist ideal-types’, and by accounting for co-operation as well as animosity and conflict that emerged between fascist as well as non-fascist entities, the entangled approach explores political dynamics contextualized in their sociopolitical settings rather than accounting for fascist ideology in a vacuum.<sup>32</sup> It therefore sheds light on the mixed dynamics of the inspiration, borrowing, adaptation and reinterpretation of ideas that had a strong, formative and empowering influence on each national contribution to the advancement of the new fascist order. This approach allows us to understand the interplay between inspiration and fascination, on the one hand, and pragmatic, interest-driven and opportunistic motivations, on the other, that convinced fascist actors to reach out to foreign peers.<sup>33</sup> From this perspective, the memorialization of foreign fascist martyrs and the insertion of foreign ideological elements into each fascism’s commemoration discourse becomes relevant for showing the outcome of unpredictable cross-border encounters and for accounting for the de-territorialization of sacralized ideological constructs, their reconstruction as part of other political projects, and their permanence in the European public space across time and space.

To paraphrase Stefan Ihrig, the often-used technique of narrating each fascist martyrdom-making activity within a merely national context needs to be revised, as a transnational approach to the construction of fascist martyrdom can offer new and important insights, not merely into the entanglements between fascisms, but into each

<sup>29</sup> M. Albanese and P. Del Hierro, *Transnational Fascism in the 20th Century: Spain, Italy and the Global Neo-fascist Network* (London, 2016), Introduction, pp. 1–10.

<sup>30</sup> A. Bauerkämper and G. Rossoliński-Liebe, ‘Fascism without borders: transnational connections and cooperation between movements and regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945’, in *Fascism Without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation Between Movements and Regimes in Europe From 1918 to 1945*, ed. A. Bauerkämper and G. Rossoliński-Liebe (New York, 2017), pp. 1–38, at pp. 2–7; P.-Y. Saunier, *Transnational History* (New York, 2013), pp. 2–3; and Á. Alcalde, ‘The transnational consensus: fascism and Nazism in current research’, *Contemporary European History*, xxix (2020), 243–52.

<sup>31</sup> Kallis and Costa Pinto, ‘Conclusion’, pp. 274–5.

<sup>32</sup> C. Iordachi, ‘From “generic” to “real-existing” fascism: towards a new transnational and historical comparative agenda in fascism studies’, in *Beyond the Fascist Century: Essays in Honour of Roger Griffin*, ed. C. Iordachi and A. Kallis (London, 2020), pp. 283–307; and A. Bauerkämper, ‘Between cooperation and conflict: perspectives of historical research on transnational fascism’, in Bauerkämper and Rossoliński-Liebe, *Fascism Without Borders*, pp. 357–61.

<sup>33</sup> A. Kallis, ‘Transnational fascism: the fascist new order, violence, and creative destruction’, in Bauerkämper and Rossoliński-Liebe, *Fascism Without Borders*, pp. 39–65; Kallis, ‘The “fascist effect”’, at pp. 22–3; and A. Kallis, ‘Working across bounded entities: fascism, “para-fascism”, and ideational mobilities in interwar Europe’, in Iordachi and Kallis, *Beyond the Fascist Century*, pp. 73–99, at p. 83.

individual fascism as well.<sup>34</sup> For example, in May 1933 the Nazi Party took a stand against the foreign publications that criticized Horst Wessel, the most important martyr for the Nazi cause. Foreign ideological peers from Italy, Bulgaria, England and the U.S.A. were invited to Berlin to give account of the ‘filth and lies’ told about Wessel in foreign countries, where the cult was deployed in initiatives and publications by Nazi sympathizers. The event was held just a few weeks after the purge of books by Jews, political opponents and liberal intellectuals from German libraries.<sup>35</sup> Inviting foreign ideological sympathizers to defend Wessel’s memory and denounce the enemies of National Socialism clearly constituted a qualitative leap in the celebrations of fascist martyrs, from a domestic to a transnational dimension, in which foreign peers were given voice. However, this significance has been obscured until recently by scholarship’s focus on the construction of Wessel’s martyrdom as a foundational ideological element for National Socialism only.

By confining the historical analysis to the significance that commemorating fallen comrades had for each fascist entity individually, scholars have left the participation of fascist leaders and representatives in the sacralized politics of foreign ideological peers largely unexplained, such as the participation of Wessel’s mother in the anniversary celebrations of the March on Rome in 1937, or the honours granted by Hitler to Italian Fascist martyrs during his visit to Italy in 1938.<sup>36</sup> Only recently, Christian Goeschel has demonstrated the parallel between the visits by Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler to the Ehrentempel in Munich (1937) and to the Sacrario dei Martiri Fascisti in Florence (1938), respectively. The commemoration of Nazi and Fascist martyrs during these visits was instrumental in symbolizing the harmony, friendship and ideological unity between these foreign ideological peers who had each sided with their partner’s cause.<sup>37</sup> An entangled perspective has contributed, in this case, to shedding new light on National Socialism, Italian Fascism, the diplomacy involving the two regimes, and their shared liturgies of commemoration.

Yet there were limits to the transnationalization of fascist martyrs. Commemorating fascist martyrs was a means of presenting fascism as a civic religion, not an end in itself. This means was sensitive to contextual historical changes. Each entity actively constructed its own martyrs, omitting certain details and exaggerating others, in order to make them fit into the realm of domestic and international politics, when necessary. For example, Hitler was evidently unaware that among the martyrs he solemnly saluted at the Sacrario in May 1938 was Gino Bolaffi, Florentine Fascist of Jewish origin.<sup>38</sup> This example is significant, since it shows that in order for fascist martyrs to be exploited on an international scale, their memorialization had to be adapted – in this case, this was done by omission.

The transnationalization of fascist martyrs continued throughout the 1930s and into the years of the Second World War through the work of fascist movements and regimes. This was achieved by both showcasing one’s own martyrs to one’s ideological peers

<sup>34</sup> Ihrig’s original call was for a revision of ‘the often-used technique of narrating each fascism’s prehistory within a merely national context’ (S. Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), p. 228).

<sup>35</sup> Baird, *To Die for Germany*, pp. 103, 272.

<sup>36</sup> P. Baxa, ‘Capturing the Fascist moment: Hitler’s visit to Italy in 1938 and the radicalization of Fascist Italy’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, xlix (2007), 227–42; and D. Siemens, *The Making of a Nazi Hero: The Murder and Myth of Horst Wessel* (New York, 2013), p. 115.

<sup>37</sup> C. Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of the Fascist Alliance* (London, 2018), p. 286.

<sup>38</sup> M. Baiardi, ‘Le tavole del ricordo. Shoah e guerre nelle lapidi ebraiche a Firenze e dintorni. Parte I’, *Margini*, xi (2011), <[https://www.margini.unibas.ch/web/rivista/numero\\_11/saggi/articoloi/baiardi.html](https://www.margini.unibas.ch/web/rivista/numero_11/saggi/articoloi/baiardi.html)> [accessed 11 Jan. 2022].



and celebrating the memory of foreign fallen fascists. In print media, foreign fascist martyrs were heroicized by fascist ideologues, even when this could bring no strategic advantage to their regime. One example is the passionate defence of the memory of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, leader of the Romanian Legionary movement, published by Italian Fascist philosopher Julius Evola in 1938, once the movement had been made illegal in Romania by the Royal dictatorship and Codreanu had been killed in prison.<sup>39</sup> During the Second World War, solemn attendance at the funerals of foreign fascists, with the display of wreaths and the extension of letters of condolence, also served to control the moves of allies. For example, the 1940 funeral in Rome of Arturo Bocchini, chief of the secret police in Fascist Italy, was perceived by the Roman audience to be ‘a German funeral’ due to the strong presence of prominent *Waffen-SS* figures, who were eventually preoccupied with Bocchini’s succession.<sup>40</sup> Within the countries of the Axis, pilgrimages to the tombs of the fallen became an established practice within the protocols of diplomatic visits; for example, on one occasion when the authorities of the Nazi-collaborationist National Legionary State visited Germany in order to discuss a possible collaboration with the Hitlerjugend, the protocol included a pilgrimage to the tomb of the organization’s role-model martyr Herbert Norkus in Berlin.<sup>41</sup>

Since the end of the war, and to the present day, the transnationalization of fascist martyrs has developed in parallel with the de-territorialization of fascism and the adaptation of its surviving nostalgic groupuscules to diverse sociocultural ecosystems at a global level.<sup>42</sup> With the transnationalization of the memorial activities of former Nazi collaborators from various countries,<sup>43</sup> and the contingent numeric growth of neo-fascist groups, the second half of the twentieth century was marked by an increased transnational circulation of fascist martyrs and their establishment as ‘role models’ and icons of fascism on a global scale.<sup>44</sup> The persistency of this phenomenon obliges us to dig into its historical roots, to look at what engendered it and to understand what made it prosperous and prolific in certain times and not in others. Analysing why, how, when and under what terms international ideological peers commemorated foreign fascist martyrs, inserted elements of foreign fascisms into their own pantheons of martyrdom and constructed shared pantheons through shared commemoration provides an entangled history of fascism. This highlights the circulation of ideas and practices of commemoration among fascist entities and contextualizes them in a dynamic manner at the crossroads between international diplomacy, transnational fascism, and the domestic tensions existing between each partner and its domestic competitors.

The process of transnationalizing fascist martyrs gained unprecedented strength during the Spanish Civil War among the international forces that supported Franco. The conflict was a process of political learning for fascist movements across Europe. Hagiographical narratives on the heroism of the Francoist troops circulated across Europe and were translated into several languages, providing a powerful medium of legitimation for Franco, but also for other European fascists, who presented Spain as the first sign that the global

<sup>39</sup> J. Evola, ‘La tragedia della “Guardia di Ferro”. Codreanu’, *La Vita Italiana*, xxvi (1938), 730–44.

<sup>40</sup> E. Dollmann, *With Hitler and Mussolini: Memoirs of a Nazi Interpreter* (London, 2017).

<sup>41</sup> National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, I, 210821, Vol. 3, *Der Erste Rumänische Legionäre*, fo. 84.

<sup>42</sup> R. Griffin, ‘From slime mould to *rhizome*: an introduction to the groupuscular right’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, xxxvii (2003), 27–50.

<sup>43</sup> M. Hurd and S. Werther, ‘Waffen-SS veterans and their sites of memory today’, in *The Waffen-SS: a European History*, ed. J. Böhrer and R. Gerwarth (Oxford, 2017), pp. 331–55, at p. 333.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g., R. Shaffer, ‘From outcast to martyr: the memory of Rudolf Hess in skinhead culture’, *Journal EXIT-Deutschland*, iii (2014), 111–24.

war against Bolshevism had begun.<sup>45</sup> Like the Spanish fascists, the other European fascist movements considered the war a great opportunity. They could prove, in the eyes of their respective national communities, their warrior essence, by rejuvenating old discourses, practices and representations of war culture through self-legitimizing sacralized myths and rituals of manhood and self-sacrifice.<sup>46</sup> Yet there were notable discrepancies in the memorialization offered by each movement for its own dead. Fascist Italy and the Francoist forces, especially after the war, transnationalized symbols and tropes of Italian Fascism and of Spanish nationalism. In Italy the Fascist martyrs revitalized the domestic cult of the fallen; their names were added to the plaques commemorating the victims of the First World War in each city. In Spain they were useful instruments for ideologically inciting the spirit of the Francoist forces in the war effort. They represented the generic attempt to construct a bond between the Italian Fascists and the Spanish Francoists in the fight for a Christian and Mediterranean Europe. The spatialization of their memory in several monuments, *sacrari* and commemorative plaques erected by the Italian authorities on Spanish ground represented an intersection between the Spanish and the Italian sacralized politics.<sup>47</sup>

Nazi Germany was more parsimonious than Italy and Spain in transnationalizing its fallen in the conflict. In Germany Nazi propaganda constructed the *Spanienkämpfer* of the Legion Condor as National Socialist war heroes and executors of Hitler's will in the 'uprising' against Germany's enemy, Bolshevism, on an international scale. The Spanish Civil War was transformed into a war of National Socialism. Following this logic, Spain, the Francoist khaki uniform worn by German soldiers and the foreign flags of the allies present at the celebrations of the returning soldiers were reduced to mere choreographic elements of a properly 'German' narrative.<sup>48</sup> The remains of six fallen soldiers from the Legion Condor, which could have served as an unpleasant reminder to the German audience of the extreme sacrifice that war required (just a few months before the invasion of Poland), were thus buried in Spain and forgotten by Nazi Germany. Pro-Nazi Falangists, who considered the 'German-Spanish friendship' an opportunity to gain power in the competition with the other forces supporting Franco, helped to memorialize them as martyrs 'for the common cause' and 'for God and Spain'.<sup>49</sup> The difference between the Spanish and German memorialization efforts was visible even in the bilingual plaque that honoured the six soldiers in Madrid's Almudena cemetery until 2017. According to the Spanish inscription, they had 'fallen for God and for Spain', whereas they had 'fallen in the fight for a free Spain', according to the German version, which avoided constructing the Legion Condor as defenders of Christianity.

The divergent meanings given to the foreign fascists killed in the Spanish Civil War by Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Francoist Spain show that alongside the generic attempt to elaborate on the fascist martyrs' memorialization as martyrs for a common

<sup>45</sup> J. Keene, *Fighting for Franco: International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain During the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2007), pp. 1–17.

<sup>46</sup> Á. Alcalde, *Los excombatientes franquistas (1936–1965)* (Zaragoza, 2014), p. 354.

<sup>47</sup> G. Medas, *¿Quiénes fueron los voluntarios? Identità, motivazioni, linguaggi e vissuto quotidiano dei volontari italiani nella guerra civile spagnola* (Cagliari, 2014), p. 171; D. Vaquero Pelaez, *Credere, Obbedire, Combattere. Fascistas italiani en la guerra civil española* (Zaragoza, 2007), pp. 237–306; and R. Notari, *Il fascismo e la guerra civile spagnola. Propaganda e comunicazione* (Salerno, 2010), pp. 200, 207–8, 309.

<sup>48</sup> C. Gilmour, 'Unmasking the Legion Condor: the creation of Nazi Germany's first war heroes', in *War and Propaganda in the 20th Century*, ed. M. F. Rollo, A. P. Pires and N. M. Novais (Lisbon, 2013), pp. 153–60.

<sup>49</sup> W. H. Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany: Collaboration in the New Order* (Columbia, Mo., 2000), pp. 41–3; 'Inauguración de un monumento a seis pilotos de la "Legión Condor"', *Imperio*, 3 May 1939, p. 1; and 'Traslado de los restos de siete aviadores alemanes de la Legión Condor', *El Adelanto*, 3 July 1942, p. 1.

cause, the individual aims of each fascist entity, the power relationships between fascists and competing forces, and matters of diplomacy were equally important constitutive elements of these martyrdom-making activities. These elements contributed to either limiting the transnational sacralization of the fallen, as the disentangled German and Spanish memorial activities seem to suggest, or establishing circumstantial, far-fetched and evidently empirically constructed theorizations of common causes among distinct political projects, as suggested by the defence of Christian and Mediterranean Europe as the minimum common denominator of the Italian and Spanish dialogue. The interests of each fascism determined the quality of the bond established with its foreign peers but, since these interests changed over time, they also allowed multiple alternatives to emerge for further sacralized entanglements.

Ion Moța and Vasile Marin were two leaders and ideologists of the Romanian Legionary movement. They died while fighting in the ranks of the Spanish Foreign Legion in January 1937 in Majadahonda, on the outskirts of Madrid. The history of their memorialization in Spain and Romania is revelatory of why, how and in what terms fascist martyrs were internationalized and transnationalized. As pointed out by Constantin Iordachi, after the Second World War,

Majadahonda turned into a place where the Romanian, Spanish and European nationalists interrelated, something that was possible thanks to the transnational dimension that the cult of Moța and Marin had taken on since its beginning, since it functioned as a symbol of the shared fight of the European nationalist forces against communism.<sup>50</sup>

I argue that the ‘transnational dimension’ of Moța and Marin’s commemoration developed gradually through the interwar to the war years as a result of the entanglements between the Legionaries and their Spanish fascist peers, the Falangists, who searched for symbolic resources on a transnational scale that could be exploited domestically against competing political projects. The sacralization of Moța and Marin as transnational fascist martyrs emerged as a product of the alignment of both fascist projects with a common cause, the new European order promoted by Nazi Germany.

During their life Moța and Marin had been tireless transnationalizers of fascist ideas. Historiography is divided on whether Moța, in his transnational contacts with the Welt-Dienst and the Comitati d’Azione per l’Universalità di Roma (C.A.U.R.), was attempting to establish the ideas of Legionarism on an international scale by refusing to make any ideological compromise with other fascist groups,<sup>51</sup> or whether, on the contrary, he was seeking to align the Legion with National Socialism and Italian Fascism at any cost, despite their evident ideological differences.<sup>52</sup> From the way in which Moța polarized the positions at the Congress of Montreux in 1934 and his intermittent dealings with the Welt-Dienst, his uncompromising antisemitic fanaticism appears quite evident. Either way, during their careers, the Legionaries adopted several antithetical ideas from foreign fascisms,<sup>53</sup> showing that foreign models were important for providing Romanian fascism with arguments and ideas. On the other hand, the Falangists were unequivocally active

<sup>50</sup> C. Iordachi, “‘Rumanía, España, Latinidad, Cristo’”. Cristianismo heroico y martirio en el fascismo rumano’, in *Fascismo y modernismo. Política y cultural en la Europa de entreguerras (1918–1945)*, ed. F. Cobo Romero, C. Hernández Burgos and M. A. del Arco Blanco (Granada, 2016), pp. 139–69, at p. 163.

<sup>51</sup> R. Cârstocea, ‘Native fascists, transnational anti-Semites: the international activity of Legionary leader Ion I. Moța’, in Bauerkämper and Rossoliński-Liebe, *Fascism Without Borders*, pp. 216–42.

<sup>52</sup> M. Platon, ‘The Iron Guard and the “modern state”’: Iron Guard leaders Vasile Marin and Ion I. Moța, and the “New European Order”’, *Fascism*, i (2012), 65–90.

<sup>53</sup> T. Sandu, ‘Droite française, fascisme italien. Influences croisées sur la Garde de Fier’, *Analele Universității București*, iv (2004), 61–77.

promoters of contacts with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, which they saw as a remedy to their own constant lack of political success; these ‘sympathies’ persisted and increased across the Falangists’ organizational permutations from the F.E. to the F.E.-J.O.N.S. (est. 1934), and as an informal network within the F.E.T.-J.O.N.S. (est. 1937), among peers who could not accept abandoning their totalitarian project of conquering the state and submitting to Franco’s authoritarian power.<sup>54</sup> For both Legionaries and Falangists, the Spanish Civil War was a great opportunity for international visibility and domestic legitimacy. In view of their respective domestic struggles, every resource counted, even the most remote and insignificant. This is why diverse fascist movements across Europe learnt to valorize each other.

As Roland Clark has noted, transnational elements that contributed to the construction of Legionary martyrdom in Romania have received only marginal attention, though they reveal a great deal about the transnational relationships between fascist entities.<sup>55</sup> Several studies show that the memorialization of Moța and Marin in Romania was an outstanding opportunity to legitimize the Legion’s ideas and to increase its popularity,<sup>56</sup> by mobilizing the emotions of the national audience,<sup>57</sup> investing in mystical ideas of self-sacrifice,<sup>58</sup> and linking together theology and ideology and mixing faith and propaganda,<sup>59</sup> in order to expand the Legion’s electoral basis. Yet these analyses give only marginal relevance to the transnational dimension of commemorating Moța and Marin by Romanian and foreign actors. Furthermore, except for one study on the central role of the Legion martyrs’ commemorations in constructing the National Legionary State,<sup>60</sup> nothing has been written on the frequency, terms or nuances of Moța and Marin’s memorialization in Romania or elsewhere after their 1937 funerals. Research on the transnational activities of the Falange and on the image of the Legion in Spain has devoted only minimal attention to the memorialization of Moța and Marin in Spain and the agency of Spanish peers in constructing this ‘cult’.<sup>61</sup> None of these studies has followed the memorialization of Moța and Marin in Romania and Spain as part of an entangled history of fascism.

<sup>54</sup> X. M. Núñez Seixas, ‘Falangismo, nacionalsocialismo y el mito de Hitler en España (1931–1945)’, *Revista de estudios políticos*, clxix (2015), 13–43; and Bowen, *Spaniards*, pp. 41–3.

<sup>55</sup> R. Clark, *European Fascists and Local Activists: Romania’s Legion of the Archangel Michael (1922–1938)* (Pittsburgh, 2012), p. 452.

<sup>56</sup> C. Iordachi, ‘Charisma, religion, and ideology: Romania’s interwar Legion of the Archangel Michael’, in *Ideologies and National Identities: the Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, ed. J. R. Lampe and M. Mazover (Budapest, 2006), pp. 19–53; and V. Săndulescu, ‘Sacralised politics in action: the February 1937 burial of the Romanian Legionary leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, viii (2007), 259–69, at pp. 265–6.

<sup>57</sup> R. Cârstocea, ‘Bringing out the dead: mass funerals, cult of death, and the emotional dimension of nationhood in Romanian interwar fascism’, in *Emotions and Everyday Nationalism in Modern European History*, ed. A. Stynen, M. Van Ginderachter and X. M. Núñez Seixas (London, 2020), pp. 134–63.

<sup>58</sup> M. S. Rusu, ‘The sacralization of martyric death in Romanian Legionary movement: self-sacrificial patriotism, vicarious atonement, and thanatic nationalism’, *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, xvii (2016), 249–73, at pp. 265–6.

<sup>59</sup> I. F. Biliuța, *The Archangel’s Consecrated Servants: An Inquiry in the Relationship Between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Iron Guard (1930–1941)* (Budapest, 2013), pp. 247–64.

<sup>60</sup> M. S. Rusu, ‘Staging death: Christofascist necropolitics during the National Legionary State in Romania, 1940–1941’, *Nationalities Papers*, il (2021), 576–89.

<sup>61</sup> I. Garnelo i Morán, *Los límites de la paradiplomacia. Misión y adaptación de Falange Exterior* (Barcelona, 2017); F. Veiga, ‘La guerra de las embajadas. La Falange Exterior Española en Rumania y Oriente Medio. 1936–1944’, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, xxix (1990), 321–35; A. C. Moreno Cantano, ‘Guerra de propagandas en Rumania durante la contienda bélica española (1936–1939)’, *Historia Actual Online*, xx (2009), 129–41; and J. Ponce and P. Selma, ‘La guardia de hierro rumana en la prensa española’, *Revista de Historia Actual*, viii (2010), 45–58.

In the early months of the Spanish civil war, Spain, Romania and their fascist movements were mostly irrelevant to each other. In Romania the civil war transformed Spain from a distant and politically insignificant country into a mythical place where anarchism and Soviet communism were already destroying Christian civilization. Several rightist political projects present in Romania attempted to exploit this distant conflict in order to legitimize themselves domestically, in a propaganda campaign that was politically profitable and without risk: the Kingdom of Romania was by then bound to a non-intervention agreement supported by France and Britain.<sup>62</sup> Only a few left-wing newspapers promoted a favourable view of the Republic; on the other hand, many right-wing dailies explicitly supported the Francoist forces. These competing parties were supported respectively by the Spanish embassy, loyal to the Republic, and the Spanish legation, which comprised former diplomats turned Falangists. The latter was not recognized by the Romanian government.<sup>63</sup> In right-wing newspapers, the coup was justified by constructing the Republican institutions as a regime of terror where chaos, homicides and the persecution of political opponents and Catholic priests were the norm. Like other right-wing movements, the Legionaries supported the rebel forces. *Sfarmă-Piatră*, led by filo-Legionary philosopher Nichifor Crainic, and *Libertatea*, led by Moța, presented the Spanish Civil War in apocalyptic terms as a battle in the greater war between the forces of light, fighting to defend Europe, and the ‘monsters’, ‘red beasts’ and ‘Devil worshippers’ accused of being emissaries of the Soviet Union and an international Jewish conspiracy.<sup>64</sup>

In November 1936 Moța and a number of his comrades saw an opportunity for proving the Legionary ideals, moving from words to action on an international level. They embarked on an expedition to Spain, with the full support of the Spanish legation in Bucharest and the approval of Franco and Codreanu. The patrol was led by army general Gheorghe Cantacuzino-Grănicerul, hero of the First World War in reserve. Codreanu sold him to the Legionaries as a moral authority, not least because he was the main financier of the Legion. Under Cantacuzino’s command were the Legion’s founders, Moța, Gheorghe Clime and Nicolae Totu; Alexandru Cantacuzino, commander of the ‘Buna Vestire’ Legionary Corp; Vasile Marin, leader of the Legion in Bucharest; Ion Dumitrescu-Borșa, Romanian Orthodox priest; and the young Legionary Bănică Dobre. The mission aimed to pay tribute to José Moscardó, the former colonel and military governor of Toledo Province, who was acclaimed as a hero of the rebels for his resistance to Republican forces during the siege of the Alcázar of Toledo, which had taken place between July and September 1936.<sup>65</sup> The Legionaries had met Falangist representatives only at the fascist meeting in Montreux in 1934, organized by the C.A.U.R., and at the Spanish legation in Bucharest. The expedition put the Romanian and Spanish fascists in direct contact with each other. In December 1936 the patrol met and honoured Moscardó, who after the siege of the Alcázar of Toledo had been promoted to army general and placed in command of the Soria Division. At the F.E.-J.O.N.S. headquarters in Soria, Moța and General Ricardo Villalba Rubio, another acclaimed defender of the Alcázar of Toledo, gave speeches to the Falangists and the Legionaries, and all present sang the

<sup>62</sup> Keene, *Fighting*, p. 223.

<sup>63</sup> Veiga, ‘La guerra’, p. 324; and Moreno Cantano, ‘Guerra’, p. 135.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Grozăviile milițienilor roșii’, *Sfarmă-Piatră*, 24 Sept. 1936, p. 8; ‘Bestiile roșii’, *Sfarmă-Piatră*, 5 Nov. 1936, p. 3; ‘Război din Spania’, *Libertatea*, 20 Sept. 1936, p. 3; and ‘Iată ce face comunismul în Spania și în Rusia’, *Libertatea*, 15 Nov. 1936, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> P. de Prat y Soutzo, ‘Efectul revoluției naționale spaniole în România’, in *Ion Moța și Vasile Marin. 25 ani dela moarte* (Madrid, 1963), pp. 15–43.



anthems of the two movements, *Facing the Sun* and *Holy Legionary Youth*.<sup>66</sup> Moța noted that, among the political organizations that were supporting Franco, F.E.-J.O.N.S. was the one that was ‘most similar to our Legion in Romania ... and to German National Socialism’.<sup>67</sup>

Defying Codreanu’s order to not enrol as volunteers in the conflict, since their forces were more useful at home in view of the upcoming electoral competition, the company enlisted in the Spanish Foreign Legion, joining El Tercio, an important elite unit of the rebel army. El Tercio had a mythical status among the Francoist forces and it was well known throughout Europe. Under Franco’s rule it had backed the coup during the summer of 1936 and it had rescued, among other rebel troops, the rebels besieged in the Alcázar of Toledo.<sup>68</sup> After their enrolment Legionary newspapers were able to construct their peers as heroes who were fighting in defence of the nation and the cross against the satanic forces of communism.<sup>69</sup> The Legionaries, it was stressed, sided with those who ‘have raised their weapons for defending the Family, the Homeland, and the Faith’.<sup>70</sup> From the front Moța penned a number of letters and articles, which explained that the Spanish Civil War was part of the global struggle in defence of Christianity and against communism: ‘If the Cross falls to the ground in Spain, its foundations will be shaken in Romania. If communism wins there today, it will attack us tomorrow’.<sup>71</sup>

On 13 January 1937 Moța and Marin were killed in an enemy attack on Majadahonda, a small town on the north-western outskirts of Madrid, by then on the front line of the conflict. The loss provoked immediate mistrust and suspicion of their Spanish comrades among the Legionary ranks. Codreanu and the Legionary establishment expressed, in private, strong criticism of the squadron’s placement on the front line, something that ‘could have been originated by a masonic conspiracy arranged by the Spanish minister in Bucharest [Pedro de Prat y Soutzo], who plays so much the [part of the] nationalist but who actually does not inspire any trust’.<sup>72</sup> Ion V. Emilian, leader of the pro-Legionary association Swastika of Fire, described the Spanish Foreign Legion as ‘cannon fodder’ against enemies provided with better artillery, something about which the German volunteers had also complained.<sup>73</sup> Setting aside the bitterness, however, Codreanu knew very well that he could capitalize massively on the loss.

Since its establishment, the Legionary movement had exploited the lack of legitimacy of the state cult of the fallen, and it had invested heavily in constructing its martyrial self-image as part of Romanian civil society,<sup>74</sup> disguising its political project as a national project. Consequently, the deaths of Moța and Marin represented a unique opportunity to sacralize the movement with two martyrs who, having fallen in a war, marked a qualitative difference from all the other right-wing entities in Romania.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Homenaje’, *Noticiero de Soria*, 7 Dec. 1936, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> I. Moța, ‘IV’, *Libertatea*, 19 Apr. 1937, pp. 1–2.

<sup>68</sup> Cârstocea, ‘Native fascists’, p. 231.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Legionari români pe frontul spaniol’, *Cuvântul Argeșului*, 20 Dec. 1936, pp. 2–6; and B. Slușanschi, ‘Antidotul comunismului’, *Insemnări Sociologice*, Dec. 1936, pp. 3–29.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Îsbucnirea revoluției naționale’, *Cuvântul Argeșului*, 20 Dec. 1936, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> I. Moța, ‘Înțelesul plecării noastre în Spania’, *Cuvântul Argeșului*, 20 Dec. 1936, p. 5; and Cârstocea, ‘Native fascists’, p. 232.

<sup>72</sup> National Archives of Romania (hereafter A.N.I.C.), Direcția generală a Poliției (hereafter D.G.P.), 10/1937, fo. 32.

<sup>73</sup> A.N.I.C., D.G.P., 10/1937, fo. 57.

<sup>74</sup> M. Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington, Ind., 2010), pp. 49–72.

Contrary to Mussolini and Hitler, who had left their fallen in Spain, Codreanu had a clear interest in repatriating the remains of his comrades: he understood that exhibiting the remains in a ritualistic funeral would testify to the heroism and sacrifice of the Legionary movement in the eyes of the national audience. With some urgency, he sent General Cantacuzino to recover the fallen and raised funds for the squadron's return trip.<sup>75</sup>

After Cantacuzino had succeeded in mobilizing the Spanish anti-Republican headquarters, the Francoist media also started to honour the Legionaries. The newspapers honoured Moța and Marin in the wartime fashion: they exalted their self-sacrifice and sacralized their martyr's deaths.<sup>76</sup> Both the fallen and the surviving foreign fascists were turned into representatives of the Romanian state, army and nobility. In a series of articles, the eight Legionaries became 'officers of the Romanian army who were ... messengers of the spiritual adhesion and lively sympathy of the Romanian patriotic people to the Spanish nationalist cause'.<sup>77</sup> It was stated that the sacrifice of the two Legionaries 'serves to bind even more the ties of close friendship and kind sympathy that unite us to the noble people of Romania, from whom the cause of saving Spain is receiving constantly so many attestations of moral solidarity'.<sup>78</sup> The 'nationalization' of the Romanian volunteers was also evident in the memorial services held for Moța and Marin. Their remains were transported to Toledo, where they were commemorated with a Catholic mass and exhibited in the square of the Colegio de Doncellas in the presence of the city and military authorities. The two caskets were covered with Romanian flags, and the Romanian national anthem was played.<sup>79</sup> In a widely advertised telegram to Cantacuzino, Francisco de Asís Serrat y Bonastre, 'foreign minister' of the Francoist forces, gave unprecedented international legitimation to the Legion, stating that the 'Iron Guard will be the eternal lace that unites our two Latin nations, daughters of the immortal Rome'.<sup>80</sup> From the point of view of the Spanish rebels, paying homage to foreign volunteers was a way of weakening the international prestige of the Republic. These eulogies in the pages of the Spanish newspapers lasted only until the Romanian squadron left Spain. Naturally, the tributes were reported and aggrandized in the Legionary press. Some of the accounts are hardly credible, such as that referring to 'prayers in all the churches of Spain for Moța and Marin' and the report of Franco himself visiting the survivors. These accounts theorized the 'Christian and nationalist fraternization of Spain and Romania'.<sup>81</sup>

In order to sacralize the Legionary movement on an international scale with much greater impact than printed words could, Codreanu organized a spectacular funerary train trip for the return of Moța and Marin's remains. Mussolini, who understood the impediment posed by the French government to the passage of the train, proposed that the remains be repatriated by sea, from Cadiz to Genoa, and then by train to Romania.<sup>82</sup> Eventually, Codreanu succeeded in repatriating the remains more quickly, directly by train, without the intervention of foreign patrons, thanks to the help of

<sup>75</sup> A.N.I.C., D.G.P., 10/1937, fo. 33.

<sup>76</sup> Alcalde, *War Veterans*, p. 260; and Alcalde, *Los excombatientes*, p. 45.

<sup>77</sup> 'El heroico comportamiento', *El Adelanto*, 22 Jan. 1937, p. 1 and *Heraldo de Zamora*, 22 Jan. 1937, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> 'El heroico comportamiento', *El Alcázar*, 28 Jan. 1937, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> 'Los cadáveres de los dos oficiales rumanos', *El Alcázar*, 30 Jan. 1937, p. 5; and 'Se tributan en Toledo honores militares', *El Alcázar*, 2 Feb. 1937, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> 'El traslado a Rumania', *El Alcázar*, 31 Jan. 1937, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> A.N.I.C., Ministerul de Interne (Interne), Diverse, 29/1937, fo. 19.

<sup>82</sup> Iordachi, "Rumanía", p. 152.

the Romanian ambassador to Spain, Jean Theodor Florescu. He was a sympathizer of Franco's forces and interceded with the French authorities to grant passage to the funeral train.<sup>83</sup> The cross-European motorized funeral march engendered brief but solemn moments of commemoration in Berlin, where the S.A. and S.S., Italian Fascists, and Falangists honoured Moța and Marin for a few moments.<sup>84</sup> High-ranking representatives of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and the Spanish legation honoured their foreign comrades again in Bucharest, at their funeral. Their presence, which was a powerful demonstration of international support for the fascist cause in Romania, and which brought popularity to the Legion, was condemned by opposition parties, since foreign participation in political demonstrations was forbidden by law.<sup>85</sup> In the ritual of commemoration, the head of the Spanish legation in Bucharest, Pedro de Prat y Soutzo, was given the honour of calling the names of the Legionary volunteers, who were present in their Spanish combat uniforms. When the Spanish fascist called the names of Moța and Marin, the crowd of Romanian fascists replied, 'Present!'<sup>86</sup> To the press, de Prat y Soutzo presented himself as the Spanish ambassador, and he expressed support for the Legionaries.<sup>87</sup>

The heroism of Moța and Marin was constructed in record time. This included the drafting of their biographies, in which their cleverness, sense of duty, Christian faith and love for their homeland were stressed, and the holding of public conferences at which their heroism was emphasized. The Legionaries fundraised among their comrades and incited Romanian civil society to donate in order to fund the publishing of books and pamphlets on the expedition of the eight fascists.<sup>88</sup> Moța and Marin became a Legionary brand: their iconized photographs were sold for a few lei;<sup>89</sup> their writings were republished;<sup>90</sup> the articles penned by Moța while he was in Spain were published in four issues of *Libertatea* in April 1937, and parts of the letters that he had given in custody to his beloved, to Codreanu and to philosopher Nae Ionescu were edited together as his political testament.<sup>91</sup> The survivors from the returning patrol published their memories of the front, bringing eyewitness accounts from Spain of the last mortal actions of Moța and Marin.<sup>92</sup>

Aware of the need to distinguish their political programme from those of all the other right-wing groups, the Legionaries continued for months to elaborate on the Spanish experience. The foreign elements that they appropriated to construct the fascist

<sup>83</sup> B. Dobre, *Crucificații. Zile trăite pe frontul spaniol* (Madrid, 1951), p. 79; 'Legionari români pe frontul spaniol', *Cuvântul Argeșului*, 20 Dec. 1936, p. 2; and D. Liciu, *Voluntari din România în războiul civil spaniol (1936–1939)*, in *Istorie și societate*, ed. M. Cîrstea, S. L. Damean and D. Liciu (Bucharest, 2011), pp. 537–83.

<sup>84</sup> N. Totu, *Notas del frente español* (Madrid, 1970), pp. 61–2; A.N.I.C., Interne, Diverse, 4/1937, fos. 39–40; and Cârstocea, 'Bringing out the dead', p. 142.

<sup>85</sup> Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extremă dreaptă românească* (Bucharest, 2018), p. 247.

<sup>86</sup> Săndulescu, 'Sacralised politics', pp. 265–6.

<sup>87</sup> Moreno Cantano, 'Guerra', p. 134; and F. Veiga, 'Diplomacia en camisa azul. La Falange exterior en Rumania y Oriente Medio, 1936–1939', in *La política exterior de España en el siglo XX*, ed. J. Tusell and J. Avilés (Madrid, 1997), pp. 201–16.

<sup>88</sup> A.N.I.C., D.G.P., 10/1937, fos. 20, 49, 52–3, 57.

<sup>89</sup> A.N.I.C., Interne, Diverse, 8/1937, Vol. 1, fo. 192; R. Haynes, 'Work camps, commerce, and the education of the "new man" in the Romanian Legionary movement', *Historical Journal*, li (2008), 943–67; and R. Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca, 2015), pp. 144–5.

<sup>90</sup> I. Moța, *Scrisoare către "Tineretul cuminte"* (Bucharest, 1937); I. Moța, *Cranii de lemn. Articole 1922–1936* (Bucharest, 1937); V. Marin, *Crez de generație* (Bucharest, 1937); and V. Marin, *Cuvinte pentru studenti* (Bucharest, 1937).

<sup>91</sup> I. Moța, *Testamentul lui Ion Moța* (Bucharest, 1937).

<sup>92</sup> Dobre, *Crucificații*; Totu, *Notas*; A. Cantacuzino, *Pentru Christos. Amintiri de pe frontul din Spania* (Bucharest, 1937); and I. Dumitrescu-Borșa, *Cea mai mare jertfă legionară* (Sibiu, 1937).

martyrs, the modality of these appropriations and what they left out from the martyrs' memorialization are indicative of this goal. From January 1937 onwards Majadahonda, the site of the pair's martyrdom, was granted greater visibility than the other narrative elements of the Spanish experience. The name of the small Spanish town had first resounded in the halls of the Legionary headquarters, the Green House, when Totu's telegram announced that his two comrades had 'fallen in the fights of Majadahonda'.<sup>93</sup> In order to construct the deaths of the two Legionaries as heroic and martyrial, the town was transformed into a mythical place. It was stated in an eulogy published for Vasile Marin that Majadahonda 'mean[t] faith, revelation, transfiguration, blood sacrifice'.<sup>94</sup> In order to fix the geography of this martyrdom in the minds of the Romanian audience, maps of the Madrid environs were published; Boadilla, Pozuelo, Las Rozas and Majadahonda became the stage for Legionary martyrdom in Spain.<sup>95</sup> Majadahonda became 'the Legionary Alcázar', in the title of an article that fused together the martyrdom of the Legionaries on the Spanish front and the resistance of the Spanish rebels during the siege of the Alcázar of Toledo.<sup>96</sup> The Legionary press referred to the *Hymn to the Heroes Moța and Marin*, composed by musician Ion Mânzatu and poet Radu Gyr in January 1937, as the *Hymn of Majadahonda*, and the Legionaries sang it on several commemorative occasions.<sup>97</sup> One of these occasions was the fall of Bilbao in July 1937: Codreanu, informed by the Spanish anti-Republican consul in Bucharest, Augustin de Foxá, that the rebels had finally conquered the Republican-held city, and informed of the importance of that victory for the course of the war, ordered the Legionaries with him to observe five minutes of silence, followed by the singing of the *Hymn of Majadahonda*.<sup>98</sup> While the fictionalized account of the sacrifice of Moța and Marin at Majadahonda beside the 'fearless lions of El Tercio'<sup>99</sup> would be remembered for decades, other narrative elements of the Spanish expedition were short-lived. As evidenced by the Legionaries' reaction to the fall of Bilbao, that which was obvious and important to the Spanish Francoists could at best be temporarily honoured by their foreign ideological peers; since it was ultimately meaningless to them, it was also soon forgotten. During 1937 the appropriation of the ideas of the Spanish rebel forces remained extremely limited and anecdotal, and this functioned as a way of glorifying Legionary heroism.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, in the Spanish Francoist media, the success of Moța and Marin was short-lived.

In the last months of 1937 and at the beginning of 1938, several fascist ideologues transnationalized the ideas of the various fascist projects by favouring study visits from foreign fascists and the translation and distribution across Europe of works aiming to present foreign fascist movements and regimes to domestic audiences. The Italians and the Spaniards were familiarized with the Legionaries' martyrial cult of Moța and Marin thanks to these accounts.<sup>101</sup> With the establishment of the Royal dictatorship in 1938 and the dissolution of the Legion, the Legionary narratives and symbols were driven from

<sup>93</sup> *Buletin Legionar*, I (1937), p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> N. Runcanu, 'Majadahonda', *Cuvântul Argeșului*, 1 Feb. 1937, p. 6.

<sup>95</sup> 'Sub semnul jerfetei', *Iconar*, 1 Feb. 1937, p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> 'Alcazarul legionar', *Cuvântul Nou*, 1 Feb. 1937, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> I. Mânzatu, *Cum am compus cântecele legionare* (Munich, 1996), pp. 9–10; V. Cârdu, 'Piatra dela temeliea veacului', *Buna Vestire*, 3 July 1937, p. 3; and A.N.I.C., *Interne, Diverse*, 1/1937, fo. 260v.

<sup>98</sup> A.N.I.C., *Interne, Diverse*, 9/1937, fo. 32.

<sup>99</sup> H. Stamatu, 'Acatistul Moța-Marin', *Ideea Românească*, II (1937), at p. 8.

<sup>100</sup> I. Dragomir, 'Eroismul legionari in Spania', *Buna Vestire*, 11 Dec. 1937, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> L. Baracchi Tua, *La Guardia di Ferro* (Florence, 1938), pp. 83–5, 120; and M. Manoilescu, *El Partido Único. Institución política de los nuevos regímenes* (Zaragoza, 1938), pp. 17, 202.

the Romanian public sphere.<sup>102</sup> For diplomatic convenience, the narratives of both the Legion and Moța and Marin also disappeared from Spanish newspapers. This sensitivity to the Royal dictatorship by the Spanish Francoists, and the efforts of de Prat y Soutzo at the court of Carol, aided the de facto recognition of the government of Burgos in Romania in 1938. In 1939 the Falange of Bucharest could toast the *de jure* recognition of the victorious Francoist Spain in a Legionary-free Romania.<sup>103</sup>

The memorialization of Moța and Marin in Spain and Romania reappeared after the establishment of the National Legionary State in September 1940, once Legionaries and Falangists were both in power under the leadership of non-fascists. For the Romanian and Spanish fascists, co-governance with General Ion Antonescu and Franco, respectively, limited their ability to implement their totalitarian projects. In those circumstances, they capitalized on all available resources in order to align the leaders with their own agendas, which in turn they aligned with that of Nazi Germany.<sup>104</sup> Contacts with foreign ideological peers were valorized by the idea of being part of a common European mission. Transnationalizing fascist martyrs played a role in ideologizing this common mission. While in Spain and Romania the reburials of fallen comrades served to showcase the unity between leaders and fascists,<sup>105</sup> for Legionaries and Falangists the valorizing of foreign fascist martyrs in shared funerary liturgies and in celebrative narratives *also* served to signal unity with ideological peers beyond the contingent and uncomfortable alliances of convenience with non-fascist leaders that the fascist political entities had subscribed to in their attempts to achieve absolute power.

Between November 1940 and January 1941 the geographies of martyrdom of the Legionaries and the Falangists intersected in memorials organized in Bucharest, Berlin, Madrid and Rome and in celebrative narratives published in party media. On 20 November 1940, immediately before the Romanian signature of the Tripartite pact (23 November 1940), the Spanish legation and the Falange of Bucharest organized a memorial for José Antonio in the Church of St. Joseph, the Catholic cathedral of Bucharest. The memorial was attended by Legionary government representatives in their green uniforms, the ambassadors of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and representatives from the Hitlerjugend and the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento. The anthems of the Falange and the Legion were sung, followed by the national anthems, in a choreography of fascist symbols and national flags. After the ceremony, Luis Beneyto Martí, head of the Falange in Bucharest, marched with a patrol of Legionaries to the Green House and, in front of the monument to Moța and Marin, performed the appeal to the fallen, evoking José Antonio, Moța and Marin.<sup>106</sup> The news was reported in the Falangist newspaper *Azul* in a short but evocative article that, recalling the sacrifice of Moța and Marin, underlined the historical similarity of the two movements: ‘The Falange and the “Iron Guard” [are] youthful quests of action and poetry, stars and lights in the sky, symbols of heroism and examples of service to the homeland; and their two leaders, enlightened by providence, [both] fell in the fight’.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, pp. 218–19.

<sup>103</sup> M. Eiroa San Francisco, *Las relaciones de Franco con Europa Centro-Oriental (1939–1955)* (Madrid, 2001), p. 24.

<sup>104</sup> W. H. Bowen, ‘Distant friends: Romania and Nationalist Spain, 1936–45’, *Buletin Universitatea Ploiești*, lxxiii (2011), 1–11.

<sup>105</sup> Rusu, ‘Staging death’; and Z. Box, ‘Pasión, muerte y glorificación de José Antonio Primo de Rivera’, *Historia del Presente*, vi (2005), 191–218.

<sup>106</sup> ‘Patru ani dela asasinarea lui José Antonio Primo de Rivera’, *Cuvântul*, 22 Nov. 1940, p. 10.

<sup>107</sup> ‘La “Guardia de Hierro” y el aniversario de José Antonio’, *Azul*, 24 Nov. 1940, p. 8.



A few days later, the Romanian supreme tribunal rehabilitated the memory of Codreanu by reversing his sentence for treason. In the pages of *Azul*, the Falangist and antisemitic writer Fernando P. de Cambra linked Codreanu's memory to the Legion's participation in the Spanish Civil War:

The image of Codreanu[,] with his enlightened face, committed with no reserve to his Homeland, cannot be more sympathetic for us Spaniards; we will never forget that once our liberation war began, ten thousand Legionaries of the Iron Guard volunteered for fighting on our side, and before the Romanian government prohibited them from leaving their country, ten of them ... enlisted in our [Foreign] Legion; of how they fought, the two fallen as heroes in Majadahonda are silent witnesses.<sup>108</sup>

The national Catholic newspaper *ABC*, in an anonymous article, commemorated the rehabilitation of Codreanu by presenting the suffering and privations to which he and the Legion had been subjected, and described the latter as 'a profound religious movement [which] started the agitation against the parliamentary system, the French-British orientation [of Romania], liberalism and the Jewish influence'. The article established a direct parallel between the Nazi Party and the Legion by referring to Codreanu's *For My Legionaries* as 'an equivalent of *Mein Kampf*', and it reminded readers that Spain was in debt to the Legion, since Moța and Marin had 'fallen for God and for Spain in Majadahonda'.<sup>109</sup>

During the spectacular celebrations held in Bucharest for the exhumation and reburial of Codreanu in December 1940, held amid a vast display of Legionary symbols, swastikas and *fasci*, the sizeable presence of German, Italian and Spanish representatives and their numerous tributes, in the form of condolence telegrams, funeral wreaths and honour guards for the remains of the fallen at St. Ilie Gorgani, served to showcase support for the project of fascistizing the Romanian state and its alignment with the Axis.<sup>110</sup> At the same time, the Legionary media mentioned the honours bestowed by the foreign fascist press on the memory of Codreanu, and they covered the memorials held by the Legionaries in the capitals of the fascist states with the support of local allies.<sup>111</sup> It is noteworthy that this process only accidentally resembles the attempts to export Italian Fascism through martyrdom. Through the commemoration of their martyrs abroad, the Legionaries and the Falangists had at most the opportunity to be considered loyal ideological comrades by the other fascist movements, but not to export their politics, in which effort they were limited even at a domestic level by competing projects. Shared funeral commemorations became occasions that served to valorize their foreign comrades' commitment but also to remark, allusively, on their own sacrifices for totalitarianism and on the usurpation of these sacrifices by competing forces. By commemorating the fallen Legionaries, presented as the founders of the new Romania, the Falangists could establish a parallel with the blood tribute of the Falange in the Spanish Civil War, which facilitated Franco's ascension to power. This was done by intersecting the geographies of the martyrdom of the Legion and the Falange, in successive memorials taking place in Madrid, El Escorial and Majadahonda. In Madrid, at the Church of San Jerónimo el Real, the Spanish foreign

<sup>108</sup> Fernando P. de Cambra, 'Codreanu el iluminado', *Azul*, 30 Nov. 1940, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> 'El Tribunal Supremo de Rumania', *ABC*, 30 Nov. 1940, pp. 3, 5.

<sup>110</sup> 'Delegații Reichului la înmormântare', *Universul*, 1 Dec. 1940, n.p.; 'Prezent', *Cuvântul*, 1 Dec. 1940, p. 12; 'Reprezentanții Germaniei', *Cuvântul*, 2 Dec. 1940, p. 5; 'Pelerinajul dela biserica Sf. Ilie Gorgani', *Universul*, 1 Dec. 1940, n.p.; 'La casa verde', *Cuvântul*, 2 Dec. 1940, n.p.; 'Pământul sfânt al Țării', *Cuvântul*, 2 Dec. 1940, p. 12; and 'El entierro de Codreanu', *ABC*, 1 Dec. 1940, p. 11.

<sup>111</sup> 'Presa străină', *Cuvântul*, 2 Dec. 1940, p. 5; 'În străinătate', *Cuvântul*, 3 Dec. 1940, p. 3; 'Poporul român', *Cuvântul*, 16 Dec. 1940, p. 14; and 'Guglielmo Rulli', *Cuvântul*, 16 Dec. 1940, pp. 3–4.

minister (and Falangist), Ramón Serrano Suñer, and the Romanian ambassador, Radu Ghenea, organized a religious memorial to honour Codreanu on the second anniversary of his death on 1 December 1940. Ghenea was a great admirer and active supporter of the Falangists in their struggle with the Spanish army generals. To honour their Romanian comrades, the Falangists set up an imposing display in which ordered arrays of party militants in blue shirts presided over a catafalque adorned with roses, the symbol of the Falange. Among the audience was a delegation of the Spanish Foreign Legion, several high-ranking early-hour Falangists, and the Italian and the German ambassadors.<sup>112</sup> After the memorial Ghenea and Suñer travelled to El Escorial to place a copper mortuary wreath adorned with the symbol of the Legion on the tomb of José Antonio. On the way back to Madrid, they visited the church of Majadahonda and honoured Moța and Marin with a mortuary wreath.<sup>113</sup>

In mid December 1940 the Legionary press started to trace parallels between the two movements, insisting on the idea of the common European mission. The Legionary newspaper *Acțiunea* (The Action) said of their Spanish comrades that ‘the common mission, that is awaiting us in the vast and deep future that is drawing Europe, makes of us fighters of the same fight, missionaries of the same faith and announcers of the same hope’.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the Legionary historian Petre P. Panaitescu wrote that throughout their respective histories, Spain and Romania had shared a common role as sentinels of Europe, defending Christian civilization against paganism. Panaitescu honoured the Spanish–Romanian friendship, which had been sealed, he wrote, by the Romanian blood shed in Spain in the common mission of saving Europe from communism.<sup>115</sup> In that atmosphere of enthusiasm for the common mission, a project to establish a common ‘Falangist–Legionary Group’ dedicated to José Antonio, Moța and Marin, aiming to create a ‘totalitarian cooperation’, was conceived by the Legionaries and the Falangists of Bucharest, though nothing came of this.<sup>116</sup>

In January 1941 the fourth anniversary of the death of Moța and Marin offered the Legionaries the opportunity to establish a direct continuity with the 1937 funeral, which had been the moment of the Legion’s maximum popularity, and which it had been unable to repeat in 1939 and 1940. For this important anniversary the Falangists took part in the commemorations organized by the Legionaries in Berlin, Rome and Bucharest alongside Nazis and Italian Fascists. In Spain Ghenea published a commemorative volume on Moța and Marin, with a foreword by Falangist journalist Juan Aparicio López, former J.O.N.S. ideologist and leading propagandist in Francoist Spain. Aparicio had already dedicated several newspaper articles to Codreanu. The following day Ghenea and the Spanish authorities attended a solemn requiem for Moța and Marin in the partially demolished church of Majadahonda in front of the Falangists of the ‘José Antonio’ Centuria and all the Romanian Legionaries of Madrid. The memorial continued near the machine gun nest crater where Moța and Marin had died, some hundred metres south of the town. There the Falangists and the Legionaries erected a Christian cross, in

<sup>112</sup> I. Călăfeteanu, ‘Naționalism și diplomație. Un episod din relațiile româno–spaniole în anul 1941’, in *România și Spania. Identitate națională și edificarea statului național*, ed. I. Stanciu and I. Oncescu (Târgoviște, 2008), pp. 153–72; and ‘Con motivo de cumplirse el segundo aniversario de su asesinato’, *El día de Palencia*, 1 Dec. 1940, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Funerales en Madrid’, *El día de Palencia*, 1 Dec. 1940, p. 5; ‘În străinătate’, p. 3; ‘Funerales en Madrid’, *ABC*, 1 Dec. 1940, p. 15; and ‘Funerales por Cornelio Codreanu’, *Azul*, 1 Dec. 1940, pp. 1, 6.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Presa spaniolă’, *Acțiunea*, 3 Dec. 1940, n.p.

<sup>115</sup> P. P. Panaitescu, ‘România și Spania’, *Cuvântul*, 22 Dec. 1940, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> A.N.I.C., Interne, 262/1940, fos. 3–9.

front of which the Legionaries pronounced the Oath of Moța and Marin. The Falangists completed the ceremony by lauding the Spanish–Romanian brotherhood.<sup>117</sup>

Within days of the shared celebrations, the Legionaries perpetrated the pogrom of Bucharest, disregarding the German request to keep order in Romania at all costs. Within hours, Antonescu ordered the army to crush the Legion. For the second time in a few years, the Legion had been destroyed by other competing right-wing actors, this time with the explicit support of Nazi Germany.<sup>118</sup> The memory of Moța and Marin survived and was honoured publicly only outside Romania. For the Falangists, the Legion continued to be a resource for a few months. After the end of the Spanish Civil War, the war veterans' mythologizing narratives served to facilitate the creation of a unifying Francoist identity.<sup>119</sup> The Falangists' memorialization of fallen Legionaries, on the other hand, contained a subversive message. The Falangists considered the diarchy of power between Antonescu and the Legionaries as similar to that which existed between them and Franco. They identified with the Legionaries.<sup>120</sup> Consequently, they weaponized their memory in the struggle for power against the other *familias* of the regime. Celebrating the virtues of the Legionaries and denouncing the bad qualities of their enemies became a means of alluding to the status of the Falangists, self-constructed as heroes whose value was not recognized among false allies and treacherous profiteers. In late February 1941 a radio programme by the Falangist Union broadcast a 'homage to Codreanu'.<sup>121</sup> In June 1941 Falangists Tomás Escolar and Jesús Nieto published a biography of Codreanu. The book referred to the persecutions and martyrdom of Codreanu and the Legionaries in interwar Romania. In the foreword Emiliano Aguado Hernández, one of the founders of the J.O.N.S., praised the 'abnegation, generosity, sacrifice, idealism, renounce, unfathomable will of national and human salvation' with which the Legionaries had confronted their enemies and their lies. He thus established an indirect but evident parallel with the declining condition of the Falangists within the Franco regime. In the concluding lines of the volume, the first-hour Falangist José María Castroviejo explicitly stated that the Falange and the Legion had 'equal supreme dedication to God, equal contempt for material things, equal disparagement of programs'.<sup>122</sup> In November, on the eve of the anniversary of Codreanu's death, the chief of the university union of Zamora, Carlos Quiros, published a two-page article in the Falangist newspaper *Imperio*. He pointed out the similarities between Codreanu and José Antonio and the Legion and Falange, and he drew an explicit parallel between the sacrifice on foreign land by Moța and Marin and the fight of the Blue Division in the Soviet Union on the side of Nazi Germany. Both movements, he claimed, had been equally slandered by their enemies' lies.<sup>123</sup>

After the fall of the National Legionary State, Suñer continued to maintain good relations with the Legionaries present in Spain. His dismissal from the foreign ministry

<sup>117</sup> 'En Majadahonda se conmemora el aniversario de los legionarios rumanos caídos', *Azul*, 14 Jan. 1941, p. 3; 'Funerales por dos legionarios', *Imperio*, 14 Jan. 1941, p. 4; 'Por los caídos rumanos en Majadahonda', *Nueva Alcarria*, 18 Jan. 1941, p. 1; *Heraldo de Zamora*, 14 Jan. 1941, p. 1; *Los legionarios rumanos Ion Motza y Vásile Marin, caídos por Dios y por España*, ed. R. Ghena and J. Aparicio López (Madrid, 1941); and 'Los Legionarios rumanos Motza y Marin', *ABC*, 14 Jan. 1941, p. 4.

<sup>118</sup> D. Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania, 1940–1944* (New York, 2006), pp. 65–7.

<sup>119</sup> Alcalde, *Los excombatientes*, pp. 202–3.

<sup>120</sup> S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923–77* (Madison, Wis., 1999), p. 354.

<sup>121</sup> 'Emisión quincenal de la C.N.S.', *Diario de Burgos*, 21 Feb. 1941, p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> T. Escolar and J. Nieto, *Vida y doctrina de Cornelio Codreanu* (Madrid, 1941) <<https://www.miscarea.net/carticica-spaniola4.htm>> [extracts, accessed 12 Jan. 2022]; 'Libros y revistas', *Hoja del lunes*, 9 June 1941, p. 4; and F. Morente, 'Hijos de un dios menor. La Falange después de José Antonio', in *Fascismo en España*, ed. F. Fallego and F. Morente (Madrid, 2005), pp. 211–50, at pp. 246–7.

<sup>123</sup> C. Quiros, 'Cornelio Zelea Codreanu', *Imperio*, 29 Nov. 1941, pp. 5–6.

in September 1942, after a group of old Falangists carried out a terror attack against a Carlist gathering (the Begoña bombing), neutralized one of the Legionaries' most important patrons in Spain.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, for the rest of the Second World War, the Spanish media recalled the Legionary movement only to a very limited extent.<sup>125</sup> Both fascisms' aspirations for totalitarian power were over. This did not prevent Antonescu's Romania and Franco's Spain from developing cordial relations or expressing alignment with the anti-communist politics of the Axis.<sup>126</sup> The exiled Legionaries and the frustrated Falangists instead directed their energies to the international arena by becoming Nazi collaborators in the ranks of the Blue Division (1941–3), the Blue Legion (1943–4) and the Romanian National Army under Horia Sima's exiled government (1944–5). After the Second World War a good proportion of the old Falangists continued to express discontent with the Franco regime, which no longer celebrated their wartime heroism.<sup>127</sup> Together with the leading Legionary figures in exile in Spain, they commemorated each other's martyrs on an annual basis, claiming their past heroism and at the same time expressing their resentment at their marginalized condition and their nostalgia for the glorious past of self-sacrifice that they had in common.

The process of transnationalizing fascist martyrs in the interwar and war years was the result of a vast, complex, contradictory and scattered ensemble of cross-border experiences, unidirectional processes of appropriation and adaptation of foreign ideas, and more truly dialogical relations between fascists from different countries. A diachronic analysis of the entanglements between fascists has helped to show the different goals that convinced each movement, in its specific historical context, to raise the stakes of its domestic politics and to battle against domestic enemies for undisputed power, in attempts realized empirically and in the absence of previous experience. As has been shown, they also did so by sacralizing foreign sacrificial experiences.

The chosen research method has shown what transnationalizing fascist martyrs meant and, consequently, how transnational fascism was developed, and why. Celebrating comrades who died abroad had little to do with a search for unity between ideological peers. Bonservizi, Gustloff, vom Rath and other fascists killed abroad, among them Moța and Marin for the Legion, were instruments for projecting at an international level the martyrial experiences of each political project. Diplomatic expediency led to the celebration of foreign fascist martyrs in order to showcase ideological unity, but this was thin and limited to acknowledging the sacralized politics of their foreign comrades. When the circumstances required it, the foreign 'cults' were downplayed and silenced. The borrowing of ideas, rituals and liturgies, and even living characters, from foreign sacralized pantheons (as testified by the visit of Wessel's mother in Rome) accounts for the mutual exchange between ideological peers, but not for their unity. These exchanges were more representative of a transnational process of appropriation that was complementary to the instrumental borrowings from remote and recent national pasts, such as the funerals of kings and soldiers in the First World War.

The common experiences of the Spanish Civil War and its seminal idealization as a common war in defence of Europe helped the fascists to present their martyrs as intersections of very distinct sacralized pantheons, at least in some cases. During the

<sup>124</sup> Călăfeteanu, 'Naționalism și diplomație', pp. 153–72.

<sup>125</sup> Ponce and Selma, 'La guardia de hierro'.

<sup>126</sup> A. C. Moreno Cantano, 'Desde Rumania al frente soviético. Los periodistas Juan Manuel de la Aldea y Trinidad Nieto Funcia', *Historia y comunicación social*, xxiii (2018), 115–37; Jiménez, *Historia de Falange Española de las JONS* (Madrid, 2000), pp. 355–6; and Eiroa San Francisco, *Las relaciones*, p. 56.

<sup>127</sup> Alcalde, *Los excombatientes*, pp. 222–5.

Second World War, once the Nazi plans for a new European order had galvanized their minor allies, martyrs who until then had had no international significance, like Codreanu and José Antonio, started to be presented as having fallen for a common cause. The process marked a logical shift from honouring sacrificial experiences of foreign causes to sacralizing one's own and foreign martyrs as part of a shared pantheon. Moța and Marin, who worked well as exemplary Legionary martyrs, worked even better as martyrs for Europe. By commemorating their martyrs in shared rituals and in narratives eulogizing their deaths for a common cause, the Legionaries and the Falangists attempted to attract international legitimacy and ideological loyalty from their foreign comrades, in order to compensate for their limited domestic power. Through their martyrs they discovered each other as fighters in the same struggle. The ideological bond established became so strong that the memorialization of Moța and Marin survived the defeat of the Legionaries in Romania in January 1941 and continued to be deployed by the Spanish fascists.

As the wartime celebrations of fallen Fascist and Nazi collaborationists show, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany theorized the common cause and celebrated foreign martyrs when this served their own purposes, and not as a proper political project. Ultimately, transnational fascism prior to 1945 was composed of asymmetric relations between powerful and powerless fascist allies. Italian Fascism and National Socialism played with sacralized pantheons, using them as instruments for sacralizing their missions, projecting their ideology abroad, manipulating diplomacy and even manipulating their ideological foreign comrades. On the other hand, the less powerful fascist entities, which also played extensively with sacralized politics to compensate for their limited domestic manoeuvring, cultivated the belief that foreign fascists were allies who could be counted on for implementing their totalitarian projects. After 1945 the 'nostalgic' fascists established a more properly horizontal dialogue among peers now equal in defeat. They had been confined to the margins of history but, at the same time, they were free from limitations pertaining to grand politics, international ambitions or state diplomatic games. With their political plans shattered and with broken reputations at a global level, they exploited transnational networking, memory work and historical revisionism as instruments for reversing their fate. Through these long-term investments, whose mechanisms they knew very well, they succeeded in de-territorializing the idea of fascism and in establishing their martyrs as its global sacralized icons.