

## ASPECTS OF THE ANTI-SEMITIC VIEWS OF NICHIFOR CRAINIC REFLECTED IN “GÂNDIREA” JOURNAL

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### ABSTRACT:

USING INFORMATION FOUND IN GÂNDIREA JOURNAL, AN IMPORTANT ROMANIAN PUBLICATION FROM THE INTERWAR PERIOD, THAT NICHIFOR CRAINIC DIRECTED FOR ALMOST TWO DECADES, THE AUTHOR EMPHASIZES IN THIS ARTICLE THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF ANTI-SEMITIC VIEWS OF HIM. IMPORTANT ROMANIAN PERSONALITY FROM THE AFOREMENTIONED PERIOD, PERSECUTED AND IMPRISONED LATTER BY THE COMMUNISTS FOR HIS PREVIOUS ATTITUDE, HE LEFT IMPORTANT WORKS ON SPIRITUALITY, MYSTIQUE AND PHILOSOPHY. BESIDES THESE THEMES, HE ALSO DEVELOPED IDEAS RELATED WITH POLITICAL AREA, THAT WE WILL INVESTIGATE THERE. THE APPROACH WHICH WILL BE A KIND OF REVIEW OF LITERATURE, WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE NUMBER OF ARTICLES PUBLISHED BY HIM THERE, THEIR THEMATIC REPARTITION (BECAUSE HE PUBLISHED THERE TEXTS OF THEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, LITERATURE, POLITICAL ARTICLES, CHRONICLES OR BOOK REVIEWS), BUT ALSO THE ASPECTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE WAY HOW AUTHOR MOTIVATES HIS ATTITUDE. WE WILL ALSO USE THE PREVIOUS RESEARCHES DEDICATED TO HIM OR HIS WORK, SHOWING HOW THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE RECEPTION OF CRAINIC FOR NOWADAYS RESEARCH.

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**KEY WORDS:** GÂNDIREA JOURNAL, LEGIONARY MOVEMENT, INTERWAR PERIOD, MYSTIQUE, NATIONALISM.

### INTRODUCTION

Important personality of Romanian political, religious and cultural space from the interwar period, Nichifor Crainic is still debated and quoted today. Both historians, theologians or scholars from the space of political investigation are trying to bring into attention interesting aspects of his life and work.

Unfortunately, in many situations, the approaches dedicated to his life and work are unilateral and not totally objective. Therefore, sometimes, theologians try to present only his contributions as the first holder of an Orthodox Mystique chair,<sup>2</sup> neglecting his far-right

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<sup>2</sup> Ioan Ică jr., "Nichifor Crainic și redescoperirea misticiei în Ortodoxie în prima jumătate a secolului XX (Nichifor Crainic and the rediscovering of mystique in Orthodoxy in the first half of 20th century)," in *Nichifor Crainic, Cursurile de mistică (Nichifor Crainic, classes of mystique)*, ed. Ioan Ică jr., (Sibiu: Deisis, 2010), 3-77; Ioan Ică

deviations or his political activity, while the historians or other scholars see in him only the legionary and the Ministry of Propaganda from the Second World War, neglecting his qualities or contributions to Romanian culture.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, as a theologian, we will not try there to avoid his "dark side", presenting it in an objective way. As historians, we will also bring into attention the positive aspects of his life and work.

This approach will be related with one important aspect of his cultural and publicist activity, namely *Gândirea* journal. Important periodical of interwar period, it was directed by him between 1926 and 1944.<sup>4</sup> It was, for sure, the best period of existence of this journal. Young voices together with consecrated writers will publish then there. Therefore, authors like Lucian Blaga, Dumitru Stăniloae, Bartolomeu Anania,<sup>5</sup> Ion Barbu, Alexandru Busuioceanu, Radu Gyr, Victor Papilian, Ion Pillat, Tudor Vianu, Vasile Voiculescu and many others, will sign there texts, chronicles, book reviews or interviews. It is true that some of them were legionary sympathisers, but not all. Moreover, it was not their political orientation that contributed to appointment into the editorial committee or to the publication of their texts, but the quality of their approaches. A good analysis of the journal will also show that, the majority of their articles will be rather connected with cultural nationalism and re-discovering of autochthonic tradition, history and culture (in a form that can call this current as a kind of outcome of *semănătorism*), than with other aspects of legionary doctrine, as anti-Semitism.

In this new posture of director of a publication, Crainic was not only a man who lead it, read some texts and, from time to time, signed an article, but a writer who, using the experience of writing, manifested in articles published in journals like *Ramuri*<sup>6</sup>. Noticing his important contribution to this journal, but without neglecting his political and ideological orientation, we will try there to speak about the way how his anti-Semite views can be seen in this journal.

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Jr., "Nichifor Crainic, "Revista Teologică", 111, no. 2 (May-June 2018): 7-22. Cf. Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Theological Ideas of Nichifor Crainic and their Relevance for His Political Activity," in *Postmodern Openings*, 9 (October-December 2018), no. 4: 54. Emanuel Cășvean, Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Conceptia euharistică a lui Nichifor Crainic reflectată în opera sa poetică și filosofică", in Mihai Himcinschi, Jean Nicolae (ed.), *Eucharist and Martyrdom from the ancient catacombs to the communist prisons, Proceedings of 13 th International Symposium on Science, Theology and Arts, Alba-Iulia, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, 6-8 May 2014 (ISSA 2014)*, 2nd volume, (Alba-Iulia: Renașterea Press, 2014): 281-189; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, Emanuel Cășvean, "Tineretea sufletească și importanța ei în gândirea lui Nichifor Crainic," in *Altarul Reîntregirii*, 31, no. 3 (September 2016): 281-289.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Keith Hitchins, *Romania 1866-1947*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, Oxford, New York, 1994), 303-305.

<sup>4</sup> Ion Hangiu, *Dicționarul presei literare românești (1790-1990) (Dictionary of Romanian Literary Press (1690-1990))*, (Bucharest: Press of Romanian Cultural, Foundation 1996), 76.

<sup>5</sup> Valeriu Anania, *Memorii (Memories)*, (Iassy: Polirom, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nichifor Crainic, "Berze (Storks)", in *Ramuri*, 96, no. 12 (December 1912): 598; Nichifor Crainic "La răscruce (At the crossroads)," *Ramuri*, 224, no. 1 (January 1920): 3; Nichifor Crainic, "Aproape (Close)," *Ramuri*, 230, no. 6 (June 1921): 188. But he also published in many other important journals of the time. Cf. I. Petrovici, "Nichifor Crainic," *Gândirea*, 221, no. 11 (December 1940): 193-195.

## THE ANTI-SEMITIC VIEWS OF NICHIFOR CRAINIC AS REFLECTED IN THE “GÂNDIREA” JOURNAL

As we have already mentioned, the contribution of the Romanian philosopher and journalist to *Gândirea* was not a neglecting one. In the years when he directed the publication (it must be mentioned that, after 1945, therefore, shortly after his departure, the journal will be suspended by communists), he published there 96 article signed with his name<sup>7</sup>. If we take into consideration that it was a period when many notes of redaction, chronicles and even articles were signed with pseudonym or presented as editorial note, we may consider that the number of articles signed by him was even bigger. Still, because of methodological reasons, we will work there only with the ones that we are sure that belong to him. Also, it must be mentioned the fact that, there is a great diversity of genres and texts between them. Therefore, reading *Gândirea* in the aforementioned period, the reader will find book reviews, poetries, political articles, theological approaches and s. o. All of them, signed by Nichifor Crainic. From the point of view of their content, they can be classified as it follows: medalions,<sup>8</sup> attitudes towards

<sup>7</sup> Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Nichifor Crainic și *Gândirea* (Nichifor Crainic and *Gândirea*)," *Tabor*, 99, no. 3 (March 2015): 29.

<sup>8</sup> See: Nichifor Crainic, "Nicolae Bălcescu", *Gândirea*, 84, no. 12 (December 1927): 340-347; Nichifor Crainic, "Ioan Mincu premergătorul (Ioan Mincu the predecessor)," *Gândirea*, 90, no. 1-2 (January-February 1929): 57; Nichifor Crainic, "Oscar Walter Cisec," *Gândirea*, 112, no. 1-2 (January-February 1930): 51-53; Nichifor Crainic, "Tudor Vianu, interpret al lui Eminescu (Tudor Vianu – Eminescu's interpreter)," *Gândirea*, 114, no. 6-7 (June-July 1930): 244-246; Nichifor Crainic, "Sf. O. Iosif," *Gândirea*, 114, no. 6-7 (June-July 1930): 257-258; Nichifor Crainic, "Jacques Maritain," *Gândirea*, 115, no. 8-9 (August-September 1930): 314; Nichifor Crainic, "Cupo Sancto," *Gândirea*, 115, no. 11 (November 1930): 390-396; Nichifor Crainic, "Dostoiewski," *Gândirea*, 119, no. 2 (February 1931): 49-53; Nichifor Crainic, "Cincinat Pavelescu," *Gândirea*, 126, no. 9 (September 1931): 372; Nichifor Crainic, "Dan Botta," *Gândirea*, 128, no. 11 (November 1931): 468; Nichifor Crainic, "Un gânditor: Lucian Blaga – rânduri întârziate (A thinker: Lucian Blaga – delayed rows)," *Gândirea*, 132, no. 7-9 (July-September 1932): 322-323; Nichifor Crainic, "George Coșbuc, poetul rasei noastre (The poet of our race)," *Gândirea*, 142, no. 5 (May 1935): 258-267; Nichifor Crainic, "Gib I. Mihăilescu," *Gândirea*, 143, no. 10, (December 1935): 489-493; Nichifor Crainic, "Vasile Goldiș," *Gândirea*, 148, no. 3 (March 1936): 159-160; Nichifor Crainic, "Rainer Maria Rilke", *Gândirea*, 164, no. 1 (January 1939): 1-12; Nichifor Crainic, "N. M. Condiescu," *Gândirea*, 170, no. 7 (September 1939): 388-395; Nichifor Crainic, "Elogiul lui Octavian Goga (Tribute to Octavian Goga)," *Gândirea*, 183, no. 6 (June 1941): 269-277; Nichifor Crainic, "Avram Iancu," *Gândirea*, 261, no. 3 (March 1943): Nichifor Crainic, "Vasile Voiculescu, poet al spiritului (Vasile Voiculescu, poet of the spirit)," *Gândirea*, 267, no. 7 (August-September 1943): 361-370.

political, cultural or religious aspects,<sup>9</sup> theological studies,<sup>10</sup> philosophical or political approach<sup>11</sup>.

In the beginning of the Second World War he will bring together in a book entitled *Germany and Italy in my writing since 1931*<sup>12</sup>, some of this articles from *Gândirea*, but not only from there. Published with a propagandistic purpose, this book's aim is to demonstrate philosopher's orientation towards the two important allies and to highlight the way how he used the influences from there inside his work. He will do the same inside some of the articles published into the publication that we are investigating. But, it must be said that only some of his articles are dedicated to this topic, because, in most of them he focuses on aspects of theology, culture, religious life and religious behaviour or morals.

Therefore, while nationalism is a topic often found both in the poetries signed by Crainic, in theological articles, meditations, reviews or chronicles aspects like anti-Semitism

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. Nichifor Crainic, "Filarmonica (The filarmonic)," *Gândirea*, 38, no. 1, (November 1924): 51; Nichifor Crainic, "La un concert al S. C. R. (To a S. C. R. concert)," *Gândirea*, 41, no. 5 (December 1924): 149; Nichifor Crainic, "Cronica mărunță (Small Chronicles)," *Gândirea*, 70, no. 10 (October 1927): 272-273; Nichifor Crainic, "Pen-clubul românesc (Romanian pen-club)," 69, no. 9 (September 1927): 85-87; Nichifor Crainic, "Tradiție și internaționalism (Tradition and internationalism)," *Gândirea*, 86, no. 2, (February 1928): 76-77; Nichifor Crainic, "Sensul tradiției (The sense of tradition)," *Gândirea*, 97, no. 1-2 (February 1929): 1-11; Nichifor Crainic, "Pacifism," *Gândirea*, 107, no. 4, (April 1930): 101-105; Nichifor Crainic, "O carte de teologie estetică (A book of esthetical theology)," *Gândirea*, 111, no. 8-9 (August-September 1930): 300-302; Nichifor Crainic "Romancier de mâna stângă (Left-hand novelist)," *Gândirea*, 117, no. 4 (April 1931): 180-182; Nichifor Crainic, "Condamnarea lui Andre Gide (The condemnation of Andre Gide)," *Gândirea*, 116, no. 3 (March 1931): 131-132; Nichifor Crainic, "Despre demofilie (About demophily)," *Gândirea*, 231, no. 1 (January 1941): 1-8; Nichifor Crainic, "România în Europa nouă" (Romania in New Europe)," *Gândirea*, 251, no. 3 (March 1944): 121-130.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Nichifor Crainic, "Politică și ortodoxie (Politics and orthodoxy)," *Gândirea*, 29, no. 5 (November 1923): 77-83; Nichifor Crainic, "Între Apollo și Iisus (Between Apollo and Jesus)," *Gândirea*, 73, no. 1 (January 1927): 1-4; Nichifor Crainic, "Între Apollo și Iisus (Between Apollo and Jesus)," *Gândirea*, 80, no. 2 (February 1927): 61-64; Nichifor Crainic, "Spiritualitate (Spirituality)," *Gândirea*, 91, no. 8-9 (August-September 1928): 307-310; Nichifor Crainic, "Tineretul și creștinismul (Youth and Christianity)," *Gândirea*, 135, no. 3 (March 1934): 65-73; Nichifor Crainic, "Ortodoxie (Orthodoxy)," *Gândirea*, 179, no. 1 (January 1939): 1-9; Nichifor Crainic, "Rugăciunea lui Iisus (Jesus prayer)," *Gândirea*, 181, no. 5 (May 1934): 217-224; Nichifor Crainic, "Filocalia (The Philocaly)," *Gândirea*, 181, no. 5 (May 1934): 280. Cf. Doina Curticăpeanu, "Nostalgia Paradisului (Paradise nostalgia)," *Tabor*, 34, no. 10 (January 2010): 58; Nichifor Crainic, "Regele și Biserica (The king and the Church)," *Gândirea*, 224, no. 10 (December 1939): 529-537; Nichifor Crainic, "Modul teandric (Theandric way)," *Gândirea*, 227, no. 1 (January 1940): 1-7; Nichifor Crainic, "Viața spirituală în România de azi (Spiritual life in today's Romania)," *Gândirea*, 237, no. 10 (December 1940): 623-640; Nichifor Crainic, "Poesia noastră religioasă (Our religious poetry)," *Gândirea*, 269, no. 8 (October 1943): 425-432; Nichifor Crainic, "Ortodoxia română ca funcțiune europeană (Romanian Orthodoxy as European function)," *Gândirea*, 258, no. 1 (January 1944): 1-8; Nichifor Crainic, "Dionisie Areopagitul (Dionisius the Areopagite)," *Gândirea*, 261, no. 4-5 (April-May 1944): 185-196.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Crainic, "Politică și ortodoxie (Politics and orthodoxy)": 77-83; Crainic, "Între Apollo și Iisus (Between Apollo and Jesus)": 1-4; Crainic, "Între Apollo și Iisus (Between Apollo and Jesus)": 61-64; Crainic, "Spiritualitate (Spirituality)": 307-310; Crainic, "Tineretul și creștinismul (Youth and Christianity)": 65-73; Crainic, "Ortodoxie (Orthodoxy)": 1-9; Crainic, "Rugăciunea lui Iisus (Jesus prayer)": 217-224; Crainic, "Filocalia (The Philocaly)": 280; Nichifor Crainic, "Teologie și estetică (Theology and aesthetics)," *Gândirea*, 204, no. 4 (April 1939): 204-210; Nichifor Crainic, "Modul teandric (Theandric way)": 1-7; Crainic, "Viața spirituală în România de azi (Spiritual life in today's Romania)": 623-640; Crainic, "Poesia noastră religioasă (Our religious poetry)": 425-432; Crainic, "Ortodoxia română ca funcțiune europeană (Romanian Orthodoxy as European function)": 1-8; Crainic, "Dionisie Areopagitul (Dionisius the Areopagite)": 185-196. Cf. Morariu, "Nichifor Crainic și *Gândirea* (Nichifor Crainic and *Gândirea*)," : 29-32.

<sup>12</sup> Nichifor Crainic, *Germania și Italia în scrisul meu dela 1931 încoace (Germany and Italy in my writings since 1931)*, (Bucharest: Cugetarea Press, 1941).

are poor highlighted there. Still, like other intellectuals of the time,<sup>13</sup> he will use religious, historical or economic reasons to justify his conception about them and to be part of a conception that has been then embraced by many people and based on aspects like the results of some of their commercial activities, like selling alcohol.<sup>14</sup>

Coming back to Crainic, we must say that, while in articles like *"The allies of Adolf Hitler"*,<sup>15</sup> a text that certifies his filo-Nazi orientation at that moment, being a kind of testimony, the one dedicated to the providence and its role in history,<sup>16</sup> *Voices from Balkans*,<sup>17</sup> where he evaluates the diplomatic, social and cultural situation of the space where we live, or even in *Contemporary German spirit*,<sup>18</sup> which is another text that will contribute for sure to his later self-censorship of his memorial writings, there can be found aspects related with Jews and small accents of anti-Semitism (for example in the phrases where he praise the attitude of the Fuhrer), to see his real opinion about this topic, a researcher must dig deeply inside his works, read his entire publications from the aforementioned journal and identify small parts that are relevant for this topic.

Therefore, the most vehement attitude of the writer about Jews and the only that we found there, is part of an article written by him in 1941. It may look strange, but his approach starts as a chronicle and goes rather to the theological essay than to the political one. Entitled *Our ecumenical land*<sup>19</sup>, the text starts from the description of a conference where an important Russian theologian from exile was invited to speak about the ecumenical dimension of "patria". He underlines the necessity of Orthodoxy to discover this important aspect and to step over the artificial borders created by the national understanding of religion and of the Church. The thinker criticises there aspects like *philetism* that must have been present in his days in some of the attitudes of Constantinople Patriarchate and some of Orthodox faithful, but also in Slavic space and other Orthodox areas. Still, in the beginning of his article, he makes a big digression, not to develop an argument based on Scripture's text, but to refer at Jews and criticise them. He says there:

"If we would be Jews, we would not stay to choose (the two lands, our note), because the two lands would be reduced to one alone. Without having roots in no one country in the world, but only tentacles, they unwind from there to wind in other spaces. Their nation is only namely the dogma of racial egoism, with the aspect of a vividly ambiguous where you do not know if Talmud is more Saint than their bank registry. The dogma of racial egoism excludes the idea of ecumenism. And also, where we say "Judaic international," we do not understand through that, an ecumenical notion, but only a verbal artifice under which is hidden the exclusivism of some people who do not participate to the spiritual community of any stranger nation. It is not true that the Jew is a man with

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Emil Boşca-Mălin, *Evreii în Țara Năsăudului (Jews in Năsăud country)*, (Braşov: Press of Writers from Năsăud Area 1943).

<sup>14</sup> See for example: A. C. Cuza, *Lupta contra alcoolismului în România (The fight against alcoholism in Romania)*, (Iassy: National Press 1897); Nicodem Munteanu, Ludovic Cosma, Anghel Constantinescu, *Jos Beţia! (Down with the drunk!)*, (Bucharest, Press of Socec&Co, Bucureşti, 1908) for more information about this topic, for Romanian attitude and the way how this activity representative for Jews in Romanian space contributed to the formation of a certain mental representation of them.

<sup>15</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Aliații lui Adolf Hittler (The allies of Adolf Hitler)," *Gândirea*, 234, no. 7 (September 1941): 337-340.

<sup>16</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Providența în istorie (Providency in history)," *Gândirea*, 251, no. 1 (January 1942): 1-8.

<sup>17</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Glasuri din Balcani (Voices from Balkans)," *Gândirea*, 255, no. 6 (June-July 1942): 281-283.

<sup>18</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Spiritul german contimporan (German contemporary spirit)," *Gândirea*, 263, no. 2 (February 1943): 57-64.

<sup>19</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Patria noastră ecumenică (Our ecumenical land)," *Gândirea*, 236, no. 5 (May 1941): 209-216.

many national lands, as it is often believed. On the contrary, he is the representant of a people from Christian Europe who has only one national land, which looks neither with our national land, nor with our ecumenical one. From this situation sui generis is born the incapacity of Jews to be integrated between other peoples. Judaic tragedy comes from the identity between religion and race, between Talmud and Israelite collective. This tragedy shows, especially to us, to the Orthodox Christians, where leads the confusion or identity between race and religion."<sup>20</sup>

Without having a direct relationship with the subject of his approach, the digression dedicated to the Jews that shows his attitude towards them is interesting and useful. It highlights the fact that the attitude of Crainic is motivated, at least at this level, by their understanding of Talmud, their economic policy and the way how they understand the others, refusing to integrate themselves among the others. What generated his attitude towards them in an article where he speaks about the relevance of love principle in relationship with others<sup>21</sup> is difficult to say. The fact that it is the only text where the author has this vehemence against Jews may also rise some question marks and let us think why, ashamed about what he wrote here and about some other allusions from other articles, he decided to self-censorship some parts of his autobiographical writings.

### CONCLUSION

Anti-Semite attitude of Nichifor Crainic from *Gândirea* journal is, as we could see an appearance with a fairly low recurrence. Some allusions to the Jews in the articles dedicated to Hitler, Nazi doctrine or fascism are accompanied with a digression coming from an article with theological content that summarizes his approach to Jews and their way of being. The philosopher seems to be rather interested about aspects like keeping national identity, relating spirituality with history or political life than about Jews and their role in Romanian history, at least in the articles published in the investigated journal. Still, when he speaks about them, his anti-Semite attitude is a fact that can be proved and is related with an interesting perception about their way of acting, some behaviours of Jews that he encountered, but also with a conception often shared by far-right oriented intellectuals. Together with other aspects of his work from the aforementioned journal, it shows the complexity of his works and emphasizes some arguments of his thinking. Therefore, together with other aspects of his activity, Nichifor Crainic must be rediscovered, investigated and discussed, for having a complete landscape of his life and activity from this controversial period of his life.

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<sup>20</sup> Crainic, "Patria noastră ecumenică (Our ecumenical land)": 209-210.

<sup>21</sup> Crainic, "Patria noastră ecumenică (Our ecumenical land)": 211.

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