



VWI goes to the IWM

Wednesday, 18th of March 2015, 16.00-17.30
Institute for Human Sciences
Spittelauer Lände 3
1090 Vienna

Ionuț-Florin BILIUTA Sowing the Seeds of Hate – The Antisemitism of the Orthodox Church in Interwar Romania

The present project is focused on the antisemitic discourse of several prominent orthodox clergymen and theologians associated with the Romanian Iron Guard and the radicalisation of orthodox nationalism under the impact of fascism. Under a wave of right-wing ideological radicalisation, orthodox clergymen and theologians shifted from understanding the Jew according to the Patristic theology and Canon law to a more confessional, exclusivist trend of theology. The contributions of the Orthodox theologians and laymen to the narrative related to identity construction in post 1918



Romania led to a process of exclusion of the Jews from the midst of the nation fundamentally different from other fascist movements, namely the exclusion on confessional grounds: if a Romanian citizen did not share the same religious confession as the majority of the population, he was deemed ethnically unfit to be a *true* Romanian citizen and could only achieve the status of a *good* Romanian. This was the first step for the complete exclusion of the Jewish minority from the Romanian nation, and the process was so radical that the need for racial laws became obsolete. If in Nazi Germany the Protestant Churches followed their political leader's

antisemitic stance, in the Romanian case some of the most radical anti-Jewish positions stemmed from within the Orthodox Church. These theologians distanced themselves from the conceptual views of the Jews cultivated by the Nazis (with their *positive Christianity* and Aryans as the master-race) and the Italian fascists (with a complicated relation with Roman Catholicism) both perceived as deviations from Christian dogma. Instead they defended the presence of the Old Testament in the Corpus of the Scriptures and denied any Aryan trace in the Orthodox Church's Christology.

Comments by Oliver Jens SCHMITT

Ionuț-Florin Biliuta is currently a Junior Fellow at the VWI. He has a PhD in History from CEU (Budapest, Hungary) and is a PhD student in Theology at Babeș-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania). He has numerous publications in Romanian historical journals. Together with *Nadia Al-Bagdadi* and *Anca Șincan*, he is currently editing 'Transforming a Church. Eastern Christianity in Post-Imperial Societies' (Budapest: CEU University Press, 2014).

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Oliver Jens Schmitt is historian, Professor of Eastern European History at the University of Vienna.