
Simion Retegan, *Luptând pe două fronturi. Memorandistul Vasile Lucaciu (Fighting on Two Fronts. The Memorandist Vasile Lucaciu)*, Argonaut Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2016, 553 p.

Father Vasile Lucaciu, “the Lion of Șișești”, is indisputably one of the exceptional personalities of the Romanian nation's modern period. He contributed decisively to the developments of the national movement of Transylvanian Romanians during the decades prior to World War I, to the strengthening of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church and, last but not least, to the preparation and accomplishment of the Great Union. Therefore, such a historical figure has triggered the appreciation of those who admired and loved him, but also the hatred of those who detested him during his lifetime. He was not forgotten by historians; today, a century after the events that fulfilled his efforts, he still represents a fresh, interesting, and generous study subject. Thus, 100 years after the “Romanian battalions” crossed the Carpathians, the Cluj-based historian Simion Retegan publishes a monograph dedicated to Vasile Lucaciu, a contribution that, according to current research on this topic, proves itself to be the most complete and voluminous work in respect of the proposed documentary contribution.

Simion Retegan, Full Researcher at the “George Barițiu” Institute of History, affiliated with the Cluj Branch of the Romanian Academy, has honored the 19th century history of Transylvanian Romanians for more than five decades, by publishing studies, books, and thorough analyses, which have become milestones

of Romanian historiography. By elaborating on the meetings of the Sibiu Parliament during the period of the neo-liberal experiment, on George Bariț and “his contemporaries”, the Romanian villages of Transylvania as “school founders”, the Romanian religious schools that were functioning “in the shadow of the bell towers” of wooden churches, Simion Retegan has proven himself to be a tireless researcher of archives, who has brought to light extensive documentary contributions that have enriched Romanian historiography and culture.

The book presented here was published last year, in 2016, by the Argonaut Publishing House. It is structured in eight chapters, and it begins with introductory considerations included in the foreword; at its end there are documentary annexes, an index of persons, and an index of localities. While reading the book, one notices the dimensions of the scientific effort that preceded it, the long study of archival documents, the author's dedication and skill in creating a whole out of the vast quantity of information he had at hand. Among the few considerations included in this review, we wish to point out the “strengths” of the book, the elements of the content that reveal their own importance and value. As shown above, the volume signed by Simion Retegan brings forth a very rich documentary contribution referring to the study

of the public activity of the priest and national fighter Vasile Lucaciu. The archival funds consulted for this purpose are of the greatest relevance for the study of this topic; they are located in Romania, like for example the fund of the *Gherla Greek-Catholic Episcopal Office*, affiliated with the Cluj County Branch of the National Archives, the fund of the *Blaj Metropolitan Office of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church*, stored at the Alba County Branch of the National Archives, the fund *Gheorghe Pop de Băsești*, stored in the Central Library of the Cluj-Napoca University, the documentary fund of the National Union Museum in Cluj-Napoca, as well as the documents of the Congregation for Oriental Churches Archives in Rome, essential for understanding the trial between Lucaciu and his Diocesan Bishop Ioan Szabó of Gherla. The so far unpublished information revealed by the book can be found both at the level of text reconstitution and argumentation as well as in the form of documents presented *in extenso* in the addendum, namely those related to Vasile Lucaciu's disciplinary trial.

Secondly, the volume signed by Simion Retegan is the most complete monograph on Vasile Lucaciu, regardless of how many historiographical attempts concerning this subject have been made so far. The book follows a long series of articles concerning Father Lucaciu; their texts and authors are explicitly quoted by Simion Retegan, who declares that they were useful in his research. From this point of view, we would like to mention a few authors illustrating the older and the newer historiography dedicated to the personage we are interested in: August-

tin Iuga, Valeriu Achim, Aurel Socolan, Blaga Mihoc, Liviu Botezan, Ion Iacoș. Under the circumstances in which the studies regarding this personality have focused mainly on the activity of the national fighter Vasile Lucaciu, Simion Retegan considerably broadens the perspective and includes the Priest's church activity in his work. This represents an essential merit of the book, i.e. the fact that it is a monograph that recovers the ecclesiastical side of the studied personality. On the same note, we must add that the trial against Bishop Szabó is by far one of the most valuable contributions. Professor Retegan deserves the merit of being the first to reconstitute this aspect of Lucaciu's biography and to publish the supporting documents. The author's introductory considerations already suggest this aspect: "Incomparably less has been written about the Priest, who was called 'Father of all Romanians'. And almost nothing was written about the great canonical trial he held against Ioan Szabó, his Bishop, a trial that started, without coincidence, simultaneously with the Memorandum; it continued for almost 12 years, it was passed from the Romanian Greek-Catholic tribunals to that of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, with several definitive sentences; it was restarted through repeated appeals in annulment – four times by the Bishop, once by the Priest – the latter fighting against the whole Diocesan ecclesiastical apparatus." (p. 7).

Thus, the book recreates the public person "Lucaciu was, both as a priest and as a politician", while at the same time offering an extended perspective on his activity, a reconstitution in which we encounter the church and cultural activity

of Vasile Lucaciu, the priest, professor, and journalist, his rich and fruitful involvement in the political and national struggle, his role in the Memorandum movement, his activity as a RNP Parliamentary Deputy in Budapest, the relentless fighter for the creation of Great Romania, in the Old Kingdom after 1914, in Italy and in the United States of America, for supporting the Great Union at the end of the world war. This ample and complex dimension of the research results in the fact that the author does not leave out any relevant aspect of the activity of Vasile Lucaciu, the Church servant and the national coryphaeus.

Last but not least, we would like to point out the up-to-dateness of Vasile Lucaciu's personality and of the message he can offer us, Romanians living in the 21st century. We are confronted with a strong belief in the religious values he served and in the national ideal he followed, doubled by an activism and a power of transforming words into deeds that make Vasile Lucaciu truly unique. Today, when public life overwhelms us with actions of the political elites excelling in mediocrity and unprofessionalism, of moral relativity and based on the selection of non-values, we realize that the appearance of a personality with the strength and amplitude of Vasile Lucaciu would be equivalent to a true renaissance, a true self-discovery of the Romanian people.

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