

# **Builders and Martyrs of the Unification**

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## **VASILE LUCACIU AND IULIU MANIU, IN THE STRUGGLE FOR ROMANIAN RIGHTS AND *THE GREAT UNION OF TRANSYLVANIA WITH ROMANIA, 1918***

Prof. Dr. Ioan Condor

The desire for a union of Transylvania with Romania was permanent, as Romanians of this Principality were dreaming of The Great Union for centuries, feelings which at times were expressed publicly and in an organized manner. During the revolution of 1784-1785 (known as the Revolt of Horea, Cloșca and Crișan), a slogan was launched, saying “Horea King of Dacia” and “Dacia Rex”, meaning the longing for the union of Romanian territories was ever growing – a union desired to be following the model of the two unifications of Dacia by Burebista and the unified kingdom of Decebalus (2).

As such, the Romanian rulers ably conditioned the involvement of Romania into the First World War with the terms that, at the end of the conflict, our country be made whole by joining together Romanian territories. In this regard there were added lines in three significant articles of the 1916 Treaty of Bucharest, signed between Romania and the Entente Powers.

The principle of Romanian national unity was firmly supported by the Transylvanian and Romanian population, and abroad by a large number of famous figures from fields such as the arts, sciences, culture and politics.

We distinguish the valuable contribution of Vasile Lucaciu, Iuliu Maniu and Octavian Goga, patriotic figures who promoted the radicalization of the campaign for pro-Union intervention, supported the Great War in order to reunite the country of Romania, and traveled throughout Transylvania and the Kingdom of Romania, marching and acting together (3).

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### The accomplishments of Vasile Lucaciu, an invaluable political figure



In discussing the figure of philosopher Dr. Vasile Lucaciu, we must emphasize that his most acknowledged activity was political, set in motion for serving the Romanian nation. Renowned speaker, forceful thinker, author of three volumes, he took part in all of the political struggles of the Romanians oppressed by and subjected to imperial ruling. Having vastly knowledgeable and significant historical, diplomatic, juridical and philosophical resources, Vasile Lucaciu was a strong mind on which the union of all Romanians could have faith in. Hence, in 1887 he is elected member of the National Committee, and in 1892 becomes Secretary General of the Romanian National Party. During the time of the Transylvanian Memorandum he becomes an emblem of national pride and a symbol for all Romanians, afterwards being condemned to five years in prison by the authorities; this was the longest sentence set to any of the key participants to the action of signing the Memorandum (4).

In 1911, Dr. Vasile Lucaciu joins the First Universal Races Congress, organized in London, an anti-racism effort with more than 50 countries involved, where he declares that “before culture and civilization, oppression and abuse must be erased, so that mankind’s genius may go forth unobstructed, on the glorious road of fellowship between people and respect between races.”

The following year, 1912, Vasile Lucaciu took a firm attitude against the founding of the Diocese of Hajdu-Dorogh in Hungary, with a mass spoken in the Hungarian language, at which the Hungarian people insisted Romanians also take part. In December 1914, together with his friend Octavian Goga, Lucaciu crosses the Carpathian Mountains, being welcome with enthusiasm, as he was considered the leader of the movement for freedom and unity of Transylvania. In Bucharest he makes contact and meets with great figures of that time, such as Nicolae Iorga, Nicolae Filipescu, Take Ionescu, Nicolae Titulescu, Mihail Sadoveanu and many others, with which, in a variety of publications, he continues the struggle for unity between Transylvania and Romania.

He took actions for representing Romania in Italy (1915), in the USA (1917), in France and Switzerland (1918), in favor of the Romanian claims to unification. In this period he was elected as President of the League of Culture, member in the Diligent Council of Transylvania (1919-1920),

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President of the League for Cultural Unity of All Romanians, which had Nicolae Iorga as Secretary, and finally elected Vice-President of the National Council of Romanian Unity, operating in Paris.

In 1920 he wins a mandate as a deputy (representative), and on June 21 the same year, Dr. Vasile Lucaciu conducted the works of the first Parliament of Greater Romania (România Mare), as dean of honor. From his speech held with this special occasion, we give the following memorable lines:

“I thank the cherished Providence that I have managed to preside, if only for a moment, this illustrious National Gathering, this Parliament, in which I can salute with endless piety our national ideal thoroughly realized and made whole.”

.....

“We have, therefore, honored Chamber, a Romania made whole. But if it was hard to achieve this great and holy legacy, just as hard it is to keep it, support and protect it.

Surrounded by outside enemies, the country crying out of need and wishing improvement on all terrain, our beloved Romania calls for all virtue, all of its sons’ devotion and loyalty, in order to adhere to its greater calling – to be the sentinel of Latin civilization in the East of Europe, in the Orient, and at the mouths of the Danube River.

The brilliance of our nation invites you, honored Chamber, to a work without pause, without cessation, a fruitful work, not with arid conflicts, party conflicts, but through patriotic rivalry and competition. To serve the common goal – our nation’s betterment.”

.....

How contemporary and compelling an advice is the one above, today, taking into account the harsh and difficult situation our country and its people are in.

The limited space did not permit us to provide and discuss all the facts regarding the laborious life and activity of Dr. Vasile Lucaciu, in his struggle for reaching an ideal so much desired by our nation – the realization of state unity. For his work Vasile Lucaciu was dubbed “The Lion of Şişeşti” (“Leul de la Şişeşti”).

We will try, though, to remember with gratitude the one who fought and gave his life for a truly just cause, a profoundly noble ideal. This gratitude joins the thanksgivings of past generations, who acknowledged and understood the higher goals of the struggles that were made before 1918.

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I cannot end this synthesis, and I could not forgive myself if I would, without first quoting a few verses from the emotional “Lament of Lucaciu” (*Doina lui Lucaciu*):

“Cântă mierla prin păduri,  
Robu-i Lucaci la unguri  
Pentru Sfânta Libertate  
De care noi n-avem parte!

.....

.....

Vine dalba primăvară,  
Fi-va Lucaci liber iară!”

“Sings the blackbird through the forests,  
Lucaci bonded taken is  
For the Sacred Liberty  
That for us not comes to be!

.....

.....

Here comes spring the beautiful  
Lucaci bonded is no more!”

The “Lament of Lucaciu” is an honest requiem of anguish and a hymn of hope for all Romanians, so that they may never live subdued and subservient, subjugated and broken, laying in defeat (5).

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### The life and activity of Iuliu Maniu, an extraordinary Transylvanian figure

In 1906 he is elected deputy of Vinț (Alba Iulia), in the Parliament of Budapest, and in the meeting of May 21<sup>st</sup> 1906 he gives a speech in which, among others, firmly declares: “against those actions of the (Hungarian, *translator’s note*) government, which will have the tendencies to restrain the development of social, economic and political development of other nationalities in the country (including Romanians, *t/n*), we will start and support the most energetic, conscious and manly struggle, without consideration to...”

He ends his decisive speech, intertwined at times with powerful noises, with the following:

“Honored Chamber! My conviction stands that it is **not** permitted to introduce even into the army the tendencies to turn Hungarian.”

In 1916, Iuliu Maniu refuses, together with Vasile Goldiș, Valeriu Braniște and other Romanians, to sign a declaration of fidelity to the Austro-Hungarian regime, setting him apart from the representatives of other nations.

Getting back from the frontline, in October-November 1918, artillery-man Iuliu Maniu, representative of the Romanian National Committee, inscribes in Vienna one of the least known pages of history. While Austrian and Hungarian soldiers left their units, or enrolled under the flag of the Bolshevik Revolution, the officers of Romanian troops held their ranks and kept a “Large Meeting of Romanian officers and soldiers” in Vienna. At their command is artillery captain Iuliu Maniu, who has talks with the Emperor and the War-Minister, surveys the city, disrupts the pillaging of Austria’s capital city, and keeps in touch with Romanian regiments serving the same purpose in Prague. Each and every Romanian soldier instructed in Vienna and Prague returned home in orderly manner, becoming vital elements of the National Guard, keeping their lands safe and maintaining the peace in their villages, mobilizing citizens or marching in front of them to Alba Iulia.

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918, Maniu speaks in front of a gathering at Alba Iulia. It is a priceless speech, kept carefully hidden from the younger generation by the Communist regime. He affirms that “we, Honored National Assembly, look upon the realization of national unity as a triumph of human liberty... Deeply

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rooted in us is the belief that only with an administration of honest democracy we can strengthen our country and make triumphant our nation...” (6)

After many solemn moments, the actions pass from Alba Iulia to the organization of the newly-freed province, Transylvania. The Great Assembly of Alba Iulia elects Iuliu Maniu as president of the Transylvania Directory Council (a provisional government, *t/n*) and Minister of the Interior, whose purpose was to make the transition from the legislation and organization of the Empire to that of the Kingdom of Romania. For almost two years Maniu led the governmental tasks of **Ardeal** (Transylvania), consolidating the new Romanian administration, re-establishing peace and order.

As representatives of the Transylvania Directory Council, president Iuliu Maniu sends a delegation to Bucharest, welcomed by Prime Minister Ion Brătianu with the unforgettable words: “We have been expecting you for a thousand years, and you come now for us to never part again!” A beautiful and electrifying historical moment!

Iuliu Maniu was President of the Romanian National Party from 1918 to 1926, of the National Peasant’s Party (Partidul Național Țărănesc – PNȚ) from 1926 to 1933 and 1937 to 1947, Prime Minister for three terms – from 1928 to 1930, from June to October 1930, and from 1932 to 1933. The Romanian Academy made him an honorary member post-mortem.

Maniu was a political figure of European stature, a great patriot with an elevated moral standard. As such, he was realistically presented by the important writer Mihail Diaconescu in the novel *The Sacrifice* (*Sacrificiul*), an epic appraisal of the Great Union of Romanians in 1918. Until now, Mihail Diaconescu is, it seems, the only writer to have made Iuliu Maniu a literary hero and an exemplary model in a work with symbolic and grand character.

Accordingly, it must be mentioned that Iuliu Maniu is a descendent of a family of Romanian nobles from the Sălaj county, grand-grandson from the father’s side of the great politician and philosopher Simion Bărnuțiu, vice-president of the National Assembly at Câmpia Libertății near Blaj, when, between May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> thousands of Romanians joined in to shout “we want to make the union of Romanian countries”.

The gruesome penal trial held (and framed, *t/n*) by Communist authorities in 1947, removed Iuliu Maniu and imprisoned him, as he was convicted to life in prison at the age of 75. A tragic date, the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1953, moment in time when he dies, at the age of 80, in the Sighet prison. The great state-man, fearless fighter for Romanian rights, for the unification of Romania and for democracy, Iuliu Maniu,

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passes on in a time of torment for his nation, his body being thrown in an anonymous grave, in the common pit of the Sighet cemetery (7).

### Notes and References:

1. See: Nicolae Iorga, *Pagini Alese*, Vol. 2, București ESPLA, 1965, page 98.
2. For details, see: Vladimir Dumitrescu, Alexandru Vulpe, *Dacia înainte de Dromichete*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1988, pages 112-113; Hadrian Daicoviciu, *Dacii*, Ed. Științifică, București, 1965, pages 86-88; Ioan Condor, *Dacii: De la Burebista la Decebal and Statul Dac condus de regele Decebal*, both articles from the series “Transilvania – pământ și neam românesc”, in the magazine “Valahia, Dacia Nemuritoare”, number 47 – July 2017, page 8, and number 48 – August 2017, page 8.
3. See: Valeriu Achim, Aurel Socolan, *Dr. Vasile Lucaciu. Luptător pentru drepturile românilor și Unirea Transilvaniei cu România*, Comitetul pentru Cultură și Artă al județului Maramureș, Muzeul Județean Baia-Mare, 1968, pages 101 and the following; Vasile Lucaciu, *Instituții Filosofice, 3 Volume: Logica, Metafizica și Etica*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2005; Ioan Condor, *Vasile Lucaciu*, in the magazine “Valahia, Dacia Nemuritoare” number 5 – May 2016, page 8.
4. See: Tiron Albani, *Vasile Lucaciu 1852-1922. Leul de la Șișești. Ediție Aniversară. 100 de ani de la Marea Unire*, Editura Societății Culturale Pro-Maramureș “Dragoș-Vodă”, Cluj-Napoca. (This book was first published in 1936 at Cercul Ziariștilor din Oradea, being re-edited in honor of the Centenary of the Great Union) 2017, pages 97 and the following.
5. See: Ioan Corneanu, Vasile Moiş, *Părintele Dr. Vasile Lucaciu, un apostol al Unirii Neamului Românesc*, Editura Solstițiu, Satu-Mare, 1999, pages 85 and the following.
6. *Minerva. Enciclopedia Română*, Cluj, 1929, Editura “Comitetul de redacție al Enciclopediei Române Minerva” p. 630, 646-647.
7. Iuliu Maniu, *Testament Moral Politic*, Editura “Gândirea Românească”, București, 1991; Mihail Diaconescu, *Sacrificiul*, a novel. Editura Magic Print, Second Edition, Onești, 2010 (759 pages).