

données succinctes d'histoire militaire, passant en revue les structures de l'armée roumaine du Pays de Beiuș et les personnalités qui s'y étaient fait remarquer.

Cette vaste collection d'informations et de fragments biographiques n'assume pas d'options méthodologiques révolutionnaires et ne prétend pas à une originalité facile, mais elle a le mérite d'apporter une contribution majeure à une perception anthropocentriste de l'histoire, affranchie des contraintes imposées par des préjugés pseudo-savants, en lui rendant sa dimension première, de vie réelle.



FLORIAN DUMITRU SOPORAN

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**LAURIAN SOMEȘAN**

**Studii de geografie** (Geography studies)

Edited by ALEXANDRU A. PĂCURAR

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**I**N THE spring of 2020, the geographic literature gained a new volume in the “retrieval of memory” series, a path opened by Professor Alexandru A. Păcurar from the Faculty of Geography, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca.

After bringing to the forefront George Vâlsan's most beloved disciple, Prof. Nicolae Dragomir, with his studies on the shepherds of Mărginimea Sibiului, now is the turn of another geographer to be put in the scientific spotlight—Laurian Someșan, also supervised and guided by George Vâlsan, in his research on sheepherding.

As expected, Professor Alexandru A. Păcurar once again succeeds in astounding us with an impressive 681 pages-long volume. Besides the text proper, it includes

345 images featuring several official documents and correspondence, as well as 46 never-before-seen photographs of Professor Laurian Someșan.

The volume starts with a bilingual Romanian-English Table of Contents (pp. V–VIII), followed by *Tabula Gratulatoria*, complete with the editor's distinctive humour, showed in his appreciation of the well-meaning but unfortunately fruitless intentions of the dean of the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Management. The editor is also the author of the Foreword (pp. 1–5, in Romanian, and pp. 7–12 in English), which states that

*Laurian Someșan's selection from among the ranks of the members of the Institute of Geography, as early as his third year of study, was not accidental. The tall, scrawny man, sober and internalized, studious and hardworking . . . was noticed by the scholar [George Vâlsan] and the faculty members and consequently coopted by the institute as a promising individual. (P. 1)*

The first part of the volume, “Laurian Someșan: Geography Studies” (pp. 13–232) contains four relevant studies written by the geographer from Monor. The first of them is “Traces of Human Life in the Region of Călimani Mountains,” published in the *Papers of the Institute of Geography of Cluj University*, vol. 6 (Cluj, 1936). The publication of this chapter, the second part of his doctoral thesis, is a natural continuation of his “Pastoral Life in the Călimani Mountains” (1933). The following study is “Length and Evolution of the Romanian Agriculture in Transylvania” (1939–1940), and then comes “The Plain of Tisza River As a Natural Ethnic Barrier” (1943), a Romanian response to the

study titled *Die Theisesebene, eine natürliche Grenze zwischen Rumänen und Magyaren: Geographische und geopolitische Studie* (Sibiu, 1939). It undeniably proves the legitimacy of Romania's western border along the orographic barrier of the Tisza Plain. Finally, the fourth study, *Le sol roumain*, was published under the aegis of the Center for Transylvanian Studies and Research (Sibiu, 1944). It was commissioned by the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as, at the end of the Second World War, Romania was in dire need of geopolitical studies that would legitimize and prove the validity of the borders set during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.

One of its most remarkable attributes is that the editor went beyond simply transcribing the texts or reproducing the illustrations. He completely revamped the graphics and the maps, using the latest cartographic methods, courtesy of a geographer-cartographer, Lecturer Dr. Adrian Niță. Furthermore, he corrected the orthographic mistakes found in the references of Laurian Someșan's studies, errors mainly caused by the publisher's negligence.

The second part of the volume, "Alexandru A. Păcurar—Romanian Geographers from Transylvania in an Effort to Mitigate the 'Restlessness of Spaces': Laurian Someșan" (pp. 235–582), is the fruit of the editor's own scientific labour. He patiently and diligently put together numerous archival documents and unique photographs, which wholly portray "the man and the work" of this distinguished geographer.

His portrayal starts with biographical information, on his family and later his schooling, his education culminating with his studies at the University of Cluj, the Faculty of Sciences, Geography Section,

Geography-History specialization (he initially attended Geography-Natural Studies), graduating in February 1929.

The entire ebb and flow of his professional and teaching career is depicted, divided into three periods: 1. the Cluj period, with the "formation of his geographic ideas" and "publishing debut," alongside his family life (junior teaching assistant, assistant, and lecturer at the Institute of Geography of the University of Cluj between 1 October 1926 and 28 February 1943); 2. the Brașov period, a period of turmoil, suggestively named by Alexandru A. Păcurar a "period between zenith and nadir," when Laurian Someșan was a university professor and the rector of King Michael I Trade and Industrial Studies Academy of Cluj-Brașov between 1 October 1941 and 1 July 1948; between 1946 and 1950, he was acting director of the Bucharest Institute of Geographic Research; on 1 January 1951, he was however forcefully removed from academia and research, one year later being arrested and sent to several prisons and labor camps—Brașov, Bucharest, the Danube-Black Sea Canal, and Borzești; he was released in April 1954; he returned to academia as a professor at the Brașov Faculty of Forestry; three years later, he was once again purged; 3. the Suceava period of "late rehabilitation" (1 October 1965–1 October 1971) marked his return to the academic career, as a lecturer (1965–1967), associate professor (1968–1969) and professor (1970–1971).

What follows is a comprehensive analysis of Laurian Someșan's scientific work, which is comprised of numerous articles and studies primarily focused on Transylvania. His investigative field expanded from the national to the international once

he gained enough scientific traction. All of his research was published in Romanian as well as international journals, without forgetting other publications in various magazines such as: *Societatea de mâine*, *Transilvania*, *Țara Silvaniei*, *Tribuna*, *Țara Noastră*, *Ofensiva Română*, *Gazeta Bistriței* and *Drum Drept*.

Equally fascinating is his correspondence with the great figures of Romanian geography, including, among others, Simion Mehedinți, George Vâlsan, Ion Conea, Tiberiu Morariu, Vasile Nimigeanu, and Ion Vintilescu. The entire corpus of letters was gifted to the editor by Laurian Someșan's daughter, physicist Dr. Maria Someșan.

Finally, the volume turns to the correspondence with his family, written during his incarceration (15 August 1952–April 1954), a first for the entire Romanian geographic literature and a feat that deserves praise and attention.

The volume concludes with the classic shibboleth found in all of Professor

Alexandru A. Păcurar's works, an extended addendum of notes (pp. 583–634) containing 316 individuals mentioned in the text, followed by an institutional, nomenclature and topographic index (pp. 635–666), allowing the reader to effortlessly identify any information deemed necessary. The references (pp. 667–681) contain 272 sources and 50 websites, thus completing the portrait of the man and the scientist Laurian Someșan.

This excellent monograph will be appreciated both by geographers and by the general public, primarily on account of its artistic qualities, including the editing, printing, cover design, paper type, graphics, all harmoniously integrated in its pages. All of this under the powerful message found in Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu's motto "Trees break, but never bend!" included by the editor himself on the volume's title page.

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GEORGE-BOGDAN TOFAN