

**FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ AND THE ROMANIAN  
ACADEMY TO COMMUNIST PRISONS: THE ARREST (5–6 MAY  
1950) AND INCARCERATION (MAY 1950 – July 1955) OF  
HISTORIAN IOAN LUPAȘ (1880–1967)\***

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**Abstract**

In the night of 5 to 6 May 1950, the repressive organs of the communist regime in Romania arrested and interrogated 69 former dignitaries of the Romanian governments from the interwar period and the Second World War. Their number increased in the next day to around 150 persons, who held the office of a prime minister, minister, secretary and vice secretary of state during 1919 and 1945. Together with other representatives of the old regime and monarchists, without any trial, they were sent hidden in the cars of the Securitate to the penitentiary in Sighet, in the county of Maramureș, near the border with the Soviet Union. Some of them, such as Iuliu Maniu and Gheorghe Brătianu, died in that prison in Sighet and were buried in complete anonymity in the cemetery of the poor without any cross or sign marking their tomb. Others resisted and managed to come out alive, being released in 1955 or 1956. Among them was Ioan Lupaș, retired university professor in Sibiu, one of the most renowned historians and academic figures of interwar Romania. Arrested in the middle of the night of 5th May 1950, Ioan Lupaș was driven to the Securitate headquarters in Sibiu, interrogated during the whole night and obliged to write three statements about his life and about his public, political and academic activity. The documents are preserved in the Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives in Bucharest and represent the main topic of this paper. In the dawn of 6 May 1950, Lupaș was sent to Sighet and imprisoned until the summer of 1955, when he was released and returned home to Cluj, where his son Semproniu lived, and then to Sibiu and Bucharest, where he lived the last years of his life together with his oldest daughter Marina Vlasiu-Lupaș, until his death, on 3 July 1967.

**Keywords:** Romania, Transylvania, communist regime, persecution, Sighet prison, intellectuals.

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## Introduction

9 August 2020 marked the anniversary of one hundred and forty years since the birth of Father Professor Ioan Lupaș (1880–1967), a prominent personality of the social, national, political, cultural, academic and church life of Christian Orthodox Romanians of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, on 2 February 2020, the “George Barițiu” Institute of History of the Cluj-Napoca Branch of the Romanian Academy<sup>1</sup> celebrated its centenary, the creation of this first national history institute in Romania being inextricably linked to the personality of Academician Ioan Lupaș, who was its co-founder and its co-director (together with Alexandru Lapedatu)<sup>2</sup> for a quarter of a century (1920–1945).<sup>3</sup> In addition, May 2020 was the month that marked seven decades since the so-called “night of dignitaries” of 5–6 May 1950, when the General Directorate of the People’s Security – in short, the “Securitate”<sup>4</sup> – arrested, interrogated and sent to the Sighetu Marmăției Penitentiary all the former Romanian dignitaries – from ministers to subsecretaries of state – of the interwar and Second World War period. Among the numerous victims of this repression ordered by the Bucharest representatives of Stalin’s regime was Professor Ioan Lupaș, imprisoned in Sighet from 1950 to 1955, as part of the former dignitaries’ lot. Seized in his home in Sibiu in the middle of the night, he was interrogated at the city’s Securitate headquarters, forced to give and sign three holograph statements, then sent off to Sighet in a militia van, without knowing where he was being driven. Professor Lupaș’s three statements, preserved both in their original version and in the form of machine-typed transcriptions in his file in the Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives (C.N.S.A.S.), are commented on in this paper, having been recently published by us in Romanian.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> About its history see: Mara Mărginean, Mirela Popa-Andrei and Attila Varga, eds., *Dicționarul Membrilor Institutului de Istorie din Cluj (1920–2020)* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română/Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2020) VIII–CXI.

<sup>2</sup> About him see: Mărginean, Popa-Andrei and Varga, eds., *Dicționarul Membrilor Institutului*, 295–299; Nicolae Edroiu et al., *Alexandru Lapedatu (1876–1950): citor de instituții științifice și cultural-bisericești (cu repere cronologice și o bibliografie a operei)* (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, ed., *Institutul de istorie “George Barițiu” din Cluj-Napoca: 90 de ani de existență (1920–2010). Volum aniversativ* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2010). The purpose of the institute was clearly outlined by Ioan Lupaș in an article dated 14 March 1920, see: vol. *Serbările pentru inaugurarea Universității din Cluj 31 ianuarie – 2 februarie 1920*, anastatic edition, foreword by Academician Prof. Ioan-Aurel Pop (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2020), 118–121.

<sup>4</sup> For information on the creation, organisation and functioning of this military repression tool of the communist regime, see: Marius Oprea and Dennis Deletant, *Banalitatea răului. O istorie a Securității în documente (1949–1989)* (Iași: Polirom, 2002); Marius Oprea, *Bastionul cruzimii. O istorie a Securității (1948–1964)* (Iași; Bucharest: Polirom, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan, “De la amvon, universitate și academie în beciurile «Securității Poporului»: arestarea preotului profesor dr. Ioan Lupaș în «noaptea demnitarilor» (5–6 mai 1950)”, in *Ioan Lupaș, Personalități ale Universității Babeș-Bolyai*, eds. Ioan Chirilă and Iuliu-Marius Morariu (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021), 170–178.

The aim of the present study is to highlight the three moments evoked from a historiographic perspective, as they have a powerful and valuable cultural, national, commemorative and spiritual significance for the Romanian nation and Romanian culture. They bear testimony as to the founding elites of Greater Romania, who were persecuted and decimated by the communist regime, installed on its territory with the aid of Soviet tanks in March 1945. Dedicated to the memory of professor Ioan Lupaș, our contribution has also a commemorative meaning, because it evokes the personality of this prominent Member of the Romanian Academy who passed away 55 years ago.

### **Ioan Lupaș – a brief biography**

Born in Săliște, in Mărginimea Sibiului,<sup>6</sup> whence he inherited an exemplary Romanian vitality and dignity,<sup>7</sup> having then studied at Romanian, Transylvanian-Saxon and Hungarian confessional and state schools in Săliște, Sibiu, and Brașov (1886–1900), which allowed him to acquire vast general knowledge and a rich national culture, Ioan Lupaș completed his intellectual training within the humanities, with a focus on history and philosophy, at the Universities of Budapest and Berlin (1900–1905).<sup>8</sup> Once back in his native country as a Doctor of Philosophy and Letters, he was competitively appointed as a teacher at the Andreian Theological Pedagogical Seminary of Sibiu (1905–1909),<sup>9</sup> where he exhibited his vast cultural and professional capacities and the strength of his national Romanian spirit, which eventually caused him to be removed from the classroom and pushed towards a “priest’s career”, where the secular arm of the Hungarian Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction in Budapest could not reach him so easily. His activity as the parishioner and archpriest of his native town of Săliște (September 1909–November 1919) remains exemplary and largely

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<sup>6</sup> About the region see: Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan et al., *Patrimoniul istorico-juridic românesc din Mărginimea Sibiului (Rășinari, Săliște). Studii și ediție critică de documente* [Biografii istorice transilvane XV] (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut Publishing; Găteanu: Symphologic Publishing, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Victor V. Grecu, ed., *Săliștea Sibiului străveche vatră românească* (Sibiu: Întreprinderea Poligrafică, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> For short bio-bibliographic presentations to be found in: Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Sibiu: Andreiana, 2014), 342–344; Mircea Păcurariu, *Cărturari sibieni de altădată* (Sibiu: Andreiana, 2015), 441–448; Mircea Păcurariu and Dorina N. Rusu, *Teologi români și străini membri ai Academiei Române* (Sibiu: Andreiana, 2016), 95–98; Mărginean, Popa-Andrei and Varga, eds., *Dicționarul Membrilor Institutului*, 306–310. For a larger presentation of his life and work see: Nicolae Edroiu et al., *Ioan Lupaș (1880–1967): Slujitor al științelor istorice, învățământului și Bisericii (cu repere cronologice și o bibliografie a operei)* (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *230 de ani de învățământ teologic la Sibiu 1786–2016* (Sibiu: Andreiana, 2016), 123–124, 358–360.

unique in the history of the Orthodox Church of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania.<sup>10</sup> In 1909, he published his historical monograph on “Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna”,<sup>11</sup> which would bring him notoriety within Romanian historiography, the “Adamachi Award” (1,000 lei) of the Romanian Academy in 1910, followed by a seat as a corresponding (29 May 1914), then titular member (17 May 1916) of the Romanian Academy.

His joining the first line of the national movement of Transylvanian Romanians caused the Hungarian authorities to arrest him on 15 August 1916, deport him and have him detained in Sopron urban county, then in Budapest, until the spring of 1917.<sup>12</sup> Once back in Săliște, he played a decisive role in the good social and national organisation of the Romanian inhabitants of Mărginimea Sibiului at a time when the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy collapsed,<sup>13</sup> the civil administration and political power were taken over by the Romanians and a large number of people from Săliște participated in the National Assembly of Alba Iulia, on 1 December 1918.<sup>14</sup> On 2 December 1918, he was elected member of the Great National Council and Secretary-General of the Religious Denominations and Public Instruction department in charge of religious denominations in the Ruling Council<sup>15</sup> (2 December 1918 – 11 November 1919), resigning from his position as archpriest of Săliște in the summer of the following year and requesting that the Archdiocesan Consistory from Sibiu declare the position vacant as of 1 January 1920.<sup>16</sup>

During the first part of 1919, he played host to several great political, military and cultural personalities, both Romanian and foreign, who arrived in Săliște to visit “that proud Romanian town in Mărginimea Sibiului”, Archpriest Ioan Lupaș

<sup>10</sup> Wolfgang Wunsch, *Der Auftrag der Kulturorthodoxie. Ein Beitrag zum Wirken des Protopresbyters Dr. Ioan Lupaș*, [Academia Band II/Vol. II Veröfentlichungen der Evangelischen Akademie Siebenbürgen/Publicațiile Academiei Evanghelice Transilvania series, Hrsg/Ed.: Dietrich Galter, Jürgen Henkel, Hermann Pitters] (Bucharest: Blueprint International, 2007), 460; Wolfgang Wunsch, “Ioan Lupaș – Protopop de Săliște (1909–1919)”, *Tabor* 11, no. 7 (2017): 72–84.

<sup>11</sup> Ioan Lupaș, *Mitropolitul Andrei Șaguna. Monografie istorică* (Sibiu: Tipografia Arhidiecezana, 1909), 404. See also: Ioan Lupaș, *Scrieri alese despre mitropolitul Andrei Șaguna*, Ediție, studiu introductiv și note de Dr. Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan și Pr. Petru-Toader Damian (Sibiu: Andreiana, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Sebastian Stanca, *Contribuția preoțimii române din Ardeal la războiul pentru întregirea neamului (1916–1919)* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut; Deva: Episcopia Devei și Hunedoarei, 2015), 92, introductory study, notes, and index by Mihai-Octavian Groza and Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan.

<sup>13</sup> Lupaș, *Prăbușirea Monarhiei*.

<sup>14</sup> Marius Boromiz, ed., *Mărginenii Sibiului pentru Marea Unire* (Sibiu: Salgo, 2019), 22–48; Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan, “Părintele Academician Ioan Lupaș – făuritor și istoric al Marii Uniri din 1918”, in *Arhivele Bistriței, Anul IV, Fascicola 1 (13): Făuritorii Marii Uniri*, ed. Mircea-Gelu Buta (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2019), 67–122.

<sup>15</sup> Gheorghe Iancu, *The Ruling Council: The Integration of Transylvania into Romania (1918–1920)* (Cluj-Napoca: The Romanian Cultural Foundation; Center for Transylvanian Studies, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Ioan Lupaș to the Archbishopric Consistory in Sibiu, letter no. 274/1919, in the *Archives of the Orthodox Deanery of Săliște*, I/2/1919.

and the Romanian locals making a very good impression on the delegations of French General Henri Mathias Berthelot, the Romanian Ruling Council (Consiliul Dirigent) of Transylvania, foreign diplomats, journalists and the Romanian Royal Family.<sup>17</sup>

In the autumn of 1919, he was appointed full Professor of the Romanian Modern History and Transylvanian History Department of the new Romanian University of Dacia Superior in Cluj,<sup>18</sup> a position which he honoured with conscientiousness and abnegation until 1 April 1945, when Petru Groza's new communist government forced him into retirement by means of a Ministry of Education commission intended to contribute to "the de-fascistisation of the country". During his hearing with this commission, held on 21 December 1944, the professor justified his activity between 1940 and 1944 as having served to "restitute Northern Transylvania" to Romania and counteract Hungarian and Bulgarian "propaganda abroad". That is why, he stressed, "I find unjust any accusation against me of having served political interests, as I permanently harboured the conviction that I was serving my country". Even though the commission concluded that "there is no evidence of any Hitlerian action by Prof[essor] Lupaş, as he only fought to hasten the restitution of Northern Transylvania, both in writing and through conferences, as well as through the speeches given at the German-Romanian Association", and, for his "offense of having accepted to represent Romania at the Frankfurt Congress – although he did not actually attend it – Prof[essor] Lupaş might deserve to be punished as per art[icle] 55 of the Higher-Education Law – through a written admonition", the Groza administration, recently installed on 6 March 1945, decided to have Professor Ioan Lupaş retire as of 1 April 1945, in the middle of the academic year, although he had not actually reached retirement age. Shortly after that, he was forced to give up his position at the head of the National History Institute, to which he donated most of his library (3.515 volumes) and the sum of 250.000 lei, which constituted the financial patrimony of the "Ioan Lupaş Foundation".<sup>19</sup>

Having taken refuge in Sibiu alongside the University of Cluj, following the Arbitration-Dictate of Vienna (30 August 1940),<sup>20</sup> Professor Ioan Lupaş

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<sup>17</sup> Marius Boromiz, *Familia regală, ambasadori, generali de armată, universitari, dascăli și gazetari la Săliște (1919–1920)* (Sibiu: Armanis; Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2021). About his activity during the First World War, see: Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan, "Ioan Lupaş – The maker and memorialist of the Union of Transylvania with Romania", in *Acta Musei Napocensis* 56 no. 2 (2020): 141–162.

<sup>18</sup> Nicolae Edroiu, "Ioan Lupaş – ctitor și codirector al Institutului de Istorie Națională din Cluj (1920–1945)", *Tabor* 11, no. 7 (2017): 21–28.

<sup>19</sup> Liviu Pleșa, "Istoricul Ioan Lupaş în timpul regimului comunist", *Caietele CNSAS* 1 no. 2 (2008): 174–175, 195–197 contain a transcription of the minutes of the hearing of Professor Lupaş held on 21 December 1944 <http://www.cnsas.ro/caiete.html>. Accessed December 12, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Vasile Pușcaș, *The Ribbentrop-Ciano Diktat, Transylvania and the Romanian-Hungarian Relations (1940–1944)* (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2021).

made the city on the banks of the Cibin his definitive home, while his relationship with Cluj continued mainly via his family, through his son, Semproniu, who lived in Cluj, but also via the Orthodox Church, due to his old friendship with Bishop Nicolae Colan (1893–1967) of Vad, Feleac and Cluj (1936–1957).<sup>21</sup> The contents of his C.N.S.A.S. file show that it is from the time of his retirement that the first notes on the professor date, as the Siguranță, later Securitate, watched his every step, particularly after the installation of the Groza government.<sup>22</sup> The reason for watching Ioan Lupaș lay with his ample political activity during the interwar period, which, in the eyes of the new and still fragile regime, warranted him the status of a potential “reactionary” and “enemy of the people’s democracy regime”. It is necessary to mention that Professor Ioan Lupaș proceeded to become involved in politics after Transylvania was united to Romania, in order to consolidate the unification and to achieve the common good. This is revealed both by an objective analysis of his political activity as a deputy in the Romanian Parliament (1919–1920, 1922–1926, 1926–1927, 1939–1940), minister of Health and Social Care in the administration of General Averescu (30 March 1926 – 4 June 1927), then minister of Religious Denominations and Arts in the Goga administration (29 December 1937 – 10 February 1938),<sup>23</sup> and by reading his statements from the morning of 6 May 1950.<sup>24</sup>

Having undergone a political press trial and been imprisoned twice before 1918, then faced with the “purging commission” of the Ministry of Education at the turn of the years 1944–1945, Ioan Lupaș suspected he was being watched by the regime’s security agencies. Thus, from 1946 onwards, he limited his contacts and circle of friends, finding refuge in the library of the ASTRA Association, of the Brukenthal Museum and of the Metropoly of Transylvania from Sibiu, as he himself would state before the Securitate in the morning of his arrest.<sup>25</sup> It is in the context of worries, material deprivation, and vexation by the Stalin-Dej regime that his first health issues appeared. As he lay in the “Cluj symptomatology clinic” at the beginning of 1947, Professor Lupaș reflected on his imminent end, thus writing to Bishop Nicolae Colan: “should it come to that, I would like to already express my intimate wish that no one should speak by my coffin, except for that worthy Bishop of the resurrected

<sup>21</sup> Short bio-bibliographic presentations see: Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, 153–155; Păcurariu, *Cărturari sibieni de altădată*, 644–653; Păcurariu and Rusu, *Teologi români și străini*, 58–60.

<sup>22</sup> Ioan Opreș, *Istoricii și Securitatea* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), 339–368.

<sup>23</sup> Vasile Crișan, *Ioan Lupaș (1880–1967). Studiu monografic* (Sibiu: Armanis, 2013), 199–254.

<sup>24</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section*, file no. 489, p. 11–14, 18–19.

<sup>25</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section*, file no. 489, p. 14.

church founded by Saint Stephen the Great: Academician Nicolae Colan! It is my last fervent desire and I trust that God will see to it that the fulfilment of it is not taken amiss”.<sup>26</sup>

### The arrest of former dignitaries of the Romanian state

Communism took over Romanian society between 1946 and 1950 not only through major changes in the country’s social, legislative, political and economic structure, but also through massive waves of arrests, which preyed on the entire political elite of the old Romanian society.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, many of these politicians, members of the military, academics, physicians, lawyers, industrialists, and clerics, humiliated, battered, starved and deprived of medical care as they were, met their end in communist prisons and camps. As late historian and academician Florin Constantiniu (1933–2012) aptly noted, “the hands of the Stalinists in Romania were smeared with the blood of prominent personalities of political and intellectual life, servilistically copying the state terror system of the USSR”.<sup>28</sup>

Before actually proceeding to arrest the members of the former “bourgeois-landowners” administrations, party propaganda launched an ample campaign of denigration and stigmatisation of the old political class, which was blamed for all the shortcomings of society, for the country’s backwardness, as well as for “having sold the country to imperialists”.<sup>29</sup> Of course, this dialectic was also meant to legitimise the appropriation of state power by the communists, the seizing and subjugation of the whole of society under the rule of their political vision. The political decision to arrest the “chiefs of the bourgeois” parties and the “inimical elements in towns and cities who held any positions in the historical parties” was circulated in the autumn of 1949 and, in the spring of 1950, it was adopted by the party’s political office. In late March 1950, a group of top-ranking members of the Securitate decided to arrest “the former dignitaries of reactionary governments, including those of the two dictatorships (of King Carol II and of Ion Antonescu), such as: ministers, subsecretaries of state, secretaries general, former diplomats, former senators, deputies, prefects, mayors of county capitals”.<sup>30</sup> During the month

<sup>26</sup> Ioan Lupaş to Nicolae Colan, Cluj, 8 January 1947 in Alexandru Moraru, *La răscruce de vremei o viaţă de om: Nicolae Colan episcopul Vadului, Feleacului și Clujului după documente, corespondență, însemnări, relatări, impresii* (Cluj-Napoca: Întreprinderea Poligrafică Cluj, 1989), 535.

<sup>27</sup> For details see: Dennis Deletant, *Romania under communist rule*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Bucharest: Civic Academy Foundation, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (București: Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2011), 469.

<sup>29</sup> Liviu Pleșa, *Istoriografia clujeană sub supravegherea securității (1945–1965)* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2017), 87.

<sup>30</sup> Pleșa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 88.

of April, the Securitate prepared a list of 82 names of people who fit the description above and, on the night of 5 to 6 May 1950, 69 of them were identified and arrested. It is necessary to stress that these people were seized in the middle of the night based on an order signed by Colonel Gavrilă Birtaş, Chief of the I Internal Intelligence Directorate of the Securitate, not on a judicial decision or arrest warrant! This constitutes clear evidence that their arrest and imprisonment was of a purely repressive nature, a tool in the hands of Securitate leaders.<sup>31</sup>

In order to carry out the arrests, 38 teams of 6 Securitate members were formed and instructed by the Securitate General Directorate to perform two operations each, starting from 00:35 a.m. on the night of 5–6 May 1950. Among those arrested during that terrible night and subsequently imprisoned in Sighet were famous names of Romanian culture, such as Alexandru Lapedatu, Gheorghe Brătianu, Ion Nistor, Ioan Lupaș, Constantin C. Giurescu, Ștefan Meteș, Victor Papacostea, Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, Constantin Angelescu, or Sebastian Bornemisa, former prime ministers, such as Gheorghe Tătărescu, Constantin Argetoianu, and Ion Gîrțu, followed by officers, industrialists, economists, legal experts, lawyers, and magistrates – some of them artisans of the Great Union of 1918 –, such as Dinu Brătianu, Valer(iu) Moldovan, Aurel Vlad, Ioan Lupaș, Silviu Dragomir, Emil Hațeganu, Dumitru Alimănișteanu, Ioan Rășcanu, Ioan Mihai Racoviță, Nicolae Samsonovici, Ion Manolescu-Strunga, Radu Portocală, Gheorghe Vântu, Coriolan Băran, Sever Bocu, Daniel Ciugureanu, Ion Pelivan, Teofil Sauciuc-Săveanu, and Pantelimon Halippa.<sup>32</sup> They were all put into special vans and sent to Sighet prison, near the border with the Soviet Union. Built in 1897, the Sighet penitentiary became a place of detention for political prisoners on 22 August 1948. Between this date and 1956, its 72 cells held around 180 members of the elites that stood at the head of Romania before 1945, 51 of whom died because of the ruthless disciplinary regime, the extremely poor diet, and the utterly precarious medical care.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, one must bear in mind that more than two thirds of the former dignitaries arrested by the Securitate between 1948 and 1952 were over 60 years old, while a significant part of them were over 70 at the time when they were seized.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Pleșa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 89.

<sup>32</sup> Constantin C. Giurescu, *Cinci ani și două luni în penitenciarul din Sighet (7 mai 1950 – 5 iulie 1955)* (București: Fundația Culturală Română, 1994), 161–193, introduction by Dinu C. Giurescu, edition supervised, annexes, and index by Lia Ioana Ciplea; Claudiu Secașiu, “Noaptea demnitarilor. Contribuții privind distrugerea elitei politice românești”, *Analele Sighet*, no. 6 (1998): 894–921; Pleșa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 88–90.

<sup>33</sup> For a list of the people who died in Sighet, see: Andrea Dobeș and Ioan Ciupea, “Decapitarea elitelor. Metode, mijloace, mod de acțiune”, in *Memoria închisorii Sighet*, ed. Romulus Rusan (București: Fundația Academia Civică, 1999), 229–233.

<sup>34</sup> Details in: Nuțu Roșca, *Închisoarea elitei românești. Compendiu*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Sighetu Marmăției, 2006); Andrea Dobeș, *Spații carcerale în România comunistă: penitenciarul Sighet (1950–1955)* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2021); “Memorialul Victimelor Comunismului și al Rezistenței”, <http://www.memorialsighet.ro/>. Accessed December 16, 2019.



### The arrest, interrogation, and incarceration of Professor Ioan Lupaş

The humiliations and overt persecution perpetrated by the regime started in the same way for Professor Lupaş as it did for many other outstanding Romanian intellectuals, with being “purged” out of the Romanian Academy in June 1948,<sup>35</sup> after which followed the termination of his pension at the beginning of 1950.<sup>36</sup> That is also when he started being watched more closely by the agents of the Sibiu Regional Directorate of the Securitate, the pages of his criminal file revealing that Securitate agents described him as an “old man” who “maintains his political views” and remains in contact with “leading members of the historical parties, known to our agencies as elements hostile to our regime”.<sup>37</sup> Up until his arrest, he was shadowed by Second Lieutenant Nicolae Neţ, whose signature is the one on the reports in his supervision file found in the archives of the former intelligence services.<sup>38</sup>

Professor Ioan Lupaş was arrested on “the night of dignitaries” of 5 to 6 May 1950 by a Sibiu Securitate team made up of Platooneer Major Ioan Mânzat and Platooneer Major Popa Opreş, without any kind of authorisation from the Prosecutor’s Office attached to the Sibiu Court. Between 24:00 and 04:00 in the morning, the two Securitate agents conducted a brutal investigation and search of the professor in his home at no.5 Dealului street, confiscating several valuables, items of correspondence, and manuscripts, which they deemed “data of an antidemocratic nature”.<sup>39</sup> Among the objects seized, the Securitate agents mentioned the following: “1) academicians’ uniform consisting of 1 dark grey tailcoat, 1 pair of dark grey trousers, 1 white waistcoat with golden buttons, 1 sabre with a gilded hilt and gilded sheath; 2) a German history book titled *Zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, a 608–page volume bound in blue cloth with golden decorations;<sup>40</sup> 3) history notes collected with the aim of drafting a monograph on the history of Transylvanian railways”.<sup>41</sup> The written record made by the two Securitate agents, Mânzat and Opreş, mentions that “having reached the location, we found Lupaş Ioan, whom we informed of the purpose of our arrival, after which he placed the entire building at our disposal”, where “the following items were found: 1) Crown of Romania decoration, 1) Buletin al Albumului Naţional with photographs, 6) coins featuring busts of former kings,

<sup>35</sup> Ion Păun Otiman, *1948 – marea dramă a Academiei Române* (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei Române, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Crişan, *Ioan Lupaş*, 52.

<sup>37</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section*, file no. 489, p. 4–5.

<sup>38</sup> Pleşa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 359.

<sup>39</sup> Pleşa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 359–360.

<sup>40</sup> Ioan Lupaş, *Zur Geschichte der Rumänen. Aufsätze und Vorträge* (Sibiu: Druck Krafft & Drotleff A.G.; Hauptverlag der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien, 1943), VIII + 608.

<sup>41</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section*, file no. 489, p. 58.

various items of correspondence and notes belonging to him, several articles cut out of old newspapers and preserved, 1) personal notebook. All are of an antidemocratic nature”.<sup>42</sup>

Ioan Lupaş was taken to the Sibiu headquarters of the Securitate and submitted to an interrogation led by Lieutenant Major Emeric Mathe, who forced him to write three autobiographic holograph statements. Two of them, which are more extended, are dated with precision, while the third does not bear the date and time of writing. The first one was completed at a quarter past five in the morning, the second at a quarter to twelve. The two more extended statements contain previously unknown information about Professor Lupaş's interwar political activity, especially from the time when he was Minister of Health and of Arts under two administrations “of constitutional essence”, the academician stressing the fact that he refused to be part of the Gigurtu cabinet, which supported “a dictatorial government”. The contents of the first statement, completed after a hectic and exhausting night, also reveal that the professor tried to win the Securitate investigator's favour by evoking his contributions to the wellbeing of the peasant and worker social classes, then an episode when he collaborated with Colonel Gheorghe Crăciun – director of the Securitate Directorate of Sibiu at the time – as part of the Anti-Revisionist League of Transylvania in the 30s and, last but not least, the appreciation for his works harboured by Romanian and Hungarian historians, as well as by a foremost representative of the Romanian People's Republic, namely Petre Constantinescu-Iaşi (1892–1977). Further evidence of the appreciation his work enjoyed was, in his opinion, the fact that some of his writings were translated into Russian and, according to the professor, they were probably going to be published under the aegis of the Cluj Institute of History.<sup>43</sup>

The contents of the second statement reveal that the Securitate representatives were particularly interested in learning precisely who it was that Ioan Lupaş kept company with in Sibiu, as the latter was pressed to disclose the names of all the people in Sibiu's social, political and intellectual circles whom he used to meet, converse and socialise with. Thus, we learn that his social circle was mostly made up of faculty members of the Sibiu Theological Institute of Higher Education, namely Professors Milan Şesan, Teodor Bodogae, Ştefan Lupşa, Spiridon Căndea, Nicolae Neaga, Ioan Beju, Grigorie Marcu, and Nicolae Mladin,<sup>44</sup> joined by his old friend, Onisifor Ghibu, as well as by Ioan Pop and Dori Popovici of Bukovina.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section, file no. 489, p. 95.*

<sup>43</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section, file no. 489, p. 18–19.*

<sup>44</sup> About them see: Păcurariu, *Dicţionarul teologilor români*; Păcurariu, *Cărturari sibieni de altădată*.

<sup>45</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section, file no. 489, p. 18–19.*

Ioan Lupaş's statements were of genuine interest to the Securitate, both regionally and centrally, as several copies of them were typed<sup>46</sup> and kept within the same file named "Lupaş T. Ion" in the Operative Archives of the State Security Services. Alongside his correspondence with "former politicians", confiscated by the two agents during the search of his home, the professor's statements were "exploited" by the Securitate in order to fabricate evidence enabling them to discredit the reputed Transylvanian pedagogue and academician and count him among the "elements hostile to our regime", as specified by "Lieutenant Major Mathe Emeric of the Securitate" in his report on Ioan Lupaş, shortly after the latter's arrest.<sup>47</sup>

On that same night of 5 to 6 May 1950, the Sibiu Securitate arrested Aurel Vlad (1875–1953), Dori (Dorimedont) Popovici (1873–1950), Constantin Tomescu (1890–1983), and Ioan Pop (†1953). After being submitted to the same investigation and interrogation procedure, later on the day of 6 May 1950, the five were driven to the Sighet Penitentiary with bags over their heads to prevent them from seeing where they were being taken. This prisonership journey inspired a ballad that Ioan Lupaş wrote, called "Pahod Na Sighet", modelled after the one he created in September 1916, when he was arrested and detained in Sopron county by the Hungarian authorities. The ballad was subsequently destroyed by his wife Ana, for fear of potential searches by the Securitate.<sup>48</sup> Once arrived in Sighet, Ioan Lupaş was imprisoned in cell number 13, together with Aurel Vlad, Ioan Pop, Ştefan Meteş, Ion Nistor, Th. Sauciuc-Săveanu, Costică Angelescu, Dorel Dumitrescu, and Dori Popovici, who was the oldest of them and died within a few months.<sup>49</sup>

When analysed in light of the legislation of the time, Ioan Lupaş's arrest and incarceration in Sighet reveal themselves as an abuse committed by the communist regime's repressive agencies. As researcher Liviu Pleşa stressed in his specialised studies dedicated to the historians of Cluj placed under the supervision of the Securitate, one of the indications that the act committed then was illegal is the fact that "the provisional-detention warrant was issued no sooner than 1 September 1954, at a time when party leaders sought to officialise the situation of those who were arrested by bringing them to trial". Thus, only after four years of detention in the Sighet prison was Ioan Lupaş tried and convicted under article 193 of the Criminal Code "for the fact that, during the bourgeois-landowners regime, he laboured intensely against the working class", a terse accusation qualified as a "crime", which was brought against most of those who were deemed undesirable by the Bolshevik

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<sup>46</sup> A comparison of the contents of the holograph statements and of the typed ones reveals several transcription and grammar errors in the typed copies. The typed statements were published as a facsimile by Professor I. Oprea in: Oprea, *Istoricii și Securitatea*, 355–362.

<sup>47</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section*, file no. 489, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Toader Buculei, *Clio încarcerată. Mărturii și opinii privind destinul istoriografiei românești în epoca totalitarismului comunist* (Brăila: Libertatea, 2000), 149.

<sup>49</sup> Pleşa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 360–361.

regime of Bucharest.<sup>50</sup> The regime's malice and lack of scruples are also made apparent by the absence of any official or credible notification to the professor's family as to his whereabouts and condition throughout his incarceration.<sup>51</sup>

His daughter, Marina Minerva Lupaş Vlasiu (1913–1998)<sup>52</sup> – herself a victim of the communist regime, detained from 14 April 1952 to 14 January 1953 and held captive in the Ghencea camp as part of a lot of ministers' wives and daughters<sup>53</sup> –, with whom he made his home in his final years, confessed in an interview given after 1990 that Ioan Lupaş went on a hunger strike in protest against the inhuman treatment he was submitted to, but was promptly sanctioned and beaten by the guards, in spite of being a man in his seventies. The information is perfectly truthful, as it is confirmed by the memoirs of Professor Constantin C. Giurescu about the years he spent in the Sighet prison.<sup>54</sup> In spite of being treated in such an inhumane manner, Ioan Lupaş never lost his faith in God's mercy and help, but would conduct a daily "brief religious service – the Matins (Orthros-Utrenie) – to keep up the morale of those who shared his fate"<sup>55</sup> and would say the following prayer every morning: "Grant me, o, Lord, a burning candle / That I may lay a devoted soul before you. / You, who planted the holy tremor of life in me, / Father, guide my morning steps. / Let the dew of mercy fall, Heavenly Lord, / Deliver the Romanian people from danger. / Give us bread, peace and prosperity, / Let Your forgiveness wash away our sins. / Bestow a serene mind upon us, Lord, / Such as is sought by any Christian / Unto the end of ages. Amen".<sup>56</sup>

### His release and final years

Thus, he held out for five whole years, until 5 July 1955, when he was taken out of the penitentiary and transferred to a Securitate cell, whence he was set free on 27 July 1955. He would turn 75 years old a few days later. Upon his release, with a shaking hand, he signed a pledge that he would not discuss anything that happened during his interrogation and incarceration with anyone.<sup>57</sup> His daughter, Marina Vlasiu, confessed that it was the fear that Securitate agencies had instilled in him and his

<sup>50</sup> Crişan, *Ioan Lupaş*, 53; Opriş, *Istoricii și securitatea*, 344–345; Pleşa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 361.

<sup>51</sup> Lucia Hossu-Longin, *Oamenii mari care au făcut România Mare* (Timișoara: Hyperliteratura, 2018), 223.

<sup>52</sup> A short biobibliography of her see: Mărginean, Popa-Andrei and Varga, eds., *Dicționarul Membrilor Institutului*, 550–551; Victor Spinei and Dorina N. Rusu, eds., *Enciclopedia reprezentanților scrisului istoric românesc: Vol. V (S-Z)* (Suceava: Karl A. Romstorfer, 2021), 456.

<sup>53</sup> Pleşa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 362.

<sup>54</sup> Giurescu, *Cinci ani și două luni în penitenciarul din Sighet*, 133, 157.

<sup>55</sup> Buculei, *Clio încarcerată*, 149.

<sup>56</sup> Crişan, *Ioan Lupaş*, 439.

<sup>57</sup> *Archives of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, Criminal section*, file no. 489, 65.

profound Christian spirit that determined him not to write his memoirs, nor to talk much about his detention, yet he let show that he had not amassed any hatred or harboured any desire for revenge, but had forgiven his persecutors.<sup>58</sup>

Once free, he settled in Sibiu, under the obligation “to present myself at the local militia station for validation within three days of my arrival in the place in question”. Here, in the city of his adolescence and youth, he led a simple and modest life, barely existing in a small room in a building at no. 20 Mihail Sebastian street, which had been set as his forced domicile. In 1957, Ioan Lupaş once more became a target of the Sibiu regional unit of the Securitate, which kept a watch on him and sometimes intercepted his correspondence. The professor ceased to be supervised on 14 April 1964, when the security services decided to send in Ioan Lupaş’s file to the operative archives, due to his having turned over 80 years old.<sup>59</sup>

Overwhelmed by the paralysis of his wife Ana, the professor moved to Bucharest, spending his final years in the Balta Albă neighbourhood, together with the families of his two daughters, Marina and Hortensia, who offered him their loving and devoted care. Having reached the venerable age of 87, Professor Ioan Lupaş passed away in Bucharest on 3 July 1967 and was buried in the cemetery of the Cernica Monastery, near the Romanian capital. On his tombstone stands carved a memorable statement of his from one of his successful books, “The History of Romanians”, published in 16 editions: “History helps us get to know the past, understand the present and believe in the future of Romania”.

## Epilogue

A prolific historian whose opus remains impressive to this day, member of the Romanian Academy, priest and archpriest of Sălişte before Transylvania was united to Romania, professor of the University of Cluj, a committed citizen, Ioan Lupaş was actively involved in the social and political life of interwar Romania, as he held the positions of deputy and senator of the Bucharest Parliament and that of minister under two administrations of the Romanian kingdom. The installation of the communist regime in March 1945 automatically brought about his retirement from his position as university professor, as well as his gradual marginalisation and removal from cultural, academic and public life. He was eventually arrested on the night of 5 to 6 May, alongside another approximately 70 former dignitaries, whom the communist regime perceived as its potential opponents, thus including them on the list of “enemies of the people”, who had to be expelled from society. Thus, Ioan Lupaş shared the fate of hundreds of intellectuals who were arrested, tortured and incarcerated in communist prisons and concentration camps, where many of them met their end.

<sup>58</sup> Buculei, *Clio încarcerată*, 149–151.

<sup>59</sup> Oprea, *Istoricii și securitatea*, 345; Pleșa, *Istoriografia clujeană*, 365–370.

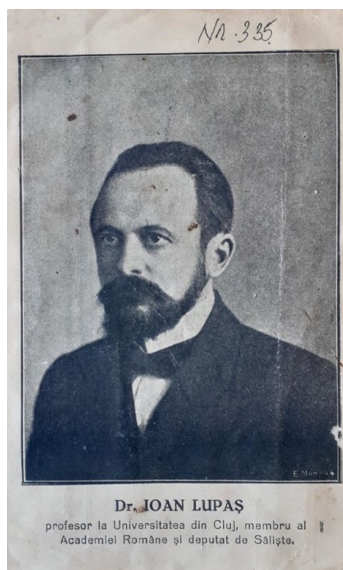


Photo 1. *Ioan Lupaș, Professor of the University of Cluj (1921)*<sup>60</sup>



Photo 2. *Ioan Lupaș, Minister of Health and Social Care (1927)*<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Muzeul Culturii Săliștene.

<sup>61</sup> Muzeul Protopopiatului Ortodox Săliște.



Photo 3. *Ioan Lușă, detainee in Sighet prison (1950–1955)*<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> CentenarRomania.ro <https://www.centenar-romania.ro/ioan-lupas/>. Accessed January 14, 2022.

