

## On the Avatars of the Written Work of Silviu Dragomir

SORIN ȘIPOȘ

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### Sorin Șipoș

Associate professor at the Faculty of History, Geography and International Relations of Oradea University, deputy editor-in-chief of the review **Munții Apuseni** (The Western Carpathians). Author, among others, of the volume **Silviu Dragomir—istoric** (Silviu Dragomir—historian) (2002).

**A**FTER HIS death, historian and politician Silviu Dragomir (1888–1962) received particular attention from specialists. This is demonstrated by the numerous studies and articles on his life and work. I have been concerned with the destiny of the historian, too, and I had to face certain issues in the libraries and archives I visited in search for information. One such place is the Library of the Romanian Academy, where the documents were recorded under number A 2181 a–g.

After seven years of repeated requests, I was finally granted permission to consult Silviu Dragomir's documents on the Diploma of the Knights Hospitaller of 1247. During these years, I had the opportunity to see for myself what the fight against the post-communist censorship actually means. Right at the beginning of my research concerning the life and work of the historian Silviu Dragomir, the late academician Pompiliu Teodor told me of the existence of this material during one of our discussions. He gave me the cat-

alog number of the manuscript at the Academy Library. After looking through the already published bibliography, I started to investigate the archives in Cluj, Deva, and Sibiu to find answers to the numerous issues related to my research. In 1998, I went to the National Archives in Bucharest, as well as to the Library of the Romanian Academy. I entered the Academy Library with the shyness specific to those coming from the country and overwhelmed by what the Romanian Academy and the Academy Library had represented throughout national history. After filling in the request form, I sat down in the room and waited for the manuscript. After a few minutes, the custodian returned totally changed and asked where I got the catalog number of the manuscript and how I had found out about it. I was expecting the manuscript; instead I was being asked how I had found out about it. A little puzzled, I explained the situation. He replied on a very firm tone that the manuscript was listed as not available to the public. I was amazed by the response and particularly by the behavior of some employees in the manuscript room; they seemed to be guardians of the manuscript rather than researchers. Obviously, I asked who donated it and what was the content of the manuscript, since it was not available to the public. When I asked the questions, I saw a reaction resembling hostility, a sort of remainder of the former regime, when one was not supposed to discuss the answers of the officials.

One year later, I made another attempt. When I insisted once again to see the survey, Mr. Gabriel Ștrempel, the director of the Academy Library, and Mrs. Gabriela Dumitrescu, head of service, officially informed me that the heirs of the Dragomir family gave the document under a clause denying access to it for 50 years. Revolted by the situation, I was thinking of a manner to consult the manuscript, in order to insert it in my doctoral thesis. After this experience, I told my department colleagues of the situation of my research, so that we might look for possible solutions together. During a discussion I had with Prof. Dr. Mihai Drecin, who was at that time deputy in the Romanian Parliament, he told me that he knew the director of the library and that, if I gave him the catalog number, he will request it to the director. On 28 February 2000, Mr. Drecin called me to say that the director of the library had signed the request form to consult and photocopy the manuscript.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, he told me that he had been given the documents, too. As proof of that, he told me about the materials in the folder and the number of pages. To be honest, I found it hard to believe, as I had been to Bucharest myself several times to see the manuscript and I had been told that it was not available to the public; I had become resigned, in a way. The news gave me hope that I could finally see the manuscript I was so obsessed with. In the afternoon of 28 February, I left for Bucharest, and the following day I was at the Academy Library to see the manuscripts. When I demanded

them, surprise, I was told they were still unavailable to the public. In my turn, I mentioned the request to see the manuscripts approved by the director. Under the circumstances, I started to lose my temper. I was told that the director had signed the request form as he thought that the document in question belonged to the collection *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, Series D, volume 1. In the evening, I met Professor Drecin and I told him what had happened. We agreed to go and meet the director the following day and get some explanations. During the conversations we had with Academician Gabriel Ștrempel, we were unofficially and confidentially told that the material contained historical information that might harm Romanian historiography and the national interests, and that therefore we were not allowed to see it. We were also presented with a handwritten explanation signed by Mrs. Gabriela Dumitrescu, head of service.<sup>2</sup>

Given the situation, all I could do was to find the heirs of the Dragomir family to clarify the matter, as I had a feeling that the library officials were not telling the truth. Our suspicions regarding the honesty of the answers provided by the managers of the Academy Library were confirmed. Mrs. Florica Enescu, one of the nieces of Professor Silviu Dragomir, donated the studies in question, after the death of the Dragomir family, to the Library of the Romanian Academy with no secrecy clause. Proof of this is the letter sent to Florica Enescu on 1 June 1974 by Gabriel Ștrempel, by then the head of the manuscripts and documents room. The letter said: "To Florica Enescu, In response to your letter of 30 May 1974, registered under no. 6656/30 V 1974, we inform you that we have received your donation and we thank you for it. The manuscripts of Prof. Silviu Dragomir, as well as the typed copies, have been included in the collections of the manuscripts-documents room, *and can be consulted under number A 2181 a-i* (italics ours)."<sup>3</sup> With the document received from Mrs. Enescu, the very person who had made the donation with no secrecy clause, I went to Bucharest in July of 2001 to see the manuscript. It was the fourth time I went to the Academy Library. The document was still not available. Out of respect for Silviu Dragomir and in order to right the wrong made by the Academy Library officials, Mrs. Florica Enescu asked for a meeting with academician G. Ștrempel, hoping that, by reminding him that she had not asked for a clause denying access to the document, the problem would be solved. The director of the Academy Library refused, even after the meeting with Florica Enescu, to make the document available to specialists. I did not attend that meeting, but after the meeting, Mrs. Florica Enescu told me that they had an argument and she did not get permission to make the document available to specialists. Mrs. Enescu even told me the name of the reviewer who had recommended that the document should be made unavailable for research. That is, the document could not be pub-

lished, but it could be consulted by those interested. However, considering that Silviu Dragomir had questioned the authenticity of the Diploma of the Hospitallers, the political authorities and some historians considered that it was best to completely deny access to it. Mrs. Enescu told me that, due to her vehement reproaches for forbidding access to the document and as she was asking who had made the recommendation, she was told that the review had been drawn up by Academician Cornelia Bodea. I have no means of checking the information, but I have good reasons to believe it is true. Besides, another argument supporting this idea is the phone call that Mrs. Enescu gave to Mrs. Cornelia Bodea. Obviously, she rebuked her for her lack of respect for the work of a colleague. It might be significant to add that, according to the information provided by Florica Enescu, when Silviu Dragomir died in 1962, Cornelia Bodea requested his manuscripts to prepare them for printing. Dragomir's heirs refused and Mrs. Florica Enescu considered Cornelia Bodea's action as an act of revenge. To me, it was not so important why I could not see the manuscripts. At that point, I had exhausted all legal means to see the documents. All I could do was publish articles in the press to draw attention to this situation. I did not do that, as I was about to finish my doctoral thesis and I needed peace and quiet. In November I defended my doctoral thesis and in 2002 the monograph was published. I still had no access to the manuscripts under A 2181. I could only wait for better times.

In the autumn and winter of 2006, there were rumors that Mr. Gabriel Ștrempel was no longer the director of the Academy Library. I checked the information and it was true. Given the new situation, I sent the new director, Dan Horia Mazilu, a well-known specialist in ancient Romanian history and the author of several works on medieval history, the latest volume published together with Ioan Horga and a photocopy of some pages of the Silviu Dragomir monograph, including note 1 in chapter I, where I presented the difficulties in consulting the manuscript of Silviu Dragomir's work. I asked him to inform me whether the manuscript was still unavailable. In January 2007, Ms. Georgeta Giurgiu, a postgraduate student at the University of Reims and the University of Oradea, was to start some research at the Academy Library. I asked her to give the director the critical edition *Silviu Dragomir—studii de istorie medievală* and to try to see the manuscripts in the Dragomir collection. I wanted to check, without going to Bucharest just for that reason, if the manuscripts had the same status. A few days later, Ms. Giurgiu called me and said that they could be seen, but the next day, when I asked for further details, she told me that another employee of the library, annoyed at being asked for that manuscript, had replied that it could not be consulted. A week or so later, on 2 February 2007, I received an e-mail from Mrs. Gabriela Dumitrescu, a really pleasant surprise, and she

informed me that I could see the Dragomir collection with the agreement of the director.<sup>4</sup>

In the spring of 2007, I made another attempt to see Silviu Dragomir's study, encouraged by the fact that Gabriel Ștrempel was no longer the director of the library. Over the past few years, Romanian society had become increasingly determined to know and embrace its past. Consequently, the attitude of Mr. Dan Horia Mazilu, the new director of the Academy Library, was open and honest and he never hesitated to sign the request to see the material in question. Consequently, in the new edition, I could introduce this important component of the historiographical work of Silviu Dragomir.

I could finally get information on the research carried out by Silviu Dragomir concerning the Diploma of the Hospitallers. The folder was very big. In fact, it was the catalog number that should have given me a hint. There are several typed manuscripts and studies dedicated to the Diploma of the Hospitallers, in several versions. However, the last typed version in three copies is entitled "Diploma cavalerilor ioaniți de la 1247: Studiu critic" and has 110 typed pages.<sup>5</sup> Another manuscript under number A 1271d bears the same title, but it is a handwritten manuscript.<sup>6</sup> Under the same number, but at letters e and f, we find two other typed copies of the "Cavalerii ioaniți și Oltenia: Studiu de critică istorică."<sup>7</sup> The title is a bit changed, which shows that the historian started and proceeded with his research for several years until he reached the final version. There is also a handwritten manuscript entitled "Cavalerii ioaniți și Țările Române: Diploma din 1247 a regelui Bela al IV-lea,"<sup>8</sup> Cluj, 1948, which is in fact the initial version of the typed manuscript simply entitled "Diploma din 1247 a regelui Bela al IV-lea," under number A 1281 a–b–c. All of the working versions are important to the specialists interested in the genesis and development of the topic. It is certain that the final version in the handwritten manuscript was finished in 1948, that is, at the time when the communist regime was established in Romania. The typed version is quite different from the handwritten one and was finished when the historian was released from the communist prison in 1955; the proof is the insertion of the diploma's translation in the collection entitled *Documente privind istoria României*, Series C, vol. 1, Transylvania, published in 1951.<sup>9</sup> The question is when Dragomir started to do the research on this topic and what was his goal. The answer is not easy to provide. However, due to the documents we have at this point, we may approximate the moment he started the research. In this sense, we have a letter sent from Italy to Silviu Dragomir by Ștefan Pascu.<sup>10</sup> The text of the letter is very important, as it provides several clues concerning the research of Silviu Dragomir. In fact, the letter from Professor Pascu was a reply to a previous letter sent by Silviu Dragomir, in which the latter asked him to provide palaeographic and diplomatic information on the Diploma of the Hospitallers.

The questions asked by Silviu Dragomir show that he was pretty familiar with the topic, meaning that he had already started his research. Although the letter is not dated, we may estimate the period when Ștefan Pascu did some research in Rome, that is, during the war, in 1943–1944. It is obvious that at that moment, Silviu Dragomir had started the research and he had reached an advanced level in his investigations. The handwritten manuscript in the Academy Library shows that a first version was completed in 1948. After he was released from the communist prison, Silviu Dragomir returned to his research, one of the topics being the Diploma of the Hospitallers. He tried to show the results of his research either in the discussions with colleagues or during scientific events.<sup>11</sup> As far as we know, he did not succeed in doing that.

The attempts to consult a manuscript donated to the Library of the Romanian Academy for research purposes, but inaccessible due to the managers of the library, have showed us that sometimes the ghost of communism still haunts Romania. □

## Notes

1. “Domnule Director, Subsemnatul Mihai Drecin, profesor la Universitatea din Oradea, deputat în Parlamentul României, vă rog să binevoiți a aproba xeroxarea studiului istoricului Silviu Dragomir despre Ordinul Cavalerilor Ioaniți aflat în Biblioteca Academiei Române sub cota A 2181, București 28 februarie 2000” (Dear Director, the undersigned Mihai Drecin, professor at the University of Oradea, deputy in the Romanian Parliament, is asking you to kindly approve the photocopying the study belonging to the historian Silviu Dragomir on the Order of the Knights Hospitaller found in the Library of the Romanian Academy under number A 2181, Bucharest, 28 February 2000). The request form has the following written in the upper right corner: “Se aprobă 28. 2. 00” (approved), followed by the signature of the then director, Mr. Gabriel Ștrempel (Document belonging to the Șipoș family).
2. “1. 03. 2000, Stimate domnule Drecin, Materialele existente la cota A 2181 sunt materiale depuse cu clauză (nu pot fi publicate) de către familia autorului. Domnul Director Gabriel Ștrempel a aprobat cererea dumneavoastră crezând că este vorba despre xerografierea textului Diplomei Cavalerilor Ioaniți publicat în DIR. . . . Șef serviciu Gabriela Dumitrescu” (Dear Mr. Drecin, the materials catalogued under number A 2181 are under a secrecy clause (they cannot be published) demanded by the author’s family. Director Gabriel Ștrempel has approved your request believing that it referred to the xerograph of the text on the Diploma of the Hospitallers published in DIR . . . Head of Service, Gabriela Dumitrescu) (Letter from the archives of the Șipoș family).
3. The letter bears the number 6695 and is dated 1 June 1974. It is signed by Dr. Gabriel Ștrempel, main researcher, head of the manuscript-document room (ibid.).

4. „Stimate Domnule Profesor, Chiar dacă vă scriu cu întârziere, sper ca de această dată să putem lămuri lucrurile. Arhiva profesorului Silviu Dragomir se găsește într-adevăr la cota indicată de dumneavoastră. Sunt însă 4 plicuri de arhiva ce însumează multe sute de pagini și în limita a 30 de pagini, ar trebui să puteți stabili D-voastră ce anume doriți. După aceea, Dl. Prof. Dr. Dan Horia Mazilu urmează să dea aprobarea pentru copierea lor. Într-adevăr, arhiva este la rezervă, cu clauză. Așa figurează în inventarul nostru. Personal, nu o cunosc pe D-na Florica Enescu iar eu am datoria de a respecta ceea ce este înscris în inventar. Oricum, cu aprobarea D-lui Mazilu, sunteți binevenit în sala noastră de lectură. Gabriela Dumitrescu” (Dear Professor, although my reply is belated, I hope this time we shall manage to set things straight. The archives of Silviu Dragomir exist indeed under the catalog number you indicated. However, there are four archive envelopes, which means several hundreds of pages, and you should decide yourself what you intend to consult within a limit of 30 pages. After that, Prof. Dan Horia Mazilu will approve for the material to be photocopied. Indeed, the materials in question are locked under a secrecy clause. This is how they are listed in our inventory. Personally, I do not know Mrs. Florica Enescu and I have the obligation to respect what is written in the inventory. Nevertheless, with the approval of Mr. Mazilu, you are welcome to our reading room. Gabriela Dumitrescu) (Message from Mrs. Gabriela Dumitrescu on 2 February 2007).
5. “Diploma din 1247 a regelui Bela al IV-lea: Studiu critic de prof. Silviu Dragomir,” Library of the Romanian Academy, manuscripts section, A 1281 a–b–c.
6. “Diploma din 1247 a regelui Bela al IV-lea: Studiu critic de prof. Silviu Dragomir,” 137 pp., Library of the Romanian Academy, manuscripts section, A 1281d.
7. “Cavalerii ioaniți și Oltenia: Studiu de critică istorică de prof. Silviu Dragomir,” 86 pp., Library of the Romanian Academy, manuscripts section, A 2181 e–f.
8. Silviu Dragomir, “Cavalerii ioaniți și Țările Române: Diploma din 1247 a regelui Bela al IV-lea,” Cluj, 1948, Library of the Romanian Academy, manuscripts section, A 1281 g.
9. “Diploma din 1247 a regelui Bela al IV-lea: Studiu critic de prof. Silviu Dragomir,” Library of the Romanian Academy, manuscripts section, A 1281 a, pp. 9–16.
10. “Scrisoarea lui Ștefan Pascu către Silviu Dragomir,” in The National Archives, Deva County Directorate, Silviu Dragomir collection, box 17, file 96, p. 145.
11. “Scrisoarea lui Nicolae Trâpcea către Silviu Dragomir din 14 VII 1958,” in The National Archives, Deva County Directorate, Silviu Dragomir collection, box 17, file 96, pp. 123–125.

**Abstract****On the Avatars of the Written Work of Silviu Dragomir**

After his death, historian and politician Silviu Dragomir (1888–1962) received particular attention from specialists. This is demonstrated by the numerous studies and articles on his life and work. I have been concerned with the destiny of the historian, too, and I had to face certain issues in the libraries and archives I visited in search for information. One such place is the Library of the Romanian Academy, where the documents were recorded under number A 2181 a–g. After seven years of repeated requests, I was finally granted permission to consult Silviu Dragomir's documents on the Diploma of the Knights Hospitaller of 1247. During these years, I had the opportunity to see for myself what the fight against the post-communist censorship actually means. The attempts to consult a manuscript donated to the Library of the Romanian Academy for research purposes, but inaccessible due to the managers of the library, have showed us that sometimes the communist ghosts still haunt Romania.

**Keywords**

history, Silviu Dragomir, Diploma of the Knights Hospitaller, post-communist period, Romania