**Carmen Ciornea, *Sandu Tudor şi asociaţiile studenţeşti creştine din România interbelică*. Bucureşti, Editura Eikon, 2017, 364 p.**

Most people are probably familiar with Alexandru Teodorescu (1896-1962), also known as Sandu Tudor, Brother Agathon, or Father Daniil, for his poetry, which blended modernist forms with traditionalist and religious themes, or for his involvement with the Burning Bush (Rugul Aprins) movement at the Antim Monastery during the 1940s. As Carmen Ciornea argues in this fascinating study, during the 1920s Sandu Tudor was also involved with student Christian groups such as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the Romanian Christian Students Association (Asociaţia Studenţilor Creştinilor din România, ASCR). Drawing primarily on Securitate files held at in the CNSAS archives, 81 of which are reprinted in this volume, Ciornea reconstructs the activities of these associations between 1920 and 1928 in impressive detail. Despite the fact that Sandu Tudor’s name appears in large red letters on the cover, the book is first and foremost a study of the history of the YMCA and the ASCR in the 1920s. Tudor’s biography functions as a red thread that holds the narrative together, but his thoughts and activities are secondary to the story of Christian student organising. Ionuţ Butoi first drew attention to the importance of these groups in *Mircea Vulcănescu: O microistorie a interbelicului românesc* (Eikon, 2015), another study ostensibly centred on a single individual but which was really about much broader themes. Butoi used the history of ASCR to provide context on the origins of the ‘Young Generation’ and participants in the Gusti School. He noted the tensions between an internationally oriented evangelical current entering ASCR through the YMCA and the chauvanistic, ultranationalist orientation of the National Union of Christian Students in Romania (Uniunea Naţională a Studenţilor Creştini din România, UNSCR). Ciornea tells essentially the same story, but with a focus on Tudor rather than Vulcănescu.

Ciornea’s account is based heavily on surveillance documents collected in a handful of Securitate files (most importantly, the Fonduri Documentare, dosare nr. 014758, 010767, 010769). The vast majority of these documents were reports by the secret police on student organising, which raises important questions about the biases and presuppositions in the narrative. Ciornea’s analysis is solid and impartial, but as she has not triangulated her sources with press clippings, memoir accounts, or student publications, it is impossible to know to what extent the story she tells is effectively the one that first the Siguranţa and then the Securitate wished to tell about Tudor and his friends. For most of the decade, for example, members of ASCR would have characterised the movement as one about religious renewal, and connected their experiences with the global spread of student evangelicalism during those years. It was only after they came under the influence of Nae Ionescu that they perceived problematic Protestant currents in their books and prayers, rejecting them for a nationalist Orthodoxism. The Siguranţa, on the other hand, was more concerned with student violence and threats to law and order. The Siguranţa associated the story of the YMCA and ASCR with that of the UNSCR, examining the radicalisation of ASCR-ists through the influence of Nae Ionescu and the UNSCR’s attempt to restrict the activities of the YMCA. Both stories are, of course, true in the sense that the 81 documents Ciornea republishes here clearly testify to both narratives. But one wonders what other stories have been lost by the over-reliance on one type of source.

As a specialist on Tudor’s literary and religious work, Ciornea uses these sources to reconstruct this phase of Tudor’s spiritual biography. She argues that throughout the 1920s Tudor “subordinated every aspect of his existence to Christian Orthodox precepts,” (42) originally being caught up in ASCR’s “unique enthusiasm” (52) then coming to belive that “the Romanian Orthodox Church, as the carrier of a rich tradition, must stay away from foreign, international models and cultivate practices based in its own nature and humility.” (119) Given her interest in Tudor’s spiritual development, it is surprising that Ciornea does not engage with his contributions to *Gândirea* at all, focusing entirely on his activities within ASCR. This choice reflects her desire to offer a commentary on the documentary sources which make up the bulk of the book. Although the analysis of Tudor and ASCR might leave something to be desired, the book is very useful as a way of making these valuable sources available to a wider audience. Offering insights into student politics, university life, religious change, church politics, young women’s public activities, and the secret police, these documents will be helpful to historians working on a wide variety of topics related to 1920s Bucharest.

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