

Review of Alexandru Surdu and Cristian Radu Nema, *București - Capitala Eroilor Patriei Române (1916-1919)*, București: Editura Integral, 2019, 192 pp.

ISBN 9786069923559

By Florentina NICOLAE
Ovidius University of Constanța

Under the auspices of the Romanian Academy, specifically, of the “Constantin Rădulescu-Motru” Institute of Philosophy and Psychology, an exceptional album was published in 2019, entitled *București - Capitala Eroilor Patriei Române (1916-1919)* [Bucharest, the Capital of the Heroes of the Romanian Homeland (1916-1919)]. I have capitalized the words of the original title, despite the spelling rules of the Romanian language, out of respect for the authors and for the approached subject matter. The collaboration of one of the greatest men of culture of our times, the late academician and philosopher Alexandru Surdu, with the filmmaker Cristian Radu Nema has resulted in a work with a deep emotional charge for the Romanian people. It is my honor to introduce this book, which I personally received from the late academician, a few months before he passed away, to the readers of the *Annals*.

The album gathers in its pages the presentations of twenty monuments dedicated to the soldiers of the fatherland, fallen on duty during the First World War. The selection criterion is revealed in the title: the monuments can be found in Bucharest or close to the capital city. The preface written by Alexandru Surdu is a genuine ode to the “Home of the Romanian Soul, of the Consummation of our Feelings and of the highest of its Thoughts”. In a few pages inflamed by patriotism, the Capital is presented not only as a theater of war and a political scene, but also as the place of pious remembrance of the efforts of all Romanian soldiers, regardless of rank, to save the “Headquarters of the Romanian Soul.” The Monument of the Sanitary Heroes, the Monument of the Heroes of Colentina Park, the Last Guard of the Capital, the Monument of the Heroes of Dudești Commune, the Monument of the Military Doctors, the Monument of the Heroes of the Military Commune, the Monument of the Heroes of Grivitsa Commune, the “Turtucaia” Monument from Bellu Cemetery, the Monument of the Heroes of the Sanitary Company, the Monument of the Romanian Railways Heroes, the Monument of the Heroes of the 21st Infantry Regiment, the Monument of the Sapper Heroes, the Monument of the Heroes at St. Sylvester’s Church, the Monument of the

Infantry, the Monument of the Heroes of St. George's "Capra" ("She-Goat"), The Monument of the Heroes in the Israelite Cemetery, the Monument of the French Heroes, the Cemetery of the 1916-1919 Heroes, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the Triumphal Arch are presented in detail, with images of remarkable quality. Very subtly, through visual symbols appended at the beginning and the end of each presentation of monuments, the authors emphasize the role of the royal family in war events that would lead to the Great Union of December 1, 1918: the Royal coat of arms, the luminous figure of Queen Mary, the image of the casket containing her embalmed heart, and the stylized outline of Greater Romania, the last of which Alexandru Surdu also used for the work *From the Great Union to Greater Romania*. Romanian citizens of different nationalities are evoked throughout the text. They all laid down their lives for the country, as shown by the presentation of the Monument of Heroes in the Israelite Cemetery, erected in 1922. Cismigiu Park houses the Monument of French Heroes, sculpted in Carrara marble by Ion Jalea in Paris, in 1920. The streets, the boulevards, the surroundings of the Capital come to life as if by magic. No Romanian can remain indifferent to so much evidence of sacrifice, as well as to so much respect for our national heroes.

We are grateful to the two authors for this 21st monument, built with words, on glossy paper, which equally nobly honors the memory of our heroic forerunners.