

I. SIMPOZION NAȚIONAL - 90 de ani de administrație și învățământ românesc în Transilvania / NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM - 90 years of Romanian administration and education in Transylvania

ROLUL LUI VASILE GOLDIȘ ÎN REALIZAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI ROMÂNESC LA ARAD

THE ROLE OF VASILE GOLDIȘ IN THE REALIZATION OF ROMANIAN EDUCATION IN ARAD

Aurel ARDELEAN
Western University “Vasile Goldis” of Arad

Abstract

This autumn we commemorate 90 years of Romanian education in Arad. After the Great Union was achieved on 1 December 1918, in which Arad had a decisive role, the organization of Romanian education in Transylvania was the first act of justice made in favour of Romanians.

The ideas of Vasile Goldiș regarding the organization of Romanian education were brought to life through his entire activity as a Member of Parliament and teacher in schools from Caransebeș, Brașov and Arad.

Key words: *Romanian education, Vasile Goldiș, the Great Union, schools in Arad*

Cuvinte cheie: *învățământ românesc, Vasile Goldiș, Marea Unire, școli arădene*

This autumn we commemorate 90 years of Romanian education in Arad. After the Great Union was achieved on 1 December 1918, in which Arad had a decisive role, the organization of Romanian education in Transylvania was the first act of justice made in favour of Romanians.

As a son of Arad, the great patriot Vasile Goldiș was an indefatigable militant for the Romanians' rights, having a democratic vision on the organization of social and cultural life of Romanians in Transylvania, in which schools must contribute to the cultivation of the Romanian language and the preservation of the national entity.

As it is known, in the years 1905-1906, when Vasile Goldiș was a deputy in the Parliament of Budapest, he requested the founding of a Romanian University in Transylvania, with the residence in Arad (which would be effected in 1919, in Cluj), and, throughout his entire life as a teacher, author of textbooks, eparchial secretary, brilliant orator, highly courageous journalist and militant for the rights of Romanians under foreign occupation, he was a model of high conduct, for both his contemporaries and for subsequent generations.

The ideas of Vasile Goldiș regarding the organization of Romanian education were brought to life through his entire activity as a Member of Parliament and teacher in schools from Caransebeș, Brașov and Arad.

We should like to cite, in this respect, some of his ideas and principles with regard to education:

A particularly important idea that Vasile Goldiș developed was that according to which education must be in close connection to practice, to the needs of the people.

As an educator, Vasile Goldiș was characterized by exemplary conscientiousness and correctness, by tact and superior understanding of the laws of education. He laid a great deal of emphasis on the use of didactic material, procuring numerous historical and geographical maps for the schools in which he taught.

As an author of textbooks he printed, in 1890, the first edition of the *History of Hungary for Lower Secondary Schools*. Although this was a translation after Ludovic Mangold, it also comprised chapters referring to Romanians, which did not occur in the original text. Between 1892 and 1897, Goldiș published a *Universal History for Secondary Schools* in three volumes, an original contribution, based on the most recent specialized works in the Europe of those times. In the three textbooks, when approaching universal history, he laid the principles of social determinism on the basis of the universal connection thesis, seeking to explain the mechanism of the genesis and development of the social phenomenon.

Throughout the three volumes, it is worth remarking the constant preoccupation of Vasile Goldiș for the permanent integration of the history of our nation among the major themes of universal history. "If, in terms of science, the history textbooks of Vasile Goldiș rise up to the level of the era when they were written, from a methodical point of view, in many respects they are still models to be followed today". The clarity of exposition, the sobriety of language and its adjustment to the required level, the clearness and even a tint of easiness in following and understanding the presented topics are only a few of these respects, highlighting the pedagogical qualities of Vasile Goldiș.

Through the organization of information, Vasile Goldiș is an *advocate of active education* and *of the intuitive method*. In 1900, Vasile Goldiș published the textbook *Geography for People's Schools*.

As a supporter of the *principle of accessibility*, regarding the teaching of Romanian history and geography in elementary schools, Vasile Goldiș demanded that one should start learning „the past of those in his proximity, of his commune, and then that of his nation”.

A defining aspect in his pedagogical activity was that Vasile Goldiș focused on the *principle of intuition*, which sought to set the student's thinking in motion towards abstractization.

The issue of Romanian education was a constant concern in the parliamentary activity of Vasile Goldiș. On the occasion of various manifestations, Vasile Goldiș condemned, in his speeches, the repressive, nationalistic – extremist policy of Hungarian leaders.

The schooling issue would dominate almost all of his speeches. He would show the situation in schools, where Romanian children were forced to learn a series of disciplines in Hungarian, on account of it being the official language of the state.

During the Meeting of the plenary Council of the Consistory of the Orthodox Bishopric in Arad, on 14/27 April 1901, on the suggestion of Vasile Mangra, Vasile Goldiș was elected *consistorial secretary*, and, in 26 June 1901, he was welcomed in Arad with good wishes of „health, vigour and many years of life” by his friends at “Tribuna poporului”¹.

By coming to Arad, Vasile Goldiș began a new stage in his life, that of political struggle for national rights. This was carried out in several ways: in the journals of the time, in Parliament, in electoral campaigns, in the congregations of the comitatus, in coordinating the activity of the consistory on a radical line in promoting national Romanian interests.

In Arad, Vasile Goldiș performed a rich activity in the field of education.

As a “commissioner” of the bishopric for schooling issues, he was concerned with the organization of Romanian religious education in the eparchy of Arad, focusing both on the educational content, and on its material basis. “As a teacher, with a vast specialized and methodical/didactic preparation, he supervised the educational process in the eparchy, and

¹ The People's Tribune

especially in the pedagogical school. On the occasion of school inspections, he made a series of observations on the quality of education and the level of preparation of future teachers.

A particular contribution to the enrichment of content for Romanian education in *schools located in the area of Arad* was the use of his textbooks, published in the period while he was teaching in Brașov, militating, at the same time, for the creation of an appropriate material basis in schools.

The most important contribution of Vasile Goldiș in the service of Romanian education was achieved not only in the eparchy of Arad, but also in all territories inhabited by Romanians in Austro – Hungary, in the form of the battle for the preservation of *school autonomy* within the autonomy of the Church. The parliamentary activity of Vasile Goldiș is remarkable, being dominated by the struggle against the educational laws of Apponyi, which undermined this autonomy.

As an author of textbooks, Vasile Goldiș contributed, in the first place, to the expansion of school information in the Romanian language.

The reputation of Vasile Goldiș as an author of textbooks is confirmed by their being used in Transylvanian schools. Thus, in the Monograph of the National College “Avram Iancu”, recently published in Brad (2009), on commemorating 140 since the founding of this school, among the authors of textbooks it is mentioned that, starting in 1896-1897, *The National Constitution* was taught from the textbook conceived by Vasile Goldiș. At the same high school in Brad, starting in 1905-1906, the *Latin* and *Syntax* textbooks in the 3rd and 4th forms of gymnasium were authored by Vasile Goldiș.

History, in the 3rd form of gymnasium, was taught, starting in 1890-1891, from the textbook designed by Vasile Goldiș (replacing the textbooks of dr. Meșota).

In the 4th form of gymnasium, the *History* textbook by Mangold – Goldiș was introduced in 1892-1893, followed by the one by Vasile Goldiș in 1894-1895.

Nowadays, the spirit of Vasile Goldiș is also present in Brad, from the 2006-2007 academic year onwards, through the existence a centre for distance education studies of the Western University “Vasile Goldiș” of Arad – the Faculty of Economic Sciences.

As a professor, Vasile Goldiș sought to form a new, wholesome national conscience for students, in an age when the Romanian people had major national ideals to accomplish.

The activity of Vasile Goldiș in Arad, over the first two decades of the 20th century, remains in the history of the Romanian people as a page of national struggle in the educational field. In his speech on the anniversary of the founding of the Preparandia in Arad (published in “Românul”² no.24, 2nd year, 1912), Vasile Goldiș reiterates the truth that the Austro – Hungarian Empire was composed of several nations, equally entitled to culture, and establishes the *principle* that each people can and must be cultured only in its own language.

“For a hundred years has the Romanian Pedagogical Institute in Arad remained in the service of this lofty principle and from its modest shed beside the river of Mureș it commemorates today the centenary of its existence in this beautiful palace, which was not erected from the country’s treasure, nor from the kindness and generosity of a patron, but *exclusively from the sweat of the kin-loving and national culture-desiring Romanian people.*”

“It is beyond all doubt that the agreement between Hungarians and Romanians can only be made when the Hungarian government recognizes the right of the Romanian people *to its national existence* and ensures the conditions for guaranteeing this national existence, among which there will undoubtedly be the absolute freedom of Romanian churches and, in the shade of this freedom, *the decent endowment of Romanian priests and teachers.* As I believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, so I believe in the hour of redemption that must come”.

² The Romanian

An important part in organizing Romanian education in Transylvania, in the view of Vasile Goldiș, was played by the close collaboration between school and the church, with regard to the education of youth in the spirit of Christian moral.

In the speech utter at the Congress of Priests in Arad (23 October 1923), entitled Return to the Christ!, Vasile Goldiș stated:

“The Union of human consciences will be accomplished when the love for one’s neighbour, the fundamental principle of the Teacher of Nazareth, is victorious in the world. And so today, when you witness the disappearance of honesty, humanity, decency, common sense and morals from society and when you see all these contrived through wrath and the all-powerful worship of the mammon, to all you, who are horrified by the harrowing ferocity among people, to all you who are truly desirous of goodwill among people, and above all to you who wish for the happiness and greatness of the Romanian nation, like a bright flower in the garden of human civilization, to all of you does history call: “Return to the Christ!”

This was the urge of Vasile Goldiș to the clergy, for saving the national being by cultivating Christian virtues, having, as a model, the life and activity of the Teacher Jesus Christ.

In the speech delivered at the House of Deputies, during the meeting of 27 June 1924, when the Law of primary education was debated, Vasile Goldiș had an important contribution to the improvement of the content of this law.

On this occasion, Vasile Goldiș sustained the principle of compulsory primary education, requesting that “the Minister create, for all, the possibility of not only sending their children to school, but also of having a place where to send them and the money with which to send them, and that the school have teachers and means for learning”. He believed that school should be attractive, that students should go there with pleasure and that the teacher should create an atmosphere of serenity among students. He did not agree with constraints (no punishments!).

Another principle maintained by Vasile Goldiș was that of free education and that the teachers be the soul of a school. “Any reform, Vasile Goldiș stated, is as valuable as those responsible for applying it, and as much as they live up to the requirements of their times and are aware of the importance of the mission and their duties. Laws, regulations, programmes, all means of education cannot yield any results in the absence of the life-giving factor: *the teacher*”. “Teachers, said Vasile Goldiș, have come to be under a regime of political terror! The purpose of the Law of primary education is to bring light into schools. Little children must learn in the language of their mothers.”

For all durable accomplishments, Vasile Goldiș promoted the principle “Through ourselves.”

While addressing himself to the members of the International Society of Secondary Teachers, who visited the “Association” in Arad (27 July 1928), Vasile Goldiș said: “You have the noble call of creating the history of the future generation who would understand – as it concerns the prosperity of the human race on earth – the incompatible superiority of the solidarity of all nations against the brutal fight towards oppression in the maddening competition for material goods.

The faithful sentinel of the civilisation created through that genius, a long row of centuries had the Romanian people the ill-luck of squandering its life energy in stopping the avalanche towards the West and defending the cross as a symbol of a superior conception of life.

“Reunited today in its natural borders, this nation urges the approach to the goods of advanced civilization, of which its ill fate has deprived it till now. Your coming among us is a strong encouragement for us. From this day on, we feel that we have fully joined the cohort of fighters for light, comrades of the soldiers of justice, combatants of human solidarity.

Following the Latin adage “*Historia magistra vitae*” (History is a teacher for life), Vasile Goldiș requests those in the service of schools turn their devotion to their country and nation to good account by thoroughly knowing the millennial history of the Romanian.

At the official commencement of classes in the Romanian language at the “Moise Nicoară” High School in Arad, on Sunday, 5 October 1919, in an atmosphere of great enthusiasm, Vasile Goldiș, as the Minister of state and as a representative of the Government of Bucharest and of the Governing Council, was deeply moved and delivered an address that was uncommon for an official speech, saying:

“As a former student of this high school, I never had the joy of receiving culture in my mother tongue, as you have, my dear children, the new generation, who will grow up by the warmth of our souls. Fate, which is often the one that makes decisions, made that I, who was a student of this high school in its first year of activity, had the honour to utter these words in Romanian, from this tribune, on the first Romanian inauguration and, as a former teacher, guide your first steps”.

After evoking past memories, Vasile Goldiș reminded those present of the duty they had to the present and advised them not to propagate wrath among nations in that shelter of culture, but to seek closeness and to know that their highest duty was to see to it that everyone felt well and content in the Greater Romania.

The cooperation of Vasile Goldiș with high schools in Arad was diversified due to his preoccupations for founding School Committees called upon to replace the old institution of the School Eforia with a form of social cooperation – a much more active community among parents, due to its democratic principles underlying it. At the opening ceremony of the upper secondary-school classes in 1920, the Arad politician insisted on the functions of school committees. Being appointed president of the new school body, Vasile Goldiș was the partner in educative action of Ascaniu Crișan, the headmaster who, in a long activity of distinguished pedagogical equity, was one of the builders of scientific spirit which, little by little, dominated pedagogical life in the high schools of Arad. During this activity stretching over many years, Vasile Goldiș enjoyed the good collaboration of head teachers Florica Bucurescu, headmistress of the “Ghiba Birta” High School, Vasile Suci, headmaster of the Boys’ Commercial High School and Romulus Cărpinișan, the technician educated in the famed European Polytechnics of Turin and Berlin. All of the above-mentioned proved a genuine pedagogical talent in capitalizing on the educative potential of exact (mathematic-physical) sciences.

Vasile Goldiș persevered in the action of developing the functions of the school committee, emphasising the democratic idea underlying the organization of this newly-founded institution. He recalled the role of the school committee in strengthening school – local community cooperation and referred to the experience of the English school, where the two factors were in charge of assessing the conditions offered by family and school to young students. In 8 April 1922, Vasile Goldiș was elected president of the new educational institution. The first bases of the activity of school committees had been laid. They illustrated the idea that the association of those two formative factors involved in any educational process – formal educators and parents – would be fruitful for the Arad community. The same academic year saw the continuation of efforts for the integration of school administration in the complex apparatus of the country’s educational system. The public enthusiasm manifested in the field was crowned by a convincing ministerial decision. From 1 May 1923 onwards, the ministerial document stated, “the administration and management of the entire education in Romania was concentrated at the Ministry of Instruction in Bucharest”.

The intervention of Vasile Goldiș in the Parliament of the country contains judgements that have withstood the test of time, due to the fact that expresses fundamental truths, out of which we mention: “The people’s instruction is essentially an interest of the state”, “The teacher is the live-giving factor of the entire complex of educational means”, “The state is the institution ensuring the attractiveness of the educational space, the state of health and hygiene of this space, as well ecological balance between school life and the environment in which education is performed”.

The collaboration relations of Vasile Goldiș with teachers from Arad stood at the basis of constructive actions that he initiated along with their representatives, referring to the reorganization of education in Arad after the Union. He supported the efforts of Iosif Moldovan in reorganizing

school inspectorates, was at the side of Nicolae Cristea in his actions of popularizing textbooks designed by authors working in schools from the other side of the Carpathian Mountains, but also encouraged the initiatives of the group of teachers militating for the erection of the Union Monument in Arad. In the cultural and political conception of the president of ASTRA, Arad was a symbol – city because, in this city inhabited by sensible people, who sustained the circulation of ideas after the Memorandum, opened European horizons and facilitated the affirmation of Arad as a political centre of Romania in the hard times of restrictions of freedom which the city on Mureș had to face during the years of dualism. In this symbol – centre, the great decisions of the Union were made, asserting the symbolic value of the city as a political centre were the great project of struggle for the Great Union were forged. Vasile Goldiș requested that the city remain in the life of future generations as a symbol – city, through the existence of the great cultural projects generated by the idea of Union. These ideas, disseminated among the Romanian public and teachers around 1920 -1921 constituted the spiritual scaffolding of the public mindset of Arad. Through the diversity of cultural – pedagogical initiatives and through his ideas of ennobling peasantry in schools and cultural institutions, Vasile Goldiș was close to the vision of Spiru Haret on the extra-curricular work of the teacher.

Vasile Goldiș was a true coordinator of Romanian education in the eparchy of Arad, which he led towards the Great Union.

In one of his addresses, uttered in Caransebeș (8 November 1913) Vasile Goldiș said: “Our national will only become happy and strong when her sons have learned to be united in the service of the national ideal. This unity builds the future, but this will only be possible when its roots are deeply grounded into the history of history of faded times. Let our eyes aim for the future, and our hearts receive all the legacy of sufferings of our century-old ancestors.”

The victory in the long struggle of the great patriot “Vasile Goldiș”, the spiritual patron of our University, alongside other great intellectual personalities of the time, resulted in the accomplishment of the aspirations of Romanians in Transylvania for having schools in the Romanian language, and in the creation of Romanian education in Arad, Vasile Goldiș had an essential contribution.

The founding of the Western University “Vasile Goldiș” of Arad, in the first year after the Romanian Revolution of 1989, is an act of justice, of testamentary accomplishment of the struggle of Vasile Goldiș for having a Romanian university in Arad, by which we, the current generation, wish to pay our respects to democratic principles, in a United Europe.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Chiș, Petru, *Vasile Goldiș. Activitatea școlară în contextul imperativelor naționale*, “Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad, 2000.
2. Gagea, Eugen, *Vasile Goldiș și “Românul”*, “Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad, 2008, p.294-296.
3. Goldiș, Vasile, *Scrieri social – politice și literare*. Ediție îngrijită și studiu introductiv, tabel cronologic și bibliografie de Mircea Popa și Gheorghe Șora, cu un Cuvânt înainte de acad. Ștefan Pascu, Editura Facla, Timișoara, 1976.
4. Goldiș, Vasile, *Prin noi înșine*, Prefața de Aurel Ardelean. Studiu introductiv, selecție de texte și note de Vasile Popeangă, Editura Multimedia, Arad, 2000.
5. Lupaș, I., Vasile Goldiș, *Vestitorul libertății și unității naționale* (cuvânt rostit la Palatul Cultural din Arad la 12 februarie 1934, lângă sicriul lui Vasile Goldiș, membru de onoare al Academiei Române) în “Gând Românesc”, revistă de cultură editată de ASTRA, Anul II, ianuarie – februarie 1934, Cluj.
6. Mărghitan, Liviu, *Academicieni din județul Arad* (secolele XIX-XX), Editura Fundației “Moise Nicoară”, Arad, 2004, p. 41-50.
7. Roz, Alexandru, *Vasile Goldiș – autor al unor manuale de istorie* în “Studia Universitatis “Vasile Goldiș”, Arad, Nr. 2/1992, p.13-21.