

## **CLUJ HIGHER LEARNING IN THE EARLY COMMUNIST PERIOD: ETHNIC DIVISION REASSERTED IN A NATIONALIZED MARKET**

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*With special regard to the fate of Hungarian minority higher learning in a controversial period, falling roughly between 1945 and 1955, this paper has a restricted aim of encompassing a number of symptomatic phenomena related to ethnically-based higher educational policy reshaping the institutional framework and clientele of higher learning. My work is based on the assumption that limiting the scope of university affairs to ethno-national considerations – or, worse, gearing majority viewpoints against minority perspectives – does not guarantee long-lasting qualitative standards for either of these communities.*

At the moment of the anti-Nazi coup of 23 August 1944 there was one university in Cluj, the Hungarian one (re)instituted there in 1940 by the Hungarian rule returning to Northern Transylvania that year. Inter-war Transylvania's Romanian university is still in exile in Sibiu, while its Cluj Hungarian counterpart refuses to obey orders of evacuation coming from Budapest in the fall of 1944. Between the mentioned coup and the full-fledged institution of Communist rule in Romania (together with the final resettlement of national borders), there is a three-year period of interregnum that, albeit contradictory, produces an unprecedented parallel organization of cultural (and political) assets in Transylvania following ethnic lines. Some of these democratic arrangements prevailed well into the fifties, Cluj higher education being a case in point.

On the one hand, together with the interregnum under Soviet auspices there came the hope to maintain Transylvania's Hungarian university, evidently on the part of those with the corresponding ethnic affiliation. On the other hand, Romanians envisaged a thorough restitution of their higher educational assets in Cluj, and not only those. Continuity was considered crucial, and most of the concerned ethnic minority community saw the maintenance of a separate university as a symbol and result of the expected democratic times, a landmark of the political change to come together with yet another change of sovereignty. Both the inter-war lack of a university to have Hungarian as its teaching language and its being there during the war served as arguments for its importance. It became the mile-stone of

co-existence, just as the parallel existence of two universities became a seismograph of minority policies in the latter forties and later<sup>1</sup>.

Responsible local elements, Romanians and Hungarians alike, were conscious of the fact that the Vienna Award was soon to be annulled, so they did their best to avoid imminent national atrocities. With the Hungarian university continuing to exist in Cluj under Soviet protection, some Romanian circles found it revolting that the Sibiu refugee university of the Romanians was not allowed back to Cluj. Meanwhile, it was the Joint Executive Committee of Northern Transylvania that found the existence of a separate Hungarian university imperative; the Hungarian Peoples' Alliance did not at the beginning pronounce itself for the university, even though some of its leaders found the academic staff reactionary and would have willingly accept less advantageous solutions as well. Negotiations concerning the immediate return of the Romanian university to Cluj began right after the re-annexation, since many of the Tătărescu-government and especially Maniu's Peasant Party made good use of the fact that the university was still in Sibiu for accumulating nationalist political capital<sup>2</sup>.

The alliance of Transylvanian-based Social Democrats and Communists was a major factor in countering Romanian nationalist strivings to curtail democratic (re)organization of education and cultural life by minorities of Transylvania. Petru Groza himself was yet another guarantee, while the Hungarian Peoples Alliance<sup>3</sup>, especially in 1945-47, successfully mediated between Bucharest and the non-Romanian leftist political factors. Yet it was a reoccurring semi-official opinion that two universities were "too much" for Transylvania, and that Hungarians should content themselves with native-tongue sections that should be included into the Romanian university<sup>4</sup>.

Had the university been evacuated and had its council departed, little chance would have been left for a separate university for Transylvania's ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> Lajos Csögör, Előszó [Foreword to] *A kolozsvári magyar egyetem 1945-ben: A Bolyai Egyetem szervezésének válogatott dokumentumai* [The Hungarian university in Kolozsvár in 1945: Selected documents of the organization of the Bolyai university] edited by Béla Barabás and Rudolf Joó (Budapest: Magyarágkutató Intézet, 1990), 11; Rudolf Joó, Bevezető [Introduction to] *A kolozsvári magyar egyetem 1945-ben: A Bolyai Egyetem szervezésének válogatott dokumentumai* [The Hungarian university in Kolozsvár in 1945: Selected documents of the organisation of the Bolyai university] edited by Béla Barabás and Rudolf Joó (Budapest: Magyarágkutató Intézet, 1990), 28.

<sup>2</sup> András B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel. A romániai magyar oktatásügy regénye, 1918, 1944-1948, 1996* [Regular exception. The novel of Hungarian education in Romania, 1918, 1944-1948, 1996] (Bukarest – Kolozsvár: Kriterion, 1997), 148-150.

<sup>3</sup> Placed at the other pole of the political spectrum, Transylvania's Catholic archbishop, Áron Márton, was doubtful about the democratic ways of Romanian authorities concerning the university. Forced into exile at the end of the war to Southern Transylvania under Romanian sovereignty (Alba Iulia, the bishop see was there anyway) by Horthyst authorities because he publicly opposed the deportation of Jews, the bishop envisaged hard times for a Hungarian university under a Romanian sovereignty of whichever political allegiance. (Later events proved that he was not mistaken in his cautious skepticism.) See Csögör, Előszó, 11; Joó, Bevezető, 30.

<sup>4</sup> B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel, 77-79.*

Hungarians<sup>5</sup>. The war was still going on, the fate of the territory was uncertain, moreover, even though Stalin made the returning of Romanian administration to Northern Transylvania conditional on democratic equity with minorities, two important Communist leaders, Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker, freshly returned from the Soviet Union, disagreed at the beginning even with the existing “alien”<sup>6</sup> university structures. (They envisaged Hungarian sections subordinated to the respective departments of the Romanian university. They were not alone in fostering the idea)<sup>7</sup>.

In the middle of the dispute concerning the university, the remaining structure continued its activity with 856 enrolled students in the second semester of 1945. (Among the 32 Hungarian professors to be acknowledged later, there were those who remained in Cluj permanently and even some who returned from Budapest, which they found even more insecure at that time.) 605 students received tuition-waivers, the student welfare bureau (another remnant of the Hungarian administration) offered financial aid in the value of 113,489 Pengős. (The two national currencies, Hungarian Pengő and Romanian Lei, were concomitantly used in Northern Transylvania for whole months, even following the interregnum. The exchange-rate<sup>8</sup> was 1:30.) With all the unsettled matters, half-hearted international control and temporary arrangements, the Bucharest authorities treated the subject of higher education in Cluj as an issue of domestic educational politics<sup>9</sup>.

On 28 December 1944 the prefect of Cluj (Vasile Pogăceanu) addressed a letter to the Rector and council of the (by then still Hungarian) university in which, according to the right and responsibility he was entitled to by the Soviet military commandment, he ordered the “urgent restructuring of the university on the basis of clear democracy”. The prefect fixed a ten-day deadline for the university to

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<sup>5</sup> There were several attacks directed against the remaining Hungarian university on charges that it was a symbol of Horthyst authority, that its teaching staff were of nationalist right-wing orientation, that its presence in the post-war educational market was useless and unlawful, even “dangerous to democracy”, all this despite the favourable voices coming from some Romanian Communists, who based their allegiance on the Nationality Statute of Vlădescu-Răcoasa issued in early 1945. *Ibid.*, 64-71.

<sup>6</sup> None of those who have not obeyed orders of evacuation under Hungarian rule or returned shortly after their temporary departure to Hungary, were found with any political faults by the so-called legitimating committees (set up in late 1944 to “filter out” former rightist extremist elements). At the time of the final decision to stay in Cluj, there were altogether 49 such employees of the university. Fifteen of them were professors; they attended to the academic activity carried out in late 1944 when the university officially restarted its activity with 628 students. Their number rose to 856 by March 1945. See Gábor Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások: Fejezetek a romániai magyarság második világháború utáni történetéből* [Illusions and disappointments: Chapters from the history of Hungarians in Transylvania after the Second World War] (Csíkszereda [Miercurea-Ciuc]: Státus, 1999), 226-231.

<sup>7</sup> Csörgör, *Előszó*, 12-13; Joó, *Bevezető*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Joó, *Bevezető*, 31; György Gaal, *Egyetem a Farkas utcában* [University in the Farkas street] (Cluj: Erdélyi Magyar Műszaki Tudományos Társaság 2001), 127.

submit its proposal regarding the new list of the teaching staff. One month later the prefect ordered the temporary suspension of university autonomy and the merger of the Agronomic Institute with the university. (On returning of the Romanian university to Cluj, the institute was melted into its structure and ceased delivering lectures in any other language but Romanian.) The functioning of the Hungarian university was intended to be assured on the basis of legal continuity; concomitantly, the prefect ordered the beginning of the activity of the Romanian university. Meanwhile, the leaders of the two universities decided to make steps for the legalization of the return to Cluj and the returning of all the inter-war belongings of the Romanian university. According to their decision, those members of the staff who were Romanian citizens and were found at duty in Cluj as of April 1945, should be re-employed automatically, while the rest of the personnel should depend on opportunities to be offered by some later legal framework<sup>10</sup>.

The exiled Romanian faculty of Cluj had always viewed the Sibiu/Timișoara arrangement outrageous and temporary and was fully aware of the possibility to return to Cluj foreshadowed by the 23 August 1944 turnover. Concrete preparations for relocation began shortly after the “liberation” by Soviet troops of the once home city of the Ferdinand I University. Yet it soon turned out that a quick return was not possible, as Romanian authorities were expelled from Northern Transylvania by the same Soviets. Meanwhile, to the greatest disapproval of the refugee university, the Hungarian institution of higher education managed to continue its activity in Cluj, and the hasty gestures of reoccupation were doomed to temporary failure. What is more, the Romanian university received an official letter from Bucharest issued by the ministry of national education requesting it to carry out a thorough ideological cleansing among the faculty. Revolted by the implications of such move, the senate refused to carry out the order<sup>11</sup>.

Transylvania’s Romanian university began the 1944/45 academic year in Sibiu, while the Hungarian one in Cluj resumed its activity, albeit with 18 professors only and with a student-body partially depleted by war. News came to Sibiu that the Cluj rector would not recognize the Soviet-Romanian truce agreement and, owing to unsettled sovereignty-matters, considered the presence of the Hungarian university in Cluj lawful. Months before the actual return of the Romanian university, there was a virtual competition for Cluj as a former and future center of higher education, a sector so much imbued with ethno-national interest in Transylvania. Intending to conform with the political shifts that occurred after the anti-Nazi coup, Hungarian authorities of Northern Transylvania, the authorities of the university included, made promises to reorganize their activity

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<sup>10</sup> *A romániai magyar főiskolai oktatás* [Hungarian higher education in Romania] (Cluj-Napoca: Bolyai Társaság, 1990), 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Vasile Pușcaș, *The Cluj/Sibiu University, 1940-1945*, in “University and Society: A History of Higher Education in Cluj in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, edited by Vasile Pușcaș (Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press, 1999), 295-296.

according to Leftist democratic standards. The exponents of the Romanian university did not deny the right of Transylvania's foremost ethnic minority to higher education in their own tongue, but vehemently opposed the arrangements made by a Cluj prefect who, in their eyes, did not represent Romanian authority but one of a foreign Bolshevik military command. In the same note, the Sibiu senate sent their letter of protest to the Ministry, to no avail though. What is more, the senate was not even invited to the ceremonies of 13 March 1945 occasioned by the return of Romanian authorities to Northern Transylvania on account of the charge that the leadership of the university had been appointed "on the basis of a fascist law"<sup>12</sup>.

Law-decree 406. of 1945, ordering the return of the exiled Romanian university to Cluj was meant to temper the situation. As it were, the decree brought even some further anguish, especially those parts of it that could be understood as the basis of a restitution in integrity. (These stipulations automatically set a question-mark over the legal continuity of the Hungarian university already, but were considered "insufficient" by the Romanian side.) Upon returning, the King Ferdinand I University resumed its activity in the old structure; until 1948 it had the four "traditional" departments of the inter-war period, that is, Law (with only one section, though), Medicine (pharmacology included), Letters and Philosophy and a Faculty of Science (mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural science and geography)<sup>13</sup>.

Confusion and a sense of discontinuity was general at the Romanian university in the 1944/45 academic year. For instance, students of the Letters and Philosophy department are listed in two separate groups, that is, those who enrolled in Sibiu and those who enrolled in Cluj<sup>14</sup>. The Sibiu contingent for the mentioned academic year numbered 478 students, 180 males and 298 females. (The preponderance of women among students well beyond the inter-war average in this department indicates the general impact the war made on the gender-constituency of the student-body.) Except two, all were Romanian subjects, 452 being ethnic Romanians as well. The majority (319) were Greek Orthodox, while there were 180 of them of the Greek Catholic faith, and only a few percent of other confessions. The territorial distribution went as follows: 329 originated from Transylvania (it is not specified, but presumably the term refers to the region as a

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 297-298.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 298-299.

<sup>14</sup> The Cluj contingent – presumably enrolled in the second semester, at a time when returning to Cluj of the Romanian university was imminent – was considerably smaller, numbering only 77 students (of which 44 enrolled to the first year). The order was somewhat reversed in this group: there were more boys (43) than girls (29); there were more Greek Catholics than Orthodox (45 to 12), while 60 of them were reported to have had Transylvanian as geographical background. Again, the majority (59) were ethnic Romanians, and all were of Romanian citizenship. See „Anuarul Universității Cluj-Sibiu, 1944-1945” (date preliminare) [Preliminary data for the yearbook of the Cluj-Sibiu university, 1944-1945] (section 289.), 7-8.

whole), the rest – except the 26 originating from Bessarabia and Bukowina – came from the Old Kingdom<sup>15</sup>.

In the three years that followed, the restructuring process aimed to compensate for the damages made by war and exile continued. Some of the educational and research facilities were reorganized, especially libraries and laboratories. With all the unavoidable decrease caused by war-conjuncture, the number of students slowly but continuously grew. Ten years later the figure was 3,026 for the 1956/57 academic year. There is an important change with regard the stipend-system applied by the Communist regime. Tuition-fees were officially eliminated, while half of the above-mentioned students received state-scholarships. In the five years between 1952 and 1957, a total of 3,194 students graduated from the Victor Babeş University (as went its new name)<sup>16</sup>.

While Law-decree 406. of May 1945 saw to the returning to Northern Transylvania of all Romanian educational assets that functioned there before 1940, Law-decree 407. founded the state-university with Hungarian as the language of instruction. According to its initial stipulations, all Romanian citizens who possessed the necessary academic credentials were eligible into the new teaching staff. (This clause, arousing immediate controversy among Hungarians, included ethnic Romanians as well, on condition that they knew Hungarian.) There were specific clauses that implied the joint usage of certain facilities that would make the functioning of the medical and natural sciences department possible in Cluj, clauses that were never fulfilled in the aftermath of the foundation of the “new” university. (That is how the medical department was transferred to Târgu-Mureş<sup>17</sup>. A few years later it was reorganized as an institute independent from the Bolyai János University.) The decree envisaged some “extraordinary financing” from the state budget to be used for the purpose of setting up the parallel Hungarian university. Nevertheless, salaries of the non-Romanian personnel employed in education tended to come on a burdensome delay-schedule<sup>18</sup>.

Negotiations concerning the would-be academic structure of the Hungarian university resulted in the reduction of the number of courses in foreign languages and history, the denial to keep up some study-tracks “inherited” from the 1940-1944 period, while some departments were diminished into mere courses. In the 1946/47 academic year, the university had 77 study-tracks in its six departments. The authorities envisaged competition between the two universities; from the start, the Romanian side attempted to secure its supremacy in various ways<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> Nicolae Bocşan, *From the “King Ferdinand I University to the “Babeş” University, 1945-1959*, in “University and Society: A History of Higher Education in Cluj in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, edited by Vasile Puşcaş (Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press, 1999), 300; Magyari, and Szilágyi, “The Bolyai”, 302.

<sup>17</sup> Beside the Târgu-Mureş Hungarian medical school, there was another medical institute established in the late forties, that of Timișoara. Randolph L. Braham, *Education in the Romanian People’s Republic* (New York: The City College, 1964), *Education*, 121.

<sup>18</sup> *A romániai magyar főiskolai oktatás*, 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások*, 240.

The Ministry of Education would state the number and type of study-paths by decree. Appointments would come in accordance with the decision of a joint academic committee formed of accredited professors of the Bucharest, Iași and Cluj university, who, if possible, should know Hungarian. The would-be appointees should also be speakers of Hungarian, they should be Romanian citizens and should have the necessary scientific qualifications. Also, there were stipulations stating that the Ferdinand I University was to aid the Hungarian university whenever such a situation occurred. (It was finally on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June that the latter was allowed to return to its inter-war location.) In selecting the study-paths and curricula, the leaders of the Ferdinand I University made clear their intention that the Hungarian university should copy their academic setup, with no deviations or modifying. Since the Hungarian university inherited a slightly different structure from that of the Romanian one, the negotiators found it quite difficult to validate their viewpoint and find the necessary qualified staff. Every appointee had to be verified and validated during long negotiations in Bucharest<sup>20</sup>.

It was at the end of September 1945 that the list of the appointed professors with Romanian citizenship was finally made public<sup>21</sup>. Due to Groza's benevolence, 33 professors with Hungarian citizenship were allowed to get employed on yearly basis. At that moment, they made up almost half of the teaching staff; most of the medical branch departed to Tîrgu-Mureș belonged to this category during the first two years. Unlike these professors, without which the proper staffing of the new-old university would have been impossible, some of the local professors had little more than their "proper political allegiance" and class-background. Bucharest and the university where this handful, yet prominent people got elevated to unexpectedly high academic status both had to tolerate them, at least for the time being, though for different reasons<sup>22</sup>.

The Royal Decree of 1946 left no doubt about the foundation of a new Hungarian university, independent of the structures still prevailing in Cluj, that is, it made clear that the authority of the two universities were two different matters; it did not reflect former agreements concerning the shared use of facilities<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel*, 93-98, 124-128.

<sup>21</sup> Nominations of professors went through the HPA [Hungarian Peoples Alliance]. A chief adept of Communist political allegiance to be paramount among the would-be appointees to university posts and an opponent of employing the politically heterogeneous, yet academically highly qualified professors of Hungarian citizenship was László Bányai. Overtly "cautious" and loyal to the Romanian Communist Party line, he pushed forward several cadres whose academic prestige was far from enough for a university position. Such political activists served then as weak points for the Party in its manipulation of university matters. Nevertheless, academic considerations still prevailed in the average during the first three years of the Bolyai University. It was only afterwards that political cleansing set in. See Csörgör, *Előszó*, 13-14; Joó, *Bevezető*, 36.

<sup>22</sup> B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel*, 130-132.

<sup>23</sup> Some Romanian professors even intended to confiscate the medical equipment arrived at Cluj in the 1940-1944 period, a move that was hindered after all, but it took difficult negotiations to retain the items in question – worth 25 million golden Pengős – in the custody of the Hungarian university. A number of dishonourable quarrels occurred during the restitution process as well.

accurately and had several vague formulations which did not satisfy even the most optimistic, that is, concerning Romanian benevolence. Soon these stipulations served as grounds for pushing forward the idea of integral restitution, unilaterally favoring the Romanian university. Repeated negotiations in the summer of 1945 did not bring any substantial breakthrough either. (There was one exception, though: the 1940-1944 equipment of the university clinics was finally ceded to the Hungarian medical studies department.) Least successful were financial negotiations. The 50 and then 80 million Lei voted for covering resettlement costs were far from enough, and, together with faculty salaries, came with delay, and that in a period of rapid post-war inflation<sup>24</sup>.

Finally, the university started its activity on 11 February 1946, that is, with a five months' delay. The short-run "success" implied considerable concessions, only to become fatal in the long run. Even though complaints to international forums would have been justified, and it is possible that the pressure created in this way would have made the Romanian authorities more generous to one of the main "façade-institutions" aiming to prove that the nationality question was "properly solved", the international forums in question were not addressed. To get a firmer foothold on shaky financial grounds, the university council finally decided to make an appeal to the ethnic Hungarian society for collections. The reaction is reported to have been ample, but of little actual help, though<sup>25</sup>.

It is for such reasons that the very start could only be a somewhat half-hearted one. Some of the departments were only administratively there, and since they did not receive proper buildings and equipment (the natural sciences department, for instance, was still not located anywhere at the time of the official opening), the university used to operate with a partial structure<sup>26</sup> long before the restrictive measures started with the 1948 reform. Even so, over 2,000 students enrolled. Since not only university buildings proper, but all dormitory facilities went over to Romanian propriety as well, finding proper lodgings for them was a great problem. Part of the around 1,500 students enrolled into the Cluj departments (the medical department went to Târgu-Mureş) was accepted into dormitories still owned by the minority confession theological institutes of the city. Student welfare

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<sup>24</sup> Joó, *Bevezető*, 33-37; Gaal, *Egyetem a Farkas utcában*, 129.

<sup>25</sup> According to many, a large part of the funds collected for the purposes of the university were in the end used by the National Hungarian Aid Committee in order to aid famine-threatened Budapest and returning war prisoners. See János Lázok and Gábor Vincze, *Erdély magyar egyeteme 1944-1949: Dokumentumok, 1945-1949* [The Hungarian university of Transylvania, 1944-1949: Documents, 1945-1949] (Marosvásárhely/Târgu-Mureş: Custos and Mentor, 1998), 35.

<sup>26</sup> "The most complex faculty was in a first stage the *Letters and Philosophy*, with its three main components: letters, history and philosophy, and it dominated the activity of the Hungarian University from Cluj. This faculty was relatively quick in forming its staff at a noteworthy level". András Magyarai and Paul Szilágyi, *The Bolyai University*, in "University and Society: A History of Higher Education in Cluj in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century", edited by Vasile Puşcaş (Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press, 1999), 303.

resources were generally meager in the years immediately after the war. If payments of salaries were delayed<sup>27</sup>, stipends offered by the state also came late. In the latter respect, the situation of students enrolled in the Hungarian university was not worse than those of the Romanians. In March 1946 the university expenses were finally included into the state budget, and 190 students received their stipends (of 30,000 Lei per month) retroactively, that is, from November 1945. The ratio of state stipend-owners was roughly the similar among the students of the Romanian university. Although at the direct personal intervention of Groza some 30-32 professors with Hungarian citizenship were included into the scheme, their situation remained temporary and their salaries came with even greater irregularity. They lived and taught under continuous pressure to leave<sup>28</sup>.

With the “new” start in 1946, the old-style set-up prevailed once again: The distribution of the 2,288 students among departments was as follows: 1,133 attended law (economics included<sup>29</sup>), 275 studied philosophy and letters, 250 enrolled into the mathematics and natural science department, and 630 studied medicine (that is, in Târgu-Mureş). The 1945/46 academic year, the first within the new setup started with a number of students considered in the one hand maximal and, in the other hand, sufficient to completely justify the existence of the university towards Bucharest<sup>30</sup>.

Few of the contemporaries realized that there was a contradiction between Groza’s utterances and promises and the actual political practice, between Groza’s democratic ideas and ideals and daily facts<sup>31</sup>. His outwardly friendly but ultimately contradictory policies towards the Hungarians have several motivations. One consists of the prime minister’s good relationships with Hungarians, his ties to Hungarian culture. The other, far more important one is made up of the network of international relations, compelling the Romanian government to make important, though temporary concessions as regards democratic rights of minorities, since the fate of Northern Transylvania was several times declared unsettled (that is, before the 1947 Paris peace treaties). A third motivation is tied to domestic political relations. Since the new political setup that elevated Groza to power was largely

<sup>27</sup> At the time of the ceding of university facilities to the returning Romanian institution, the situation of the around 1,200 employees of the Hungarian university was rendered uncertain and vexing. Some got turned out from their flats as these belonged to the university before 1940, and none had got their salaries for months on end. Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások*, 239.

<sup>28</sup> Lázok and Vincze, *Erdély magyar egyeteme*, 35-38.

<sup>29</sup> From 1945 till 1959, the law and economics branch of the Bolyai University issued more than 2,000 graduation diplomas, of which 699 were in the field of economics. (The last students in this branch graduated from the Bolyai proper in 1956. The approval to reopen this track came too late in 1958.) Magyari and Szilágyi, “The Bolyai”, 305

<sup>30</sup> B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel*, 133,138.

<sup>31</sup> Once the parallel activity of the two institutions started, the matter was by and large removed from the political agenda, as if everything had been settled in the best possible way. Even Hungarian leftist political circles, the HPA for instance, seem to have avoided raising the topic again, let alone openly criticize the implemented “democratic setup”. Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások*, 246.

unpopular among the Romanians, Groza needed whatever support he could gain, that of leftist Hungarian circles included. Nevertheless, he also had to keep an eye on majority chauvinism as well, so that too many concessions in favor of the minorities would not trigger general discontent. Hence the years immediately following the end of the war witnessed several cases of founding so-called façade-institutions, intended to keep both domestic and foreign factors in balance. One of these was the Hungarian state university, viewed as “Groza’s university” in the fifties, though it was a royal decree that gave birth to it in 1945<sup>32</sup>.

There were further things that remained unsettled. The representatives of the Romanian university disagreed with any kind of division of or sharing facilities with the Hungarian university, arguing that those facilities were hardly sufficient for one university, let alone two, especially in the case of clinics. They also suggested that the Hungarian university should start only with the law, economics and philology departments, postponing enrollments to the medical faculty and the other departments. Furthermore, none of the buildings suggested by the Romanian Rector, Emil Petrovici, had been in the custody of Cluj higher education before 1945. In other words, the attempt to keep the Hungarian medical faculty in Cluj, even at the cost of serious compromises, failed from the very beginning. That is how this department, formally a part of the Cluj Hungarian university, was resettled to Târgu-Mureş. Both sections of the Hungarian university opened officially on 9 February 1946. At that date the medical faculty numbered 300 students. There was an important concession, of temporary effect, though: ten professors of the faculty (actually the majority, since it was among this faculty that most of the teaching staff with Hungarian citizenship activated) were allowed to continue their activity, on the basis of yearly contract until 1948, when most with such status finally and definitely left Romania. It is characteristic of the ideological “purification” among the academic staff that nine out of ten professors were enrolled into the Communist party, as membership and a proper ideological outfit were made the paramount condition for the existence of the department. As for the number of students, the first promotion to graduate in 1951 numbered 123 students; 130 medical doctors received their diploma at the Târgu-Mureş medical school (still part of the Cluj Bolyai structure at that time) in 1954, 139 in 1959. At that date over 99% of the graduates were ethnic Hungarians. In 1948, out of a total of 296, 290 of the teaching staff were reported to be Hungarians. This was the year when a separate pharmacology section was opened, with its students coming at first from the Natural Sciences department of the Bolyai University of Cluj. (Starting as an administratively integral part of the Cluj-Hungarian university, the medical branch was turned into a separate institution in 1948, still with Hungarian as its

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<sup>32</sup> Lázok and Vincze, *Erdély magyar egyeteme*, 16-18.

teaching-language. The gradual and decisive Romanianization of the medical school began in the sixties)<sup>33</sup>.

To counterbalance charges of “reactionary ties”, the staff of the Hungarian university stressed its leftist allegiance, while prominent Catholic and Protestant intellectuals were also present in its composition. Memoranda of students and employees of the university repeatedly took position for the democratization of the university, even for the return of the Romanian university. Romanian professors of the still Sibiu university also displayed political heterogeneity. Hungarian communists were of the opinion that a Rightist orientation prevailed among the as yet Sibiu-based faculty. Some, though, like Rector Emil Petrovici, seem to have been of a truly democratic orientation; the latter acted in favor of the Hungarian university – like during negotiations over various modalities of coexistence of the two universities in Cluj – even to the detriment of his popularity among his less tolerant Romanian colleagues. The markedly xenophobic dictatorial political setting of Antonescu’s Romania had had its effect on the ideological orientation of some of the departments of the Sibiu university. Especially the history, archeology and ethnography sections acted as an unscrupulous spiritual basis of the diplomatic and political offensive aimed at the re-annexation of Northern Transylvania<sup>34</sup>.

With the clinics ceded integrally to the returning Romanian university, the functioning of the separate Hungarian medical department became impossible in Cluj<sup>35</sup>. The ministry offered the buildings of the former military academy in Târgu-Mureş. After prolonged negotiations, the Hungarian professors of the department inspected the site and accepted the removal of the department to its new location. The equipment acquired during 1940-1944<sup>36</sup> was transported by two trains. The

<sup>33</sup> Béla Barabás, Péter Mihály, and Péter H. Mária, eds., *A marosvásárhelyi orvos- és gyógyszerészképzés 50 éve: Adatok, emlékezések* [Fifty years of medical doctor and pharmacology training in Marosvásárhely: Data, memoirs, remembrances] (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1995), 24-26, 30-34, 217; György Nagy, *Eszmék, intézmények ideológiák Erdélyben: Tanulmányok* [Ideas, institutions and ideologies in Transylvania: Studies] (Kolozsvár [Cluj]: Komp-Press/ Polis, 1999), 375.

<sup>34</sup> B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel*, 154-155; Joó, *Bevezető*, 22, 30.

<sup>35</sup> On 1 January 1946 the diplomas earned in medicine and pharmacology are recognized valid by the Romanian authorities. Gábor Vincze, *A romániai magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája, 1944-1953* [Historical chronology of the Hungarian minority in Romania, 1944-1953] (Budapest/Szeged: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1994), 39.

<sup>36</sup> The Groza-government ordered the delivery of all the equipment acquired between 1940 and 1944 to the Hungarian university, while the Romanian university should regain all its belongings before 1940 together with those it acquired during the years of exile. When the exiled university returned, each and every building, classroom, laboratory and office had to be handed over in a formal procedure that left no doubt about who was to have full right over these facilities. The Hungarian university had to hand over all the 46 buildings to the Ferdinand I University; the former being compensated – merely on paper, though – with entitlements concerning a set of buildings that had not been university propriety before and most of which were not fit for academic purposes. B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel*, 120-122, 141.

buildings were spacious but were at that moment totally inadequate to lodge the specific facilities of a medical department. The controversy was bitter since the territorial question posed by Northern Transylvania was still unsettled at the time of the removal. Many saw an inopportune concession in the move, while others, with Romanian communist leaders and a good part of the implied university cadres alike stressed the advantages to come from a new university centre to be created elsewhere than Cluj. Ties with the “mother-institution” situated in Cluj were quite close at the beginning. These relations gradually slackened, especially after medical and pharmacology faculties were detached from university-structures proper.

The Hungarian institute of medicine and pharmacology (dentistry included) had 925 students in 1950/51, while the sections that managed to remain in Cluj under the aegis of the Bolyai University proper had altogether 1,418 students<sup>37</sup>. Such a distribution according to main branches of specialization (and, for that matter, according to career expectations), by and large valid for previous post-war academic years as well, is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it denotes a so far unprecedented self-reorientation among the ethnic Hungarian student body, that is, medical studies take the place of law and political science, taking the lead in the distribution by departments of students. Second, the removal of the medical department to Târgu-Mureş and making it a separate institute afterwards made away with one third of the Hungarian student population at the Bolyai University. Third, beyond reorientation, it denotes a presumably great shortage of qualified personnel in health care. Fourth, it was one of the least “politicized” study-paths, offering at least some kind of elusion of the rigid state-system created in the professions after 1950, a perspective that non-Romanians were more liable to consider in their career-choice. In 1959, when the Babeş and the Bolyai University were merged, courses in Romanian were also introduced to Târgu-Mureş. From that time on the medical department became officially bilingual, with separate tracks for Hungarian and Romanian students<sup>38</sup>.

The 1947 Communists take-over implied radical changes in minority policies for the near future, since international pressure concerning the matter was lifted<sup>39</sup>. In May 1947 one of a chief activists launched an indirect attack; Vasile Luca made an appeal to the leftist political representatives of Hungarians to abandon the “unscrupulous politics of national unity” and start thorough cleansing. Curtailing of the remnants of university autonomy became the issue of the day, Luca’s directive was that the “public enemy of democracy” should be nominated from among all

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<sup>37</sup> Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások*, 197.

<sup>38</sup> B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel*, 156-161; Csörgör, *Előszó*, 15. In later years, the Romanian track gradually, although never completely forced out the Hungarian one.

<sup>39</sup> On 10 February 1947 Romania signed the peace agreement with the Allied Powers. The borders of the country are set exactly where they had been as of 28 June 1940. The parliament ratified the peace treaty only on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August (possibly as a symbolic gesture reminding of 23 August 1944). Vincze, *A romániai magyar kisebbség*, 53.

minority institutions. The Bolyai University became one of the first targets of such actions. Some professors were expelled on made-up motives related to the national saving campaign. Some departments and study-paths were eliminated for the same reason. (These were actually never reopened.) The reform turned the whole structure of higher education upside down. "Polytechnicization" was the slogan of the day, new institutional forms were created, others eliminated. The right to give doctors' titles was withdrawn from the Hungarian medical faculty, by now detached from the Bolyai University. With a few exceptions, all the professors of Hungarian citizenship were made to leave. A number of the leaders of the Hungarian minority, the rectors of the Bolyai University and prominent Communist figures included were arrested in the fall of 1949. Massive exclusions from the Party commenced. These acts mark both the end of the interregnum and the opening of the era of full-fledged Communist rule in Romania<sup>40</sup>.

The all-inclusive 1948 reform (Communist etatization) marked an entirely new period in the history of Romanian higher education, a period characterized by strict centralization and a massive influx of the ideology of the day into the conception, organization, curricula, staffing, and student recruitment of higher learning. Besides Marxist-Leninist ideology, mass culture, that is, a peculiar national cultural revolution were landmarks of orientation. The four "classical" departments underwent a series of restructurings. Medical studies were detached from universities proper, other departments were split into quasi-individual segments. Humanities lost ground under pressure from a heavy influx of polytechnic branches of study. All the shifts resulted in dilution and general instability ultimately detrimental to scientific quality<sup>41</sup>, while centralization eliminated the last remnants of university autonomy<sup>42</sup>.

In the form that it finally acquired, the Hungarian university of Cluj after the Second World War may be conceived of as the result of a peculiar balance of

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<sup>40</sup> See Lázok and Vincze, *Erdély magyar egyeteme*, 41-45; also Béla Barabás and Rudolf Jóó, eds., *A kolozsvári magyar egyetem 1945-ben: A Bolyai Egyetem szervezésének válogatott dokumentumai* [The Hungarian university in Kolozsvár in 1945: Selected documents of the organization of the Bolyai University] (Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet, 1990), 165.

<sup>41</sup> An important side-effect of the nationalization of higher education consisted of shifts in the constituency of academic staff. By 1950 almost all the former employees of Hungarian citizenship departed from the Hungarian university. Recruiting new and politically loyal staff became an imperative in all universities. Many of the new staff came from the ranks of secondary school teachers, from scientific and research institutes or were well-known personalities of cultural life. Political loyalty laying with the Romanian Communist Party was a chief condition of appointment; at times it even made academic credentials proper fall into second place. This general trend had its effects at the Bolyai University as well. Yet unofficial charges that the new Hungarian academic staff was not on level with its Romanian counterpart as regards scientific qualifications seems to be lacking proper foundations. See *A romániai magyar főiskolai oktatás*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Magyari, and Szilágyi, "The Bolyai", 300-301.

scores<sup>43</sup>: the new political leadership in Bucharest after August 1944 could not annul the presence of such a university in Cluj, while the leaders of the ethnic Hungarian community of Transylvania could not secure a legal continuity between the Hungarian university before 1918 and the one that Transylvania was left with in 1944-1945, hence they could not secure the legal and material conditions necessary for the start of this old-new university under conditions of equity. Moreover, the university with Hungarian as its language of instruction has always meant more than the existence of a mere institution; it was a symbol and a manifestation of the democratic attitude of the Groza-government (and that of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej afterwards) towards the Hungarian minority of Romania, a mirror of the “new, democratic minority policies” of the first two decades of Communist regime in Romania<sup>44</sup>.

As regards the legal foundation of Hungarian minority institutions, the educational ones included, in most of the cases the clauses favoring the minority were legal sources of an inferior level in the hierarchy of legislation, which made their implementation hazardous or easy to be counter-played by local authorities. Even though the legislation was outwardly well-intended, it always left gaps that could be filled out with interpretations that made legal grounds themselves shaky and uncertain<sup>45</sup>.

Such was the case of the law-decree itself that was meant to provide legal foundation to the Hungarian university in Cluj. First, it had no executive directives, nor a government delegate entitled to carry out the letter of the law in practice; instead, ministerial decisions were promised to solve the actual organizational problems that should occur. Second, the mentioned decree – as a royal one it became at least doubtful after 1947 – founded an institution for which it did not secure elementary conditions of functioning; among these, buildings were the most problematic issue. In this respect, as well as with regard to technical facilities and equipment, leaders of the freshly returned Romanian university were unwilling to make even the temporary and meager concessions<sup>46</sup> stipulated by the decree. They

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<sup>43</sup> After all, it was a most peculiar setting that assisted at the creation of separate Hungarian higher education in Cluj. With the maintained structures of the war-time Hungarian university in Cluj under the aegis of Soviet protectorate and leftist political demands, it was impossible for Bucharest to plainly carry out its plans for a “restitutio in integrum” of the Romanian university of Transylvania, that is, the one before 1940. Nevertheless, the Hungarian position was not strong enough to secure a Romanian acknowledgement of legal continuity, hence the university could not secure equal positions with its Romanian counterpart. Already in 1945 there was unfair competition between the two that gradually pushed the Hungarian institution into a state of inferiority. B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel*, 165-166.

<sup>44</sup> Lázok and Vincze, *Erdély magyar egyeteme*, 15.

<sup>45</sup> Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások*, 195.

<sup>46</sup> The nationalization of 1948 completely upset the ownership of all the academic facilities, altering even the patterns (limited in range, as they were) of joint usage and partnership between the two universities that functioned till that date. The implementation of the law of nationalization also signaled a strong wave of ideological purification. Once again, equity and equality between the two institution was seriously challenged. B. Kovács, *Szabályos kivétel*, 134-135.

notoriously upheld the idea of a “*restitutio in integrum*”, a move that was to render the functioning of another university in Cluj by and large impossible. All the while, the Romanian side stressed the idea that the restitution was a “political and national necessity”, making it evident that the returning Ferdinand I University would not consider the parallel existence of another institution of higher education in Cluj lawful and opportune. Not once in the process of organization, staff appointment, future financing, even in the planning of curricula shifts were carried out that clearly envisaged a compromised setup for the Hungarian university, one that would make it inferior in a comparison with its Romanian counterpart<sup>47</sup>.

There are three separate stages in the structuring and curricula of the Hungarian university. The first started at the liberation of the city and lasted until 1 June 1945, the date of legal foundation by the new sovereignty. During this stage there were but few administrative and curricular changes. There were six departments: in addition to the four classical ones, there was Economics (“inherited from the 1940-1944 period of the Franz Joseph University) and Agronomy (newly attached to the structure). In the second phase, that is, between the issuing of law-decree 407/1945 and the reform implemented in education (the “nationalization”) in August 1948, the Bolyai functioned with four faculties, just as the rest of the universities of the country. The economics department was melted into the law and political sciences department, and had three specializations (general economics, accounting, and one called “the study of goods”) Agronomic studies were omitted from the university structure, teaching went on only in Romanian, the staff coming from the Babeş University of Cluj. There was another important modification, which consisted of an influx of Marxist-Leninist ideology into the curriculum. The third and last stage lasted from nationalization till the merger of the university into the Romanian one in 1959<sup>48</sup>.

From the fall of 1944, the Hungarian university of Cluj had functioned under the auspices (and expressly manifested wish) of the Soviet military authorities until June 1, 1945. Then, with Law Decree 406 (founding, under royal authority, a new state university in Cluj with Hungarian as its teaching language) and Decree 407 (according to which the so far refugee Romanian university was to return to Cluj) something new begun: there were two parallel universities now. For sure, the latter Decree did not satisfy representatives of the cause of the Hungarian university, since its content was different from the agreement signed on April 18 concerning the parallel functioning of the two universities. The decree stated the restitution of university facilities “*in integrum*” (that is, in their intact pre-war totality) to the Romanian institution, hence the activity of the medical department of the new Hungarian university was made impossible. The other departments were also relocated into smaller, less adequate buildings. The Hungarian academic staff and leading segments of leftist political representation of Hungarians found the decree

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<sup>47</sup> Lázok and Vincze, *Erdély magyar egyeteme*, 20-28.

<sup>48</sup> *A romániai magyar főiskolai oktatás*, 11.

chauvinistic and anti-democratic, lacking the bases of future equity and equality. There were other problems of a technical order as well (distribution of equipment, the university library, the salaries of the Hungarian personnel and the status of the Hungarian professors of non-Romanian citizenship). Nevertheless, the formal returning of the inter-war Romanian university and the returning of buildings and equipment to it took place on June 5, 1945<sup>49</sup>.

Decrees 406 and 407 of 1945 made it clear that the Hungarian university they created in parallel with the Romanian one in Cluj was to be regarded an altogether new institution, with no legal continuity tying its existence to the “ancient regime” Hungarian university in this city. Nevertheless, the fact that a number of professors of the war-time Franz Joseph University decided to stay against all circumstances and successfully continued their teaching activity under the auspices of the interregnum that set in by the end of the war, should be considered as the indispensable basis on which the Bolyai University was built. Transylvania’s separate Hungarian university functioned until 1959, by which time around 4,000 ethnic Hungarians earned their degree in various branches of study<sup>50</sup>.

In its first ten years of existence, the Bolyai University produced around 10,000 ethnic Hungarian diploma-owners<sup>51</sup>. If we take into account the whole period, that is, the one until 1959, this figure rises to an estimated 15,000. The considerably large size of this body of academically trained elite coming from Cluj alone can be better weighed if we compare it to the around 5,000 ethnic Hungarian degree-holders who earned their diploma in the 1919-1945 period, the “Hungarian years” included. These figures consider only those with a university degree properly earned from Cluj, that is, neither the around 700-800 theology students only in 1945/46 in Cluj, nor ethnic Hungarians around the other universities of the country are counted. 4/BKA 139-140.

In December 1947, the so far separate student organizations of the Babeş and Bolyai University students were united under the aegis of the Cluj branch of the National Student Association. Other moves aiming at ceasing student self-organization on ethnic basis followed. In the summer of 1948, two professors of the history department are pensioned (against their will). With the coming of the educational reform, the greater part of the faculty with Hungarian citizenship

<sup>49</sup> Barabás, Péter, and Péter H., eds., *A marosvásárhelyi orvos- és gyógyszerészképzés*, 19-23.

<sup>50</sup> György Nagy, *Eszmék, intézmények ideológiák Erdélyben: Tanulmányok* [Ideas, institutions and ideologies in Transylvania: Studies] (Kolozsvár [Cluj]: Komp-Press/ Polis, 1999), 375-376.

<sup>51</sup> “In 1956-57, of a total of university-age population numbering 1,914,258 in the 18-23 age-group, 81,206, or 4.2 percent, attended the institutions of higher learning. Of these, 56,170 attended the day session. This figure was 69.2 percent of the total number of enrolled students and 2.9 percent of the university-age population. By 1959-60 the ratio had declined, due to both an increase in total population and a decline in enrollments. The 61,980 students enrolled in 1959-1960 represented 3.2 percent of the total 1956 university-age population. The 44,775 students enrolled in the day sessions were 72.2 percent of the total enrollment and 2.3 percent of the university-age population”. Braham, *Education* 141

departs. By the fall of the mentioned year, 11 such professors went back to Hungary. Within a year, another 7 such professors follow suit. It was only at the Târgu-Mureş Medical institute that four professors held out until a later date. On 11 December, new staff is appointed to the Bolyai, altogether 14 professors. They are all of the approved Communist political orientation; some even rely heavily on the “party line” for their status. The dilution process of the academic consistency begins with this shift. University autonomy suffers further curtailing: according to the Soviet model, the independent departments are melted into national department-groups<sup>52</sup>.

At the last Cluj conference of the “reorganized” HPA, the newly appointed president of the Association reported that – except the theological faculties – there were altogether 4 Hungarian institutions of higher education, among which the Bolyai University functioned with 8 departments, the Târgu-Mureş Institute of Medical Sciences and Pharmacology had 5 departments; there was then the Faculty of Arts and the Agronomic Institute with four, respectively one department. In the year of the reform, the Bolyai University had 1,429 students; the number of those studying at the Hungarian university rose to 2,270 if we take into account those at the medical department in Târgu-Mureş. Looking back, it is evident that with the reform in education carried out in 1948, Romanian authorities found the moment ripe to introduce Romanian as the language of instruction into all branches of specialized education. Within five years, almost all the polytechnic schools or sections – created in the place of theoretical schools – were suspended or Romanianized<sup>53</sup>.

The late forties and early fifties are characterized by tremendous investments into the so-called re-education process. The Communist Party assumed the task of re-education everybody involved in education, pupils and teachers, students and professors alike. The number of cadres involved in the process rose significantly in the period. Massive “purification” among the academic staff of higher education already took part in 1944-45, but the process continues. (For instance, 80% of the staff of the Philosophy and Letters department in the Bucharest University were dismissed and changed for “ideologically fit elements”. In 1948, the professors of the Bolyai University of Cluj who still were Hungarian citizens do not receive permission to teach any longer, and in 1950, a number of professors of the same university are denounced on charges of “bourgeois attitudes”. Many ecclesiastical leaders, prominent intellectuals, even non-Romanian leftist political leaders are arrested.) While courses and examinations in Marxism-Leninism are introduced virtually on all levels of education, education itself becomes a main tool of propaganda and of remolding peoples’ allegiances and minds. A new “numerus

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<sup>52</sup> See Vincze, *A romániai magyar kisebbség*, 63, 71, 74, 79.

<sup>53</sup> László Diószegi et al, eds., *Hetven év: A romániai magyarság története 1919-1989* [Seventy years: The history of Hungarians from Romania] (Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet, 1990), *Hetven év*, 78-79, 80-81.

clausus” is introduced in higher learning in 1948. According to the new regulation, class-backgrounds matter a great deal in eligibility for studies. Students of working-class or peasant backgrounds or those with the “proper” ideological credentials gain considerable advantage over children of “bourgeois elements”. Many a time the enforced shift in social background resulted in counter-selective effects, since meritocratic considerations did no longer matter in the first place. Charges of bourgeois nationalism were frequent causes of dismissals among ethnic minority students and teachers<sup>54</sup>.

Drastic political and ideological encroachments into educational matters characterized the period<sup>55</sup>. The Bolyai University was not alone as the target of reshaping in the name of “proletarian culture”. The Romanian universities were also implied. Moreover, the phenomenon was not confined to Romania only, it could be witnessed all around Central and South-Eastern Europe, that is, in the Soviet satellite-states with their “imported” Stalinist regime. Though the social (and, for that matter, ideological) “*numerus clausus*” that was destined to exclude “bourgeois” elements from both the student body and faculty had had its marks on the “Babeş” university as well, personal shifts based on ideological considerations among the staff were less numerous than in the Bolyai University. Interference disrupting well-entrenched study-paths and academic orientations was less poignant in the case of the Babeş University. What is more, it was the former that had to more thoroughly reshape its student clientele according to “class-struggle directives”: the same directives implicitly and tendentiously charged that it was among the Hungarians that middle-class elements historically and characteristically prevailed among the student body<sup>56</sup>.

The ideological cleansing carried out in the summer of 1949 found altogether 117 employees and students at the Communist “base organizations” of the two universities who “had been members of different parties or Fascist organizations” (that is, absolutely everything else than Communist political formations), 75 among the academic and auxiliary staff members and 42 among the students. Since there is no reliable evidence of the size of this contingent of the “non grata” for the medical department of the Bolyai University already in Tîrgu-Mureş, an accurate comparison of the two universities of Cluj is not possible. Still, available data may be of some relevance. Four students and 24 staff members were found to have had previously faulty political allegiance. At the Babeş University (medicine,

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<sup>54</sup> Catherine Durandin, *A román nép története* [History of the Romanian people] (Budapest: Maecenas, 1998), 352-353, 359.

<sup>55</sup> It was the teaching profession that underwent one of the first and most thorough political cleansing after the Communist takeover. A considerable number of teachers were dismissed and replaced by other, politically “reliable” cadres. Those remaining were compelled to take part in so-called courses for guidance, aimed at improving their level of indoctrination. To be sure, such courses were yet another safety-filter introduced into the professional market of education, with a presumably large quota of professional counter-selection. Braham, *Education* 159.

<sup>56</sup> See Barabás and Józ, eds., *A kolozsvári magyar egyetem 1945-ben*, 166-167.

mechanics, agronomy and transports included), there were 38 students and 51 of the staff who were reported to have had “enemy ideological ties”. It is worth mentioning that among the most frequent previous political allegiances (the National Peasant Party, the Iron Guard or the National Liberal Party) the “Zionist” label appears perhaps the most frequently, that is, in 23 cases. Most “ideological aliens” (71 of the registered total) were reported to be of “petit bourgeois” origins. Such social extraction by itself made up the necessary pretext for one’s turning out of the Party<sup>57</sup>.

The “verifying committee” of the higher education sector in Cluj inspected 2,055 Communist Party members<sup>58</sup> of the “base organizations” of all the sections and departments of the two universities. Students, academic staff and auxiliary personnel were all included in the investigation. As regards social origins, 311 came from workers’ families, 801 were of peasant origins (476 from poor, 241 from “middle” and 84 of rich peasant families), 381 were listed with public servant parents, 342 with intellectual family backgrounds, 92 as craftsmen and 156 as tradesmen. The latter categories went under the common heading of “petit bourgeois”. As for occupation of the verified, we have a totally different setup. There were 260 listed as skilled and 156 as unskilled workers, 214 as public servants, and the majority, 1,382 were included into the category of intellectuals. (Naturally there were no “peasants” here, but the list contains 15 Party members who were housekeepers and even one listed as a craftsman)<sup>59</sup>.

With all the lip-service to “proletarian internationalism”, nationality remained a separate and distinct division-line<sup>60</sup>. The distribution of party membership at the universities went as follows: the majority, 1,330 in all declared to be Romanian; Hungarians followed with the figure of 448; then came Jews with 229. Thirty members declared to be of Slavic origin, while 18 were registered as “other”. Three quarters, 1,544 of the 2,055 were male. It is most striking that only 12 of the more than two thousand were recorded as having been members of the Communist party before March 1945; while the great majority, 1,798 in all, declared to have been a

<sup>57</sup> P. M. R. *Comisia Județeană de Verificare, Subcomisia de verificare Nr. 13, 10, 15, 2, 6, 17: „Sectorul universitar”* [The Romanian Workers Party, The District Verifying Committee, Sub-committee no. 13, 10, 15, 2, 6, 17: The “university sector”] (Arhivele de Stat, Cluj. Fond Arhiva PCR Cluj, Nr. Inv. 8., Dosar 43/1948), 405.

<sup>58</sup> The committee investigated 256 people, mostly men, who “had no adhesion to the party”. All became, presumably formally and with no activity afterwards, members of the party after March 1945; 170 were of social democratic extraction. The majority, 193 of them were intellectuals by profession. Of the non-member group, 167 were ethnic Romanians, 67 Hungarians, 17 Jews and 5 “Slavs”. *Ibid.*, 412.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

<sup>60</sup> This implied the tendency that, once found with some kind of “ideological fault”, ethnic minority party-members got more harshly punished. Early in the fifties, the ethnic division-line actually started to function as an indirect “*numerus clausus*”, especially if we keep in mind that the Party leadership was painfully aware of the over-representation of those with a non-Romanian ethnic extraction among the rank-and-file Party members.

Communist Party member before the unification (that is, the forced merger of the Social Democratic Party with the Communist Party); 257 of the rest declared to have been a member of the Social Democratic party before 1947, 18 persons are registered in the “annulled” category, and nobody is listed with no party membership. One person was excluded from the party for not presenting himself in front of the “verifying committee”. Of the total, there were only 36 listed as students (the rest, according to the wording of the cited source, were presumably “pupils”); 32 were Romanians and 30 Hungarians<sup>61</sup>.

About every seventh of those “verified” was excluded from the Party as a result of the investigation carried out in the summer of 1949. Again, all but three became party members after the coming to power of Petru Groza. The reasons of exclusion were various; most went under political and ideological headings. Of the 287 excluded, 53 were reported as having had “legionary activity”, 52 were dismissed for “other fascist activities”, 47 were said to have had “hostile activity after 10 March 1946 (the breaking up of the unity of the working class, etc.)”; another 47 were guilty of “serious deviation from the party line (chauvinist and anti-Soviet agitation, etc.)”; 27 were blamed of having been “informers and agent provocateurs”; 25 were “exploiters, speculators and their agents”; another 25 were excluded for “moral disintegration”; finally 11 were charged with “crimes and robbery on the territory of the Soviet Union”. The majority of the excluded, 210 in all were put in the category of “intellectuals”, while the most frequently quoted social origins of those dismissed were “peasant” (107), “intellectual” (66), and “public servant” (61). As to ethnic origins, the committee dismissed 208 Romanians, 56 Hungarians, 15 Jews, 4 Slavs and 4 “others”<sup>62</sup>.

New regulations introduced in the summer of 1950 stipulate that from that time on the graduates of professional schools, pedagogical institutes and those of higher education shall be “distributed” by a central governmental office; minority-inhabited regions were the chief target of the entirely new, centralized pattern of qualified personnel distribution. (By 1951, there were altogether eight faculties left at the Bolyai University.) In October 1951 the law department of the Babeş and the law and economics departments of the Bolyai University are united into a separate Juridical and Economic Institute, with the law section to function both for Hungarian and Romanian students (for a short while, economics were taught only in Hungarian, but the intention was to create parallel Romanian sections for all the study-paths of the College.) Further professors are dismissed from the Bolyai in 1952 (altogether 8 in that year; some of them are re-employed later on). In the summer of the same year the philosophy department of the university ceased to exist<sup>63</sup>.

The 1956 anti-Communist revolution in Hungary had considerable reverberations among the ethnic Hungarian community of Transylvania. Cluj as a

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<sup>61</sup> P. M. R. *Comisia Judeţeană de Verificare*, 406-408.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 411.

<sup>63</sup> Vincze, *A romániai magyar kisebbség*, 81-84,87; Magyar, and Szilagyi, “The Bolyai”, 305.

university centre was additionally exposed in manifestations of solidarity with the Hungarian revolution. On its turn, the Romanian Communist Party realized that indoctrination did not attain the required results and acted accordingly. Moreover, the manifestations of solidarity were a perfect pretext for new charges of anti-democratic, chauvinistic, disloyal behavior, openly set against students and professors alike at the Bolyai University. Less than three years later, these events became an important reference-point in the tactical and practical moves aiming at the “unification” of the two universities<sup>64</sup>.

In the last academic year (1958/59) before “uniting”, the student population involved in the two universities of Cluj numbered 4,443, of which 1,525 were of non-Romanian ethnic origin, among which there were 1,266 ethnic Hungarians. Beyond made-up charges of harboring “nationality separatism”, “bourgeois nationalism”, the main pretext for “uniting” was that of a supposed over-population<sup>65</sup> of the Hungarian university. That is, according to central Communist authorities, those who had had their studies in Hungarian were faced with an overcrowded job-market and a lack of positions that their studies would entitle them to. A statistical inquiry into the matter found this latter charge baseless; yet to no avail, since the “unification” (the melting of the Bolyai University into its Romanian counterpart) was already a Party directive. Once the melting of the departments of the Bolyai University into the setup of the Romanian institution, the shrinkage of educational opportunities for non-Romanians began, and that in the context of the drastic diminishing of the “classical” theoretical study-paths carried out to the advantage of a “polytechnicization” in higher education that was said to better fit a national job-market determined by forced industrialization. The “unification” of 1959 eliminated the last compact stronghold of proper reproduction of the ethnic Hungarian educated elite in Romania<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások*, 253-255.

<sup>65</sup> Admittedly, this was the case if we keep in mind that the mentioned 1,266 ethnic Hungarian students made up 28.5% of the whole student-body of Cluj (that is, in the two universities proper). Yet, “over-crowding” does not apply if one goes beyond strictly regional boundaries. (As it shall be seen below, the student-body of the Bolyai University made up but 2.6% of the total student-body nation-wide that year. Even if we rightfully estimate that there were around as much Hungarians studying in other institutions of higher learning as there were in the Hungarian university in Cluj, we still witness a considerable under-representation of would-be ethnic Hungarian degree-holders country-wide.) According to 1948 census data, the ethnic distribution in Romania was as follows: of the total of 15,873 inhabitants, 85.7% were Romanian, 9.4% Hungarian, 2.2% German, 0.9 Jewish and 1.8 “other”. In Transylvania, out of the 5,761,000 total, 1,482,000 (25.7%) were listed as Hungarians by native tongue, 332,000 (5.8%) as Germans, 30,000 (0.5%) as Jews. In 1948 the “Roma” category was not listed. Obviously, there is a slight difference in absolute numbers when nationality is considered on the basis of mother tongue or when it is based on ethnic belonging. See Diószegi et al, eds., *Hetven év*, 52-53.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*; also Nagy, *Eszmék, intézmények*, 383-385.

Meanwhile, the larger academic market context is heavily marked by a new wave of expansion denoting the dilution of the academic market. In 1948/49, there was a number of 48,676 students in 129 faculties in Romania. The growth continued until 1957, when the unprecedented peak of 81,206 was reached. (The figure included every post-secondary form of education, universities proper and other institutions alike.) In 1938/39, there were only 33 faculties nation-wide. In 1950, there were 135, in 1955 there were 144. With a great leap as compared to the 2,194 in 1939, the number of post-secondary teaching staff registered roughly the same shifts: it was 5,638 in 1948, 8,518 in 1950 and 8,278 in 1955. Nevertheless, absolute numbers indicate at least two important phenomena. If we consider the teacher per student ratio in the pre-war year previously referred to and that in 1948, the former is slightly better. If we consider the amounts of state allocations with educational purposes in the period of the reform and afterwards, we may deduce that by the middle of the fifties the position of an university professor was considerably less rewarding financially than before the reform. In addition, curricular reorientation brought a massive influx of new personnel, for whom older university standards, scientific, moral, or educational alike, may have been unknown. With the forcing out of the whole non-polytechnically minded generation, a considerable dilution of academic standards occurred. Meanwhile, more and more youths are directed towards vocational and technical secondary education instead of traditional higher education<sup>67</sup>.

There were 34,093 enrolled students country-wide in 1936/37. Most were men (25,650). In the inter-war period, law, letters and philosophy were by far the most popular study-tracks. Of the mentioned contingent of 1936/37, 9,886 students were enrolled in law departments and 4,516 in philosophy and letters departments of the by then four universities of Romania. Meanwhile, those studying in polytechnic schools numbered only 2,260. Beyond centralization, Communist-type nationalization and forcible uniformity (the role of the Ministry became to minutely carry out Party directives), one of the basic objectives of the 1948 reform was to radically alter this pattern of distribution by study-track. As education became the sole responsibility of the state, the needs of centralized planned economy were directly referred upon the network of higher education. This relationship made away basic Romanian educational policies from the previously followed French and German patterns and resulted in a Soviet-type reorganization of the whole educational process with the ultimate scope of producing the “new socialist man”. “To attain this dual goal of indoctrination and pragmatism, new principles have been adopted to underline the new educational system. They stipulate that education be conducted on a “realist-scientific” basis divorced from all elements of “mysticism, obscurantism, and subjectivism”; that it be aimed to train youth in the spirit of “socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism”;

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<sup>67</sup> Braham, *Education*, 32, 103, 141.

and that educational policies be geared to the pressing needs of industry and agriculture in accordance with polytechnicization principles.” On the level of pre-university education, too, vocational and technical schools became the issue of the day, while at the university level the capacities were massively reoriented, for example towards engineering, evidently to the detriment of the so-called non-productive fields. Humanities were themselves restructured, so that Marxist-Leninist ideological courses become paramount<sup>68</sup>.

If we take the last pre-war year as 100%, the country-wide growth registered in the student body was of 184% in 1948/49. It rose to 211% a year later and reached an overall growth of 293% by 1955. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that the overwhelming majority of the new institutions created under Communism were not universities proper as regards the level of training and the degrees they offered. As to the Cluj universities (that is, the Romanian Babeş, the Hungarian Bolyai, the Medical School placed in Târgu-Mureş included), it is worth quoting further enrollment figure samples for the 1938-1960 period. With 4,142 students in 1938-39, the Cluj university made up 15.63% of the nationwide total. Exactly ten years later, there are 8,365 students at the two Cluj universities and 841 in the Medical School placed in Târgu-Mureş, all together being 18.91% of the total. The figures then fluctuate from roughly ten to thirteen thousand in Cluj, oscillating between 400 and 1,000 in Târgu-Mureş, while the two added up make between 15% and 19% of the countrywide total. All the while, the Hungarian university in Cluj goes through gradual depletion, with enrolment figures relatively stagnant and making for only one fourth to one fifth of the whole Cluj-related student body. Even if we consider the extra-territorial branch, that is, the Medical School, a parity-basis that could have been created along ethnic lines has considerable lacunae. Meanwhile, the three-fold rising in absolute numbers of overall enrolment denotes, once again, the dilution process that higher learning undergoes in the mentioned period. For instance, the 12,866 students of the two Cluj-related universities in the last year before the merger make up only 18,96% of the by then fully nationalized and academically reshaped total contingent<sup>69</sup>.

Notwithstanding efforts of the state to redirect the would-be intelligentsia towards the “productive” fields, the proportion of students in law and humanities continued to be relatively high in the discussed period. As late as 1960, slightly more than one third of the 61,000 students still were involved in studies covering letters, philosophy, history law, economics, plastic and performing arts and the such. Meanwhile, especially after the Communist takeover of 1947 and the 1948 reform, it was a constant preoccupation of the Party to “improve” the social composition of the student body. In practical terms this meant discriminatory

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>69</sup> For more details see Braham: *Education in the Peoples Republic*, 112.

policies of admittance into higher education aimed against the previously dominant bourgeois, middle-class and second-generation intelligentsia elements in the student clientele. Again, with an 50% growth of the proletarian-origin segment of the student-body between 1948 and 1957, the results of the targeted shift in social composition were found unsatisfactory. “Class struggle” continued to be a marked element of selection in higher education long after its notorious effects had begun to diminish in other sectors<sup>70</sup>.

With all the reductive changes it had gone through in the general process of reshaping higher learning in Communist Romania, the Bolyai University still had 2,470 enrolled students by 1959, of which 1,195 were full-time and 1,275 part-time students<sup>71</sup>. (This latter category is referred to as “without attendance” or “by correspondence”. It was by their numbers that the student-body as a whole seemed to continuously swell in the fifties, nevertheless, this Communist-type form of higher education never attained the status of ordinary full-time studies.) At the tenth-year anniversary of its existence, the university had 1,618 full-time students and 314 teachers. The number of the latter decreased to 296 by 1958. The shifts in the size of the full-time student body and in that of the teaching staff indicate the depletion process that had been going on under the surface. The open moves towards “unification” were but the end of a long process<sup>72</sup>.

All along its existence, the university suffered from the lack of a substantial backing that should have come from an institutional network based on true democratic ethnic minority self-organization. Such a network could have been more successful in keeping up the normal functioning of the university in a setting more and more openly hostile to minorities. Nationalist charges were frequent and supplied the ultimate basis for the gradual depletion of the university. The ideology of the homogeneous nation-state was once again present in the background after the Communists took hold of power in 1947, and saw to the uninterrupted strife of official circles to keep control of everything that went under state-auspices, ethnic minorities and their education of all levels included. The circumstances of setting up the Bolyai University reach far beyond academic or social considerations proper. Founding it was one of the political safety-valves that had to be opened under international pressure in 1945, since the belonging of Northern Transylvania was neither internally nor externally a settled matter. After the 1947 peace settlement, Romanian authorities seem to have done all that stood in their authority to end or even reverse many of the concessions made during the interregnum. The curtailing of higher education having any other but Romanian as its language of

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-149.

<sup>71</sup> According to another source, in the year of the unification, the Babeş University had 4,089 students, while 2,317 were enrolled in the last academic year of the Bolyai University. *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>72</sup> *A romániai magyar főiskolai oktatás*, 13; Sándor Tonk, *Erdély magyar egyeteme*, in *125 éves a kolozsvári egyetem*, edited by Péter Cseke and Melinda Hauer (Kolozsvár: Komp-Press, 1999), 18.

study was part and parcel of a political line which gained more and more of its legitimacy from a renewed nationalist drive<sup>73</sup>.

Nonetheless, the Cluj Hungarian state university was by far not alone in losing its traditional ties to a society which itself came to be disrupted. Communism entirely reshaped the educational market as a whole, ultimately remaking the closed market structure along national division-lines, a set-up so characteristic for the inter-war period. “Polytechnicization”, ideological cleansing and the “solution brought to the “minority problem” in education were all measures intended to back up a national economy that, from the mid-1950s on, envisaged to be the basis of nationalist Socialism. It is also worth mentioning that, in East-Central Europe, Romania was not a sole case of the legitimization-mechanism that pushed nationalism back into a time-honored position. The discussed period is one of ample political change, a change that set all the pre-war societal setup under a tremendous pressure. Once again, Communism did not but repeat the politicization of recruitment strategies and of the institutional and curricular setup of higher learning. The infiltration of daily political matters into academic affairs resulted long-lasting set-backs: the political dimensions gained the upper hand over the truly professional ones, while quantitative considerations overshadowed qualitative ones.

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<sup>73</sup> Nagy, *Eszmék, intézmények*, 376-377.

