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## TRANSILVANICA

# “I Want You Even if You Do Not Want Me”\* Jesuits in Cluj between 1595 and 1610

FERENC  
PÁLL-SZABÓ



Emmanuel Neri Italus Soc. IESV. odio Fidei Catholicae ab  
Amianis cruciatus Claudiopoli in Transilvania. A. 1603. 9. Iul.  
C. Sireta d. M. J. C.

EMMANUEL NERI as a martyr.

SOURCE: MATHIA TANNER, *Societas Jesu*  
(Prague, 1675), 59.

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**I**N THE second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Protestant movements gained ground in Transylvania, which then saw the emergence of different confessions. By 1571, when the Catholic Stephen Báthory was elected prince of Transylvania, Catholicism had been almost swept away from the country. In order to recover the lost positions, the prince—meanwhile also elected as king of Poland—brought in the Jesuits, who opened a College in Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg) which was planned to become the first university of Transylvania.<sup>1</sup>

After Stephen Báthory's death, the Jesuits' position became weaker, and although the next prince, the underage Sigismund Báthory, was also a Catholic and was eager to keep the order in Transylvania, they were eventually expelled in 1588.

\* The phrase comes from the short story “Alexandru Lăpuşneanul,” written by Romanian author Costache Negruzzi and published in *Dacia literară* (Iaşi) 1, 1 (1840).

## The Return of the Jesuits to Transylvania

**I**N 1595 Sigismund Báthory had enough power—the year before he had imprisoned many of the nobles who had been collaborating with the Ottoman Empire, and executed some of them in Cluj or Gilău (Gyalu, Julmarkt), thus eliminating his opponents, while others were presently afraid to stand against him—to regulate the presence of the Jesuit Order in Transylvania (members of the order had already settled in the country): in May 1595 the Diet of Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár, Weißenburg) solemnly invited the Jesuit Order back to Cluj, at Cluj-Mănăştur (Kolozs-Monostor), and returned their confiscated assets.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after this decision, Alfonso Carillo, a well-known Jesuit diplomat who had arrived in Transylvania in 1591, interceded with the local council of Cluj, and consequently the Unitarians were forced to give back the buildings that had belonged to the Jesuits in 1588 and which hosted their college. Soon, the number of the Jesuits in the city increased to 12, after the arrival of some prominent members of the order: the well-known Polish Bible translator Jacob Wujek, the rector of the institution in its glory days, who resumed his position, Petrus Maiorius (Maggiore, who later became rector of the institution) from Italy, as well as Claudio Vernelio from France.

Carillo obtained, among others, the payment of the yearly subsidy offered in 1583 by Stephen Báthory, in order to cover the expenses of the seminary, but failed to obtain the same privileges from the pope (as promised two decades earlier), although he sent many letters in this regard (the head of the church feared a new banishment).

Soon the College had four classes, three in grammar and one in humanities, and the number of students was constantly increasing. In 1596 there were 16 Jesuits in the city, out of whom 8 taught at the College, while the others were preachers; it becomes therefore obvious that the Jesuits went beyond the didactic duties for which they had been summoned to Transylvania.

In the same year a plague broke out in the city, killing many citizens. The Jesuits used this pandemic to their own advantage, preaching that the epidemic was the result of the citizens' "heresies." Soon a fifth class, in rhetoric, was introduced.

In 1597 the number of Jesuits grew again, four new fathers arriving in town. Another significant success was the conversion of thirty young Protestant noblemen, students of the College, to Catholicism.

The considerable number of the friars required an administrative change: Petrus Maiorius, one of the College's professors, was appointed as vice-provincial, being responsible for the coordination of the Jesuit activity in Transylvania.

Following this, Cluj became the center of the mission's activity in Transylvania. Soon after, when Wujek decided to retire to Poland, Maiorius became the rector of the College.

Unfortunately for the order, the political context once again nullified the hard work invested in founding the College (and in converting the "heretics"): Sigismund Báthory, the prince of Transylvania, decided once again to abdicate (he made several agreements with Rudolph II who promised him the Silesian duchies of Racibórz and Opole, and a yearly subsidy of 50,000 thalers in exchange for Transylvania), and left the country to his wife, Maria Christina of Habsburg. The city of Oradea (Nagyvárad, Großwardein), the closest major city to Cluj, was under siege by Ottoman troops for more than a month (30 September–2 November 1598, resisting heroically),<sup>3</sup> and in this context the parents of the College's students withdrew their children, being afraid that the enemy troops could target Cluj. Before the Ottoman attack, the Jesuits had been expelled from Oradea, where a nobleman, Albert Király, destroyed the order's properties, their lives being saved only by the intervention of the local garrison.

After the danger had passed, the Jesuits resumed their educational activity in Cluj, but the number of students decreased. In spite of this, the level of education increased, new subject matters like philosophy and theology being introduced. The Jesuits also recovered from a financial point of view, as the yearly subsidy of a thousand gold coins was reintroduced, being paid again by the prince; moreover, they were even given two tenancies as a donation from one of the members of the order, Ferenc Sulyok: Bedeciu (Bedecs) and Inucu (Inaktelke),<sup>4</sup> two villages situated near Cluj, in an area called Călata (Kalotaszeg).

In the month of August of the same year Sigismund Báthory returned to power, but left his throne once more a few months later, leaving the country to one of his cousins, the Polish Cardinal Andrew Báthory. The new ruler was willing to reconcile with the Ottoman Empire, and therefore the position of Michael the Brave, voivode of Wallachia, who wanted to continue the fight, became very difficult.

In this situation, Michael the Brave decided to take a great risk: he occupied both Transylvania and Moldavia (the latter was under the rule of Jeremiah Movilă, who was also willing to reconcile with the Turks), unifying for the first time the three countries inhabited by a Romanian majority. Michael's short rule was beneficial for the Jesuits, as the properties at Macău (Mákófalva, near Cluj, whence the Jesuits had been chased away) were restored to the order.

In 1601 Michael the Brave was killed by the Austrians (General Giorgio Basta was initially sent by the emperor to cooperate with the Wallachian voivode, who ruled in the name of the Habsburgs, but who soon came to be seen as a threat), and a new civil war broke out (the Habsburgs represented by Basta and

some local noblemen fought against the majority of the local noblemen led by the elected Prince Moses Székely, who had the support of the Ottoman Empire).

Although the country was in the middle of a war, the activity of the College continued uninterrupted. In 1600, 24 members of the order were active in Cluj, where they managed to convert many of the College's Protestant students. In the next two years, due to the political circumstances and amid the general confusion, the number of Jesuits decreased to 11, which created the need to increase their number and led to the subsequent arrival of Giovanni Argenti, who was appointed vice-provincial.

These were the last moments of relative calm for the order in Cluj: being considered agents of the Habsburg Empire, the hatred against them grew constantly, as shown by the Macău incident. The situation needed only a spark to get out of control. It came in the summer of 1603.

## **9 June 1603: The Banishment of the Jesuits from Cluj**

**E**VEN DURING the first expulsion of the Jesuits, in 1588, the situation had been only one step away from violence: only the intervention of the guards sent by Sigismund Báthory had saved the Jesuits from an imminent attack.<sup>5</sup>

In 1603 the order represented a problem for the locals, for two reasons. First of all, they were openly supporting the unification of Transylvania and Hungary under Habsburg rule, an idea which was not accepted by the Transylvanian nobles, who preferred independence and were convinced that Austria could not protect these territories in case of an Ottoman attack (which would certainly come if this scenario was followed). We cannot forget that the pro-Ottoman orientation had a strong tradition in Transylvania, Sigismund Báthory being forced to put to death those noblemen who had opposed to his pro-Austrian policies ten years prior.

The other reason for which the Jesuits were so unpopular in the country was the success of the Academy, associated with the conversion of many young Protestant noblemen who were its students.

In the summer of 1603, the tragedy was imminent. The Austrian General Basta stationed his troops in Cluj, but soon Moses Székely approached the city with Turkish and Tatar troops. Avoiding a decisive confrontation, Basta moved his troops to the well-equipped and easily defended fortress of Gherla (Szamosújvár, Neuschloss), and he himself went in the direction of Satu Mare (Szat-

márnémeti, Sathmar), hoping to get help from the emperor. In spite of leaving the city of Cluj, he left behind a strong garrison of 350 soldiers.

The inhabitants of Cluj had other plans: in order to avoid a new siege, and inevitably the destruction of the area around the city, they made an agreement with Székely and warned the imperial garrison to leave the city. The Austrian troops agreed to withdraw, especially considering that their captain, Carol Göllnitz, had suddenly died. They left on 9 June.

This was the moment that triggered the unfortunate events that were about to come. The Jesuits were unpopular among the Protestant inhabitants of the city, and the fact that Basta (the Austrian general who was hated in Transylvania due to his violence and crimes) had favored them openly (when he was in the city) did not help them either.

In the Sunday before the garrison left the city, the Unitarian bishop (or a priest, according to Argenti) stirred the crowd, stating in his sermon that the time had come to expel the Catholics. Rector Maiorius, who found out what was about to come, complained to Imre Gellyén, the local mayor, but the answer was again that the Jesuits had nothing to fear. The Unitarian preachers were also present at this meeting and their advice was that the Jesuits should return to their premises and not show themselves in public, in order to prevent potential conflicts.

On the second day, early in the morning, the garrison left the city and the armed locals followed them in order to forestall a possible attack. After the Austrians left the city, the armed locals, together with the inhabitants of the nearby villages, who were seeking shelter inside the city because of the war, gathered at the house of the Unitarian bishop, located in the central square, where Bishop Mathias Toroczka and priest Paul Góczy Nyiró made them swear that they would not lay down their weapons until the Jesuits left the city.

Around eight o'clock, the crowd led by the Unitarian priests and their students attacked the buildings of the church, the seminary, and the College, being organized in three different groups, destroying the altar and the statues of the saints, and everything else which stood in their way. The Rector and Father Argenti were among the first who saw what was happening, and they went to warn the others using two different routes. The rector was attacked by a man, but the blow struck with an axe was not powerful enough to kill him. Another priest who arrived from a nearby village was more severely injured. Rector Maiorius was saved by a local captain and his men, who were accidentally in the area, and two other ill Jesuits were also saved, but suffered injuries. The only Jesuit killed was Joannes Niger (or Emmanuel Neri),<sup>6</sup> the sacristan, who was responsible for taking care of the sick. He was shot in the chest, then in the head. He was buried the next day by the College's students, and was considered a martyr.

Argenti arrived at the building of the College and hid together with other members of the order. The destruction of the church, according to his description, was complete: the crowd beheaded Virgin Mary's statue, shot the saints' images, and even destroyed the benches. After such an ordeal, the Jesuits considered it a miracle that only one monk had been killed.

The College rooms were also heavily vandalized: the beds, doors, windows, bins were destroyed, and the books were burnt, torn up or stolen. Among the books that disappeared on that day we mention a codex from the famous library of Matthias Corvinus, the *Bibliotheca Corviniana*, which belonged to Stephen Szamosközy, historian and humanist, who had lent it to Father Antonio Marietti.<sup>7</sup>

Eventually, the riot was ended by a local counselor, who ordered the Jesuits to leave the city. In a report sent to Rome, the Jesuits complained about the humiliating treatment they received after these events: they were not allowed to dress properly, although it rained heavily, and dirt was thrown at Father Argenti several times.

The destruction continued in the following period due to the fact that the Rector Maiorius, who expected an attack, demanded the concealment of the order's belongings in different places, in the walls and under the floorboards. After the locals found out about this, a real treasure hunt began, which led to the destruction of the building.

Later, the inhabitants used the walls of the College as a stone quarry for their buildings. The church was also destroyed: the upper vault was demolished, killing 14 Protestants in the process.<sup>8</sup>

After they were expelled, the Jesuits were sent to the Tatars' camp (the Tatars had joined Prince Moses Székely in this mission, following the orders of the Ottomans), from where they went to the prince who welcomed them, although the rumor was that he was behind the banishment of the Jesuits (who were considered to be too close to the Habsburgs). The prince, a true diplomat, appeared to be profoundly disturbed by the events and promised support in the future, but stated that because of the unfavorable popular opinion his hands were tied for the moment. He did only one thing for the Jesuits: he ordered the safekeeping of their belongings in Cluj, and he returned their horses and chariots.

Later the Jesuits were taken under the protection of Johannes Bogáti, a Catholic nobleman from Székely's army, who sent them to safety in the fortress of Gurghiu (Görgenyszentimre, Görgen).<sup>9</sup>

In the autumn of 1603 the Jesuits were back in Cluj: they arrived together with Basta, and the Austrian general gave them the Unitarian church (Saint Michael's church), and the Unitarian school buildings in the Old Town (Óvár)—today the building of the Franciscan monastery—in order to compensate them

for the previous losses. Basta severely punished the citizens of Cluj: those responsible for the destruction of the Jesuits' assets were executed (some of the perpetrators, especially the priests, had managed to leave the city before Basta's arrival), the executions being stopped only by the intervention of the Jesuit rector, who begged Basta to put an end to them (however, this statement must be treated cautiously, because it belongs to a member of the Jesuit order).<sup>10</sup> According to Basta, Emperor Rudolph had ordered for the entire city to be wiped out, but Basta was satisfied with the payment of an enormous penalty.<sup>11</sup>

Although in the following year the Jesuits had 260 students and it seemed that they would settle down again for a long time, a new turn of events decided otherwise: Basta was driven away for good, and the Jesuits were also forced to leave, this time for a longer period. In 1605 Prince Stephen Bocskay issued a decree of expulsion, but he died soon afterwards.

In 1606 the last Jesuit refugees in the area of Cluj left Mănăstur. In the following year a new decree against them was issued, this time by Sigismund Rákóczi. This decree remained in force through the whole century, although the Jesuits managed to remain in Transylvania during almost all this time.

The reign of Gabriel Báthory proved to be fatal for the Jesuits; in 1610 the last two members of the order left Transylvania, mainly because they were suspected of being involved in the conspiracy of two Catholic noblemen, Stephen Kendi and Boldizsár Kornis, who sought to murder the prince. The exile of the Jesuits was once again short: after a few years, due to the tolerant religious policy of Gabriel Bethlen, they returned to Transylvania.

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## Notes

1. For this period see Ioan-Aurel Pop and Liana Lăpădatu, "Les Débuts de l'Université moderne à Cluj: le Collège jésuite entre 1579 et 1581," *Transylvanian Review* 18, 4 (2009): 3–20.
2. *Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek*, vol. 3 (1576-1596), ed. Sándor Szilágyi (Budapest, 1877), 472.
3. István Szamosközy, *Erdély története (1598-1599, 1603)*, transl. István Borzsák, ed. István Sinkovics (Budapest, 1977), 137–140.
4. Endre Veress, "Oklevéltár a kolozsvári Báthory-egyetem történetéhez (1579–1603)," *Erdélyi Múzeum* (Kolozsvár), new ser., 1 (23), 5 (1906): 374–375: the donation was conditional: the properties had to be returned to a member of the Sulyok family if the Jesuits emigrated or if they were expelled.
5. "Ismeretlen jezsuita: a jezsuiták erdélyből való kiűzetésének története," in *Erdély öröksége: Erdélyi emlékirók Erdélyről*, vol. 2, *Sárkányfogak 1572–1602*, ed. László

- Makkai, contrib. László Cs. Szabó, <http://adatbank.transindex.ro/cedula.php?kod=1087>.
6. The events related to the murder are presented in Mathia Tanner, *Societas Jesu usque ad sanguinis et vitae profusionem militans, in Europa, Africa, Asia, et America, contra Gentiles, Mahometanos, Judaeos, Haereticos, Impios, pro Deo, fide Ecclesia, pietate sive vita, et mors eorum, qui ex Societate Jesu in causa Fidei et Virtutis propugnatae, violenta morte toto Orbe sublatis sunt* (Prague, 1675), 59.
  7. The extent of the destruction is exaggerated in the Jesuit descriptions: the vast majority of the library books were saved. The Corvina Codex was probably destroyed because it was in the room of the Jesuit and not in the library.
  8. This information must be treated cautiously, as it appears only in Endre Veress, “A kolozsvári Báthory-egyetem története lerombolásáig, 1603-ig (Második, befejező közlemény),” *Erdélyi Múzeum*, new ser., 1 (23), 4 (1906): 264.
  9. “Nagy Szabó Ferenc memorialéja,” in *Erdélyi történelmi adatok*, vol. 1, ed. Imre Mikó (Kolozsvár, 1855), 39–169.
  10. “Ismeretlen jezsuita: a jezsuiták erdélyből való kiűzetésének története,” 2: 79–86.
  11. *Erdélyi történelmi adatok*, 1: 195.

## Abstract

“I Want You Even if You Do Not Want Me”: Jesuits in Cluj between 1595 and 1610

In this article we discuss the presence and activity of the Jesuit order in Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg), between 1595 and 1610. Located in Transylvania, with an overwhelmingly Protestant population, Cluj was the home of a reputed Jesuit College. Unfortunately, the political context did not favor the order's presence in this area: in the summer of 1603, the monks were banished from the city after a citizens' riot.

## Keywords

Jesuits, Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg), Catholics, Protestants