

# The Preparations for the 1923/24 Academic Year and the “Nationalization” of Cluj

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**W**ITH THE summer heat, the student movement has calmed down. The students have returned to their homes, where they are assuaged by the advice of their parents, who alone can fully appreciate the loss that their children have suffered this year. The students who have remained in the cities—very few—are going about their business, so we can say that currently the student movement is nowhere in sight.<sup>1</sup>

This idyllic description of the summer lull appeared in a local newspaper that endorsed the government’s views and was an expression of hope rather than of reality. The author of the text claimed that the storm had passed and that henceforth, under the effect of moral parental counsel, students would reconsider their attitude and realize the serious impact of their actions: a wasted year of studies. And this, obviously, was something that should never happen again. A torpid summer and the apparent lack of any student activity were taken to mean that a similar autumn lay ahead. An autumn season when academic life would return to normal, like waters receding after a flood.

But for those familiar with the intense agitation of a handful of students with their insurgent leader, the surface calm was illusory and this description ironic. What amounted to a desirable scenario for some (authorities of all kinds, professors, parents, and even students), namely, the “quiet return to classes,” was fraught with the great fear of ultimate failure, to be avoided by all means, for others. Both sides had been working hard to ensure the success of their plans over the summer break.

Some echoes of the recent tumult could nonetheless be heard. For example, there was news that the attackers of Rector Iacob Iacobovici had been discovered. They were “three anti-Semitic students” who were disavowed by “the serious students who had declared they were against the attackers.”<sup>2</sup> Predictable news, though strongly denied by some student leaders.

The new conditions for enrollment in the University of Cluj appeared under the signature of the same Iacobovici, the rector who was still in office at the end of June.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, registration was preceded by and conditional upon an exam, and this was an absolute first. The oral exam announced for 1–15 October was to check the candidates’ knowledge in their chosen field (literature, sciences, law, medicine). For all four faculties

## Inscrierea la Universitatea din Cluj

ectoratul Universității din Cluj și cu noul, ca în conformitate cu dispoziția cuprinsă în art. I. noul Regulament de ordine de studii în Universitate se face urma trecerii unui examen de admitere instituit pe lângă fiecare facultate.

Pentru Facultatea de Drept examenul constă din următoarele probe: Limba română, Istoria românilor, Geografia Românilor și a țării latine.

I. Pentru Facultatea de Filosofie și Litere examenul constă din următoarele probe: Limba română, Istoria românilor și Geografia României.

II. Pentru Facultatea de Medicină examenul constă din următoarele probe: Limba română, Istoria românilor, Geografia României, Științele naturale, Anatomia și Fiziologia.

III. Pentru Facultatea de Științe examenul constă din următoarele probe: Limba română, Istoria românilor, Geografia României, Noțiunile de matematică și fizică, și secțiile Matematice, Fizică și Chimie, și secțiile Fizică și Fiziologie.

matematică. Noțiuni de fizică, chimie și matematică, pentru secția chimie. Noțiuni din științele naturale și chimie, pentru secția științele naturale. Noțiuni de geografie și științele naturale, pentru secția geografică.

Examenul este oral și constă din materiile respective predate în ultimii ani de liceu.

Acest examen va avea loc la Universitatea din Cluj între 1—15 Octombrie a. c. absolvenții de liceu se înscriu întâi în mod provizoriu și numai după trecerea cu succes a examenului de admitere vor fi înscriși în mod definitiv.

Conform regulamentului de ordine și disciplină art. I. al. 3: Se înscriu în Universitate în primul loc românii. Supuși străini sau fără nici o protecție în limita locurilor disponibile și cu avizul conform al Consiliului profesoral al facultății respective.

Nu se admite nici o înscriere fără prezentarea tuturor actelor în original.

Cluj, la 26 Iunie 1923.

Rector:

ss. I. Iacobovici.

in the university, however, the following admission subjects also became mandatory: “The Romanian Language, the History of the Romanians, the Geography of Romania.”<sup>4</sup> The university administration thus met one of the initial requirements of the student revolt: Romanian language tests for admission to the Faculty of Medicine.<sup>5</sup> Not only were the tests extended to the other faculties, but they were also accompanied by new ones, all aimed at verifying the potential students’ quality of good Romanian (citizens), at least in terms of their knowledge of the announced subjects. This was another, very clear signal that the leadership of the institution (and the Ministry of Instruction) gave to the students, suggesting that they had understood and were ready to concede to the “reasonable” part of their petitions. The idea was that they expected—of course—an equally reasonable response from the students: a response that would allow the institution to function. Students were shown the other side of the strategy as well. After

“Enrollment in the University of Cluj,”  
*Patria* (29 June 1923).

the May regulations had prohibited student organizations within the university from engaging in actions with a “national agenda” (an increasingly “political” agenda, in fact),<sup>6</sup> the measures announced a month later revealed that their nationalist requests had been broadly accepted, in the hope of obtaining the desired consensus between “students” and “professors.”

The new measures regarding university admissions were part of a larger plan designed to satisfy—for the most part—the students’ demands, without offering them, however, what was not on offer: the *numerus clausus*. All this was done in the hope of reaching the necessary peace. The new approach to university admissions was not that new. It had been formulated before. In a typed manifesto, circulating in the student dormitories as early as the beginning of March 1923, such a plan was considered possible because the government had refused to reduce the number of Jews who had access to higher education, in keeping with their lower percentage in the country’s total population. The preamble of that text said:

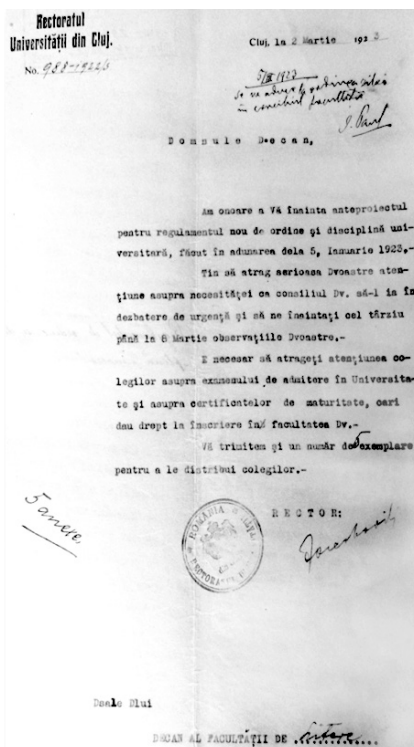
*We all know what this refusal from the ruling party means, since this is the most anti-Semitic of all the parties in the country. To hope for a favorable resolution from the other parties is nonsense, knowing that all have declared themselves categorically against this request. Still, there is another, legal way, approved by our authorities, too: to increase the number of Romanian students, as this will implicitly lead to a decrease in the number of foreigners compared to ours. Obviously, this is a numerus clausus, but interpreted in another, legal sense, accepted by everyone and, what’s more, established with the effective support of the authorities.<sup>7</sup>*

In other words, what the government could not “openly” offer to the students was proposed to them “through intermediaries,” in this case Prof. Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, who had explained to some students “his general approach to this.”<sup>8</sup> It was a two-step plan, with two types of measures. First of all, the accommodation problem was solved by assigning a new dormitory to medical students, which would be “fully furnished” by autumn: “Once the matter of the dormitories is solved, we can be sure of the overwhelming preponderance of the Romanian element.”<sup>9</sup> A second part of the project provided for restricting the possibility of enrollment—but only in the medical school! The fragmentation of admission into two time intervals, the first for the Romanians, the second for the minorities, and “a rigorous examination in the Romanian language and literature, geography and history for those who did not graduate Romanian high schools” was to ensure the desired result: “It is not NUMERUS CLAUSUS, but it will be more effective than that.”<sup>10</sup>

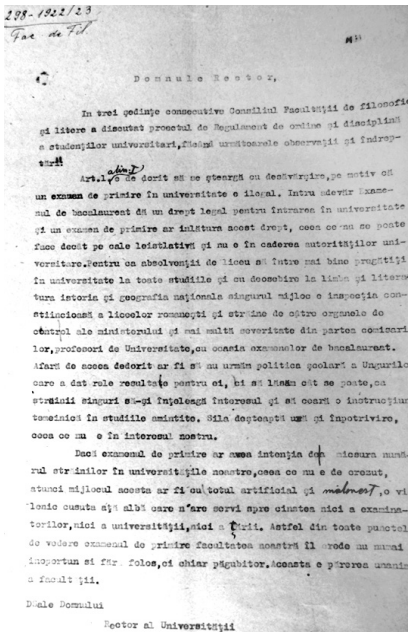
Just like on so many occasions before, the leadership of Petru Maior Student Center was deaf to any proposals intended to replace the *numerus clausus* even with something that was considered more “effective.” However, they kept the document among their papers, considering it useful for future researchers!

The proposals that Ștefănescu-Goangă, as director of the dormitory, sent to the students at the beginning of March 1923 were, in fact, part of a plan that had been discussed intensively within the university administration. On 4 January the same year, the ideas that defined this strategy appeared in a joint “communiqué” issued by the rectors and deans of the country’s universities and by the Minister of Public Instruction, Prof. Dr. C. I. Angelescu:

2). *The students’ requests regarding Dormitories and Cafeterias will be addressed in the shortest possible time, to satisfy the students’ needs. There will be a law of Dormitories and Cafeterias providing them with all that is necessary to help the students.* 3). *The Rectors and Deans took note with satisfaction of the Minister of Instruction’s statement that the government will provide this year all the funding needed for the completion of the university buildings; for endowing education with new places of learning (laboratories, clinics, libraries, etc.), as well as for the printing of Romanian magazines and textbooks . . .* 8). *Under the law of Higher Education, an entrance exam will be introduced for each faculty with the start*



Circular sent to the faculties by the Rector’s Office, the University of Cluj (2 March 1923).



Answer of Faculty of Philosophy  
and Letters to the Circular sent  
to the faculties by the Rector's Office.

of the school year 1923/24. 9) Numerus clausus for students who are Romanian citizens cannot be admitted. 10) Measures will be taken to ensure that those bodies that are not claimed by close relatives, regardless of religion, shall be handed over to the dissection rooms. A special regulation will specify how this provision shall be enforced in all hospitals and forensic institutes.<sup>11</sup>

On 2 March Rector Jacobovici submitted to the deans the preliminary draft of the new regulation of academic order and discipline, asking that it should be urgently debated in the faculty councils, and that the comments should be sent to him by 8 March at the latest. The entrance exam was considered to be one of the most important matters. "It is necessary to draw the attention of your colleagues to the university entrance exam and the school-leaving certificates that will entitle candidates to enroll in your faculty."<sup>12</sup>

The answer given by the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters to that request is quite telling and deserves to be quoted somewhat extensively:

*In three consecutive meetings, the Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters discussed the Draft Regulation for Order and Discipline among university students, making the following observations and amendments. Art. 1, Para. 1 should be fully deleted, on the grounds that a university entrance exam is illegal. Indeed, the baccalaureate exam gives the legal right of admission to university and an entrance exam would remove this right, but this can only be done by legislative means and is outside the purview of the university authorities. In order for high school graduates to be better prepared when they start university in all the fields and especially in language and literature, national history and geography, the only way to ensure that is by a meticulous inspection of Romanian and foreign high schools by the control bodies of the ministry and by more severity shown by the commissioners, university professors, during the baccalaureate exams. Apart from this, it would be desirable not to follow the model of the Hungarian school policy, which yielded bad results for them, but to allow foreigners to understand, as much as possible, what is in their interest and to ask for a thorough instruction in the aforementioned studies. Coercion leads to hatred and resistance, and that is not in our best interest. If the entrance examination were intended to decrease the number of foreigners in our universities, which is not to be believed, then this average would be entirely artificial and dishonest, a far-fetched act of slyness, which would bring no honor to the examiners, the university, and the country. Thus, our faculty considers that the entrance exam is, however we may look at it, not only inopportune and useless, but downright harmful. This is the unanimous opinion of the faculty.<sup>13</sup>*

The nationalist uproar had not drowned all the voices of reason. To their credit, “the unanimous opinion of the faculty” showed intellectual lucidity, professional ethics, morality and a sense of justice and human empathy.

Under the ever-present assault of the new nationalism, the spirit of political negotiation nonetheless prevailed. It was reflected in the final form of the regulations published in the *Official Journal*<sup>14</sup> on 13 May and in Rector Jacobovici’s announcement in *Patria* (The Country) newspaper on 29 June. Even the scholarships that were to be obtained by freshmen required them to enter a competition that consisted of a “written and oral test on one of the following subjects: Romanian language and literature, Romanian history and geography, as well as a written and oral test on any of the subjects that the candidate studied in the last year of high school.”<sup>15</sup> Places in dormitories were subject to the same regime.<sup>16</sup>

It was not long before the new rules were denounced in the local Hungarian-speaking press as a masked form of *numerus clausus*, targeted against the Hungarians rather than the Jews, because the latter would be able “to learn Romanian more easily.”<sup>17</sup>

Once implemented, in the first part of October, the new methods of recruiting university candidates showed their effectiveness; that is, they reduced the number of Jews admitted to the university far more efficiently than the option preferred by the student leaders. With the satisfaction of having taught a lesson to those who had “kept insisting on the *numerus clausus* while not understanding its ineffectiveness,”<sup>18</sup> the authorities invoked the crushing example of the Faculty of Pharmacy. Out of the 97 candidates there, 50 had been Jews. After the exam, 47 of them were rejected, since they did “not have the necessary training”; moreover, most had come from Hungary and had “no idea about the studies concerning the Romanian state.”<sup>19</sup> It seemed like a triumphant demonstration of the effectiveness of the new system. Still, this system also instantly revealed its limits: it risked leaving the university without customers, in any case, without sufficient customers. Exactly the same outcome would have been reached if the much-invoked *numerus clausus* had been applied.

Only a few days after this “triumph” came the news that some faculties would give up the entrance exam or that, on the basis of their right to autonomy, they would “suspend” it. Following in the footsteps of the Faculty of Law in Bucharest, the one in Cluj announced such a measure. It had found that the admission system “greatly reduces the number of enrollments, which, of course, is not at all in the interest of national culture.”<sup>20</sup> Not only those who came from outside the country proved unable to cope with the rigors imposed by examinations on a few basic subjects: “The university entrance exams revealed some genuinely detrimental aspects. The stories that have reached our ears reveal tremendous ignorance.”<sup>21</sup>

The other pillar of the plan that was to increase the share of Romanian students was not forgotten: accommodation, accompanied by other social measures, all aimed at compensating for the perpetually invoked underprivilege of the Romanian population in Transylvania, in comparison with the material and social status of other nationalities.

“The Romanian population of Transylvania is not rich,”<sup>22</sup> wrote an anonymous journalist who analyzed the situation of a category consisting largely of peasants and with

## Hotărârea Facultății de Drept din Cluj

Facultatea de drept a Universității noastre a luat hotărârea de a suspenda examenele de admitere. Facultatea noastră s'a pus pe punctul de vedere a Facultății similare dela Universitatea din București, care a hotărât mai înainte suspendarea examenelor de admitere.

Hotărârea e luată în baza dreptului de autonomie a Universităților, și ea este foarte bine venită. E lucrul de notorietate publică azi, după începerea înscrierilor la Universitate, că măsura luată de Ministerul Instrucțiunii, nu e ducătoare la scop și nu e de loc fericită. Ea a obținut până acum un singur rezultat: de a reduce foarte mult numărul înscrierilor, ceea ce, desigur, nu e de loc în interesul culturii naționale.

"The Decision of the Faculty of Law,"  
*Patria* (18 October 1923).

a middle class dominated by poor intellectuals, priests or teachers. It could hardly cope with the expenses related to the upkeep of a student in a city always afflicted by the "housing crisis" and the high "cost of living." In many cases, the possible historical, economic, and sociological explanation for the situation of the city was abandoned in favor of nationalist frustration.<sup>23</sup> However, the state intervened by specific means: scholarships, places in dormitories, accommodation and meals at "a very low price compared to the prices in the city."<sup>24</sup> Of the 226 students in the Avram Iancu dormitory, 100 were scholarship holders, with all expenses included.<sup>25</sup>

The new dormitories, also promised a few months before, were opening or preparing to open in the new academic year. From an interview with N. Gane, dean of the Faculty of Medicine (where the uprising had started), we find out that: a new dormitory for female students was opened on Moșilor Street, the sum of 50,000 lei was allocated for an already existing dormitory (the money came from the Ministry of Health), there is a new dormitory

with 100 places for medical students (27 Moșilor St.) and "a large dormitory is to open on Babeș Street," in a building bought by the Ministry of Instruction, for 3,500,000 lei.<sup>26</sup> The list of the students' social benefits was completed with a number of scholarships (30 of 600 lei each, 20 of 200 lei each) for each of the faculties of the university, with textbooks and funds for lithographed courses. All these to "end the insinuations of those who turn the students' needs and shortcomings into political weapons!"<sup>27</sup>

Of course, however hard it tried, the government could not defeat the opposition's skepticism and distrust, nor could it stop its criticism. The opposition's view of the situation was very different: "Nothing has been done to satisfy the students' just demands (dormitories, taxes, laboratories, etc.), although the new school year is about to begin."<sup>28</sup> And what the government had undertaken was deeply contradictory, according to the same opinion. It had introduced the university entrance exam, but had cancelled the congress of the students from Cluj and that of the students from Iași. The ministry's public communiqués, which presented its measures at the beginning of the school year, were nothing but "fairground advertisement," and the agitation that had led to a whole academic year being wasted was its responsibility: "The one that is to blame for these agitations is none other than the government, which encouraged them at first, only to stop them brutally afterwards."<sup>29</sup>

The students and their situation had become a political issue. Not only had the student movement politicized itself (by shaping a program of alliances with forces that

would support its agenda; for instance, it had signed a collaboration with National-Christian Defense League as early as March 1923),<sup>30</sup> but it was a cause for dispute between the main parties in the country, between those in power (Liberals) and the opposition (the National Party mainly, but also other relevant political forces, such as Alexandru Averescu's supporters). Student actions and themes became a subject that political actors took stances on, by endorsing, supporting, or disavowing it, or by expressing their "concerns" about or protests against it, etc. It was an unavoidable topic. The student movement "had left the university." It had become part of a broad public debate, one that went beyond the academic environment. The political parties tried to gain electoral and sympathy points, taking the "temperature" of the student issue, neglecting or completely ignoring its problematic, if not flatly unacceptable, aspects. The more one endorsed the student cause or appeared to do so, the more patriotic one sounded, and the politicians, parties and journalists could better pass for supporters of the national cause. It should be noted, however, that those who did so were not spared the experience of being hit by the boomerang effect of their own actions, out of too much concern for the fate of the students.

**A** COMPETITION IN matters of nationalism was gradually developing,<sup>31</sup> also stimulated by the student movement. The national issue was revisited with particular emphasis in the region and in the city (Transylvania, Cluj).

When—precisely in the spring of 1923—a new weekly meant to cover the life of the city was launched, it took the name *Clujul* and justified this choice as follows: what had been the city of passions for Romanian Transylvania had turned, four years before, into the "Jerusalem of the Romanian resurrection."<sup>32</sup> This needed to be celebrated more intensely, for "our" time had come. In a text in which the word "masters" was reiterated several times to dramatically emphasize the antithesis with the painful past ("our millennial pain"), with a humiliating ("always being put down by the cohabiting peoples"), long history ("a thousand years of poverty and no education"), the need for revenge was voiced, supported by the achievements of the "four years in which Romanian culture has flourished": "It's time to raise our heads."<sup>33</sup> The lost millennium had to be quickly recovered, and those few years seemed to have worked wonders.<sup>34</sup>

Something had changed in the few years of Romanian rule in Transylvania, at least in the view of some of the inhabitants. This signal came specifically from the urban, bourgeois circles, who wanted a higher Romanian presence in cities, not only at a demographic level,<sup>35</sup> but especially economically. The owner of a bookstore and a bell foundry, the manufacturer of church vestments and objects etc., was also the man who now owned the periodical entitled *Clujul* and wanted to promote his own economic interests, but also to support the Romanian cause. The two went hand in hand, so he had to fight his opponents. Throughout the interwar period, the Romanianization of Transylvanian cities (especially the large ones) was a constant topic of discussion and action.<sup>36</sup> Implicitly, it was also a source of nationalism, of anti-Semitism, because there, in the big cities, there were more "cohabiting" populations" and more Jews.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the students' demand to limit the access of an entire ethnic (religious) group to higher education and to future positions in society (made possible by a university degree) was echoed among those equally eager to limit/exclude the competition.

Besides the constant attention and support it gave the students' cause, the weekly also kept a chronicle of Cluj current affairs, according to its own fields of interest. This was a chronicle of the "nationalization" (Romanianization) of the city, from the perspective of the petty bourgeoisie, but it also provided some examples of how it perceived "the others." Taken together, such topics and the manner in which they were approached illustrated changes in the "atmosphere" of Cluj.

A freemasons' congress was to be held in Cluj at the end of April. The city had become a place of congressional pilgrimage. Many such events were scheduled or even held in those months of 1923—yet another sign of the assault on the public presence and of the need to express the messages of various ethnic, professional, and ideological groups. It was an opportunity for the newspaper to convey a presumably well-known thing ("noted long ago"), namely, the fact that "Hungarians and Jews are united in Romania" and that in Transylvania "Freemasonry is represented only by Hungarian Jews and magnates."<sup>38</sup> A similar conclusion (on a shared Hungarian-Jewish cultural identity) was drawn in the discussion of the educational problems of the Israelite community in Cluj, when the government began, in the mid-20s, to demand the gradual removal of the language of instruction, Hungarian, from the four Jewish high schools established in Transylvania after 1918.<sup>39</sup> The dismantling of the tenement offices (which forced house owners, under certain conditions, to provide rent-controlled accommodation to state officials and army officers) was described as *coup de grâce* dealt to the "Romanians in the cities of Transylvania and especially in Cluj," many of whom were the tenants of Hungarian and Jewish landlords.<sup>40</sup> For the Romanians who had recently moved into cities, housing continued to be a problem, even after the few years since the installation of the Romanian administration, and now many of them were in danger of being at the mercy of minority landlords. The reactions to that measure actually led to its rescission. Tenement offices were re-established just a few months later (in October).<sup>41</sup>

The almost touching announcement about the establishment of the Romanian Shoemakers' Union in Cluj, with "the aim of developing the Romanian industry and protecting Romanians from Jewish speculation," was proof that an aspirational symbiosis had emerged between the Romanian students and the small business owners; the association was committed "to working for students at lower prices."<sup>42</sup>

The construction of the Orthodox cathedral was not only a reason for national satisfaction in the city, but also the object of an intense press scandal, of a real campaign that *Clujul* waged for weeks, to prevent an "abomination": entrusting the building project "to a Jewish company based in Cernăuți."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, to heighten the "impiety," the company in question had allegedly subcontracted the various operations and construction stages to local enterprises, from Cluj or Oradea, "whose owners are Hungarians only in name"<sup>44</sup> (they were Jews, it goes without saying; this might lead one to infer that if they had actually been Hungarians, it would have been better...). The attack was successful. After several such articles, and following successive meetings of the Orthodox consistory, the original decision was repealed and replaced by the one in which "the project was entrusted to Mr. Ieremia," an architect from Bucharest, after "the Jewish company had been unable to meet certain conditions."<sup>45</sup> The public nationalist blackmail worked, all the more so as it was linked to an important religious edifice, meant



to change the city's landscape not only architecturally, but also symbolically. It was clear proof that there were situations in which prosaic logic (in this case economic: the best offer) could be replaced by the force of the nationalist "argument." The construction of the cathedral was "nationalized" and the building of a "Christian" place of worship by "non-Christians" was thus avoided. In the ideological language that gradually crept in, this Christian-non-Christian antithesis tended to be invested with new values. (See also the insistent reference to Christian versus non-Christian students.)

The local leadership of the bar went through a similar nationalization process. Since the beginning of the new organizational structures created after 1918, there had been disputes in the bar between influential personalities and the factions led by them.<sup>46</sup> The "squabble of the lawyers of Cluj" experienced a prolonged peak episode in the summer-autumn-winter of 1923. After the elections were won by the faction led by Dr. Dionisiu Pop, the opposing camp, led by Dr. Valer Roman, claimed that the victory had been possible with the help of "minorities." "These gentlemen were partly elected with the votes of the Romanians, partly with the votes of the minorities, and as it goes, minority members are the overwhelming majority, so they could well have elected a clean minority bar!," as one of the members of the bar argued. He also mentioned the reason why the opponent had been rejected: "the lawyers' body did not want to elect the socialist Dr. Valer Roman."<sup>47</sup>

However, the "socialist" had now moved into a different ideological camp and started waging a fierce battle for the nationalization of the bar, being assisted by Dr. Amos Frâncu, who shared his convictions. "Nationalization" meant, in this case, the exclusion



"How to Build a Romanian Cathedral,"  
Clujul (17 June 1923).

of the minorities from the local leadership of the bar, i.e. from its council. In their confrontation, the two camps deployed an entire “adversarial” arsenal; strikes, general meetings that were convened or suspended, parallel meetings of the groups that declared their own candidate victorious, appeals to the Lawyers’ Union of Romania (which decided in favor of the “Romanian-Hungarian” camp, as it was called by the opponents!), etc.<sup>48</sup> Not even the—legal—arbitration of the Bucharest leaders of the guild was accepted. It was “defeated” by a new criterion that was increasingly victorious in so many domains:

*The Romanian lawyers from the group of distinguished personalities, Dr. I. Suceiu, Dr. A. Frâncu and Dr. Valer Roman, have decided to continue their opposition and extend it throughout Transylvania. They consider that the sentence passed in Bucharest on Wednesday is null and the nationalization of the bar in Cluj is definitive.*<sup>49</sup>

No wonder those “distinguished personalities” were soon to form new structures of organization, eager to capitalize on the fresh breath of nationalism.

The old party system was contested by new political forces, all of them cultivating the “new nationalism.” In various stages of development, they were not (yet) parties or avoided being called so.

A first such initiative made its public appearance in early September, before the start of the new academic year. Without necessarily being a youth organization, it had a message for the students. It carried on the project of the “Legionnaires from the former national guards of 1918 and 1919,” was called the “Brotherhood of the Cross”<sup>50</sup> and was led by Dr. Amos Frâncu, recently appointed dean of the bar (at least according to him) in Cluj. As the journalist who wrote about this noted, the new “national breath,” “which has of late penetrated everywhere, has given Dr. Amos Frâncu a new justification, which was fully understood by the leaders of the country.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, the new undertaking had permission from the “leaders,” being supported by the Minister of War, by Generals Traian Moşoiu and Ioan Răşcanu, who had given “their consent for shooting and sports legions to be formed within the Brotherhood of the Cross organizations, in contact with the army.”<sup>52</sup> Some of these legions were to be organized “among the students.”<sup>53</sup> The plan was to organize them in the territory. The chiefs of the gendarmes were to recruit legionaries in each locality (commune), and a leader would be appointed from among them. They then appointed a district head, “who can be an active or retired officer” and “only in extremis one of the intellectuals.”<sup>54</sup> Finally, district heads could choose a county leader, who was to attend the expected congress in Cluj,<sup>55</sup> where the delegates from all over Transylvania were to be trained. It was, therefore, an organization with a national-military-regional character. Of course, for those familiar with the future organizational structure called the “Legion,” the name and hierarchical coincidences are more than significant (there the “Brotherhoods of the Cross” were reserved for high school students).

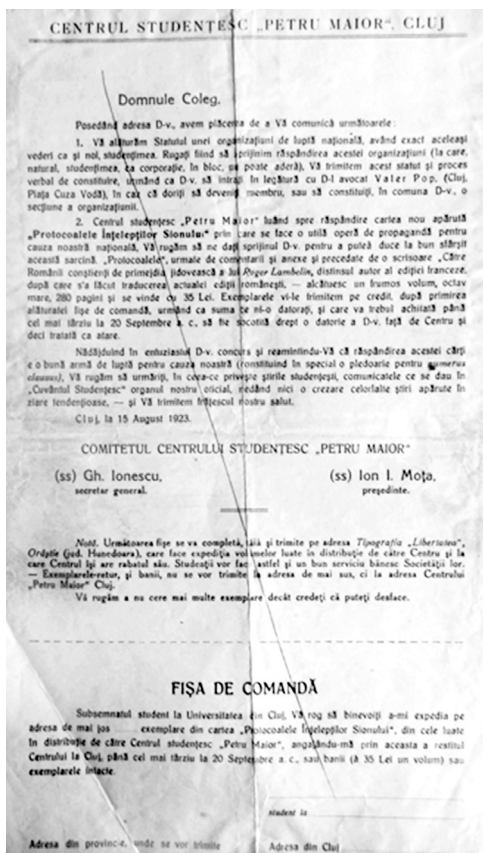
The second figure who stood out in the disputes for “nationalization of the bar,” Dr. Valer Roman, preferred a more intellectualized formula of organizing the new ideological current: The Romanian Action, a group that accommodated several local academics, but which emerged later, towards the end of the calendar year.

Information about the situation of the as yet unnamed organization can be found in a document of the Petru Maior Student Center. A printed flyer with the student center's header was sent, in the middle of summer, to the members, who were on vacation. The text read as follows:

*Dear Colleague, since we have your address, we are pleased to inform you of the following:*

1. Enclosed you will find the Statute of a national militant organization, with exactly the same views as we, the students. As we have been asked to help this organization to spread (though we, students, as a corporation, can naturally not join it), we hereby send you this statute and articles of incorporation. You must then get in touch with Mr. Valer Pop, attorney at law (Cluj, Cuza Vodă Square), in case you want to become a member, or to form a section of the organization in your commune.

2. The Petru Maior Student Center has promised to help disseminate the newly published book *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which contains useful propaganda for our national cause, so please give us your support to carry out this task. The *Protocols*, followed by comments and annexes and preceded by a letter "To the Romanians Who Are Aware of the Jewish Danger" by Roger Lambelin, the distinguished author of the French edition after which the translation of the current Romanian edition was made, come in a beautiful volume, large octave, 280 pages, and sell for 35 Lei. We shall send you the copies on credit, and after receiving the attached order form, the amount you owe us, which will have to be paid by 20 September at the latest, will be counted as a debt of yours to the Center and treated as such. We have faith in your enthusiasm and remind you that the dissemination of this book is a good weapon for our cause (it is, in particular, a plea for *numerus clausus*). Please follow the student-related news in the press releases published in *Cuvântul Studentesc*, our official mouthpiece, disregarding any other news that appears in biased newspapers—and we hereby send you our brotherly greeting. Cluj, 15 August 1923, the Committee of the Petru Maior Student Center; Gh. Ionescu, secretary general, Ion I. Moța, president.<sup>56</sup>



BCU-CN, Petru Maior coll., Ms. 5993, “Afîșe intrate,” printed flyer (15 August 1923).

An accompanying note stated that:

*The following form shall be filled in, cut out and sent to the Libertatea Printing House in Orăștie (Hunedoara County), which will ensure the shipment of the copies distributed by the Center and for which the Center has a discount. Students will thus do good financial service to their Society.*<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, the ad-hoc leader of the students used the database of the Center (the personal, home addresses of the members), to propose to them to join the new “national militant” organization, having “the same views” but nonetheless different from the one to which he belonged; an organization that the students could “naturally” not join “as a corporation,” but—lo and behold!—they could do so individually, by following the indications they received. Moreover, they were urged to contribute to its spread in the territory, wherever they were at that time, as useful tools. Secondly, the leaflet asked for help in the sale of a book of “propaganda for our national cause,” about which no mention was made regarding the person who had translated it or to whom it “belongs” (before, in his correspondence with his Bucharest colleagues, Moța had referred to the same work as “my book”: “By the time of the Congress, my book *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* will be finished.”<sup>58</sup> The students were rallied to this action as an obligation “towards the Center,” which was also a financial obligation, with a deadline for the receipt of the proceeds (“by 20 September at the latest”)! The package included the collaboration with the Moța family company: the Libertatea Printing House in Orăștie. It was at least an ingenious (if not abusive) way of mixing the interests of an organization of all students into the affairs of a group, of some individuals. But such interference did not seem to matter to the law student who had signed this document.

As the opening of the new school year was drawing near, “student” issues came to the fore once again, and not just because of the government’s efforts to showcase the improvements brought to university life. What should have been a quiet end of summer was troubled by clashes with the police and the disorder caused by the Congress of Delegates in Iași.

The government had to cope with the consequences of what its official publication, *Viitorul* (The Future), had been accused of doing. The newspaper had supported the student movements and A. C. Cuza’s attitude towards them. The accusations came from what is described as “certain periodicals.” Here unidentified by name, the reference must have been to publications like *Adevărul* (The Truth), *Dimineața* (The Morning), *Lupta* (The Struggle).<sup>59</sup> The press as a whole had come to be assessed according to how it related to the “national issue,” and the student movement was a dynamic part of that. *Viitorul* rejected such reproaches, also through its regional confrere, *Înfrățirea* (The Twinning): how could the government support those demonstrations, when it was “crystal clear” that it had an interest to “maintain the peace in the country”?<sup>60</sup> As for the hint that it espoused anti-Semitic views, the newspaper defended itself with clarifications that really set it apart from the views of the students engaged in the fight: “It is only against those Jews who have no love for this country and especially against those who work against our interests.”<sup>61</sup> But “such individuals, be they Jews, Hungarians, Germans, Bulgarians

or whatever” “are still to be reproved by everyone: I do not think that any Romanian has different opinions.”<sup>62</sup>

Forced to make this confession (because the intervention was, of course, intended as a correction), the liberal newspaper made a distinction, albeit a theoretical one, between its own anti-Semitism and that of the students and of Cuza. In the former sense, only the Jews acting “against our interests” should be rejected (the criterion of love of country was obviously difficult to express in any other terms). In the latter variant, *all* Jews were enemies (considered as such), regardless of their actions, their possible attachment to Romanian culture, their human quality, etc. It didn’t matter what they did. It mattered that they were Jewish. Moreover, in the hierarchy of enemies from within, they were placed above any other minority (Hungarians, Germans, Bulgarians, etc.).

It was clear that the authorities had been irritated by the exploits of some agitators over the summer, who had not even respected the respite afforded by a holiday: “A group of turbulent agitators gathered in Iași demanding the introduction of the famous *numerus clausus* in higher education regulations.”<sup>63</sup> Their actions could compromise the entire effort of preparing the new academic year, and the memory of previous failed attempts to make the student leaders reasonable gave voice to exasperated outrage: “True nationalism does not reside in removing citizens of another religion from schools where they do not come to introduce a foreign culture, but to receive Romanian culture.”<sup>64</sup>

Did these disquisitions matter to the students themselves, did they notice that measures were being put in place to help them? Common sense would urge us to think that they did, especially those who directly benefited from them. For those who were on the path of radicalization, however, such details did not matter at all and failed to influence them, in any way, to revise their positions.



The leaders of the university youth from all over the country, “Adevăratul naționalism,” *Înfrățirea* (28 August 1923).

There were some young people, such as the president of medical students, Săroiu, who publicly thanked for the improvement of their accommodation situation when the long-announced medical students' new dormitory was inaugurated in the presence of the Minister of Social Protection, Mr. N. N. Săveanu.<sup>65</sup> Coincidentally or not, this occurred upon the fifth anniversary of the Romanian troops' entry in Cluj...

But for the radical core of the Petru Maior Center, the effort of the authorities to improve the social situation of the students and encourage the cultural emancipation of the Romanian youth through measures in their favor them went completely unnoticed. Far from improving its image in their eyes, the government had become a target for them. It was the cause of their failure to achieve the only claim that really mattered: *numerus clausus*. Topics such as the construction of new dormitories or the introduction of the entrance exam were not raised in the discussions recorded by the minutes of the student organization's leadership. From the whole new academic regulations, only the paragraph prohibiting activity "on a national basis" in the university was taken into account. The battle with the regulations was limited to that. In the case of I. I. Moța, it was accompanied by the fear that the new school year would be an ordinary one, that is, one in which the students attended courses instead of boycotting them, in order to have their well-known demand met. The paroxysmal fear of failure was unbearable for Moța. All this personal, deeply internalized unrest had to be turned outwards, towards the enemy outside: the authorities, the government, through its ministers, and the Jews, through their representatives.

Before bigger plans were set in motion, local issues still had to be resolved. After returning from Iași, from the Congress of Delegates who had reached important decisions, Moța would organize his comrades for the autumn university guerrilla warfare.



## Notes

1. "Mișcarea studentească," *Înfățișarea* (Cluj), 5 July 1923, 2.
2. "Ultimele informațiuni," *Patria* (Cluj), 22 June 1923, 3.
3. His mandate as rector and Senate chairman would last, according to the regulations in force, for only one academic year.
4. "Înscrierea la Universitatea din Cluj," *Patria*, 29 June 1923, 3.
5. "Ce am făcut până acum și de ce," *Dacia nouă* (Cluj), 23 December 1922, 2.
6. In one of the meetings of the Committee of Petru Maior Student Center, Moța drew his colleagues' attention to the new regulation: "Art. 42 states that it should be enforced immediately after the promulgation, which took place in May 1923." Lucian Blaga Central University Library, Cluj-Napoca (hereafter cited as BCU-CN), Petru Maior coll., Ms. 6011, "Proces verbal" (19 August 1923).
7. *Ibid.*, Ms. 5993 (Printed posters), typed manifesto, dated 2 March 1923.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Cluj County Branch of the National Archives (hereafter cited as SJCAN), Universitatea "Regele Ferdinand I" Cluj coll., Facultatea de Litere și Filosofie (hereafter cited as URFC-

- FLF), box 5, no. 90–449, 1922–1923, typed copy of the ministerial communiqué (4 January 1923).
12. Ibid., circular sent to the faculties by the Rector's Office, the University of Cluj (2 March 1923).
  13. Ibid., undated copy of petition to the Rector's Office, no. 298, 1922/1923.
  14. Ibid., printed leaflet entitled "Regulament de ordinea și disciplina studenților universitari" (Cluj: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Ardealul," 1923).
  15. SJCAN, URFC-FLF, box 6, no. 1-100, 1923–1924, "Regulament pentru acordarea de burse în țară și în străinătate," typed, undated copy of the text published in *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 137, 1923.
  16. Ibid., "Examene și burse pentru studenți," typed, undated copy, signed by Dean N. Drăganu, no. 1, 1923/24.
  17. The protest published in *Újság* (Hungarian-language newspaper) is commented on in the "Examenele de admitere la Universitate," *Înfrățirea*, 27 August 1923, 3.
  18. "Necesitatea examenelor de admitere la Universități," *Înfrățirea*, 6 October 1923, 1.
  19. Ibid.
  20. "Hotărârea Facultăței de Drept," *Patria*, 18 October 1923, 1.
  21. "Nivelul învățământului," *Patria*, 23 December 1923, 1.
  22. "Situția materială a studenței," *Înfrățirea*, 28 March 1924, 4.
  23. It had become a habit to compare prices in Cluj with those in other towns. The editor of a local newspaper, who went to... Sovata did just that. Of course, accommodation and food were cheaper than in Cluj. But the explanation is interesting. "80 percent of the visitors in Sovata are Jews; they must therefore be spared. In Cluj, where things are changing, where the owners are Jewish and the customers are Christian, daylight robbery is allowed." "La Cluj și la Sovata," *Clujul*, 8 July 1923, 3.
  24. "Situția materială a studenței," 4.
  25. Ibid.
  26. "Solicitudinea guvernului față de nevoile studenței: Ce s-a făcut pentru studenții din Cluj," *Înfrățirea*, 14 October 1923, 3.
  27. Ibid.
  28. "Mișcările studențești," *Patria*, 26 August 1923, 3. Armin Heinen also discusses the oscillating and sometimes contradictory attitude of the government during that period, in *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail": Mișcare socială și organizație politică: O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional*, trans. Cornelia and Delia Eșianu, scientific control by Florea Iocioaia (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), 115.
  29. "Taxele universitare," *Patria*, 27 October 1923, 1.
  30. Radu Florian Bruja, *Extrema dreaptă în Bucovina* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2012), 108.
  31. On the broad acceptance of the debate on "national specificity" in the cultural milieu of interwar Romania and its ideological implications, see Katherine Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență: Cultura română sub Ceaușescu*, trans. Mona Antohi and Sorin Antohi (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), 46. On the "nationalist consensus" in interwar political life (mentioning the necessary exceptions), see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare 1918–1930*, trans. Vlad Russo (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), 24–27.
  32. "Pornim la drum," *Clujul*, 8 April 1923, 1.
  33. Ibid.

34. On dualist Hungary as a nationalizing state and the effects of that policy (the reverse of the post–1918 nationalization), see Rogers Brubaker, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, and Liana Grancea, *Politică naționalistă și etnicitate cotidiană într-un oraș transilvănean*, foreword by Marius Lazăr (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale; Kriterion, 2010), 68–82. On the transition from Kolozsvár to Cluj, as part of such a process, see *ibid.*, 106–110.
35. In Cluj, in 1920, the proportions were as follows: Romanians 33.8%, Hungarians 49.8%, Jews 13.9%, cf. *ibid.*, 102.
36. A brief selection of works on this issue: Petru Suci, “Desvoltarea orașelor ardelene: În baza unei anchete,” *Societatea de Măine* (Cluj), nos. 10–11, 13–20 March 1927, 135–137; Ioan Lupaș, “Problema orașelor din Transilvania în lumina recensământului din anul 1930,” *Revista economică* (Sibiu) 27 (1932): 261–265; Petru Nemoianu, “Orașele ardelene,” *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* (Bucharest) 2, 1 (1935): 261–370; Silviu Dragomir, “Population de la Roumanie d’après la nationalité,” *Revue de Transylvanie* (Cluj) 2, 4 (1935–1936): 537–539.
37. Statistical data show the following percentage distribution of the main ethnic groups in Transylvania in 1910: of the total population, 51.9% were Romanians, 30.6% Hungarians, 10.4% Germans and 3.4% Jews; as for the demographic structure of the urban environment, here the figures show 17.6% Romanians, 55.6% Hungarians, 14.2% Germans and 9.6% Jews. The 1930 census indicates the following situation: 57.8% Romanians, 24.4% Hungarians, 9.8% Germans and 3.2% Jews; in urban areas: 35% Romanians, 37.9% Hungarians, 13.2% Germans and 10.4% Jews. It is noteworthy that the percentage of Romanians in cities doubled over the two decades (from 1910 to 1930). Source: Sabin Manuilă, *Aspects démographiques de la Transylvanie* (Bucharest: n.p., 1938), apud Livezeanu, 164. In 1910, 18.5% of the total Jews from Transylvania lived in the six largest towns (Arad, Cluj, Oradea, Satu Mare, Târgu-Mureș, Timișoara): Ladislau Gyémánt, *Evreii din Transilvania: Destin istoric/The Jews of Transylvania: A Historical Destiny*, trans. Simona Fărcașan (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul Cultural Român, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2004), 95.
38. “Un congres al francmasonilor la Cluj,” *Clujul*, 22 April 1923, 3.
39. In articles such as “Românizarea școlilor ardelene: Chestia liceelor evreiești,” *Clujul*, 8 July 1923, 2 or “Adunarea evreilor din Cluj contra limbii române,” *Clujul*, 15 July 1923, 1. On the issue of Jewish schools in the era, see Gyémánt, 115–118 or Attila Gidó, *Două decenii: Evreii din Cluj în perioada interbelică* (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2014), 201–230.
40. “Un atentat la românitatea Clujului,” *Clujul*, 1 July 1923, 1.
41. “Informațiuni,” *Clujul*, 21 October 1923, 3.
42. “Uniunea pantofarilor români din Cluj,” *Clujul*, 22 July 1923, 2.
43. “Cum se construiește o catedrală românească,” *Clujul*, 17 June 1923, 1.
44. *Ibid.*
45. “Construirea Catedralei în antrepriză românească,” *Clujul*, 8 July 1923, 3.
46. Mirel Ionescu and Greta-Monica Miron, *Istoria Baroului Cluj* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2012), 71–72.
47. Ion Giurgiu, “Zarva advocaților din Cluj,” *Clujul*, 27 May 1923, 1.
48. Ionescu and Miron, 72–75.
49. “Anularea alegerii de la baroul Cluj,” *Clujul*, 22 July 1923, 1.



50. It had been set up with great fanfare in the summer of 1919, but then turned into a complete shambles: “Adunarea constituantă a Frățiilor de Cruce și a Surorilor de Cruce,” *Patria*, 6 July 1919, 2. For the statutes drawn up then, see SJCAN, Fondul personal Amos Frâncu (no. 226), package “Documente rezultate din activitatea lui Amos Frâncu în viața politică, militară, socială și culturală,” no. 22 (Acte și corespondență privind activitatea lui Amos Frâncu ca președinte al “Frăției de Cruce din Țara Moșilor”), “Frăția de Cruce” – Statute tipărite, fol. 14r.
51. “O nouă organizație necesară: Frăția de Cruce,” *Înfrățirea*, 10 September 1923, 3.
52. Ibid.
53. On the students’ joining the organization, see “Studentii din Cluj în Frățiile de Cruce,” *Clujul*, 26 August 1923, 2.
54. “Pregătirea congresului legionarilor din 1918,” *Înfrățirea*, 15 September 1923, 2.
55. Ibid.
56. BCU-CN, Petru Maior coll., Ms. 5993, “Afișe intrate,” printed flyer, 15 August 1923.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., Ms. 5851, no. 159/1923, 10 July 1923.
59. The articles Octavian Goga published in the newspapers of the time contributed fully, on the one hand, to stigmatizing the journalists who were on the wrong side of the national interest, and on the other hand, to celebrating student manifestations and attitudes. What he called the “Honigmans and Rosenthals” in the press were ceaselessly attacked for their identity and ideas, while the youth movement received encouragement and approval. The two sections of the collection published by Goga in 1927 (containing articles previously published in *Țara Noastră*), have revealing titles and a consistent approach to these issues. See “Cultul tinereții” (19–89) and “Presa de negustori” (93–161) in *Mustul care fierbe* (Bucharest: n.p., n.d.).
60. “Nu antisemiți, însă iubitori ai Românismlui,” *Înfrățirea*, 1 September 1923, 1.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. “Adevăratul naționalism,” *Înfrățirea*, 28 August 1923, 1.
64. Ibid.
65. “Inaugurarea căminului studențesc din Calea Moșilor,” *Înfrățirea*, 25 December 1923, 2.

### Abstract

#### The Preparations for the 1923/24 Academic Year and the “Nationalization” of Cluj

The paper presents the situation at Cluj University in 1923, after the student unrest, with the government’s attempts to indirectly meet some of the nationalist demands of the students while nevertheless refusing to contemplate their main request, which concerned the introduction of a *numerus clausus*. As such, measures like the introduction of an admissions test and the opening of new student facilities, chiefly dormitories, only had a limited impact, and the nationalist student leaders continued their militant activities.

### Keywords

interwar period, Cluj University, student unrest, anti-Semitism, *numerus clausus*

