

CORNEL SIGMIREAN and AUREL PAVEL
Elită și națiune: Fundația “Gojdu”
(1871–2008)

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IN THE context of the centennial of the Trianon Treaty, concluded on 4 June 1920 between the Powers victorious in World War One and Hungary, one of the issues targeted and regulated by the respective international treaty, but delayed by the Hungarian state and finally filed away by the Soviet Union in 1953, has resurfaced in the Romanian public and historiographic debate: the Gojdu Foundation’s wealth and properties. The merit of reviving the issue of the history of the Gojdu Foundation belongs to the Târgu Mureș academic Cornel Sigmirean, a prestigious historian of Romanian modernity, of Transylvanian Romanian culture and of the history of the elites until the unification with Romania, and to the Sălaj priest Aurel Pavel, a professor at Saint Andrei Șaguna Faculty of Orthodox Theology of Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu. In the summer of 2020, the two academics published an ample volume on Emanuil Gojdu, the foundation established by the famous lawyer in 1870, its scholarship holders and the foundation’s odyssey from its establishment until today. The authors revised and extended the work published two decades ago in Târgu Mureș, on the bicentennial of Emanuil Gojdu’s birth, their new editorial accomplishment being salutary and meritorious both in a historiographical and in a memorial sense, concomitantly serving historical writing, while also cultivating the memory of the greatest Orthodox Romanian Maecenas and philanthropist.

The research on Emanuil Gojdu’s biography and the history of his prestigious

Romanian Orthodox foundation in Dual Hungary is not a new endeavor for Romanian historiography, being approached in the three decades since the fall of communism with professionalism and passion by numerous historians in Romania and in Hungary, such as Maria Berényi, Constantin Mălinaș, Pavel Cherescu, Ioan Boia, and Titus Serediuc. The attention enjoyed by the Gojdu Foundation’s history, wealth, properties, scholarships and stipends is explicable considering its patrimonial and financial value, the major impact it had over the development of Romanian culture and science, and the training it provided to over 1,600 Romanian pupils and students between 1871 and 1920. After the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, the foundation experienced a most unfortunate and undeserved fate. Its activity was suspended by the authorities during in the interwar era, then its wealth and properties were seized and nationalized by the Hungarian state at the beginning of the communist era. Finally, in the mid-2000s, most of its Budapest properties—known as “Gozsdu-Udvar/The Gojdu Courts”—were sold.

Unlike previous approaches, as suggested by its title, this volume integrates the Gojdu Foundation’s history in the larger cultural, political and religious context of Central Europe, Austria-Hungary and Romania, piecing together a much more complex fresco of the modern times, the foundation’s destiny and the biographies of Gojdu fellows, highlighting their major contribution to the creation of Greater Romania and to the progress of Romanian culture and civilization after 1918, when the Gojdu Foundation’s former beneficiaries affirmed themselves as Romania’s entrepreneurs, writers, university professors, scientists, doctors, lawyers, theologians,

diplomats, career officers, politicians, parliamentary representatives, senators, ministers and prime-ministers. Also, the historic file of the dissolution and sale of the Gojdu private foundation of public utility by the Hungarian state is presented and updated, focusing on the presence of the foundation on the political agenda of the bilateral Romanian-Hungarian relations in their two main distinct historical stages: 1920–1953 and 1996–2008.

Structurally, the volume can be divided into five main special sections: 1) Historical presentation (pp. 7–149); 2) The complex list of Gojdu Foundation fellows (pp. 150–335); 3) Documentary annexes (pp. 335–371); 4) Abstracts in English and Hungarian (pp. 372–401); and 5) Index of names and localities (pp. 402–461). The first part opens with a preface and ends with the customary conclusions, between which find the next twelve chapters: “Nation and Intellectual Elites;” “The Nineteenth Century and the Orthodox Church’s Rebirth;” “A National Dissident: University Education in the Romanian language;” “Scholarships for Pupils and Students;” “The Great Maecenas Emanuil Gojdu: Origin and Family;” “The Gojdu Foundation: Testamentary Decisions;” “The Gojdu Foundation’s Wealth (1871–1919);” “The Foundation’s Scholarships;” “Gojdu Elites: Cultural and Political Destiny;” “Postscript;” “The Gojdu Foundation on the Romanian-Hungarian Political Relations Agenda (1920–1953);” “History and Diplomacy: The Gojdu Foundation between 1996 and 2008.”

After reading these chapters, several main ideas emerge. Firstly, the Gojdu Foundation was a nineteenth-century creation, founded in the era of the affirmation of nationalism and of the modern political

nations, of new social, cultural-religious and national emancipation frameworks, when the nations increasingly legitimized themselves by their elites’ number and value. In their turn, these elites put themselves in the service of the national, cultural, social and political progress of their nations. Secondly, it is noted that the Aromanians settled on the territory of the Austrian Empire in the eighteenth century played a central role in supporting the Romanian nation’s political, religious and cultural affirmation and emancipation in Transylvania and Hungary, the most famous Aromanians involved in the Romanian people’s national and religious revival within the borders of the former Habsburg Monarchy being Metropolitan Bishop Andrei Şaguna (1808–1873) and Emanuil Gojdu (1802–1870). Thirdly, for the Orthodox Church in Transylvania and Hungary, the Gojdu Foundation represented the triumph of Şaguna’s ideal regarding the role of the church (faith) and of schools (education) within and in the service of the Romanian nation, the Orthodox Church asserting itself as a genuine national and popular church, with the greatest communitarian and institutional force of coagulating the Romanian people, which cultivated and supported the ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity of the Romanians in the Transleithanian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Fourthly, the Gojdu Foundation, through the lawyer’s inheritance and will, as well as through its members’ administrative skills, became the largest Romanian foundation in Austria-Hungary and one of the largest private foundations in Central and Eastern Europe, whose properties and financial assets exceeded in 1918 ten million crowns (around five million euro at its present value). From the foundation’s

funds, between 1870 and 1920, 3,626 scholarships for pupils and students and 953 financial aids were granted for the completion of middle and higher education, civilian and military, for bachelor and doctoral exams. With its assistance, 1,615 individuals pursued their education, among which 1,150 were students at over thirty universities and academies throughout the whole of Europe, 426 of them gaining their doctorate. Fifth, Trianon Hungary froze the foundation's accounts in 1920 and compelled its administrators to deposit their cash revenue, obtained from rents on the foundation's properties, only in banks located in Hungary, making it impossible to provide any scholarships. Throughout the entire interwar period, the Hungarian government was dominated by the idea of revising the Paris peace treaties and adopted a delaying tactics on the issue of the Gojdu Foundation, postponing sine die its settlement according to article 249, line 6 of the Trianon Treaty, which provided for the placement of this foundation in the service of the Orthodox Romanians from the regions united with Romania in 1918, in keeping with its original goals. A Romanian-Hungarian agreement was signed only on 27 October 1937, which made available to the Gojdu Foundation all its assets located on Hungarian territory, with all related rights and obligations. Unfortunately, the start of World War Two and the Second Vienna Award prevented the concrete implementation of the bilateral agreement, the foundation's only gain being the acquisition of the Elisabeth Sanatorium in Cluj from the Hungarian Red Cross in late 1937, a building that was nationalized by the communist regime on 19 October 1949 and returned, in a deplorable state, only

recently, after having hosted for decades the Cluj-Napoca Hospital of Hematology. The final chapter on the Gojdu Foundation's finances, accounts, and especially properties in Budapest is represented by their abusive nationalization—contrary to the Hungarian nationalization law of 1952 and to the Romanian-Hungarian 1937 agreement—by the Hungarian communist government in early 1952. The following year, at the behest of the USSR, any claim of mutual compensation between the “brotherly states” of Romania and Hungary was dropped. The Hungarian governments also took advantage of this communist agreement after the totalitarian regimes fell in both countries, considering the Gojdu Foundation's inheritance as “resolved.” This explains why the Hungarian authorities simply ignored the claims and restitution requests of the Gojdu Courts by their rightful owner, the Gojdu Foundation re-established in Sibiu in 1996, proceeding with their rapid “privatization”: they were first transferred from the Hungarian state to Budapest Sector VII City Hall in 1999, and then auctioned off—despite repeated restitution requests by the Gojdu Foundation—and finally sold, in 2004, by the Autóker Holding company for 800 million forints, amounting to 2.5 million euros. Meanwhile, Romanian diplomats and the state authorities in Bucharest could not preclude and prevent the sale by the Budapest authorities of the Gojdu Courts to private entities, neither could it obtain from the Hungarian side equitable and suitable compensations for the real value of the respective buildings, denoting the Romanian side's incapacity to negotiate with the Hungarian side on an equal footing, while in Transylvania a significant number of buildings located in major cit-

ies were returned to the historical Hungarian churches (Catholic, Calvinist, Unitarian). The Romanian government's initiative of 2002, accepted by the Hungarian authorities and officially adopted in 2005, to create a Romanian-Hungarian Emanuil Gojdu Public Foundation as a separate entity, independent from the Gojdu Foundation, was rejected by the Bucharest Parliament for demagogic reasons, thus wasting the opportunity of a symbolic restitution of the Gojdu inheritance and the possibility to set up a Romanian institution in the Hungarian capital. After 2008, the Gojdu problem disappeared from the official agenda of the Romanian governments. As the authors conclude at the end of their analysis, "today, the Gojdu Foundation, deprived of its properties, is merely a chapter in the history of the Romanians, of the modern Romanian nation's birth in the nineteenth century, through school and education, the result of embracing the European cultural model" (p. 149).

In the section dedicated to the Gojdu Foundation fellows, the authors provide the biographical details of 1,615 Gojdu fellows, ordered alphabetically, who were educated between 1870 and 1920 in primary schools (6), civil schools (7), exact sciences schools (15), middle schools (269), technical schools (15), commercial schools (48), cadet or officer schools (93), notaries schools (8), administration schools (1), fine art academies (1), superior pedagogic schools (8), superior veterinary medicine schools (2), academies and universities (1,150). It is clear from this study that the path followed by the young students towards a Gojdu scholarship involved a series of well-established steps provided for in the foundational letters: preparing a file with documents on bap-

tism or birth certificate extracts, the confirmation that the parents could not cover the applicant's tuition, and their transcript of records. The files were sent, through the diocesan centers in Arad, Caransebeș and Sibiu, to the foundation's representative and the Romanian Orthodox parish in Budapest, who evaluated the respective files and awarded study grants. Celebrated nineteenth and twentieth centuries personalities from Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș were among the Gojdu fellows: Victor Babeș, Valeriu Braniște, Virgil Ciobanu, Zosim Chirtop, Emil Dandea, Constantin Daicoviciu, Silviu Dragomir, Ioan Fruma, Octavian Goga, Petru Groza, Aurel Lazăr, Dumitru Lascu, Ioan Lupaș, Virgil Nemoianu, Teodor Neș, Dumitru Stăniloae, Ioan Stroia, Traian Vuia, Aurel Vlad, Nicolae Zigre, Ioan Zaicu, etc. The authors put considerable and commendable effort in drafting the micro-biographies of the fellows, especially since little was known about some of them, this data being extracted primarily from primary sources such as the foundation's annuals, its archive, and the Romanian Orthodox parish in Budapest. The information thus obtained and presented in this volume can be the starting point for future research dedicated to the Transylvanian Romanian elites' life and activities. A future edition of the book would do well to include here, after the Gojdu fellows, the list of the 34 Jews baptized between 1939 and 1945 by the Romanian Orthodox priest of the parish hosted by the Gojdu Courts building in Budapest, and thus saved from deportation to Nazi extermination camps (p. 119).

The annexes section comprises thirteen documents, significant historical sources: 1) Emanuil Gojdu's will of 4 November

1869; 2) the foundational letters of the Gojdu Foundation from 1885; 3) the agreement between Hungary and Romania regarding the regulation of matters pertaining to the Gojdu Foundation from April 1924; 4) the Gojdu Foundation's Memoir addressed to Prime Minister Iuliu Maniu on 7 March 1930; 5) the agreement between Romania and Hungary of 28 April 1930; 6) the text published in the Official Journal on 13 May 1938, with the ratification by King Carol II of the agreement between the Romanian government and the Hungarian one regarding the solution to the Gojdu Foundation issue; 7) the text of the agreement between Romania and Hungary regarding the final regulation of the matters pertaining to the Gojdu Foundation of 27 October 1937; 8) the list of Gojdu Foundation's assets in Hungary on 15 October 1937; 9) a Report of the Romanian Legation in Budapest from 1938; 10) the rental contract of the Gojdu Foundation's buildings in Cluj, 5 November 1937; 11) a Gojdu Foundation's letter to Foreign Minister Simion Bughici from November 1953; 12) a Gojdu Foundation's letter to Dr. Petru Groza, the president of the Council of Ministers, dated 29 May 1953; 13) the agreement between the Romanian Government and the Government of the Republic of Hungary regarding the establishment of the Emanuil Gojdu Public Foundation, adopted on 20 October 2005. This is followed by the abstracts section, "The Gojdu Foundation," and "A Gojdu Alapítvány," and the Index of fellow names and birthplaces, completed by a general index of names and localities.

Unquestionably, the volume signed by Cornel Sigmirean and Aurel Pavel represents a valuable contribution, from a

scientific, memorial and sentimental perspective, regarding the Gojdu Foundation's history and its fundamental role in the emergence of the Romanian elites in Transylvania in the era of Austro-Hungarian dualism. It comes to keep the foundation's memory alive in the present and in the future, and to cultivate Emanuil Gojdu's personality in the collective memory of the Romanian people, illustrating a bright page of Romanian history, albeit with a sad epilogue. The activity of this foundation was brutally and unjustly interrupted by the Hungarian government in 1920, 1952, and 2005, as it froze, then nationalized and auctioned away its assets, acquired and bequeathed by one of the most celebrated lawyers in Hungary in the mid-nineteenth century, a devoted son of the Romanian nation, but at the same time a loyal citizen of Hungary, the first jurist who replaced Latin with Hungarian in initiating legal proceedings in the cities of Pest and Buda, gaining a special place in the history of Hungarian justice, an authority to whom justice has not yet been done in the eyes of history. For this reason, I consider that it would be preferable for this volume to be translated and published both in Hungarian, as well as in English, to ensure an international circulation through which Emanuil Gojdu's biography and Gojdu Foundation's history would be popularized. The foundation was unjustly deprived of its lands and assets by a Hungarian government that did not respect its international commitments and arbitrarily and abusively confiscated private properties bequeathed to a foundation by this great European personality.

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