

Journalism Studies

ILIE RAD

at Babeş-Bolyai University

“Journalism is the only profession that rules out stupidity.”
(*Ion Vinea*)

Early Initiatives: “A Journalism Chair”

THE IDEA of a Transylvanian school of journalism has been present in this Romanian province for a long time. It emerged in light of similar foreign initiatives, discussed by the press of that time. For instance, in the year 1899, in an article called “Școală de ziaristi” (A school for journalists) published in George Bariț’s *Gazeta de Transilvania* (60, no. 127, 11 (23) June 1899, p. 3), one of the editors enthusiastically commented on the creation by Albert Bataille of a journalism school at the Paris Collège Libre des Sciences Sociales. The curriculum was to include:

I. A course in newspaper editing (Professor Henry Fouquier, journalist). 1. The current role of the press. Its future. Its tasks. Its duty. 2. Aptitudes and training for journalism. 3. General knowledge required of a journalist. 4. Technical course. Editing a newspaper, writing a column, a review, an essay, correspondence, a theatre

Ilie Rad

Professor in the Department of Journalism of the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences belonging to Babeş-Bolyai University. Author, among others, of the books **Stilistică și mass-media: Aspecte al experienței jurnalistice** (Stylistics and the media: Aspects of the journalistic experience) (1999) and **Aron Pumnul (1818–1866)** (2002).

chronicle, a literary piece, reporting on parliamentary activities and on the courts. 5. Knowledge required of permanent or occasional contributors (scientific, artistic, social reports, sports pieces). 6. Reports. How to become a reporter. Natural skills. Acquired skills. Necessary knowledge. The job of a reporter. Ethics in journalism. Examples and anecdotes.

Students are required to write essays, papers, and reports.

II. History of the press (Tenured professor I. Cornéli, journalist). *Introduction to the history of the press. 2. Classification of the course. 3. Biographies of famous journalists. 4. Monographs of famous journalists.*

The course shall be completed by a series of conferences.

III. Press law (Professor Cruppi, M.P.). *1. Historical development in France. 2. Comparative law. 3. Press law in England. 4. The law of 29 July 1881. 5. Plans and reforms.*

IV. Contemporary history from a journalistic perspective (Professor Seignobos, university professor). *Social political life abroad. The constitutions and the governments of various countries and their situation. Political terminology in various civilized countries.*

V. Practical courses. *Printing, composition, galleys, visits and practical work at the Figaro newspaper.*

The famous journalist and politician Valeriu Braniște, who had spent more than a year in the Szeged prison for press offences, once pertinently stated that “in Switzerland and everywhere in the West some universities have established journalism chairs. If ever we manage to have such a chair of our own, we should also establish a ‘seminary for prison studies’ alongside it, training not only the future journalists, but all those likely to be involved in militant politics” (Popa and Tașcu 2003, 10). Another Transylvanian, Onisifor Ghibu, also wrote: “The suggestion I had received in Bucharest—whereby I should look at the manner in which the foreign press monitors and comments on the ‘Romanian cause’—made me stop for a few days in Switzerland, in order to make contact with the specialists in the new science of journalism, as a few years earlier a chair of journalism had been created at Zurich University” (Ghibu 1981, 169).

We see that a school of journalism was needed in Transylvania in order for the future journalists to be well trained in legal and political matters, allowing them to defend the interests of their readers and, more importantly, to defend themselves in the press lawsuits filed against them. Secondly, such a school would have been a natural addition to an illustrious tradition in the field of the written press. It is not by accident that all those who studied the history of the Transylvanian press have highlighted its undeniable qualities. “For more than a century, the history of the Transylvanian press has been the most beautiful

chapter in the history of Transylvania. In its pages, we find the thoughts and the feelings of the most outstanding representatives of the Romanian community in this region” (N. Iorga). In his turn, Ion Breazu stated that “For one century, the Transylvanian press was the giant laboratory of the national conscience” (Breazu 1944, 114).

Before it existed in an institutional form, journalism studies in Transylvania had a few forerunners of whom it can indeed be proud.

Following Tradition

FEW PEOPLE know, for instance, that the founder of Turkish-language press is a Cluj native of Hungarian extraction and belonging to the Unitarian faith, who converted to Islam under the name of Ibrahim Muteferrika or İbrahim Müteferrika (1674–1742). He also printed the first Turkish books using the Arabic script, and also became known as a geographer, astronomer, and philosopher, after receiving permission from the Grand Vizier Nevshahirli Damat İbrahim Pasha and from Sultan Ahmed himself to also print non-religious books (to the great disappointment of the contemporary calligraphers and religious leaders). In 1729 he printed his first book, with a circulation of a few hundred copies. Several statues in Istanbul celebrate the memory of this scholar, who brought an essential contribution to Ottoman culture.

The first war photo reporter in the world was also a native of Cluj. Károly Papp Szathmáry, painter and photographer, was born in this city in the year 1821. He became world famous for the photographs he took during the Crimean War of 1853–1856, and later became official photographer to King Carol I of Romania.

Very few people know that the city of Cluj was home to the first press office in Transylvania, which opened for the May 1894 trial of the authors of the Memorandum. In the spring of 1894, in Cluj, in the building currently belonging to the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania, the Hungarian government tried the authors of the Memorandum, and 14 members of the Central Committee of the Romanian National Party (among them Dr. Ioan Rațiu—who made the famous statement: “One does not discuss the existence of a people, one asserts it!”—and Vasile Lucaciu) were sent to prison. At the suggestion of Onoriu Tilea, Ion Rațiu’s son in law, Cornel Diaconovich drew up “a detailed plan for the organization of the press office” (Branîște 2002, 127). Diaconovich even wanted to publish “a separate monitor of the trial, to be printed daily in Cluj and sent to the subscribers to all of our newspapers; he wanted to book a telegraph wire for a few hours every day, in order to quickly and accurately

inform the public opinion abroad; he had planned several divisions, for the written press in the Kingdom of Romania, and for the German and the Hungarian press. He had formulated concrete proposals, nominating the individual in question, for the various positions in the office. He wanted to hire Hungarian and Romanian professional stenographers. His plan was altogether modern” (Branîște 2002, 127). The press office occupied one floor of Hotel Biassini, at what is nowadays no. 20 Avram Iancu Street, a hotel famous for having hosted Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi in October 1842, and also Nicolae Bălcescu and George Bariț, during the revolutionary events of 1848. Vasile Lucaciu became the official director of the press office, seconded by Septimiu Albini, both of them defendants in the trial. In actual terms, the office was led by Elie Dăianu and Valeriu Branîște.

Favorable circumstances for the establishment of the “journalism chair” so desired by Valeriu Branîște emerged after the creation of the University of Dacia Superior, in October 1919, five months after the university was handed over by the Hungarian authorities. Thus, in the *Cluj University Yearbook* for 1919–1920, 1920–1921, 1921–1922, 1922–1923, 1923–1924, 1924–1925, in the curriculum of the Faculty of Law and State Sciences, we also find a chair of journalism. The chair was held by university don Iorgu Radu (born on 7 December 1886, with a doctorate in law from Berlin University, a specialist in international law who also taught, as a substitute professor, the course in Romanian Common Law). The word “chair” should not be understood here in its current sense, as designating a fundamental unit of a higher education institution which carries out didactic, methodological, and research activities in one or several disciplines, but rather as a course spanning one or two semesters. Unfortunately, the course syllabus remains unknown because, as opposed to the case of other disciplines, the aforementioned university yearbooks failed to include even a succinct presentation of this course. The reputed Professor Tudor Drăganu, currently in his nineties, who was Iorgu Radu’s student, does not remember such a discipline being taught.

In 1919, shortly after the establishment of the University of Dacia Superior, the poet and publicist Ion Vinea published in the newspaper *Adevărul* (32, no. 10929, 19 October 1919, p. 1), an article titled “Catedra de gazetărie” (The journalism chair), in which he stated that

The Law School of Cluj University has a new chair of journalism, meant to introduce the future journalists to the secrets of their complex and demanding task: to closely monitor public life, always look towards tomorrow, seek out all novelty, seize and divulge political secrets, make or destroy reputations, disseminate ideas, create opinions and trends, operate like sensitive antennas tapping

into the steady flow of vibrations coming from all directions. It is there that they will receive an official document, signed and stamped, certifying that they are qualified to assume the implicit task of speaking and asking questions on behalf of the general public, the task of working on behalf of this public (apud Rad 2004, 4).

Like any novel development, the new chair of journalism quickly found its critics. In the aforementioned article, Ion Vinea continued by saying:

There is nothing more useless than these lofty schools which train people for a profession that requires only honest faith, temperament, talent, and quickness of wit, and which has its workshops and laboratories in the editorial offices of the newspapers. Journalism remains a profession in which competence emerges and asserts itself—probably in compensation for the journalist’s eternal task of praising value whenever it becomes manifest. Universities are a source of culture, and any cultivated person has opinions and a distinct style. However, universities cannot teach the skills demanded by this fast-paced, intense and diverse life, where only talent and strength, enthusiasm and intelligence can prevail. One can acquire a culture in any library and university. Unfortunately, the other aptitudes cannot be taught. Also, it must be said that—most dreadfully—journalism is the only profession that rules out stupidity.

In the current stage of our investigation, we do not know whether any academic structures devoted to journalism operated in Cluj during the interwar and the postwar period. The excellent monograph signed by Vasile Pușcaș (*Universitate, societate, modernizare: Organizarea și activitatea științifică a Universității din Cluj, 1919-1940*, preface by Keith Hitchins, 2nd edition, Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2003) mentions nothing in this respect. Bucharest professor Marian Petcu claims that, in 1974 “courses in journalism began to be taught at the faculties of philology belonging to the universities of Cluj and Iași” (Petcu 2004, 228). Our investigations and the statements made by some Cluj professors indicate that we are dealing only with “retraining” classes that had nothing to do with institutionalized journalism studies. The courses in question included lectures on the policy of the Communist Party, and maybe some classes in normative grammar, especially since the journalists of that time were not hired on the basis of their talent or intelligence, but rather according to their political “soundness.”

During the communist period, journalists were trained at Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy of Bucharest and, at local level, they attended top-up courses at the faculties of philology or social sciences. Unfortunately, the history of Romanian journalism studies is yet to be written. In a graduation paper, written by

Irina Avram and presented at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences of Bucharest University (Avram 1997), we read that between 1956 and 1959 a department of journalism operated within the Faculty of Juridical Sciences and Philosophy of Bucharest University, and within the Faculty of Philology between 1961 and 1966. Beginning with the year 1971, Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy, which trained the Communist Party workers, also included a school of journalism, “which provided training to potential journalists on the basis of a curriculum that combined ideological education with minimal philological knowledge and basic professional skills” (quoted in Coman 2003, 123). Without denying that fact that the school in question also produced outstanding journalists, we have to accept the opinion whereby it was “fiercely controlled and directed by the ideologists of the Communist Party, who only admitted properly vetted candidates” (Popa and Tașcu 2003, 5). In fact, the analysis of the curricula for 1971–1989 performed by Irina Avram in the aforementioned paper indicated the dominance of courses having a marked ideological content: “The functions of the press in communist society,” “Party construction,” “Scientific socialism,” “The international communist and workers’ movement,” “The science of governing the socialist society,” “Fundamental aspects of national history,” “The history of the Romanian workers’ movement and of the RCP,” “The theory and practice of party life,” all accounting for approximately 80% of the disciplines taught (quoted in Coman 2003, 123). Among the Cluj students who went to this school we shall mention here Ion Arcaș, Ion Goia, Iulian Patca, Maria Sângeorzan, a. o., who later became known journalists.

Contemporary Realities

THE FACULTY of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences, which hosts the Department of Journalism, is one of the latest faculties to be established at Babeș-Bolyai University. A department of political science was created here in 1992, the first one of its kind in Romania. During the three years that followed, from 1992 to 1995, the department operated within the Faculty of History and Philosophy, under the coordination and the administration of the chair of Contemporary History and Political Sciences. In the spring of 1995, after a request was presented by a group of students and professors to the Babeș-Bolyai University Senate, a new faculty was created as the eighteenth faculty of the university—the Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences, with three departments: Political Science, Public Administration, and Journalism. A fourth department was created in the year 2000: Social Communication and Public Relations. Despite their different profiles,

the four sections have a lot of things in common, being united first and foremost by the communicative dimension, a communication that can take place in the political arena, in the office of a public servant, over the radio waves or in the written press.

From the very beginning the Romanian line of study was accompanied by a Hungarian one, followed in 1997 by a German line of study. This demonstrated the truly multicultural nature of Babeş-Bolyai University. The three lines of study cooperate perfectly and organize joint actions, publications, scholarly and cultural projects, being an example of tolerance and mutual respect, as noted by all the delegations who have visited our faculty and our department.

Initially, the Department of Journalism—the entire faculty, for that matter—operated in the Echinox building, named after the homonymous journal. The old Echinox building, located in the vicinity of the famous former Piarist high school of Cluj (currently Báthory high school, with Hungarian as the only language of instruction), comes thus to combine the old and the new, the Gothic arches with the modern furniture. From the very beginning, the faculty was affected by a shortage of space. Some assistance was offered by certain secondary schools which, with the enthusiasm typical for the early post-revolutionary years, offered classroom space to the new faculty, sometimes free of charge.

As expected, the initial building rapidly became insufficient for the didactic process. In the autumn of 2002, the University purchased for the Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences the building of the former Cluj Book Repository (on General Traian Moşoiu Street), which it refurbished to European standards.

Like all higher education institutions, the Department of Journalism needed a few years before receiving full accreditation. In a first stage, based on Decision no. 410 of 25 April 2002 of the Romanian government regarding accredited or provisionally authorized higher education institutions or units, published in *Monitorul Oficial al României* (Official Journal of Romania), part I, no. 313/13.05.2002, signed by Prime Minister Adrian Năstase and by the minister of education and research, Ecaterina Andronescu, by the minister for labor and social solidarity, Marian Sârbu, and by Finance Minister Mihai Nicolae Tănăsescu, the Department of Journalism, just like the other three departments in the faculty (Social Communication and Public Relations, Political Sciences, Public Administration) received a provisional authorization. That same year, the Romanian government issued Decision no. 944 of 29 August 2002, modifying Government Decision no. 410/2002 regarding accredited or provisionally authorized higher education institutions or units, which offered full accreditation to the Department of Journalism. The decision was signed by Prime Minister Adrian Năstase, by the minister of education and research, Ecaterina

Andronescu, and by the minister for labor and social solidarity, Marian Sârbu. It was published in the *Official Journal of Romania*, part I, no. 675/11.09.2002.

Finally, on 12 June 2003 the Romanian government issued Decision no. 693 modifying and completing Government Decision no. 410/2002 regarding accredited or provisionally authorized higher education institutions or units, published in the *Official Journal of Romania*, part I, no. 466/30.06.2003, signed by Prime Minister Adrian Năstase, by the minister of education and research, Ecaterina Andronescu, and by Secretary of State Răzvan Ionuț Cîrîcă on behalf of the minister for labor and social solidarity, which reconfirmed the Department of Journalism as an accredited department.

The first dean of the faculty was Professor Vasile Pușcaș (1995–1996), who later became a government minister and Romania's chief negotiator with the EU, followed by Professor Vasile Boari (1996–2002), by Professor Péter Cseke, coordinator of the Hungarian line of study within the department of journalism (2002–2004), and by Associate Professor Cătălin Baba (2004–2007; 2007–present). The first head of the Department of Journalism was Tudor Vlad (1995–2000), followed by Doru Pop (2000–2001), Ilie Rad (2001–2007) and Elena Abrudan (2007–present). The chancellors of the faculty (called scientific secretaries in other universities) were: Ilie Rad (1995–2000), Liviu Radu (2000–2007) and Ilie Rad (2007–present). Cristina Nistor, a member of the Department of Journalism, is currently the University's spokesperson.

Journalism studies are constantly developing in the city of Cluj, coming to continue the aforementioned tradition. The Department of Journalism publishes the review *Studia Ephemerides*, with two issues a year and featuring many articles written in foreign languages. It also publishes the newsletter called *Învățământul jurnalistic clujean* (Journalism Studies in Cluj), with 14 issues printed so far. A new building was erected alongside the old one, and the faculty acquired new laboratories, as well as TV and radio studios, with state-of-the-art equipment. The University radio station (UBB Radio), staffed by the students of our Department, is the first of its kind in Romania (an online training radio). The department currently runs two M.A. programs: Media Communication in the Globalization Era (a research-based program) and Media Production (a vocational program). It has organized many events, such as the annual seminars on journalism, whose papers were published in a number of volumes: *Curențe și tendințe în jurnalismul contemporan* (2002), *Schimbări în Europa, schimbări în mass-media* (2003), *Jurnalismul cultural în actualitate* (2004), *Presa scrisă românească—trecut, prezent, perspective* (2005), *Stil și limbaj în mass-media din România* (2006), *Forme ale manipulării opiniei publice* (2007), *Limba de lemn în presă—ieri și azi* (2008), *Jurnalismul românesc al diasporei* (2009). Another major initiative was the series of events called Conversations in Cluj,

attended by major representatives of contemporary Romanian journalism: Mihai Coman, Octavian Paler, Nicolae Balotă, Adelin Petrișor, Liana Pătraș, Alessandra Stoicescu, Lucian Mândruță, Mircea Toma, Robert Turcescu, Andreea Esca, Andreea Marin, George Pruteanu, Adriana Săftoiu, Nicolae Melinescu, Melania Medeleanu, Bartolomeu Anania, Petru Popescu, Cristian Tudor Popescu and others.

While the general student population is experiencing a significant decrease, every year the Department of Journalism receives a large number of applications from candidates fascinated both by the prestige of Babeș-Bolyai University and by the journalistic profession itself.



References

- Avram, Irina. 1997. *Istoria învățământului jurnalistic din România: Sistemul public*. Graduation paper, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, Bucharest University.
- Braniște, Valeriu. 2002. *Amintiri din închisoare (Însemnări contemporane și autobiografice)*. Edited with an introductory note and a chronological table by Liviu Petreanu. Bucharest: Tritonic.
- Breazu, Ion. 1944. *Literatura Transilvaniei*. Bucharest: Casa Școalelor.
- Călinescu, G. 1980. *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*. Madrid–Paris–Rome–Pelham, N.Y.: Fundația Europeană Drăgan, Nagard.
- Coman, Mihai. 2003. *Mass-media în România post-comunistă*. Jassy: Polirom.
- Cornea, Andrei. 2003. În universitate, cartea s-a făcut rară. 22 14, 713 (4–10 Nov.).
- Ghibu, Onisifor. 1981. *Pe baricadele vieții: Anii mei de învățături*. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia.
- Petcu, Marian. 2004. Contribuții la istoria învățământului jurnalistic din România. In *Schimbări în Europa, schimbări în mass-media*. Ed. Ilie Rad, 205–229. Cluj-Napoca: Limes.
- Popa, Mircea and Valentin Tașcu. 2003. *Istoria presei românești din Transilvania de la începuturi până în 1918*. Bucharest: Tritonic.
- Rad, Ilie. 2004. File din istoria învățământului jurnalistic clujean (I): Primul birou de presă din spațiul românesc. *Adevărul de Cluj* 16, 4237 (12 Oct.): 5.
- Vinea, Ion. 1978. *Opere V: Publicistică*. Eds. Mircea Vaida and Gheorghe Sprințeroiu. Introductory study by Mircea Vaida. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia.

Abstract**Journalism Studies at Babeş-Bolyai University**

The paper provides a brief overview of journalism studies in the city of Cluj Napoca, or indeed at Babeş-Bolyai University. After a survey of the early intentions in this respect, inspired by foreign models as early as the mid-19th century, the paper examines the city's contribution to the history of journalism and outlines the significant local tradition in this field. The rather dire situation of journalism studies during the communist era is also presented, followed by a more detailed account of the establishment of a specialized department at Babeş-Bolyai University, after the fall of communism.

Keywords

Babeş-Bolyai University, journalism studies, department of journalism, media