

Gyula Dávid

The Days of the 1956 Revolution and the Years of Retaliation in Cluj Napoca (1)

In 1956 there was not a revolution in Romania, however, the show of sympathy towards the Hungarian revolution provoked various forms of retaliation, and also triggered a showdown with the real or putative enemies of the communist regime. The history of the nation's attitudes towards the revolution's events and objectives – including the behaviour of the Hungarians – is quite well known (2), but on the 60th anniversary of the revolution it is definitely worth taking a closer look on the effects and projections of this huge event in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár).

Following Stalin's death, in 1953 the icy tension of the Cold War began to thaw, and the population of the countries that were rendered under Soviet subordination after the Second World War began to feel hopeful: the dictatorship could be replaced with a more democratic regime, with some kind of reform communism.

Perhaps it was natural that the hope of a possible change was first aroused primarily among the intelligentsia, especially in a substantial majority of the writers' community, which, bound in the straitjacket of "socialist realism", was forced to make a mockery of its true vocation by the regime. The younger generation, which, by nature, has always been susceptible to everything new, was also full of expectations. In those days, these two social groups became the increasingly determined representatives and advocates of change.

During this period, Cluj-Napoca was in a peculiar situation anyway: the everyday life of its institutions was determined by the more and more openly pursued Romanian ethnic nation-building endeavours of the communist regime. Even though the Magyar Autonomous Region (MAT – Magyar Autonóm Tartomány) had already been set up in 1952, it became evident in the first years of its existence that the new intellectual centre of the Hungarians was going to be developed in Tirgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely), at the expense of Cluj-Napoca. (3) To begin with, the independent medical college that separated from the newly established Hungarian university of Cluj-Napoca (1946) was housed there. In 1953, the new Hungarian monthly literary magazine, the *Igaz Szó* (*True Word*) also began to be published there. The Hungarian department of the Theatrical College moved to Tirgu Mures, in the vicinity of the Székely Theatre that was also founded there in 1946, while the pure existence of the institutions

of Hungarian higher education in Cluj-Napoca was threatened by continuous restructuring: The Hungarian Art Institute that had only opened in 1948, was already shut less than two years later, and instead, bilingual colleges of fine arts and drama studies were established, what is more, the Gheorghe Dima Music Academy only offered training exclusively in the Romanian language. The Hungarian department of the agricultural college faced an uncertain future, and in 1953, education in the Magyar language at the technical university was eliminated altogether. At the same time, in the early 1950s, the department of economics was temporarily separated from the Bolyai University, and continued to operate as an independent bilingual college. (4)

All this – and especially the intention of assimilation that stood in the background of these changes – was not left without consequences, even among the Hungarian intellectual elite in Cluj-Napoca that was, in fact, bound to the Communist Party, and which was additionally scaled down by the arrest of some of the popular teachers of the Bolyai University (Edgár Balogh, Lajos Csörgör, János Demeter, Lajos Jordáky) in 1949, or the attack against Gábor Gaál, that caused not only his intellectual, but his physical elimination as well. (5)

The “thawing” of the Cold War in Romania took shape in more modest, more restrained forms than the Hungarian events that eventually led to a revolution. Gheorghiu Dej, the former premier supporter of the Muscovite branch, not only preserved, but also reinforced his status by manipulating with appearances and by successfully removing the opposition through deceit. He even managed to liquidate his rivals within the party-leadership by proclaiming a “fight against personality cult”.

However, once the genie was let out of the bottle, more and more circles of society felt free, particularly among the writers. Among the Hungarian papers printed in Romania, this liberated spirit was especially perceptible in the weekly journal *Utunk* that was published in Cluj-Napoca, where increasingly outspoken literary debates took place about the party’s management of literature, about the freedom of the writer, schematism, and the idyll that painted a lacquered image of reality. On the surface, these were aesthetic matters, the differences between “the old” and “the young” generations, or “the confrontation between Cluj-Napoca and Tirgu Mures”, but, in reality, a lot more was at stake. How much really was at risk could be felt in 1956, especially during the preparation of the writers’ congress in Romania. A lot of the details are already known today. (6) But to illustrate the writers’ expectations, here is a quote from János Székely, who was still at the beginning of his poetic career, from a response

to a question asked by *Utunk* in preparation to the writers’ congress in the summer of 1956: “...I expect that it will be made clear that the writer is responsible for the written piece, and not – say – the editor, ... the decision of what’s a timely human problem and what isn’t, I think, should be left to the poet. I look forward to the removal of any aspects from the critical practise that are far from reality or are not concerned with literature itself, and finally, easing of the tension in our literary life by intellectual discussions and debates.” (7) And we can also cite an answer provided by László Földes that he gave to a question at another conference – he already moved on to target the party-activist dictatorship that was exercising domination over literary life: “...they introduced the uneducated manners that they always use in a community spirit, always using the ‘majestic plural’ in speech. And they will not stand in contradiction: they always say ‘our party’s opinion’, ‘we demand in the interest of socialist realism’, ‘we are addressing the issue’, etc. Who’s we? The Holy Synod?” (8)

True, the authorities’ response was soon delivered: in these months several events happened, first the *Jar-case* had been causing an upset in the Romanian literary life (9), then the writers’ congress, the outcomes of which were summarized by Gyula Szabó: “Then there was a writers’ congress, the main purpose of which was to discourage the entire writers’ community from being outspoken and from telling the truth, to deter us from the hypocritical slogan of ‘Write about the truth for us!’” (10)

The “deterrent”, however, was not sustainable. As we were approaching October, it became increasingly evident that several pointed discussions were needed, and not only about literary issues.

A two-day summit convened at the end of September 1956, which was organized by the top party leadership to meet with the Hungarian writers of Cluj-Napoca and Tirgu Mures, where several openly party-loyal writers raised issues which were inconsistent with the assertion of the “brotherhood of co-habiting Romanians and Hungarians” and the concerns they raised went far beyond the sphere of literature. (11) Regarding this convention, which became known as “the two days of honesty”, I have quoted from just one speech, by László Szabédi, to give a taste: “... the right to use my mother tongue also entails my right to receive an answer in my mother tongue. It is clear that my right is a duty for somebody else. It is therefore necessary to pass a law that states that in workplaces where the worker is required to interact with clients, in Cluj-Napoca and wherever it’s necessary, only persons speaking both Romanian and Hungarian should be appointed... It is impossible to require the efforts of the peaceful brotherly co-existence only from one party.” (12)

As a response to the critical comments made at the meeting of 29 – 30 September, the authorities started some face-saving actions: they put in a series of measures that seemed to signal the beginning of an attempt at finding solutions to the problems raised, but in reality, they were more like showcase actions. As it was summed up by the Hungarian embassy in Bucharest in its report dated 10 January 1957: *“In the province of Cluj, eight Hungarian grammar schools and the Hungarian Department of the Agricultural College recommenced. Moreover, in the Magyar Autonomous Region (MAT) and in other places several Magyar schools and apprentice schools were opened. The ‘Korunk’ journal was resumed, and the publication of several Magyar children’s magazine and cultural magazines was authorised. A Directorate-General of Ethnicities was set up in the Ministry of Education. Some minor grievances were also dealt with. Higher offices were looking into the matter of why the MAT’s status had yet to be regulated.”* (13) The rehabilitation of writers found guilty at show trials began, such as Edgár Balogh, Lajos Csógör, János Demeter, Lajos Jordáky, József Méliusz, and the post-mortem clarification of Gábor Gaál’s case. All this was later supposed to provide an impression to the wider public that the Hungarian population of Romania had a great deal to lose if they were not willing to line up as supporters of the Kádár-regime after the defeat of the Hungarian revolution, which was duly done by the writers of Cluj-Napoca, although to a lesser extent than it was done in Tirgu Mureş. (14)

Even before the outbreak of the revolution, many of us could follow step by step the events of the changes in Hungary, through the printed press that was legally circulated across borders, and through the broadcasting of Budapest radios. From the spring of 1956, personal encounters were also feasible: an artists’ group from the Debrecen University visited Cluj-Napoca, and in return a group of Cluj-Napoca students were invited to Debrecen for a visit, and through the performances, but especially through free talks and emerging friendships, many of us had the opportunity to have a glimpse into the life of Hungarian university students, what is more, to hear of the problems and the search for solutions that the whole of Hungarian society was engaged in. Regarding what actually happened during the visit, we can quote from a report written by a Securitate agent on 27 April 1957: *“...this current year, on the eve of 24 April, a performance by the students of Debrecen University turned into a spectacular demonstration. After the end of the show, the audience did not want to leave the hall, but they kept on clapping, and both the sitting members of the audience and the students standing on the stairs cried. ...At the railway station, another show of sympathy*

erupted, something we have not seen since the autumn of 1940, when Transylvania was annexed to Hungary. At the station, some people sang while others cried. The local authorities tried to suppress this emotional atmosphere by switching on the loudspeakers, but they did not succeed; the songs kept breaking out and became louder. Then three wagons were side-tracked, but after the arrival of the international train, the wagons had to be connected to it, and the demonstration continued.” (15)

The reconnection of Hungarian with Hungarian was not only limited to university circles. In the summer of 1956, Albert Bereczky, the Protestant bishop of Duna-mellék could pay an official visit to Cluj-Napoca (16), then in July, László Ravasz, who was hitherto removed from office by the communist regime in Hungary, was allowed to make a trip there, without any formal protocol, with a private passport. (17)

Reverting to the mood of the university youth, let us recall that sensational meeting which took place in the middle of October, directly before the outbreak of the revolution in Hungary. After previously having been called a fascist, and after a decade-long prohibition, Áron Tamási, now honoured with a Kossuth Prize, returned home for a family visit. Following a literary tribute evening in his honour in Tirgu Mureş, and fulfilling the invitation of the literary circle of the Bolyai University, Áron Tamási also met the Hungarian students of Cluj-Napoca on 17 October 1956. (18)

The true meaning of this encounter was well illustrated decades later by the recollections of a third-year student, Benedek Nagy: *“The seven hundred students that squashed into the assembly hall welcomed this famous guest as if he was a prince returning to his country. Nobody said it, but there was some kind of great determination and will-power vibrating in the air, and especially in the circles of the university youth. ...Now I know that at the age of nineteen, along with many others, I witnessed the rare moment of an encounter between two generations. The two generations that were pushed light years apart by the world wars, the change of regime and homeland. And the generation that sprouted in the years of the darkest oppression and tyranny finally found its consciousness, with which they finally picked up the compass that had been knocked out of the hands of the generation of the two world wars, and got to the point of expressing their will that they intend to shape their own lives as they want.”* (19)

There was also another event that was not directly related to Hungary, but it belongs to the history of 1956 in Cluj-Napoca. A demonstration that began in the Piarist church of Egyetem Street shook the whole city up, when on 12 August in 1956 two former Greek

Catholic priests celebrated a mass. The Greek Catholic Church was outlawed by a decree in 1948 (and forcibly incorporated into the Orthodox Church), but at this mass thousands of Greek Catholic believers supported the initiation of their archbishop, Alexandru Rusu, who was freshly released from prison, to reinstate the Romanian Greek Catholic church into its rights. The result of this demonstration was a monster-trial, launched in 1957, where the archbishop and a dozen other devoted priests and believers were found guilty of instigation and sentenced to life imprisonment. (20)

However, the mood and conduct of the university students were not only influenced by the general atmosphere of “thawing”. Already several months prior to October – by an initiative coming from the top – , there were preparations across the country for the formation of a new student alliance: meetings were organised where the students were expected to formulate their own ideas of what this new organisation should be like, how it should function, and what issues it should deal with. At these meetings, the student could “legally” present their concepts. And they did so. The students put forward their expectations towards the entire university system, including in their programme, for example, the autonomy of universities, free class attendance, the abolition of the compulsory teaching of Marxism and the Russian language. As far as the student organisation was concerned, they voiced their desire that the alliance should be independent of the Young Workers’ Association, and they required the right to be free to establish connections with student organisations in other countries (in the West too). Indeed, when the Hungarian revolution broke out, these meetings also gave a platform to certain demands of a political nature, including the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, too.

The first meeting of the student alliance in Cluj-Napoca was scheduled on 24 October 1924, at the Academy of Fine Arts, where originally only a small-scale meeting was expected to happen, but which would have represented the students of other universities and colleges of Cluj-Napoca. However, several hundred students turned up at this session, held in the Knights’ Hall of King Matthias’ birthplace, and during the speeches several issues of not an exclusively academic nature were also raised. There was also a proposal that the population of all the universities of Cluj-Napoca should convene in a big stadium and highlight its demands at a rally and a demonstration. Three of the leaders were arrested within a few days, and two of them, sixth-year fine arts students Imre Balázs and Arisztid Tirnován were sentenced to a seven-year imprisonment following their hearing on 23 December 1956, with the charge of public incite-

ment. (21) Also present at this meeting were theology student Dénes Fülöp G. and Lajos Páll, a fine arts student. Later, in 1958, this would also be included among their charges at their trials. (22)

On behalf of the Student Association of the History-Philology Department of the Bolyai University, third-year student István Várhegyi prepared their draft, and Géza Páskándi (already an acclaimed young poet and a third-year student of Hungarian literature) wrote his own supporting argument and added his own supplements. (23) Bálint Kósa, a third-year biology student also prepared a similar proposal, although this was never presented publicly. The text was later found during a house search, and he was convicted for it. (24)

The government was worried from the beginning that this elementary demand of the changes that led to the revolution in Budapest would also spread to Romanian society. Thus, one of its first actions was to isolate Romanian society from the Hungarian events at all costs. Mail censorship was immediately introduced, the borders with Hungary were reinforced and sealed by military force, and ordered the increased monitoring of the universities, and the students in general. (25) In addition, they also tried to compromise the revolution through the press and radio broadcasts, claiming that what was happening in Hungary was in fact a “counter-revolution”, the doing of some “fascist gangs”, and its aim was to restore the “damned capitalist-landowner system”, and what is more, they threw in the threat that always works among the Romanians: “the Hungarians want to take Transylvania again”. (26) Despite this, they failed to quell the solidarity, and we could witness and experience its manifestations across Cluj-Napoca.

To illustrate the prevailing situation at the Bolyai University, we quote from two student letters written at the time:

From the letter of second-year history student, Benedek Nagy, 19 years old, to his parents: *“Do you know of the events of Poland? Do you listen to the news of Pest, especially around 9 o’clock in the evening? Or the 15 point-memorandum of the universities of Pest, Szeged and Debrecen? The government was given two weeks, and if they don’t fulfil the points, they will be forced to by demonstrations. I spoke to people, who were in Debrecen or Pest yesterday. The mood is astonishing. I cannot even describe it...the students of Bolyai are “smoldering”, but we cannot start it before our lazy brothers or we’ll be branded. We are living in historic times, and we’ll witness great events in the near future. Bolyai – Theology – Agronomy, etc. We’re*

working on the same frontline... Free discussion groups have been set up, we, historians are the leaders, soon we'll be the vanguards and the leaders of the Hungarian youth of the universities." (27)

From the letter of 18-year-old Domokos Szilágyi, who was a second-year student of Hungarian literature, to his parents: *"In the past two weeks, due to the events in Hungary, the whole of Bolyai has turned upside down. Of course, they held meetings with us every day, to calm the people down. The highly-revered authorities naturally are panic-stricken, lest the students of Cluj-Napoca should march in protest, peacefully, of course; therefore, they are trying to pitch the Babeş and Bolyai (the Romanian and the Hungarian universities of Cluj-Napoca) against each other. They told us that the Babeş wants to march for Greater Romania, while they told the Babeş that we demand Transylvania, so they somehow managed to prevent the demonstration. However, the Romanian students of Timișoara (technical students) organised a sympathy demonstration for the Hungarian revolution. Even in Tirgu Mureş, at the medical university, the 'sad sea of the world is boiling, oh, you Magyar' echoes. Our physical well-being is not at risk, as the military was brought in from Szászfenek and armed guards patrol the streets from morning till the evening around every single student hostel and university building. Otherwise, on the Day of the Dead, there were more Securitate agents in the cemeteries than mourners. Under these circumstances, one thinks four times before doing anything. So, there is nothing to be afraid of."* (28)

At some university buildings: at a Hungarian students' dormitory and at the Babeş University flyers appeared that called on the youth to show solidarity with the Hungarian revolution (29). A group of eight Romanian students also showed their support, and with the leadership of assistant professor Raoul Volcinschi, they were planning to get in touch with the "fugars" of the Mócvidék (Țara Moților, Motzenland), and then to confront the communist powers with weapons (30).

In the meantime, the troops of the Interior Ministry were kept on standby, which also forecast the possibility that there might be some provocative interference at the rally or demonstration planned at the university's stadium, and an armed intervention might occur. Expecting this, some younger teachers of the Bolyai University tried to discourage the students from attending the rally, and they eventually succeeded in doing so. Another action of theirs was aimed to refute the rumour that the Hungarians "want to take Transylvania back": János Varró assistant professor and his fellows, listening to the radio, jotted down the text of the sixteen-point demands of the Budapest university students, prepared a Romanian translation,

and tried to pass it around through official channels. It was a typical consequence that their action later became a charge of "spreading counter-revolutionary writings" in their trial. (31)

As the events progressed, in the last days of October new forms of expressing solidarity were manifested: the students initiated a silent standing tribute before lectures honouring the victims of the revolutions (not only at the Bolyai University and the Protestant Theological School, but also at the Babeş University), students wore black ribbons on their coats, and when the Party demanded that workplaces issue statements at assemblies to reject the Hungarian revolution, students of the Bolyai and the Protestant Theological School tried to boycott these assemblies at these institutions. At the Bolyai University, such a statement could only be issued at the third attempt, on 4 November, after the second Soviet intervention in Hungary. (32) Furthermore, the students of the Evangelical Faculty of the Protestant Theological School requested in writing that Bishop György Argay warn two of their communist teachers against abusing the revolution. (33) A first-year student of Hungarian literature, Ferenc Bartis drew up a five-point proposal of how the students could express their solidarity with the Hungarian revolution. (34) Radio broadcasts reporting about the events of the Hungarian revolution were widely listened to, the events were commented on and discussed, and the issues of the revolutionary press that were brought to Romania (by those returning home) were passed around even well after the defeat of the revolution. Of particular significance was the 2 November issue of the *Irodalmi Újság (Literary News)*, which was circulated with great interest (later, the act of dissemination, copying and passing on featured as a charge in a number of trials). In fact, fourth-year geography-geology student Árpád Szilágyi even wrote a letter to the editors of *Irodalmi Újság*, in which he described in detail the general situation in Romania (including naturally the worries of Hungarians), and also discussed the issue of Transylvania, "questioning Trianon". This gave a reason for him to be charged with "treason" and to be sentenced to twenty years in prison. (35)

In the meantime, on 1 November, the Day of the Dead came, when numerous groups of students visited the Házsongárd cemetery, and the students showed their respects for the dead of the revolution by placing flowers on the graves of certain writers and lighting candles in the Heroes' Cemetery. This initiative came from the second-year

students of Hungarian literature at the Bolyai University, who, led by their responsible teacher, began to visit the cemetery weeks before the revolution, in order to maintain and care for the neglected graves of writers. In the wider circles of students, this activity offered the excuse to express grief and compassion. Some of the graves invited more than just a silent bow of the head: at the tombstone of the poet Sándor Reményik a student recited a poem of his, another student performed a poem by Lajos Tamási titled *Piros a vér a pesti utcán* (*Blood runs red in the streets of Pest*), while Ferenc Bartis presented his own poem. Members of several other groups placed flowers on the graves in the Heroes' cemetery. Even the Hungarian national anthem was sung. (36)

Of course, the Securitate was informed well in advance about these regular visits to the cemetery, and the deployed personnel of the interior, reinforced with the students of the local training college for the Party, followed these student groups. The recollections of events by the former participants can be supplemented (37) (or made more accurate) with their written reports. These events were labelled "counter-revolutionary, nationalistic rebellions" by the authorities, and were duly sanctioned in the following years.

The Hungarian population of Cluj-Napoca did not stop caring about the revolutionary events, even after the revolution was defeated, as people returning from Hungary naturally gave accounts of their experiences. We know from an agent's report dated 11 December, that Károly Kós witnessed the events in Budapest, and he "*was enchanted by the optimism, the discipline prevailing even in the bloodiest of events, and 12-year-old children fighting with weapons. He concluded that, despite all the sacrifices and difficulties, the whole Hungarian nation believes in victory.*" (38) Several sources also mention that, despite the strict customs inspection at the border, the returning citizens brought with themselves various products of the press printed during the Hungarian revolution. For example, the 2 November issue of the *Irodalmi Újság*, which contained the poem of Gyula Illyés titled *Egy mondat a zsarnokságról* (*One sentence about tyranny*), which was circulated in several copies. The young writers, who were urging the changes most eagerly in the spring, could not be broken even in December, and their statement, signed only as "*the young writers working in the editorial office of Utunk*", was eye-catching among similar statements issued by other communities, forced upon them by party officials. "*We are aware that there are painful days behind you, you just had a shattering experience, and there are still big questions waiting to be resolved. Under these circumstances, it is not an easy task to grab a pen, to stand in front of the readers and express*

an opinion. But it isn't easy to stay silent either for a person who is aware of the responsibility of a writer. Because never ever did so many proclamation-editor or memorandum-writer work in Hungary like nowadays. And alongside well-meaning people, false prophets also get to be heard. What is the right thing then? To stay silent or to speak out? To tolerate the cacophony, or to let the writers, who are loyal to the people, be heard, and to try and find answers to the pressing question? We believe that the responsibility towards the people obliges you to make yourselves heard as soon as possible." (39) It is true indeed what Gyula Szabó, one of the "young writers" wrote about this statement decades later in his memoirs: "*The lack of 'belligerence' in this text was conspicuous – there was no trace of 'reactionism', 'counter-revolution', 'white terror' – and what made this statement all the more striking was the reluctance of the young writers to give their names to this statement.*"(40) It was not an unfounded conclusion that the arrest of Géza Páskándi a few months later was an open warning to the young writers.

After the defeat of the Hungarian revolution, simultaneously with the military-backed terror of the Kádár-regime, the instances of arrests and political trials multiplied across Romania. (41) After the arrest of the two leaders of the 24 October assembly at the College of Fine Arts, Imre Balázs and Arisztid Tirnován, István Várhegyi and his friends (Benedek Nagy, György Koczka, Kálmán Kelemen) were arrested at the Bolyai University on 17 – 18 November. They were sentenced to seven and a half and three years respectively in the First Bolyai Trial. Then followed the Second Bolyai Trial, when assistant professor Gyula Dávid, and also Ferenc Bartis and Géza Páskándi were arrested and accused of organising a counter-revolutionary demonstration in the cemetery on 12 March 1957 (the charge against Páskándi was supporting the proposals by Várhegyi). They were sentenced in the Second Bolyai Trial to seven and six years respectively. Finally, in August 1958, assistant professors János Varró and Elemér Lakó were arrested and charged with demonstrating in the cemetery. Connected to the Third Bolyai Trial, Irén Péterfy, Lajos Vastag and Lajos Páll were all sentenced for being sympathetic towards the Hungarian revolution.

Besides those mentioned above, in 1957 – 1958 students Endre Deutsch, Emil Jamandi, Bálint Kósa and István Szekerán were also put on trial.

Alongside the trials mentioned above, the impeachment of educational officers and students who expressed sympathy during the days

of the revolution in October had already begun in the first months of 1957. This was known as “the time of reckoning”. (42) Assistant Professor Géza Saszet and lecturers Edit and Sándor Keszi-Harmath had already been removed from the Bolyai University in the first month of 1957, while several students were ex-matriculated. Later, on 22 October 1958 the great assembly of the Young Workers’ Association of the Bolyai University took place, where certain students were called out by name (based on agents’ reports) and they were forced to publicly take sides with regards to the revolution. Included among these students were Irén Péterfy and Lajos Vastag. This was the famous “whistling session”, where some responses given to the provocative questions were drowned out with whistling or clapping by the other students in the audience. (43) After this session, several more students were removed from the University, Irén Péterfy and Lajos Vastag were arrested and sentenced in the Third Bolyai Trial to ten and eight years in prison respectively.

Although the regime considered the Bolyai University as a “counter-revolutionary powder keg” from the beginning of the unrest and assessed it as a deadly threat to the system (44), other sections of society were not spared from the arrests either. Within the ranks of the army, Sergeant Lajos Horváth Tordán was arrested on 4 December 1956, while two soldiers from the Cluj-Napoca Headquarters, Major Géza Papp and Field Marshal János Szántó were arrested on 18 May 1957. The count against Szántó was that he dared to object when the events in Hungary were being discussed in front of the officers at the headquarters, and the speaker “started to talk about the hooligans who want to annex Transylvania to Hungary”. Szántó then stood up and “called the colonel’s claims about Transylvania ‘incitement’, and asked his colleagues to stop the anti-Hungarian fuss”. (45) For this act, he was sentenced to six years in prison. Géza Papp, who failed to report Szántó after he recounted the events to him the following day, was given seven years in prison, because he was a higher-ranking officer.

Among the acts of retaliation in Cluj-Napoca after the events of 1956, there were some more further-reaching trials as well. One of them was the case of István Dobai, a lecturer of international law, who had to stand “trial for treason” for drafting a “memorandum to the United Nations.” (46) This memorandum, in the drafters’ beliefs, offered a solution on the issue of Transylvania that was acceptable for everyone. The editors of the memorandum were convicted. István Dobai, the former lecturer of the International Law Department

of the Bolyai University, and László Varga Protestant pastor were sentenced to life imprisonment. Lawyer Gábor Kertész and grammar school teacher József Komáromi were given twenty-five years each in prison. András Bereczky, a lecturer of the Bolyai University and academic researcher Ferenc Gazda got fifteen years each in prison. Teacher of Theology, János Dobri got six years. Dezső László a pastor in downtown Cluj-Napoca and József Nagy, a former landowner were given five years respectively. At the time, there was another trial in Cluj-Napoca that caused outrage. The trial of Miklós Bányai carried over to 1959, in which Bányai was sentenced to life imprisonment, while his associates Sándor Krebsz and Károly Kincses were given twenty and fourteen years respectively. (47)

There were further serious trials in 1958 – 1959, that were already designed to fit into the far-reaching strategy of the Romanian party authority. The direct goal at this time was to create a suitable atmosphere of terror and fear in order not only to accomplish the forced “unification” of the Bolyai and Babeş universities in the spring of 1959 (48), but also to gradually eradicate the whole – hitherto independent – Hungarian school system. Among these trials belonged the so-called “textbook-trial”, which revolved around the “nationalistic texts” of Hungarian literary textbooks and excerpts. Using this as justification, the teachers’ community could be intimidated, and as a result of this trial, not only were three excellent teachers of Hungarian language slandered: Miklós Fejér, János Jócsák and Jenő Nagy, but also Ferenc Gazda, who we already know from the Dobai-trial, as well as defamation of the Hungarian editors of the textbook publishing company. (49) There was also another serious trial, which resulted in death penalties or lengthy prison sentences. The two principal defendants of this trial were student of theology Ferenc Soós and Pál Halmai. Others accused were Péter Bálint, László Farkas, Olivér Kisgyörgy, Péter Kóta, László Székely and István Valkai – all students of law, medicine or engineering. The military tribunal of Cluj-Napoca sentenced two persons to death (this was later changed to life imprisonment), three were sentenced to life, one to twenty-five years, one person to twenty years and one for ten years in prison. (50)

There were numerous other individuals brought to trial in Cluj-Napoca and its surrounding area: József Czikmántori, Gábor Gogomán, József Hatházi, Márton Miklós, József Nyerges from Cluj-Napoca; József Fekete, János Lácay, Jenő Pál, Antal Pávelka, Árpád Süveg, Attila Szabó from Dej (Dés); Antal Veress and István Vincze from Huedin (Bánffyhunad); Márton Török from Căpușu Mare (Magyarnagykapus); János Filep and Márton Juhos from Sic (Szék) and József Lénárt from Dămieni (Deményháza). These individuals

were arrested and sentenced merely for an utterance of sympathy, empathy or support. (51) The purpose of these trials was purely to keep the community from which they were removed in fear.

During the time of these arrests and trials, the Hungarian state and party delegation led by János Kádár happened to visit Romania, which revived memories of the revolution. Kádár and his companions, on their way home, arrived in Cluj-Napoca on 28 February 1958, where his private train spent three-quarters of an hour at the railway station. The local government and party officials all turned up to greet Kádár, who, according to the official report (52), also gave a speech in front of 50,000 people on the square in front of the station. Then the Hungarian delegates also danced perința and csárdás with the dance groups that were ordered to perform to them. Kádár's speech, in which he called the space in front of the station the city's main square, elicited public outcry from the Hungarian inhabitants of Cluj-Napoca. "*Kádár and his companions knew their duty*" - wrote György Földes decades later. "*The delegation reassured the Romanian public that Hungary acknowledged the borders of Trianon as inviolable... This speech was not forced upon Kádár...His words covertly suggested the necessity of accepting subordination, and it was all grist to the Romanian authorities' mill.*" (53) And the Romanian government could read between the lines: they were given a free hand to do what was coming next.

The hearings of the Third Bolyai Trial on 9 February 1959 are well associated with the story of the termination of the Bolyai University: it signalled the beginning of the end for the University. Shortly after this, on the eve of 15 March, the Protestant Theological School was overrun, and three theologians and their fellows were put on trial. (54) The main defendants were Miklós Péter, Árpád Mózes and Dénes Fülöp G. (in the three trials, twenty-two people were given a combined sentence of 203 years in prison). It was followed by the trials of the teachers of the Unitarian Theological School, where again several individuals were sentenced: four teachers (János Erdő, Imre Gellért, Mihály Lőrinczy and Dániel Simén); the secretary general of the Theological School, István Kelemen and the priest, Ferenc Bálint. In effect, they were found guilty for objecting to a statement that appeared in the press with modified text. This statement would have been originally issued after the defeat of the revolution, condemning it under duress. (55) Meanwhile, the meetings of the "merging" process were taking place, and once the merging was accomplished, another meeting was organised with the bishops, magistrates and teachers of the Hungarian Protestant Churches, where the representative of the Cult Department forced the attending church leaders to pronounce

a humiliating self-criticism, which envisaged the final elimination of the Protestant Theological School. (56)

Today, when we pay our respects on the 60th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, we bow our heads not only in front of those living in Cluj-Napoca, but also those who have passed away in the meantime. We are also sure that their support, sacrifice and sympathy towards the revolution is an inseparable part of the 20th century history of Cluj-Napoca.

NOTES

1. The abridged text was presented in Cluj-Napoca on 28 October 2016, at an event organised to honour the 1956 revolutionaries of Cluj-Napoca, where the local 1956 heroes were given Freedom of Liberty Award by the Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania).
2. From the rich literature of the Romanian reception of the Hungarian revolution, we recommend the volumes: *1956 Erdélyben. Politikai elitéltek életrajzi adattára 1956-1965* (Edited by Gyula Dávid. Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület – Polis Könyvkiadó. 2006), where the introductory essay summarises the events. The fifty-four trials in Romania that can be connected to the Hungarian revolution and the names of their Hungarian, Romanian and German victims can be found in the volume that was prepared for the inauguration of the monument of 1956 in Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy): *In memoriam 1956* (Edited by József Török. Sepsiszentgyörgy. 2012. 14-33.). The most important volume containing documents: *Az 1956-os forradalom és a romániai magyarság. 1956-1959.* (Edited and foreword written by Stefano Bottoni. Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó. 2006.) Of the events at the Romanian universities, Ileana Boca gives a full account: (1956 – un an de ruptură. România între internaționalismul proletar și stalinismul antisovietic. [1956 – the year of fracture. România between the proletarian internationalism and the anti-Soviet Stalinism]. București: Fundația Academia Civică, 2001.), the relevant documents can be found in Corneliu Mihai Lungu and Mihai Retegan (eds.): *1956 - explozia. Percepții române, iugoslave și sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia și Ungaria.* [(The explosion – 1956. Romanian, Soviet and Yugoslavian reactions to the events of Poland and Hungary]. București: Univers Enciclopedic. 1996.)] and Andreea Andreescu,

- Lucian Nastasă, Andreea Varga (eds.): *Minorităţii etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Maghiarii din România. 1956-1968*. Cluj: Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitatea Culturală. 2003.) Trials concerning Germans in Romania are discussed in the volume: Graef, Rudolf and Volkmer, Gerald (eds.): *Zwischen Tauwetter-socialismus und Neostalinismus. Deutsche und andere Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1953-1964*. München: IKGS Verlag. 2011.
3. Bottoni, Stefano: *Sztálin a székelyeknél. A Magyar Autonóm Tartomány története. 1952-1960*. Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó. 2008. = *Múltunk Könyvek. és Autonóm magyarok. Székelyföld változása az „ötvenes” években. Tanulmányok*. Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó. 2005. (especially the studies by Csaba Zoltán Novák: *A Magyar Autonóm Tartomány elitjének kialakulása és megszerveződése* and József Gagy: *A Magyar Autonóm Tartomány: egy centralizációs kísérlet. hatalom, értelmiség, társadalom*).
 4. About these changes József Somai gives an accurate description (*Fehér könyv az erdélyi magyar felsőoktatás kálváriájáról*. Kolozsvár: Bolyai Egyetem Barátainak Egyesülete. 2009. 117-139.)
 5. Edgár Balogh and his associates were arrested in November 1949 and were sentenced on 26 April 1954. Gábor Gaál was barred from the Party in May 1950 and was transferred from the faculty of philosophy to the faculty of Hungarian literature. His appeal against the barring was rejected in the summer of 1952, the shock of which gave him a heart attack. He eventually died on 13 August 1954.
 6. For the details of this process and documents, see Levente Benkő (ed.): *Az őszinteség két napja. 1956. szeptember 29-30. Erdélyi magyar értelmiségiek 1956 őszén*. Kolozsvár: Polis Könyvkiadó. 2007. and Szabó, Gyula: *Képek a kutyaszorítóból. Műhelytitkok, szabadon*. Vol. I. Csíkszereda: Pallas-Akadémia Kiadó. 2001.
 7. Cited by Gyula Szabó: Ibid, 323. The interview with János Székely appeared in the 19th issue (on 11 May) of *Utunk*, with the title *Az írókongresszus előtt* as part of a series that started in the 11/1956 issue of the journal (on 27 April).

8. Ibid, 324. In the series *Az írókongresszus előtt* the interview with László Földes appeared in the 23rd issue (on 8 June).
9. Benkő, 28-30 and 267-277.
10. Szabó, 331.
11. The text of the speeches made at the assembly published by Benkő, 81-264.
12. The written text of László Szabédi's speech can be found in Benkő, 96-104.
13. Andreescu, Nastasa, Varga, 242.
14. *Felzárkózunk a Román Munkáspárt oldalán. A kolozsvári magyar írók nyilatkozata. (We line up behind the Romanian Workers' Party. The statement of the Hungarian writers of Cluj-Napoca)* issued in *Igazság*, in Cluj-Napoca, 6 November 1956 signed by: István Asztalos, Edgár Balogh, János Bartalis, Gyula Csehi, László Földes, Imre Horváth, István Horvák, Sándor Kacsó, Jenő Kiss, Lajos Létay, Péter Marosi, László Salamon, Gyula Szabó, István Szabó, László Szabédi, Jenő Szentimrei, Gáspár Tamás. The circumstances of how this statement was drafted are recounted in detail by Szabó, 338-354. and in *Levél Magyarország fiatal íróihoz. Utunk*, 49/1956. The article that condemns the "counter-revolution" appeared in the journal *Utunk* between 7 November and 30 December 1956, signed by István Asztalos, László Bányai, László Erdélyi, Anna Látó, István Nagy, András Szilágyi, Gáspár Tamás.
15. The report is told by Bottoni, 87. The visit of the Debrecen students in Cluj-Napoca is told by Géza Páskándi (*Utunk*, 17/1956, 27 April), the trip of students of Cluj-Napoca to Hungary is described by Elemér Jancsó (*Utunk*, 21/1956, 25 May)
16. We know the details of the visit made by Bishop Albert Bereczky to Cluj-Napoca from the book of István Tótkés: *A romániai magyar református egyház élete. 1944-1989: "During the visit, many were convinced that (Bereczky's) Transylvanian journey was fruitless. Bereczky, not knowing (or perhaps knowing it very well?) the mentality of the Transylvanian people, emphasised that Hungary*

- has accepted for good the situation of the detached areas, and it holds the view now that we must settle on either side of the border individually and independently of each other. Spiritual connection must stay spiritual indeed, as neither state nor church can interfere with the issues of the other side. This declaration itself would not have been dangerous – adds Tőkés – , but the intonation and how he branded the dissatisfied people of Transylvania 'dream-chasers' and 'grasping for air', and how he was not willing to acknowledge the tense atmosphere in which the Hungarian people, and more precisely the Reformed Church lived in Romania. Instead of acknowledgment and sympathy towards the Hungarians, he openly expressed his loyalty towards the Romanian authority and praised the 'new socialist system of values' with avid dissatisfaction. (Ibid, 2nd edition. Kolozsvár. 2014. 245.)*
17. We know of an episode that happened in Cluj-Napoca during the visit of László Ravasz to Transylvania in July 1956, and the events of the dinner given by the teachers of the Protestant Theological School in his honours from the confession János Dobri, a teacher of theology, and who was also sentenced in the Dobai-trial. (Tófalvi, Zoltán: *1956 erdélyi mártírjai. Volume III. A Dobai-per.* Marosvásárhely: Mentor Kiadó. 2009. 417-418.)
 18. The story of Áron Tamási's journey to Transylvania in the summer and autumn of 1956, and the event of the literary evening of Tirgu Mures and Cluj-Napoca can be read in: Dávid, Gyula: Tamási Áron a Bolyai Egyetemen 1956 októberében. *Székelyföld.* 2016, 10. 45-63.
 19. Nagy, Benedek: Egy életre szóló szemvillanás. In Bán, Péter (ed.): *Találkozások Tamási Áronnal.* Marosvásárhely: Pallas-Akadémia Kiadó. 2000. 158.
 20. Fürtös, Andreas: *Episcopul Alexandru Rusu și regimul comunist (1945 – 1963).* <https://remusmirceabirtz.files.wordpress.com/.../alexandr...> At the Military Tribunal of Cluj-Napoca, the prosecutor asked for 25 years-imprisonment, however, during his right to the last word, the 73-year old archbishop asked for sentence changed to life-imprisonment, saying "that was shorter for him". Indeed, he died in prison in Szamosújvár (Gherla) in 1963.

21. The interviews conducted with them were published by Anna Sebők P.: *Kolozsvári perek 1956.* Budapest: Hamvas Intézet. 2001. 75-90 and 91-103.
22. Lajos Pál spoke about the meeting of 24 October and his years in prison in detail in an interview with him (Fekete szalag. *Forrás.* 2003, 5. Questions by Huba Kozma).
23. Gál, Mária: *1956. Mítosz vagy történelem.* Beszélgetés Várhegyi Istvánnal. Szabadság, 24 June 1994. Zoltán Tófalvi: *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom visszhangja Erdélyben.* http://primus.arts.u-szeged.hu/doktar/texts/tofalvi_56.html Dávid, Gyula: *Egy egyetemmi hallgató hadbírószági ítélettel hat évre taksált 1956-os feljegyzései.* In Pécsi, Györgyi (ed.): *Páskándi Géza emlékkonferencia.* Budapest: Magyar Művészeti Akadémia. 2012. 7-18. Páskándi summarised his own role in '56 and his attitude towards the revolution in his writing titled *A mások bátorsága (The courage of others).* (Included in his posthumous book titled *Begyűjtött vallomásaim.* Lakitelek: Antológia Kiadó. 1996. 27-31.)
24. Tófalvi, Zoltán: *Kósa Bálinték Golgota-járása.* Háromszék, 12 December 2015.
25. The resolution made at the assembly of the Political Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party on 24 October 1956 can be read in Lungu-Retegán, 74-78.
26. The 13th point of the meeting of the Party Committee of 24 October orders that "... *the true meaning of the events must be processed most urgently*" in front of the party and administrative bodies of the Babeş and Bolyai universities of Cluj-Napoca and colleges of Tirgu Mureş. (Lungu-Retegán: *Op. cit.* 77.) In response to this, Miron Constantinescu, the member of the Party Committee who was delegated to Cluj-Napoca, at a meeting held on 25 October with the representatives of the two universities of Cluj-Napoca brought up the „Transylvania-diversion”, then the following day, Raluca Ripan, the rector of Babeş University, at a meeting with the teaching staff, literally mentioned that "*the Hungarians over across the border want Transylvania again*".

27. The letter of Benedek Nagy, dated at 7.30 pm on 23 October 1956 is in the collection of the Museum of the victims of the Romanian communist dictatorship in Sfântu Gheorghe.
28. A piece from the letter of Domokos Szilágyi to his parents, dated 16 November 1956. Cited by Lajos Kántor: *Ki vagy te, Szilágyi Domokos?* Budapest: Balassi. 1996. 42-43. Lajos Kántor, in his essay titled *Tanár és diák '56-ban a Bolyain* (*Hitel*, 10/2006. 37-42) re-published this letter, and also cited from the poems of Szilágyi and Aladár Lászlóffy, who experienced the days of the revolution in Budapest.
29. About the expressions of sympathy towards the Hungarian revolution at the Babeş University see the 26 – 27 October reports of the Party Committee of Cluj Province (Lungu-Retegan, 87-88, 101.) Also see Boca, 141.
30. About Volcinschi and the trial see: Alin Muresan: *Sportivii de la @U Cluj@ ce plănuiau în 1956 să li se alătore partizanilor din Făgăraş*. Ayi Cultural, 2014. Jan. 23. <http://cultural.bzi.ro/inedit-sportivii-de-la-u-cluj-ce-planuiau-in-1956>
31. The Securitate became aware of the action instantly (the report of the agent dated 25 October 1956 is published by Bottoni, 164-165.)
32. The memoirs of Árpád Szilágyi are recorded by Benkő, Levente: *Volt egyszer egy 56*. Kolozsvár: Exit Kiadó. 2016. 147-148.). The statement published on behalf of the Theology appeared in the 20 November 1956 issue of the journal. István L. Gagyi-Balla: *Forradalom után Erdélyben* (Romániában). In Székelyhídi, Ágoston (ed.): *Magyar 56*. Volume II. 114-115., and *The memoirs of Miklós Péter* (manuscript in the 1956 collection of EME).
33. Dani, Péter: *Ez volt..., így volt Börtönországban. Egy evangélikus lelképásztor élete a romániai diktatúrában*. Budapest: Püski Kiadó. 2006. 106-107.
34. A manuscript among the legal documents of the Second Bolyai Trial (Dos. P.00738. volume I. 259.) Cited by Dávid, Gyula: *1956 Erdélyben, és ami utána következett*. Budapest: Nap Kiadó. 2016. 6.

35. The memoirs of Árpád Szilágyi are quoted by Benkő, Levente: *Volt egyszer egy 56*. 147-165.
36. About the events of 1 November 1956 in the Házsongárd cemetery in Cluj-Napoca see Zoltán Tófalvi: *1956 – koncepciók perek Erdélyben*. In Pál-Antal, Sándor and Szabó, Miklós (eds.): *A Maros megyei magyarság történetéből*. Marosvásárhely: Mentor Kiadó. 1997.; Sebők P., Anna: *Kolozsvári perek 1956*. 159-160.; Gazda, József: *A tűz októbere. 1956 magyar sorsokban*. Budapest: Püski Kiadó. 2006. 250-251.
37. The reports of the students of the Party College of Cluj Province ordered to observe the events in the cemetery can be found among the documents of the Second Bolyai Trial. (CNSAS Dos. P. 000738. Volume I. 220-230.) The details of the recital of the Lajos Tamási poem are thankfully received from Piroska Mező Piroska, then a third-year student of Hungarian literature.
38. Andreescu et al., 234.
39. Levél Magyarország fiatal íróihoz. *Utunk*. 1956, 49. 8 December.
40. Szabó, 367.
41. The details of the trials mentioned below can be found: *In memoriam 1956*. 14-33.
42. Gagyi Balla, István: *A Bolyai Egyetem az 1956-os forradalom idején*. In: *A kolozsvári Bolyai Tudományegyetem. 1945-1959*. Budapest: A Bolyai Egyetem Barátainak Egyesülete és a Bolyai Egyetemért Alapítvány. 1999. 290. He also reveals the name of the teachers removed from the university and the 12 ex-matriculated students (ibid, 291.) The report by the party committee analysing the situation at the Bolyai University at the beginning of 1957 (dated 23 February 1957) and the report enacting the resolutions (dated 2 March 1957) are published by Andreescu et al., 268-275.
43. As can be read in the informative report about the students' assembly (dated 30 October 1958, recorded by Andreescu et al., 361-362), the students “displayed inappropriate behaviour”, “it was not possible to persuade the students to take the suitable approach towards the acts committed, what is more, during

- the meeting the students manifested totally unacceptable behaviours at the most inappropriate times (whistling, clapping)*". The reporting agent also states that "it was not possible to identify the provocateurs".
44. Tismăneanu, Vladimir; Dobrescu, Dorin and Vasile, Cristian (eds.): *Comisia prezidențială pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România. Raport final..* București: Ed. Humanitas. 2007. 105-106.
45. The memoirs of János Szántó are quoted by Benkő, Levente: *Volt egyszer egy 56.* 255-256.
46. Tófalvi, Zoltán: *Erdély mártírjai. 3. A Dobai-per.* Marosvásárhely: Mentor Kiadó. 2009.
47. *1956 Erdélyben. Politikai elítéltek életrajzi adattára.* 39.
48. Somai, József: *A magyar felsőoktatás fokozatos felszámolása*, In Balázs, Sándor; Bodó, Barna; Csetri, Elek; Gaal, György; Kónya-Hamar, Sándor and Somai, József (eds.): *Fehér könyv az erdélyi felsőoktatás kálváriájáról.* Kolozsvár: Bolyai Egyetem Barátainak Egyesülete. 2009, 118-120., and Balázs, Sándor: *Egyetemegyesítés leple alatt felszámolás.* Ibid. 99-116.
49. The report dated on 2 September 1958 about the 10th grade Hungarian literary excerpts was published in *Maghiarii din Romania.* 348-358), the report on the 6th grade Hungarian grammar textbook can also be found there on pages 431-442. In the latter, a supplement also lists the fourteen persons who were convicted, also stating their social origins, their role in the publication of the textbooks, and any other "hostile activities" committed by them.
50. About the Soós-Halmi-trial see the memoirs of Ferenc Soós: *Akik imádkoztak üldözőikért. Börtönvallomások, emlékezések.* (Edited by László Miklós. Published by Erdélyi Református Egyházkerület, Kolozsvár. 1996, Volume II. 30-34. The sentence passed in the trial of the group can be found in the 1956 collection of Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület.

51. The personal details of the listed people can be found in the volume titled: *1956 Erdélyben. Politikai elítéltek életrajzi adattára.*
52. Andreescu et al., 323-324.
53. Földes, György: *Magyarország, Románia és a nemzeti kérdés. 1956-1989.* Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó. 2007. 40. On the day of the arrival of the Hungarian state and party delegates, on 28 February, the journal *Igazság* published an article by István Nagy titled *Hazafelé tartó barátainkhoz (To Our Home-Bound Friends)*, about the events of the short time spent here, the journal gave an account on 1 March, also publishing the speeches made by János Kádár and Vasile Vaida first secretary of the province.
54. Dávid, Gyula: Az 1956-os magyar forradalom előtt, alatt és után a kolozsvári Protestáns Teológián. In Zombori, István (ed.): *Az 1956-os forradalom hatása a környező országok egyházaira.* Budapest: METEM. 2009.
55. Judit Gellérd writes in detail about the trial of the Unitarian teachers: *A Liberté rabja.* Kolozsvár. 2005. 79-83. Also see Lehel B. Molnár: Erdő János egyházunk és népünk szolgálatában. In *Isten és ember szolgálatában. Erdő János emlékezete.* Kolozsvár. 2007. 21-22.
56. After the trials of the teachers of the Theological School, a meeting was held with the bishops of the relevant churches and the teachers of the theology, and István Tótkés took notes and published them in: *A romániai magyar református egyház élete. 1944-1989.* 181-187.