

Hermann Oberth at the University of Cluj. A Necessary Clarification

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Abstract: The present article identifies and analyses the information concerning Hermann Oberth as a student, preserved in the archives of the former Faculty of Sciences of the University of Cluj. It brings to light a series of previously unknown details regarding his enrolment in October 1922 and the formal completion of his academic record in April 1923. These documents show that the goal pursued by the future scientist was to obtain a graduation certificate and to take the capacity examination required to obtain a teaching diploma in secondary education. Thus, he followed the course of study prescribed by the Hungarian Law of Education of 1883, which was still accepted by the newly established Romanian university authorities in Cluj, in order to settle the status of the students enrolled before the war or immediately after its end. Taking this procedural detail into account ultimately leads to abandoning a notion that has circulated for several decades, namely that, in Cluj, Oberth completed a degree examination comparable to today's system, based on the defence of a thesis.

Keywords: Hermann Oberth, University of Cluj, academic year 1922-1923, certificate of completion, capacity examination.

Rezumat: Articolul semnalează și analizează informațiile despre studentul Hermann Oberth păstrate în arhiva fostei Facultăți de Științe a Universității din Cluj. Sunt detalii inedite, referitoare la înmatricularea lui Oberth, în octombrie 1922, și, respectiv, la încheierea situației sale școlare, în aprilie 1923. Din ele reiese că obiectivul avut în vedere de viitorul om de știință a fost obținerea certificatului de absolvent și prezentarea la examenul de capacitate (de obținere a diplomei de

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profesor în învățământul secundar). El a urmat astfel traseul prescris de legea învățământului din Ungaria, din 1883, acceptată încă de noile autorități universitare de la Cluj, românești, pentru rezolvarea situației studenților înscriși înainte de război sau imediat după încheierea acestuia. Luarea în considerare a acestui amănunt procedural impune renunțarea la ideea aflată în circulație de câteva decenii, că Oberth ar fi dat la Cluj, ca în zilele noastre, un examen de licență bazat pe susținerea unei teze.

Cuvinte-cheie: Hermann Oberth, Universitatea din Cluj, anul universitar 1922-1923, certificat de absolvire, examen de capacitate.

In the spring of 2023, the rector of the Babeș-Bolyai University, Daniel David, invited me to present a paper at the symposium marking one hundred years since the completion of Hermann Oberth's university studies in Cluj. I accepted the invitation, although I was not very familiar with the life story of this important pioneer of global astronautics, a Transylvanian Saxon born in Sibiu. The idea of exploring at least one facet of his biography was nevertheless appealing. I chose to first and foremost conduct the necessary archival research. The aim was to find information on the aforementioned figure in the documentary holdings of the faculty he had chosen in 1922, namely the Faculty of Sciences. Thus, I could align my contribution with the anniversary moment and, moreover, to offer the audience certain previously unexamined material. Any detail thus brought to light from these archives had the potential to constitute an intriguing discovery. None of the scholars who had previously written about Oberth's life and work had made use of this particular body of documents. Consequently, very little was known about how he completed his university education. Moreover, Oberth himself did not provide much detail. He only provided a single academic document to his devoted biographer, Hans Barth: his teaching diploma in physics and mathematics issued in Cluj on 18 May 1923.¹ Nothing else. The scientist never disclosed a bachelor's degree in the standardised format then used by the University of Cluj. Nor did he ever explain why. This left room for misinterpretations of the significance of that sole document he provided and of the examination on the basis of which it had been issued.

¹ Hans Barth, *Hermann Oberth. Titanul navigației spațiale*, 2nd expanded edition (București: Kriterion, 1979), illustrations appendix no. 19.

The archival investigation I carried out yielded quite little. What I did uncover, however, was enough to clarify what had happened a century ago. In the records of the former Faculty of Sciences, among the documents preserved for the academic year 1922-1923, I found Hermann Oberth's name mentioned in four places. Two references appear in the register recording incoming and outgoing documents, and two more in the minute book of the Faculty Council. The first of these entries shows that on 27 October 1922, shortly before the beginning of the academic year, Oberth requested the recognition of the studies he had completed in Germany² (however, the request itself, bearing his signature, appears not to have been archived). The Faculty Council's resolution is dated the following day. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 October record that six semesters completed abroad were recognised for the petitioner. He was required to attend "a further two semesters at our Faculty before taking the specialisation examination."³ Thus, Oberth mentioned and asked that the three academic years he had spent in Germany be taken into account. Evidently, he did not include the brief period during which he had also been enrolled at the University of Cluj, beginning in February 1919.⁴ The episode in question was rather brief and did not conclude with him taking any examination. The activity of the Hungarian university in the city, at which Oberth had enrolled after returning home at the end of the war, came to an abrupt end in May of that respective year. The institution was taken over by the Romanian authorities (who had been in control of Transylvania for several months), following the refusal of the academic staff to swear an oath of allegiance to the King of Romania.⁵ In

² The National Archives of Romania, Cluj County Branch (hereafter ANR-SJC), Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, Register of incoming and outgoing documents for the academic year 1922-23, fol. 12v.

³ ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, no. 62, Minutes of the Faculty of Sciences Council of Cluj for the years 1921-22 and 1922-23, fols. 57v-58r.

⁴ Heinz Gartmann, *The Men Behind the Space Rockets*, trans. by Eustace Wareing and Michael Glenny (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1956), 51; Barth, *Hermann Oberth*, 67; Simion Simon, "Întâlnirea a doi titani ai științei: Hermann Oberth și Augustin Maior", *Lucrările simpozionului internațional Hermann Oberth și bazele științifice ale zborului cosmic, 16-17 mai 2003*, ed. Simion Simon (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003), 104; Ana-Maria Pălimariu, "Hermann Oberth (1894-1989)," *Limbă și cultură germană în România (1918-1933). Realități postimperiale, discurs politic și câmpuri culturale*, ed. Andrei Corbea-Hoișie, Rudolf Gräf (Iași: Ed. Polirom, 2023), 599.

⁵ See more recently Vasile Pușcaș, *Universitate, Societate, Modernizare. Idealul universității moderne la Cluj (1919-1945)* (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Școala Ardeleană, 2019), 66-81.

autumn, when the university reopened, this time as a Romanian institution, Oberth chose to leave for Munich. From there, he moved to Göttingen, and then to Heidelberg, in search for the appropriate academic environment and mentor.⁶ He had thus come very close to completing the final stage of his university studies.

After failing to achieve what he had hoped for in Heidelberg, he chose to take that final step in Cluj, in his native province, closer to his family. At that time, there were other young Transylvanians just like him, who had completed semesters before or immediately after the war, at various Central European universities, and who decided to become students of the Romanian institution of higher education in Transylvania. They wished to settle their academic affairs and to obtain the diploma required to embark on a professional career. All of these young students, upon enrolment, requested that University of Cluj take into account the semesters they had attended and the examinations they had passed elsewhere, and place them in the appropriate year of study. They were met with understanding, regardless of the language in which they had studied or the country where they had pursued the education in question. The response to these requests was usually favourable.

The reference to Hermann Oberth in the minute book of the Faculty of Sciences Council, however, raised a question: given the absence of the letter in which the figure under scrutiny here had presented his academic record and intentions, it became necessary to clarify the actual meaning of the phrase “specialization exam,” referring to the final test to be taken. The assumption that this was the bachelor’s degree examination could not be the only one to be taken into consideration. Another possibility came into play. The evidence appears in the document in question a few lines below.

During the same council meeting, Miss Ana Hoffbauer was granted, at her request, recognition of the eight semesters she had completed at the universities of Budapest and Graz. According to the “old Regulation” (as stated in the resolution), this entitled her to appear before the “committee for the examination of candidates for professorships.”⁷ That is to say, it may be inferred that she was thus allowed to proceed directly to the so-called “capacity” examination – the state-regulated qualifying examination, at the

⁶ Gartmann, *The Men Behind the Space Rockets*, 52; Barth, *Hermann Oberth*, 66-71.

⁷ ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, no. 62, Minutes of the Faculty of Sciences Council of Cluj for the years 1921-22 and 1922-23, fol. 58r.

time mandatory for becoming a secondary-school teacher –, without first having to take the bachelor’s degree examination. The minutes provide no further details in this respect either – it does not specify which “old regulation” is referenced. In Romania, the law governing the secondary and higher education had not changed in the meantime. The 1912 law remained the legal standard – there was no newer one. It is, in fact, out of discussion, given that Article 24 explicitly stipulated that those wishing to become teachers must hold, among other certifications, a bachelor’s degree diploma.⁸ This was one of the conditions for admission to the capacity examination. By contrast, no such requirement appeared in the Education Act issued in Hungary in 1883. Under its provisions, in order to present oneself for the examination for the title of secondary-school teacher, one had to provide evidence for having attended four years of university study in the subjects corresponding to the intended specialization.⁹ The required document was a certificate of completion issued by the Faculty of Letters or the Faculty of Sciences attended, thus attesting that the candidate had fulfilled the obligations established by the regulations. A comparison between the two legal frameworks shows that the latter offered the solution to Hoffbauer’s case. In this context, the normative act could indeed be justifiably described as “old.”

It should not come as a surprise that this legal framework continued to be upheld in Cluj, even after Transylvania’s incorporation into Romania. Since a law unifying the education system of the greatly enlarged kingdom could not be adopted swiftly after the end of the war, the regulations previously in force in the annexed provinces continued to be used for some time. The territories in question were integrated together with their particularities, including those relating to institutional rules and practices. Moreover, in the case of Transylvania, until 1920, a form of autonomous regional government existed, exercised by the Ruling Council (installed in December 1918 in Sibiu and later moved to Cluj). That provisional government, through its Office of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction (*Resortul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii*), strived

⁸ *Antologia legilor învățământului din România* (București: Institutul de Științe ale Educației, 2004), 161-162.

⁹ *Az 1883-dik évi törvények gyűjteménye* (Budapest: Pesti könyvnyomda-részvénytársaság, 1883), 382-384.

to ensure the functioning of the local school network.¹⁰ Additionally, it began adapting it to the new political reality and to the shift in state framework. The major issue was the very limited availability of the human resource. The teaching staff that could be relied upon was insufficient in number, relative to the demands placed upon it (in fact, the overall number of teachers had been significantly reduced during the war). An acute personnel shortage was recorded particularly in connection with the project that the Romanian authorities regarded as “the nationalization of education on all levels, for the benefit of all the sons of our nation in Transylvania, the Banat, and the Romanian-inhabited parts of Hungary.”¹¹ More precisely, the pressing imperative at the time was the transition to instruction in the Romanian language in the majority of the existing state schools, beginning with the 1919-1920 school year. A remarkable number of high schools and civic schools that were now being transformed into Romanian educational institutions required teaching staff capable of assuming the task.

Thus, the expedited relocation to Transylvania of a certain number of teachers and preceptors from the Old Kingdom was encouraged, as well as the reactivation of local retired educators.¹² Moreover, the authorities counted on certain active segments of the Romanian scholarly community in Transylvania, as well as on those still in training. Their recruitment into the education system was to follow a different course from the usual one, given the exceptional circumstances. There was no longer time to wait for the actual completion of a full cycle of university education, initiated at that point, to produce results. The first call to those wishing to obtain a teacher status in an expedited manner is particularly revealing. Issued by the Ruling Council on 23 May 1919, it encouraged enrolment in a free training course for the following categories: students who had managed to complete four semesters (that is, only two years of study); high school graduates who had five years of teaching experience; theology graduates who held some form of pedagogical qualification; priests who had served for ten years as schoolteachers.¹³ Therefore, the eligibility

¹⁰ I. Bratu, “Învățământul secundar din Ardeal”, *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul 1918-1928*, vol. II (Bucharest: Editura Cultura Națională, 1929), 1002-1010; Gh. Smarandache, “Activitatea Consiliului Dirigent Român al Transilvaniei în domeniul învățământului secundar”, *Studii și articole de istorie*, LXIV (new series) (1999): 118-123.

¹¹ *Gazeta Oficială*, nos. 7-12 (1-22 February, 1919): 2.

¹² *Limbă și cultură germană în România (1918-1933)* (subchapter 4.1.1., authored by Ionuț Nistor), 194.

¹³ *Gazeta Oficială*, no. 20 (16-29 March 1919): 2.

standard was set way below the levels established by both of the aforementioned laws. The first intensive course and the examination scheduled at its end took place in Cluj in the summer of 1919, inside the building of the recently taken-over university.

An actual capacity examination was also scheduled there in August, which was the very first to be held after the war. However, we do not know whether or not it actually took place. An explicit opportunity was offered to the candidates who had been students of the Hungarian universities in Cluj and Budapest and who, for various reasons, had not managed to take the exam at the time.¹⁴ In those circumstances, they were the ones for whom the decision was made to rely on the provisions of the “old regulation” (namely, the 1883 law),¹⁵ which did not make registration for the capacity examination conditional upon possession of a bachelor’s degree. Thus, this procedure was followed in the case of Ana Hoffbauer as well, in 1922. Her name and those of other former students who requested to be treated in this manner are telling. They show that those who were able to take advantage of this opportunity in the early 1920s, at the Faculty of Sciences, were predominantly from among Transylvania’s national minorities. Understandably, they were mostly aiming for positions within state or confessional schools in the region where the languages of instruction continued to be German and Hungarian.

The examination of the two categories of candidates for the teaching diploma (namely, the “course attendees” and those falling under the umbrella of the “old regulation”) was entrusted to an “interim committee.” It included university professors and was chaired by philologist Nicolae Drăganu.¹⁶ Circumstances compelled it to act with considerable flexibility. It relied on a blend of convenient rules suited to the context, in order to fill the gaps in Transylvania’s school system as quickly as possible. However, in 1922, when the Secretariat-General in Cluj (which had coordinated the education system in the province after the dissolution of the Ruling Council) ceased its activity, the Ministry of Public Instruction in Bucharest announced the nationwide imposition of a single procedure for the capacity examination: the one prescribed by the Romanian education law. Nevertheless, one year’s grace

¹⁴ *Gazeta Oficială*, no. 45-46 (30 July – 6 August 1919): 1.

¹⁵ Bratu, “Învățământul secundar,” 1013.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* The clarification regarding the period during which N. Drăganu held that position appears in *Anuarul Universității din Cluj pe anul școlar 1923-24* (Cluj: Institutul de Arte Grafice Ardealul, 1925), 124.

period was allowed before the unifying decision took effect. In Transylvania, the moratorium was firmly and explicitly addressed to the two aforementioned categories. Until 30 July 1923, they could still take the teaching diploma examinations, in accordance with the rule applied in the previous years.¹⁷ If they failed to take advantage of the opportunity, they were compelled to take a more complicated route to obtaining the teaching qualification. Additionally, the regional authority that had previously evaluated the candidates was also being dissolved. The ministry's statement reads as follows: "As of 1 July 1923, the interim capacity examination committee operating alongside the University of Cluj shall be dissolved."¹⁸ Therefore, the "old-style" form of examination went into liquidation. Hermann Oberth ultimately made use of this final opportunity as well.

The fact that the goal he pursued in Cluj was to obtain the teaching diploma emerges from the other two mentions of his name. On 11 April 1923, according to the register of incoming and outgoing documents, Oberth requested the "recognition of the eight semesters and the issuance of the certificate of completion."¹⁹ The Faculty Council's response was given at the meeting held on 28 April 1923. The minutes summarise the request somewhat differently, by omitting the number of semesters credited to the student. Instead, they noted his additional demands: "Mr. Hermann Oberth requests the certificate of completion and the permission to take the examination in accordance with the old regulations."²⁰ The decision was recorded tersely: "Approved."²¹ Thus, Oberth was to receive the document confirming that he was a graduate. From the faculty leadership's viewpoint, his academic record was now deemed complete. However, the actual date of the resolution stands out. It suggests that he had somehow managed to settle the matter more quickly. The second semester could not possibly have been finished by early April. Yet, at his enrolment in October 1922, Oberth had been explicitly asked to attend two more semesters in Cluj.

¹⁷ "Recrutarea profesorilor secundari pentru Transilvania, Bucovina și Basarabia", *Adevărul* XXXV, no. 11750 (22 July 1922): 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, Register of incoming and outgoing documents for the academic year 1922-23, fol. 52v.

²⁰ ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, no. 62, Minutes of the Faculty of Sciences Council of Cluj for the years 1921-22 and 1922-23, fol. 81v.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Nonetheless, that academic year was far from ordinary. The first semester, which began on 1 November, proceeded uninterrupted for a mere few weeks. It was then progressively disrupted by the antisemitic agitation that erupted at Cluj University's Faculty of Medicine. The unrest quickly spread to the other university centres across the country, giving rise to street altercations, obstructions in lecture halls, and pressure placed on the academic authorities and the ministry.²² The end of the first semester and the opening of the second were effectively compromised by the escalating tensions. Under such circumstances, on 1 February 1923, the rectorate of the University of Cluj decided to suspend "until further notice, all lectures and practical sessions for all faculties," beginning with the following day.²³

What Hermann Oberth was engaged in over the first three months of the academic year in Cluj, before the suspension of the teaching activities, remains unknown. We do not know which lectures and seminars he chose to attend. His student record book would clarify the matter, if it still existed. In this type of document, it was customary at the beginning of each semester to list the subjects one intended to study (professors were then required to mark the date of the student's first attendance in their course and, at the end of the semester, to confirm that the course had indeed been duly attended). Oberth undoubtedly followed this general practice as well upon enrolment in October 1922. The subjects he selected must also have appeared on the list he submitted at that time to the university registry, in full accordance with the internal procedure. However, that document, too, has since been lost. In the absence of such sources, we do not know how Oberth concluded his first semester either. Did he manage to take at least one examination? The regulation did not compel him, but neither did it prevent him from taking any at the end of that initial period. The strategy for the entire year was left up to the student. For the stamp marking the end of the autumn-winter term, one had to merely provide proof of attendance to the selected lectures and of participation in the seminars. Additionally, there is also no record of Oberth's place of residence. His name does not appear in the records listing the Faculty of Science students who benefited from accommodation in the university

²² Maria Ghitta, *Clujul universitar și geneza noului naționalism (1919-1925)* (PhD diss., Cluj-Napoca, 2020), 58-65.

²³ ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, box 4, 1922-23, file no. 790/1922-23 (1 February 1923).

dormitory.²⁴ This fact suggests that he paid tuition and lodged privately. He probably remained in his rented place of accommodation after the suspension of courses as well, during the two and half months of waiting for the resumption of teaching. During that time, he was also able to leave the city for several days, in order to travel to Sighișoara, where his wife and two young children resided.²⁵

The delay in the start of the second semester, however, seriously threatened Hermann Oberth's plans. At a certain point, it became clear that, even if teaching were to eventually resume, he would no longer be able to complete his academic record in time to take the capacity examination. That stalled semester, therefore, had to be taken out of the equation. When he decided to take action, Oberth had only about a month left before the desired examination, and the university remained closed. The inference is that he resorted to an argument he had not previously advanced (or that the council had not taken into account). In order to bring his total number of semesters to eight, as he requested to have recognised on 11 April 1923, he must also have included the incomplete semester he had attended in Cluj in 1919. No other hypothesis seems likely. With no alternative, he presumably proceeded in the same manner as student Elisabeta Szabó had done in September 1921. He requested "that the second semester of the 1918-1919 academic year be considered completed, despite lacking the certificate of completion required by the Romanian interim office."²⁶ In her case, by way of exception, the Faculty of Science Council decided to validate the semester, "in view of the diligence shown by the student, as well as her desire to pursue her studies further."²⁷ The particular circumstances of the spring of 1923 tipped the scales toward a similar resolution for Herman Oberth's request. When the council ruled in his favour on 28 April, the second semester had only just begun, less than two weeks earlier.²⁸ The academic calendar had become severely delayed, and peace had not truly been restored in the universities. The student movement had not entirely subsided and, thus, the spectre of another suspension of the

²⁴ ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, no. 68, fols. 143, 154-155.

²⁵ *Hermann Oberth (documente inedite)*, eds. Mircea Țiplea and Marin Gheorghe Trifa (Mediaș: Crisserv, 2012), 19.

²⁶ ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, no. 62, Minutes of the Faculty of Sciences Council of Cluj for the years 1921-22 and 1922-23, fol. 3r.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, box 14, file no. 64, fol. 31r.

academic year continued to hover over Romania's higher education system. In such circumstances, there was little sense in obstructing the plans of a student like Oberth. It was, in all fairness, hardly his fault that he had been unable to meet the requirement formulated by the council in October 1922. One semester recovered, one way or another, retroactively, as a substitute for one that could not realistically be completed on time, offered a convenient solution for both parties.

Ultimately obtained under such circumstances, the certificate of completion enabled Hermann Oberth to take the capacity examination. It is even likely that he took all of the tests in one day, since this appears to have been the rule established by the Ministry of Public Instruction in Bucharest.²⁹ This would mean that the date inscribed on the diploma coincides with that of the examination itself: 18 May 1923. Oberth underwent three categories of tests (written and oral), as required by the old law.³⁰ Details are provided both in the document he received at the end and in his discussion with Hans Barth.³¹ During the fundamental examination, his basic knowledge of Romanian language and literature, German language and literature, mathematics, and physics was assessed. The grades he received were "satisfactory" in the first subject and "good" in the others. This was followed by the specialised examination, consisting of more applied topics in mathematics and physics, namely the subjects he was to teach in school and for which he was again graded "good." The session concluded with an examination in philosophy and pedagogy, in which he was likewise graded "good."

The procedure did not provide for the submission of a thesis. Consequently, the claim suggesting otherwise must be rejected, having, in time, become a deeply entrenched myth. It entered circulation some time after 1970, endorsed by Hermann Oberth himself, by then in his old age and at a moment when he was being publicly reclaimed by Romania. Since then, the circulated claim was that the volume rejected as a dissertation in Heidelberg was accepted in that same capacity in Cluj.³² Yet, this could not have been

²⁹ See the schedule sent by the ministry to the deans on 4 November 1922: ANR-SJC, Fonds *University of Cluj*, Faculty of Sciences, box 14, file no. 64, fol. 107.

³⁰ *Az 1883-dik évi törvények gyűjteménye*, 385-388.

³¹ Barth, *Hermann Oberth*, 71 and the illustrations appendix, no. 19.

³² *Ibid.*; *Hermann Oberth (documente inedite)*, 19; S. Simon, "Întâlnirea a doi titani ai științei", 104; S. Simon, "Prefață," Hermann Oberth, *Racheta spre spațiile planetare/ Die Rakete zu der Planetenräumen* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003), 7; *Transilvăneanul Hermann Oberth. Pământeianul*

the case within that examination framework. However, something else may reasonably be acknowledged to have taken place. There are no grounds to dispute that the ideas contained in the manuscript were indeed discussed with the candidate and evaluated by professor Augustin Maior. However, this took place not in the context of a bachelor thesis defence, but rather as part of the special examination that Oberth had taken.³³ This is an important distinction that must not be overlooked. The obvious anachronism must therefore be removed from the discussion.

The teaching diploma received by Hermann Oberth stated that he was “qualified to teach physics and mathematics in secondary schools with Romanian and German as languages of instruction.”³⁴ Although the document had been obtained as a result of an examination that had taken place on the premises of the University of Cluj, in the presence of professors from the same institution, it did not bear the university’s endorsement, but that of the already dissolved Secretariat-General of Public Instruction in Cluj. It was this regional office that had granted the authorization and in whose name the proceedings had been carried out. The seal affixed to the document was that of the interim committee. The clarification must be made in the same context of dismantling entrenched clichés. In fact, the only final academic document issued by the University of Cluj to Hermann Oberth was the certificate of completion. It is the sole official act that truly connects the great Saxon inventor to this alma mater. When, in 1972, Oberth became its Doctor Honoris Causa, the procedural and terminological particularities of the distant 1922-1923 academic year were already regarded, it would seem, as irrelevant, if not outright inconvenient details. The past was simplified and translated into contemporary terms so that the former mature student’s connection with the University of Cluj could be recast as the first scientific validation of his genius.

care a identificat căile navigației spațiale, eds. Mircia Țiplea and Marin Gheorghe Trifa (Mediaș: Crisserv, 2011), 7. Oberth’s book was published in 1923, at his own expense: *Die Rakete zu der Planetenräumen* (München: Verlag R. Oldenbourg, 1923). Significantly, in the “Introduction,” the author does not suggest that there was any connection between his work and the University of Cluj. Nor does this detail appear in Gartmann, *The Men*, 52.

³³ See Barth, *Hermann Oberth*, 71, the footnote, as well as several nuances made by Hans Barth in “Cuvânt de salut”, in *Lucrările simpozionului internațional Hermann Oberth*, 23-24.

³⁴ Barth, *Hermann Oberth*, illustrations appendix, no. 19.