

The General History of the Middle Ages at the V. Babeş University of Cluj (1951-1952)

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Abstract: *The General History of the Middle Ages at the V. Babeş University of Cluj (1951-1952).* The 1948 education reform represented, besides a new institutional architecture transposed in accordance with the model of the soviet universities, a process of recycling professors. The process of changing the teaching staff was carried out on at least two levels – the definitive or temporary elimination (sometimes accompanied by incarceration) from the education system on the one hand, and the exertion of severe surveillance and intimidation, thus remodelling the discourse and the behaviour in the spirit of the socialist realist “cultural revolution” on the other hand. The study shed light on a method that led to the expulsion of the professors was the public defamation, the accusation of immorality and of their lack of understanding of the new political transformations of the country, thus labelling the professors as “enemies of the people”. The atmosphere of fear and humiliation was sustained through press campaigns of defamation. Especially the younger university professors were instructed to attack, in the press, the more professionally well reputed and publicly well-known professors. These articles contained not only analyses of the professors’ works and ideas, but also their dismantling, their “exposé” and their human undermining. This paper is a case study on a professor from medieval department of Cluj university, Francisc Pall at the beginning of 1950s years.

Keywords: communism, Romania, education reform, cultural revolution, violence, surveillance.

Rezumat: *Istoria generală a Evului Mediu la Universitatea V. Babeş din Cluj (1951-1952).* Reorganizarea învățământului superior din România ca urmare a reformei din 1948 a însemnat și pentru

Universitatea din Cluj și implicit pentru învățământul de istorie o schimbare radicală atât a modului de organizare instituțională cât și a conținutului procesului didactic. Modelarea instituțională după structurile didactice sovietice și predominanța caracterului ideologic în spiritul dogmatic al marxism-leninismului al conținutului învățământului au devenit trăsăturile fundamentale ale sistemului de învățământ din România. Frământările organizării administrative se reflectă și la nivelul structurilor facultății de istorie. Astfel, inițial, între alte structuri ale Facultății de Istorie a funcționat și o Catedră Generală a Evului Mediu, colectivul didactic activând sub această formă până în luna mai a anului 1952, de când s-a format o singură catedră de istorie universală, cuprinzând antichitatea, epocile medievală, modernă și contemporană. Studiul de față discută acest proces instituțional de transformare instituțională a studiilor de Ev Mediu și impactul lor asupra destinului profesional a profesorului Francisc Pall.

Cuvinte-cheie: comunism, România, reforma educației, revoluție culturală, violența, supraveghere.

The reorganisation of the Romanian higher education system as a result of the 1948 reform¹ represented, for the University of Cluj and implicitly for the history education system, a radical change in both the institutional organisational means and the contents of the didactic process². The institutional model in accordance with the Soviet didactic structures and the predominance of the ideological nature in the dogmatic spirit of

¹ Maria Someșan, Mircea Iosifescu, *Legile din 1948 pentru reformarea învățământului* [The 1948 laws for the reformation of the education system], in *Analele Sighet 6, Anul 1948 – instituționalizarea comunismului* [The year 1948 – the institutionalisation of communism], editor Romulus Rusan, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 439-444; Adrian Perșa, *Ce se urmărea prin reforma învățământului* [What was intended through the reformation of the education system], in *Ibidem*, pp. 481-486.

² Florin Muller, *Politică și istoriografie în România 1948-1964* [Politics and historiography in Romania 1948-1964], Editura Nereamia Napocae, Cluj-Napoca, 2003; Felician Velimirovici, *Istorie și istorici în România comunistă (1948-1989)* [History and historians in communist Romania (1948-1989)], Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2015; Vlad Georgescu, *Politică și istorie. Cazul comuniștilor români 1944-1977* [Politics and history. The case of the Romanian communists 1944-1977], ed. a 2-a, Editura Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008; Anatol Petrencu, *Învățământul istoric în România (1948-1989)* [The history education system in Romania (1948-1989)], Editura "Știința", Chișinău, 1991.

the Marxism-Leninism in the contents of the education system became the fundamental features of the Romanian education system.

The search for organisational means at the level of the faculty can be identified in the adoption of certain provisional or definitive measures³. History, as shown by Ovidiu Ghitta⁴, was initially part of the Faculty of History and Geography, followed by the establishment of the Faculty of History, and, beginning with 1957, the Faculty of History and Philosophy, the institutional structure that subsisted throughout the second half of the 20th century.

At the same time, the administrative organisation's unrests are also reflected at the level of the structures of the faculty. Thus, initially, the Department for General Medieval Studies functioned among other structures of the Faculty of History and the teaching staff worked in this form until May 1952, when a single department of world history was established, thus covering the antiquity, the Middle Ages and the modern and contemporary periods. In a report in which F. Pall mentions this administrative transformation as a result of "the Dean's directives", the former department melded into "the wider frame... and the former collectives were transformed into subunits of subjects and the department heads became subject heads"⁵.

The 1948 education reform represented, besides a new institutional architecture transposed in accordance with the model of the Soviet universities, a process of recycling professors. The process of changing the teaching staff was carried out on at least two levels - the definitive or temporary elimination (sometimes accompanied by incarceration) of the education system on the one hand, and the exertion of severe surveillance and intimidation, thus remodeling the discourse and behaviour in the spirit of the socialist realist "cultural revolution" on the other hand. The expulsion from the university was motivated by the collaborationism with the Antonescu regime or by adherence to the ideas of the right-wing movement acts which were stipulated in the Armistice Convention as the judiciary substantiation of this measure. Another

³ Mihai Toader Nicoară, *De la Universitatea "Regele Ferdinand I" la Universitatea "Babeş-Bolyai" (1948-1959)* [From the King Ferdinand I University to the Babeş-Bolyai University (1948-1959)], Editura Accent, Cluj-Napoca, 2014; *Istoria Universităţii Babeş-Bolyai* [The history of the Babeş-Bolyai University], (coordinator) Ovidiu Ghitta, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2012.

⁴ Ovidiu Ghitta, *Ştefan Pascu, momentul de răscruce* [Ştefan Pascu, the pivotal moment], in *Personalităţi ale Universităţii Babeş-Bolyai II Ştefan Pascu* [The great figures of the Babeş-Bolyai University II Ştefan Pascu], coordinated by Mihai T. Nicoară, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2015, pp. 53-89.

⁵ The Lucian Blaga Central University Library, Special Collections, Francisc Pall Collection, Ms. 5567, f. 64 (henceforth regarded as CUL).

method that led to the expulsion of the professors was the public defamation, the accusation of immorality and of their lack of understanding of the new political transformations of the country, thus labelling the professors as “enemies of the people”. Among the Cluj based historians expelled from the faculty, Ioan Lupaș was forcefully retired in April 1945, he was prosecuted for “pro-Hitler activities” and he was harshly attacked in the “România liberă” [Free Romania] newspaper; in the same manner, Silviu Dragomir was labelled as “reactionary” and was retired in October 1947 as part of a group that contained 80 other professors⁶. In his study dedicated to this period in the history of the Faculty of History of Cluj, O. Ghitta noted: “The pillars of strength of the Cluj school of history disappeared from the institution one by one, through the decisive interference of the politics, which must have given troubling thoughts to those left active”⁷. The atmosphere of fear and humiliation was sustained through press campaigns of defamation. Especially the younger university professors were instructed to attack in the press, the more professionally well-reputed and publicly well-known professors. These articles contained not only analyses of the professors’ works and ideas, but also their dismantling, their “exposé” and their human undermining⁸.

The teaching staff of the Department of General Medieval Studies was comprised of four professors – the department head was associate professor Francisc Pall⁹, and the collective included associate professor

⁶ O. Ghitta, pp. 61-62; see also Stelian Mândruț, *Istorici clujeni “epurați” în anul 1948* [Cluj-based historians “purged” in 1948], in *Analele Sighet 6, Anul 1948 – instituționalizarea comunismului*, editor Romulus Rusan, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 565-570.

⁷ O. Ghitta, pp. 61-62.

⁸ Ion D. Sârbu, *Atlet al mizeriei* [The athlete of misery], Petroșani, 1994, pp. 114-116.

⁹ For F. Pall see *Profesorul Francisc Pall la vârsta de 65 ani* [Professor Francisc Pall at the age of 65], foreword by Pompiliu Teodor. *Bibliografia operei (1933-1976)* [Opus bibliography] by Nicolae Edroiu, Iolanda Karolyi, Maria Tecușan, Cluj-Napoca, 1978; Mircea Popa, *Francisc Pall în corespondență cu Andrei Veress* [Francisc Pall in correspondence with Andrei Veress], in A.I.I.C.N., 1994, pp. 413-416; Aurel Răduțiu, *Francisc Pall*, in “Acta Musei Napocensis”, XXVI-XXX(1989-1993), pp. 667-669; Idem, *In Memoriam – Francisc Pall*, in “Romanian Civilization”, II(1993), 2, pp. 117-118; Sabin Bellu, *Francisc Pall*, AIICN, XXXII(1993), p. 409; Pompiliu Teodor, *Profesorul Francisc Pall* [Professor Francisc Pall], in “Revista istorică”, IV(1993), pp. 411-413; Idem, *Istoricul Francisc Pall* [Francisc Pall, the historian], in vol. “Miscellanea in honorem Radu Manolescu emerito”, edited by Zoe Petre and Stelian Brezeanu, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 341-348; Idem, *Istoricul Francisc Pall și exilul lui Inochentie Micu* [The historian Francisc Pall and the exile of Inochentie Micu], in *Francisc Pall, Inochentie Micu. Exilul la Roma* [Francisc Pall, Inochentie Micu. The exile to Rome], 1745-1768, edited by Ladislau Gyemant, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, pp. VII- XVII; Idem, *Introducere în istoria istoriografiei din Romania* [Introduction to the history of the Romanian historiography], Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pp. 249-251; Mircea Suma, *Particularități ale discursului*

Virgil Vătăşianu¹⁰ and university assistants Camil Mureşan and Samuil Goldenberg, the latter of whom also had teaching obligations within the Department of General Modern History. The department was responsible for teaching the subjects Medieval General History, The Auxiliary Sciences of History, Latin Palaeography and Latin Palaeography Applications. If some of these subjects could be considered technical, with less ideological and political implications, the general medieval history course continuously represented an “apple of discord”, denoting what O. Ghitta regarded as “the Pall case”¹¹.

The department functioned at the beginning of the 50s, the period in which it existed in this structure, under two great pressures. The first was represented by the changes requested regarding the contents and form of the teaching process. The second major pressure resided in the adaptation of the teaching body to the ideological and political directives, in impose a Marxist-Leninist view, to “assimilate the historical materialism based on the true worldview, the materialist view”, as one of the members of the department wrote, naturally into the forms of expression practiced at that time. The abundance of this bafflegab that was characteristic for that period and the recurrence of certain issues lead to two observations: we are either faced with a formalism to which the department professors conform in the absence of a different option, or the dynamics of the transformations that occurred in higher education and the direction imposed by the party completely conditioned the didactic activities. We shall try to establish whether it was not merely formalism, but a “revolutionary”, threatening reality that allowed for no reasonable alternative.

At the level of the Faculty of History, for the “improvement of the scientific, ideological, and political contents”, a series of “measures” were repeatedly taken into account. For instance, in the “work plan” of the Faculty of History between January and March 1952¹², the following objectives were stated in this sense: the analysis of the activities of the teaching staff in the collective meeting; the improvement of the activities

istoric la Francisc Pall [Particularities of the historical discourse of Francisc Pall], in “*Annale Universitatis Apulensis*”, VII (2003), pp. 377-383; Ionuţ Costea, *Francisc Pall și laboratorul istoricului* [Francisc Pall and the historian’s laboratory], in vol. *F. Pall, Diplomatica latină din Transilvania medievala* [Latin diplomatics in medieval Transylvania], edited and foreword by I. Costea, Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2005, pp. 7-49; Liviu Pleşa, *Istoriografia clujeană sub supravegherea Securităţii (1945-1965)* [The historiography in Cluj under the surveillance of the Securitate], Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgovişte, 2017, pp. 356-393.

¹⁰ Nicolae Sabău, Corina Simon, Vlad Țoca, *Istoria artei la Universitatea din Cluj*, vol. I (1919-1987), Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2010.

¹¹ O. Ghitta, pp. 74-79.

¹² .CUL, *Francisc Pall*, Ms. 5563, Personal documents – Miscellaneous, ff. 28-30.

of the teaching staff with the participation of the dean's office staff to 4-6 department meetings; the introduction of the individual work plan and the control form for the weekly activities of the teaching staff: lecturers, assistants, tutors; the strengthening of the prior control on the courses; the establishment of certain wider thematic that would cover an entire page for each one-hour lesson and their prior discussion in among the teaching collective – the prior discussion of at least 3 two-hour lessons in the case of the history departments; the periodic analysis of the courses; the analysis of the medieval history course; the improvement of the seminar methodology; the periodic analysis of the seminar activities of each department; the establishment of a new framework for the students to use; the organisation of a theoretical conference for the faculty, in collaboration with the Institute of History and Philosophy of the Romanian People's Republic, Cluj Branch; the organisation of experience exchanges with the Bolyai University; the support of the experience exchanges between the teachers of social sciences from Cluj, Tg. Mureș, Brad, Petroșani; continuation of the correspondence with the students from the USSR; assurance of the endowment of the library; the completion of the presentations for the University's scientific symposium; the preparation of the establishment of a students' the scientific circle. The same document also mentioned "the training for the individual study of Marxism-Leninism by all teaching staff members".

In accordance with the provisions of this "work plan" established at the level of the faculty for the period between January and March 1952, on 5 January 1952 the department of the General History of the Middle Ages or the History of the Middle Ages, as it appears in the report written at this time by F. Pall, established its own "activity plan"¹³. Thus, the establishment of collective meetings was decided for Thursday at 6PM, "as before". Moreover, new tasks were established for the department, namely, to improve the teaching method for the courses and the "deepening of the subject matters during the seminars". Besides the activities that focused on observing the level of appropriation of knowledge by the students, "discussing the scientific, ideological, and didactic issues in relation to the activities of the department (during the weekly meetings)" and "planning the reading of the classics of the members in relation with the issues of the department (in collaboration with the Marxism-Leninism cabinet)". Furthermore, the connection with the Soviet science was emphasised, and university assistant S. Goldberg was in charge with "overseeing and discussing the Soviet scholarly

¹³ *Ibidem*.

literature"; a series of "reciprocal visits to the courses and seminars held by the members of the department" was expected, as well as a "monthly analysis of two lessons (...) held by each member of the department before actually holding the respective lessons". Such attendances were made once a month, as were the analyses of the courses.

The new wording of the administrative language of the proletariat dictatorship was also imposed in the documents compiled by professor Pall. Thus, for the period between April and June 1952, he established his own "work plan"¹⁴. This time, the document was more systematic, divided on each issue: organisational, ideological, didactic, and scientific tasks. In general terms, the organisational and didactic "tasks" were the ones mentioned above. However, the ideological aspects were emphasised. What was envisioned was the "control over the ideological combativity during the courses and seminars (through the reciprocal visits of the members of the department)" and processing the party documentation regarding the propaganda and agitation and "the written reports of the members of the department regarding the aid received from the party educational system".

The intimidation of the professors by means of reeducation was also mentioned in other cases in the memoirs. The aforementioned Ion D. Sârbu recounted such a situation. The professors of the Faculty of Letters were summoned to the dean's office and were ordered to read together out loud, the feature article from "Scântea"¹⁵.

On this matter, based on a manuscript draft, a report was compiled by F. Pall on 3 June 1952¹⁶, a few weeks before the time limit established by the department work plan on 8 May of the same year. The text of the report could be considered a true "confession" of the reeducation of the historian in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism. The document bears the title "The help I received from the party education system", a title copied *ad litteram* from the requests made to the teaching staff. Professor Pall mentions attending the course on the History of the Communist Party (b), which he deemed to have been "very useful ... in raising the ideological and political level, thus giving me the ability to better understand the societal development and the construction of socialism". However, knowing the evolution from the Soviet Union also permitted the understanding of the implementation of the model in Romania. Regarding these general aspects, Professor Pall also notices a

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 69-70.

¹⁵ I.D. Sârbu, p. 113.

¹⁶ CUL, Ms. 5563, Personal documents - Miscellaneous, f. 48.

series of issues that, according to him, “have been of great practical help in my teaching work”. In this sense, the professor listed several issues: deciding role played by the production model in the development of the society, the creative role and the fundamental importance of the class struggle, the appreciation criteria of the figure heads in the historical development; the role played by the masses and by the bourgeoisie in the revolution, the unilateral nature of the bourgeoisie revolution or “The History of the Party showed me the necessity of ideological combativity and the presentation of the issues of history and their actualization”. The professor’s speech also shows a fashionable self-critical perspective through which the reeducation purpose of this activity is emphasised: “Here is a series of issues”, F. Pall wrote, “that I have overlooked or have not always managed to present justly in my professional work – for instance, in my courses before my in-depth reading of the History of the Party.” He emphasises, in the spirit of the epoch, the information gaps he seemed to have after attending the course, which, in F. Pall’s case, “due to other tasks, I could not dedicate sufficient time to the study of the recommended bibliography”.

The analysis of the lessons started at the beginning of February 1952 with discussing V. Vătășianu’s course on Italy¹⁷. In the second part of the same month, February, the course “The Iberic states in the 11th-14th centuries” was analysed, a lesson which was supposed to be given by F. Pall – the lesson was “read beforehand by the members of the collective”. In his intervention, S. Goldenberg “considers that the lesson was of poorer quality than the previous ones (from England and France), since the material was much less systemised. One explanation would be the lack of accessible sources that would clarify these issues sufficiently.” V. Vătășianu also intervened, asserting that “the lesson was not of poorer quality” and C. Mureșan posed a question regarding “the differences between the situations of the exploited classes from the conquered regions and those from the regions that had not been conquered by the Muslims”. At the end, professor Pall also intervened, and the record stated that “Comrade Associate Professor Fr. Pall appropriates the majority of the observations and almost immediately takes action to use them in the lesson, which, through this contribution by the collective, will be given in an improved form”¹⁸. At the end of February, V. Vătășianu’s lesson on the Byzantine Empire in the 13th-15th centuries¹⁹ was also analysed, as well as F. Pall’s

¹⁷ BCU, Ms. 5567, f. 40.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 43.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 44.

lesson on England in the 16th-17th centuries²⁰ and C. Mureşan's lesson on the Bourgeoisie Revolution in the Low Countries²¹.

The department head, F. Pall, mentioned in the agenda of the meeting held on 24 April 1952 the "analysis of the weekly workplans of comrade C. Mureşan", as requested by the dean's office, as it appeared in the workplan and as it was also integrated in the activity plan of the Department of the General History of the Middle Ages. Although the aforementioned analysis never took place "due to a lack of time, since, at 7.30 PM the members of the department had to participate in a communication session at the Institute of History and Philosophy"²², it was kept in a manuscript form, probably as a presentation compiled by Camil Mureşan and submitted to F. Pall, as the department head. It is edifying for the way in which the political regime moulded not only the professional and intellectual reeducation that occurred in the 50s, but also the intimidation of individuals by constantly maintaining the sense of insecurity, continuous surveillance and total control. As a young assistant at the time, C. Mureşan was ready to present his activities from several viewpoints: the structure of the daily life, readings, the activities that involved the students, and social activities. What results from the text of the presentation is a very serious self-criticism and a strong fear that was festering within the author. From the outset, C. Mureşan stated that "my activity had planning deficiencies, in the sense that I only rarely managed to harmonise daily the teaching activities and those of the institute; there were times I only carried out teaching activities and other times I only worked for the institute. I managed to plan and to have one hour of rest at noon and, more often, one hour of walking in the evening. I attended shows much too rarely, I did not read enough works of fiction or press, and even when I did, I did not make notes of it on file cards"²³.

The same strongly self-critical tone also appears in a handwritten note of the other department assistant, S. Goldenbers, made on 24 May 1952. We cannot assess with certainty what the purpose of these handwritten notes was – perhaps it was a form of self-characterisation that was so common at that time, or perhaps we are faced with another sheet of personal analysis, although in the responsibility report of the department from June it is written that there was no such sheet. As opposed to the aforementioned one, the note signed by S. Goldenberg is more general, containing a wider characterisation of the didactic and

²⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 54, f. 55.

²¹ *Ibidem*, f. 59, f. 60.

²² *Ibidem*, f. 59.

²³ BCU, Ms. 5567, f. 106.

research activities. However, the self-critical perspective obediently reoccurs. S. Goldenberg asserts that “for now, I am at the beginning of scientific activities which require more perseverance, self-restraint, and greater patience than I have had so far”. Further on in the text, he points out that: “Regarding the work discipline, I must mention that it often leaves much to be desired because of the multitude of tasks and because of the insufficient level of planning in the case of the workload. I often set off on an issue of scientific or didactic research and, without finishing it, I begin another. The only guarantee of my scientific and didactic progress can only be the continuous elevation of my ideological and political level, as well as a better planning of the workload”²⁴.

Between the two department assistants, it would appear that F. Pall preferred C. Mureșan: “Comrade Mureșan is progressing beautifully in learning the Russian language and he is diligently studying the Marxist literature, attending the party night school”. However, a certain coldness towards S. Goldenberg can be observed: “I will not insist on the training of comrade Goldberg, here, his work sheet was checked in the beginning within the Department of General Modern History, since he also had attributions there.” Could this be the only reason for F. Pall’s reluctance? S. Goldenberg’s individual file came into the possession of Pall as well. It is possible that the head of the department for the Middle Ages to have considered him an intruder, a man placed within the collective, bearing no special merit for researching the Middle Ages, but rather for knowing the Russian language and for being a follower of historical materialism. F. Pall thus proves to be a believer in recruiting specialists based on meritocracy, with an affinity for scientific preoccupations and a passion between the master and his disciple.

The minutes of the department meetings of that time, the monthly reports, and trimestral accounts show several recurrent aspects: the issue of didactic activities, the appropriation of the Soviet scholarly literature, scientific activities and the fulfilment of the social “duties”.

The evaluation of the didactic activities can be found in several periodical reports and in the reports of the student’s session exams. At the end of the report in the summer of 1951, Professor Pall noted some of the proposals for the improvement of both the learning results and the students’ exams for the subject Medieval General History. On the one hand, Professor Pall insisted on the fact that “the subject is very vast” and “if it were taught in three semesters, weekly, two hours of lectures and two hours of seminar, the results would surely be better than the ones of

²⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 62-63.

this year". Similarly, regarding the "contents of the education system" and particularly for its alignment with "the most advanced science in the world", the Soviet science professor Pall considered that "although in teaching this subject, a certain number of Soviet studies accessible in Cluj have been used, a Soviet university text book on the Medieval General History would be of great help". The professor from Cluj mentioned that such a text book "was translated and typed" at the Romanian-Soviet Institute in Bucharest and that "measures must be taken in order for it to be sent to the local branch of the same institute as soon as possible."

The contents of the course was, of course, described in what its political and ideological character meant in the report from 9 July 1951, with an emphasis on the fact that the analytic curriculum was compiled "based on the experience of the previous years of restructuration" and "the official curriculum for Soviet universities was also take into account, a curriculum that could have been acquired through personal means". Professor Pall insisted on showing that for the elaboration and drafting of his course he used "all soviet studies that were accessible in Cluj (the text books by Kosmînski and Semenow for the secondary education system and for the pedagogical institutes, the Chrestomathy of medieval history by Graţianski and Skazkin, the studies of Alpatov, Gukovski, Kolseniţki, Porşnev etc. published in Soviet periodicals and some in Romanian periodicals, the text book for the History of Western Literature by Jirminski)." Moreover, as Professor Pall recounted, his course was "analysed in December 1950 and certain manifestations of objectivism were found", which as much as he could, he "tried to eliminate throughout the rest of the school year".

Regarding the didactic activities, Pall observed a progressive improvement of the seminars, "the students have become much more interested in the discussions when certain issues in the lessons are processed and analysed more in-depth, illustrated by parts of the sources, translated in front of them and sometimes with their collaboration". Other times, Pall observed that the students proved to have "the critical spirit and independence of mine, but without straying from the primary just a line of discussion"²⁵. To help the students, bibliographies and seminar workbooks were compiled, their lecture notes were checked and they were taught how to use the critical apparatus in their scientific work. Thus, the report for March noted that "there was an increase in the students' interest in the bibliography, since they intensely visited the library of the Institute of History and Philosophy and they read the

²⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 46.

recommended books more and more". The consultation hours once established, as the time table became definitive, they "started to be attended" and the students "asked carefully thought-out questions on matters that interested them more or regarding issues that were not sufficiently clear to them; however, they were still somewhat shy and their presence was still in relatively low numbers"²⁶.

In the department work plan, as a final aspect taken into account, the issue of scientific activity was also present. In the plan compiled in January of the same year by F. Pall, only the final item on the list vaguely mentioned the research activity: "gathering materials and writing articles, reviews or reports by the members, addressing the fields of their scientific interests"²⁷. This issue is also integrated in the vocabulary that was characteristic to the epoch, since the scientific activity was, in its turn, a "duty" of the members of the department. For trimester II of the year 1952, its objective was to become familiar with the Soviet contributions to ("reading and referencing the Soviet scholarly literature" - an activity that, until that time, was S. Goldenberg's responsibility -, and compiling "monthly reports on the Soviet historiography" - "a duty" that was this time in V. Vătășianu's area of expertise); furthermore, "writing an article on the Romanian-Russian brotherhood of arms during the reign of Peter I, Tzar of Russia" was expected to be carried out as a collaboration between S. Goldenberg and M. Dan²⁸.

The cumulative reports do not show intense research and particularly published activity. This activity was part of the research conducted within the Faculty of History. O. Ghitta, following the footsteps of Ștefan Pascu, who was the interim dean of the faculty at that time, identified three causes of this problem: the didactic "duties" were overwhelming and they did not leave sufficient "time for such preoccupations"; the lack of funding for trips to libraries and archives from other towns; finally, the absence of a local publication in Cluj that would exploit the studies and articles of the teaching body²⁹.

Within the Department of the General History of the Middle Ages, the issues regarding scientific research can be identified based on certain general reports written by F. Pall, on 31 January 1952³⁰ and on 24 June 1952³¹. The former is a simple list of the research activities of each

²⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 53.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 33.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 70.

²⁹ O. Ghitta, pp. 70-71.

³⁰ BCU, Ms. 5567, f. 38-39.

³¹ *Ibidem*, f. 66-67.

member of the collective. The report shows that the professors were involved in different research collectives. In the collective of DIR documents, Series C, Transylvania, Pall had been the head, and starting July 1951, the deputy head, but he “practically led this collective and he made revisions on the translations of the Latin documents”³² together with C. Mureşan and S. Goldenberg, who were the translators of the Latin documents. V. Vătăşianu was a collaborator in the Dinogetia archaeological collective and a scientific advisor for the collective that compiled the “Archaeological Repertoire” within the Institute of History and Philosophy, by “gathering materials and writing articles”.

The individual researches were thematically aligned with the expectation horizon of the “Marxist-Leninist” historical “new science”. F. Pall held a presentation at the scientific session of the University entitled “Serfdom after the treaty of feudal law of Beaumanoir (13th century)” and a report on how “The Soviet science unmasks the falsifiers of medieval history” in ARLUS, and in the history section of the Institute of History and Philosophy in Cluj, the report “Kosminski: The class struggle during the age of feudalism”. In the case of the other lecturer of the collective V. Vătăşianu, he was noted for “gathering material for a paper on The Byzantine Architecture in the Balkan Peninsula” (he gathered 90% of the documentation) and for “bringing additions to the research on the Art History in the Romanian People's Republic” (“chronological and stylistic indications regarding 80 architectonic monuments from Transylvania, 11th-13th centuries”³³). Regarding the young assistants, they frequented themes meant to emphasise the class struggle in the Middle Ages, the centralised state in the history of the R.P.R., the economic history (C. Mureşan³⁴) and the anti-fascist movement, the working-class movement and the Romanian-Russian relations (S. Goldenberg).

³² *Ibidem*, f. 66.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 39: C. Mureşan: “Legislația lui Verboczi și caracterul ei de clasă” [Verboczi’s legislation and its class nature], “Problemele statului centralizat în Istoria R.P.R.” [The issues of the centralised state in the history of the R.P.R.], “Prețurile în economia agrară a Țărilor Române” [The prices in the agrarian economy of the Romanian Countries]; S. Goldenberg: “Răscoala antifascistă din Bulgaria (1923) și răsunetul ei în presa română contemporană” [The anti-fascist revolt in Bulgaria and its echoes in the Romanian contemporary press], “Relațiile româno-ruse la începutul sec. XVIII” [The Romanian-Russian relations at the beginning of the 18th century], “Critica studiilor lui B.F.Porşnev în istoriografia sovietică” [A critique of B.F.Porşnev’s studies in the soviet historiography], “Mişcarea muncitorească din Transilvania” [The working-class movement in Transylvania], “Problema fascizării României” [The issue of the fascism of Romania].

In the report from 24 June 1952, the list of scientific research contributions is accompanied by an apparently harmless conclusion, but one which can represent a barely concealed critique of the organisation, orientation, and imposition of the research approaches. F. Pall pointed out: "Generally, the research activity of the members of the department is not linked with its characteristics, but with the duties they have for the Institute of History and Philosophy, which is obviously a great hindrance from the viewpoint of the didactic specialisation in which they are involved"³⁵.

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The reading of this rich documentary material, the selection and reproduction of certain (perhaps excessively) long passages led us to a series of observations. In the aforementioned texts, one can identify a series of reasons for which the reports and individual and collective assessments have been compiled: "the lack of time", the numerous didactic "duties" for such a small collective, the deficiencies in the organisation of didactic and research activities, the still problematic level of ideological and political training.

Moreover, one can note the application of the "revolutionary" language and the alignment with the requirements stated in the administrative forms of the new political power, the diligent fulfilment of the "tasks" from the "workplan" and a strong self-critical perspective, a common means of expression in the years of the proletariat dictatorship³⁶. Thus, one can note the signs of conformism or rather the efforts to adapt to the "cultural revolution" and to become part of the "historiographic front", to adapt to the directives of the new order. However, certain veiled and dissimulated critiques also arise, regarding the new organisation of the historical education system and historical research. These critiques can be identified in the conclusions of the balance sheets, in the explanations for the "shortcomings" detected in the "didactic activities" or in the "scientific research activities", or as proposals aimed to improve the department activities. They were, means and reasons recurrently encountered in the stances taken by the older professors of the Faculty of History in Cluj, emphasised by O. Ghitta in his study on Ș. Pascu³⁷.

By following the activities of the Department of The General History, the Middle Ages between 1951-1951, we could observe the

³⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 67.

³⁶ See Andi Mihalache, *Istorie și practici discursive în România "democrat-populară"* [History and discursive practices in the democratic-popular Romania], Editura Albatros, București, 2003.

³⁷ O. Ghitta, pp. 71-73.

dismantling and restructuring of an “old World”, with western traditions in the Cluj historical education system, and its replacement with the “new World”, tailored in accordance with the Soviet model. In this context, one may note that certain organisational unresists were crossed, the contents of the didactic process were redirected, measures were taken to convert the professors trained in the spirit of the general culture and historiography Marxism-Leninism, measures were taken to train new professors that had a “revolutionary conscience” and that would understand the role played by “the party’s combativity, the actualisation and usage” of history for the edification of the socialist society in Romania. This was also the case of the general medieval history didactic collective. F. Pall emphasised this aspect: “All members of the department, except for comrade Goldenberg, shall follow the party education system: comrades, Vătăşianu and Pall for the History of the Party, 1st year; comrade Mureşan ... the Party University³⁸”. What can actually be observed is a process of revolutionary reeducation of the teaching staff, seconded by the upholding of a climate of insecurity of continuous surveillance and permanent intimidation³⁹. This is the approach by which one must interpret the course analyses within the collective or by the “superior forums”, the “duty” of elaborating the individual sheets and of writing reports on the aid given by the party education system to the teaching and scholarly research activities.

Thus, the contents of the course of the General History of the Middle Ages was reorganised – it became a synthesis that covered a vast chronology and geography that no longer only included Western and Eastern Europe and the Islamic World, but also the Orient, China, India and Japan. The theoretical foundations of the presentations were changed from the historical outlines of the period prior to the 1948 reform of the education system. In the case of Professor Pall, this didactic approach was already crystallised and presented in the preface of his course on the Crusades. His premise was based on the organisation of the presentation in accordance with the didactic objectives, “without sacrificing the methodical principles and the scientific accuracy of the facts”. Moreover, in his opinion, the course represented a synthesis, a systematic presentation “meant to aid understanding, memorising and obviously – why not admit it – its learning by a beginner”. Thus, Professor Pall insisted, the course “could not be conceived as a simple and superficial pleasure reading, or as a stale erudition work, encumbered by the ballast of citations”. The professor’s plea called for the direct use of historical

³⁸ BCU, Ms. 5567, f. 67.

³⁹ See Liviu Pleşa, *Istoriografia clujeană ...*, passim.

sources, since he considered that the source “can sometimes be more significant and more suggestive through its concession or its picturesque in the rendition of the climate of an epoch (...) than a much subtle and often too personal modern interpretation”⁴⁰. Furthermore, the professor pleaded for the students to be urged to read and not to remain within the bounds of the written course, for the students “to be curious and diligent, to exceed and to deepen the issues that were treated and to reflect on them”⁴¹. In Pall’s view, the didactic activity was based on a collaboration between the professor and the student – the former offered systematic knowledge and structured scholarly literature and expected responsiveness based on a sincere desire for knowledge from the latter, “the research and love for scientific truth through the thirst for knowing and through the formation of the critical spirit”⁴². Faced with these expectations that could probably be found among the students until the 1948 Reform, things took a different turn. The aforementioned reform created an extremely heterogenous school population, with a precarious level of education, with difficulties in their oral and written means of expression, with shortcomings in their knowledge of the language of the sources and of modern languages. All of this was in addition to the climate of suspicion and surveillance that contributed to the lack of direct and sincere dialogue between the professor and the students. Pall was reproached for distance and coldness towards the students, for the difficulty in communicating with them, for the difficulty in making oneself approachable. However, Pall had been trained and educated for a different world, and he was suddenly compelled to face the new realities of the democratic popular education system in Romania, in which the students either originated from rural areas or were integrated in the production.

Above all, the control and surveillance of the professors was omnipresent. The documents firstly show the professional moulding and sometimes even the intrusion in their private lives. In the posthumously published memoirs, historian David Prodan recounted those times. “You woke up in fear of what could happen to you throughout the day, you went to bed with the unrest of what the night and the following day

⁴⁰ F. Pall, *Curs de istorie universală. Cruciadele (sec. XI-XIII)* [A course on world history. The Crusades (11th-13th centuries)], edited by The National Students’ Union of Romania, The Cluj Students’ Centre, 1948, p. 1.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

could bring. You started for any knock on the door, any sound of the doorbell, any phone call"⁴³.

The authorities took advantage of the existence of certain older dissents among the historians from Cluj. Certain policies were paid for older accounts or for self-protection, to receive the goodwill of the hellhounds of the new power. We must draw attention to the case of the head of the Department of The General History of the Middle Ages, F. Pall. Pall's "personal file", a file that sends chills down anyone's spine at that time, points to control and "vigilant" surveillance to intrigues and "collegial" egos. The head of the University labour authority, after the investigation on Pall, posed the following resolution on 9 January 1950: "The professor is well trained. He is cold and distant in nature, unable to feel sympathy for the students. His ideological training is insufficient and he lacks combativity. The professor lacks the perspective of seeing the issues overall as interconnected. From a political viewpoint, he was a member of the National Popular Party and he is presently reticent and does not manifest himself. He does not know the Marxist-Leninist ideology and his willingness to enrich his political level leaves much to be desired. He is a formalist and he is malevolent; he originated from the level of middle-class peasants"⁴⁴. The report was made as a synthesis of the references made by S. Goldenberg, Ş. Pascu, and M. Dan between 14 and 18 November 1949, colleagues working for the Faculty of History. F. Pall's professionalism, his ability to work "even by sacrificing his health"⁴⁵ was "of great use to the Romanian historical science"⁴⁶, which prevails in front of his low ideological level, his lack of combativity, his neutrality/indifference ("by retreating into the ivory tower of science"⁴⁷) and the formalism he of which he was accused. All of this shows that it has not yet been the time for an open battle with F. Pall, since he could be considered a "fellow traveler" in the establishment of a reform of the education system.

In spite of the efforts of recycling didactic activities of shifting the direction of the scientific research towards themes that more agreeable to the political power, the story of the Department of the General History of the Middle Ages has a sad ending. In the middle of May, as we have

⁴³ David Prodan, *Memorii* [Memoirs], edited by Aurel Răduţiu, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1993, p. 68; cf. O. Ghitta, p. 78, note 115.

⁴⁴ The Archives of the Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, the *Francisc Pall File*, Report from 9 January 1950, f. 42 (hereby referred to as AUBB).

⁴⁵ AUBB, *Ibidem*, f. 10.

⁴⁶ AUBB, *Ibidem*, f. 12.

⁴⁷ AUBB, *Ibidem*, f. 10.

already mentioned, the department was dissolved and a new department of world history was established, the dissolution of the department foreshadowed another outcome, namely, that of the “termination of duties”, in the laconic expression present in the personal files of the two lecturers, Francisc Pall and Virgil Vătășianu at the end of the 1951-1952 school year, in the context of the removal from the Faculty of History of a certain number of professors⁴⁸. The course of medieval general history was at that time constantly accused of a lack of combativity, idealism, formalism, objectivism, and cosmopolitanism, either at the level of the dean’s office of the Faculty of History, or at the level of the University rector⁴⁹. Francisc Pall also noted in the activity reports of the department in April-June 1952 the “hardships and shortcomings” they faced, the lack of organised activities and didactic coordination: “of course, the members of the department made efforts and progresses in the restructuring of the subjects, but they still have numerous objectivist and cosmopolitanism issues, which proves that in order to further elevate their ideological levels, they still have much work to do”⁵⁰.

The reckoning broke out in the fall of 1952 and Francisc Pall and Virgil Vătășianu were removed from the Faculty of History and from the Institute of History of Cluj, at least for a time.

⁴⁸ O. Ghitta, 79-87.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 74-79.

⁵⁰ CUL, Ms. 5567, f. 68.