

THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT SANDU TUDOR AND THE INSTITUTIONALISING STRATEGIES OF INTERWAR STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS (1921 – 1926)

Keywords
Sandu Tudor;
Alexandru Teodorescu;
Orthodoxy;
Christian paradigm;
Association of Romanian Christian Students

Abstract

The present paper gives a diachronic presentation of the connections between three organizations – the Y.M.C.A (Young Men's Christian Association), the A.S.C.R. (Asociația Studențească Creștină din România [The Christian Student Association of Romania]) and the U.N.S.C.R. (Uniunea Națională a Studenților Creștini din România [the National Union of Christian Students of Romania]). The pluridimensional (theological, cultural and political) research aims to describe the implications and mutual interests in their dynamics, to the extent that these can be reconstructed based on scrutiny of the Siguranță [Secret Service] Archives and of the press of the time. Needless to say the present paper does not lay claim to an exhaustive analysis of this topic, but tries to reconstruct the circumstances of Alexandru Teodorescu's (aka Sandu Tudor) evolution within these organisations. Besides, in order to understand the existential trajectory of a human being, particularly an exceptional one (such as our subject), in order to understand his options, decisions and how they were taken, it is important to look at the environment, the people he lived among, the sympathies and animosities shown, etc. Therefore, the documentary sources will be filtered according to these objectives and the paper will especially focus on the way the Orthodox Church was present (experienced, perceived) among the student population.

JEL Classification: I20, K49, Z12

INTRODUCTION

A few clarifications are necessary regarding the way student movements were perceived at the time. It must be mentioned that the university environment developed quickly, which led, apodictically, to numerous student associations appearing all over the country in the seven university centres (Bucharest, Iași, Cluj, Timișoara, Oradea, Chișinău and Cernăuți) (Ion Agrigoroaiei, 2012). After 1919 a cultural *euforia* set in, and the young were, predictably, the first to respond to the call of the new wave. Once the Great Union accomplished they felt somewhat duty bound to right the world, to pose as civilising heroes (Dacia nouă, 1933), an ideal which is hardly surprising at that age.

On the other hand, the great number of student associations also shows another fundamental need (quality) of the young: solidarity. Their adherence to the different organizations of the time eventually proves both juvenile sociability and the unbreakable, (apparently) fully acknowledged connection between the wish for intellectual emancipation and the concept of brotherhood, of generational cohesion. As the names of these student organizations indicate, the criteria for the appearance of a union, society, group, etc. were heterogenous and almost impossible to quantify: ethnic, confessional, cultural, reading preferences, professional, regional, local, sporting, recreational, aspirational etc. It must be said that, besides the before mentioned temptation to associate, right after the war there was a favourable political climate, extremely receptive to any social solicitation, especially if it played on the idea of national union and regeneration, of improvement through culture.

Thus, without counting the various professional student circles (philological, philosophical, historical, etc.), the institutionalizing strategies of these organizations mainly aimed at promoting and defending the momentary interests of the young adepts (cultural, ethnic, confessional, regional, social, access to dining halls, hostels and libraries, etc.) all with a major and immediate impact on their members. Naturally, in time, they were a way of developing the critical spirit and configuring a group consciousness with common interests thus became necessary. The fractures and disharmonies of the age reverberated deeply among students, which translated into a multitude of solicitations on subjects such as inequality, injustice, privations, misery, etc. Gradually these solicitations took more and more incisive, violent forms.

The destiny of an interwar student developed practically within three dimensions: the ethnic

dimension, the religious dimension (hence the recurrence of the term “Christian” in the name of most student organizations) and, last but not least, the generational dimension. Without going into detail, it must be said that the concept of generation, the feeling of belonging to a group was not necessarily down to age but particularly to expressing common ideals (Dragoșdrobiș, 2013).

The conferences of the U.N.S.C.R and the A.S.C.R – their Objectives, Organisation and Impact

The distance between the two structures – the A.C.S.R. and the U.N.S.C.R. – can be easily deduced from reading the files in the C.N.S.A.S Archive, more precisely the pages where the Secret Police looked in detail at the congresses of these organizations. The above quoted pages prove that, beginning in 1922, student congresses enjoyed a significant popularity and frequency, the audience being made up of state representatives, professors, politicians, important clergymen, active members of the union and even external audiences.

As mentioned, the laborious protocols hint at the close scrutiny, which supports the idea that the authorities saw the students (and, obviously, their organizations) as a real threat. The frequency of adnotations and underlinings on the pages proves how intensely the superiors *studied* all these manifestations.

Their content was generally limited to outlining the development of the meeting, the number of participants, the name and characteristics of the speakers, the reactions among those presiding and the audience respectively, and sometimes the level of the speakers’ discursive ability (reviews of the speeches). Interestingly the Secret Service agents or commissioners did not resort to ideological comments in their reports, usually writing down the factual events instead.

And if we accept the description of the Conferences by the Secret Service reports as a suggestive x-ray of interwar student life, then we think fit to compare and contrast the Congresses of the two student organizations from Romania - U.N.S.C.R. and A.S.C.R. The analogy will give access to a significant amount of data concerning the objectives, organization and role of the two structures. The selection also took into account significant stages in the evolution of interwar student organizations, when students were under gradually increasing pressure to take on an ideology and join a political party. The document analysis shows a focus on the years 1924-1928.

Y.M.C.A., A.S.C.R. and F.A.C.S.R – JOINING THE GLOBAL STAGE

As we have seen, the groundwork for the Association of Romanian Christian Students – A.S.C.R. – was laid by the Y.M.C.A. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol.1, p. 18), which enjoyed great support from the authorities in different social environments (political, cultural and theological). The philanthropic, altruistic, socio.educational and community-oriented aims this association displayed initially succeeded in gathering acolytes.

In the previous subchapter we mentioned that the general confusion reigning after the end of the First World War justified up to a point the perception of the Y.M.C.A. at the time and the important role it played. In 1920 the popularity of the world association had reached a peak and its advanced educational ideas, concepts and methods had found sympathisers and appreciation world-wide.

An aspect which must not be overlooked is consequently that, in an upsetting age under the imperative of modernisation and when young people felt the need for ideological models generating cohesion and solidarity perhaps more acutely than ever before, the Y.M.C.A. offered its members access to the global stage and the possibility to make and maintain international contacts.

Of course the church authorities also let themselves be carried away by this renewing wave. Perhaps they saw in this world organisation which helped develop the A.S.C.R. a solution for creating a unified Christian front, a proof of the value of Christianity. Both the methods and the means the Association used were in accordance with the Christian ideology. It is enough to go through the archive documents in order to get the necessary answers as to the powerful persuasive effect of the principles of the above-quoted world organisation, as the sentences are school-book examples of Christian eloquence: „Christian education, to build and show character under all circumstances. Evidencing in all activities neighbourly love, understanding and respect, cultivating a spirit of consecration to humanitarian causes, concretely defined as: [those which] serve to interest all members of the Association in accepting these principles because they believe in them, provide the necessary lifestyle for them to flourish in. These principles are common to all the Young Men’s Christian Associations in the world. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol. 8, p. 85).

Even the simple participation of young people more than 18 years old (the target audience of the Y. M. C. A.) in the numerous activities designed as a way of diversifying the university curriculum – sports, choir, traditional ethnic dances, instrumental music practice, conferences, theatre, cinema,

courses, summer camps, social work, etc. – was seen as an efficient means to develop love of kin, by promoting group consciousness and the spirit of sacrifice.

The O.D.A.S – the Student Helping Company – and the University Office were created along the same lines in 1921 and 1927 respectively to render the social activity coherent and sustainable. It is self-evident that we will not further develop these aspects here but we should underline that the presence of the O.D.A.S. is eloquent proof that the members of the A.S.C.R. looked for ways to solve the students’ justified complaints outside the political tribulations of the age. (Ionuț Butoi, 2015). Consequently, the Y.M.C.A. steered clear of all suspicion at this first stage, presenting itself as an apolitical organisation looking to educate its adepts in the love of the Church, king and country and to resist all contrary trends. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol. 1, p. 6). Predictably, it went through an amazing socio-economic and strategic development. As to infrastructure, the Association built a camp in a clearing in Upper Timiș, which was initially made up of a main cottage and several bungalows, a beach, gymnastics facilities etc., where the young apprentices selected by the Work Office stayed, who received special, very royalist education and went through a semi-military daily routine. Under these circumstances, Prince Nicholas’ interest for this camp, which he frequently visited (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol. 1, pp. 6-7), was very much justified.

Building sister associations in Iași and Cluj led to the appearance of the Federation of Romanian Christian Student Associations (1923), with Sergiu Condrea as president. As these were designed in keeping with the Romanian Christian Students’ Association in Bucharest, it was decided at the Christian Students’ Congress of 15 February 1924 that this should be called A.C.S.B. – the Association of Christian Students in Bucharest – and join the F.A.S.C.R. (the Federation of Christian Student Associations from Romania) – a hierarchically superior organisation which coordinated the activity of all these student organisations. This federation in its turn joins the Universal Federation of Christian Student Associations (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol. 1, p. 79), an international association based in the USA whose main aim was spreading Christian propaganda among European students and which regularly organised international conferences.

The ultimate purpose was strengthening international relations on cultural and moral grounds in accordance with the “universal” principles of Christianity. Starting this year, similar student delegations from abroad will inevitably

attend the annual meetings. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol. 1, p. 96).

THE STUDENT CONGRESSES OF 1924. THE POLITICAL TRIBULATIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

The credibility this association enjoyed is also confirmed by the fact that the authorities consented that the fourth congress of the Federation of Christian Student Associations should be organised in Romania, in Bistrița-Năsăud, from 1 to 20 september 1924 (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, pp. 27-33). The event brought together all sister associations in Bucharest, Iași and Cluj. This is all the more noticeable as another envisaged congress of U.N.S.C.R students, which should have taken place in Iași in August of the same year (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 5), was forbidden, although the event had been advertised as a small conference (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 10). In the table by the Special Security Brigade containing the members of the Delegation of the Federation of Christian Associations to the congress in Bistrița-Năsăud is the name of Alexandru Teodorescu (Sandu Tudor) (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 27-33). Our subject's prominent personality is also evidenced by the fact that his presence is conformed by the congress schedule. Thus, the student Sandu Tudor appeared beside household names of the cultural academic life of the time as an integral part with an active role as coordinator of the common prayer concluding the fourth day of September. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 27-33). The profoundly Christian character is evident both in the lecture titles – „The Bible and the Scriptures” (Miss Elined Prys); „St. Michael and Gabriel” (V. Niculescu); „What Jesus thought of Himself and of the Son of Man” (Precurea Eugen); „Jesus Christ, how he valued the human personality and his love of humans” or „ God – love, Heavenly Father”, „ The Holy Virgin” (Mircea Vulcănescu) etc. – and in the way the whole event was organised: It started with a Te Deum mass and had scheduled a meditation moment in the beginning and at the end of each day (A.C.N.S.A.S., Documentary Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, pp.27-30 and p. 33). The archive documents prove that the congress went well and took place in an orderly, quiet fashion (A.C.N.S.A.S., Documentary Source, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 26). The final report contains an agenda with strictly religious subjects and speakers belonging to nearly all Christian confessions (Orthodox, Protestants, Neoprottestants, etc.)

(A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 27-33).

The authorities' attention was focused rather on the U.N.S.C.R. Students, more precisely on preventing a tempestuous arrival with a view to protest (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, p. 13), since a delegation of the „moanițarian” group, which was known to disagree with the „cuzist” group (Cuza's supporters), had arrived in Iași (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, pp. 21-22).

Consequently, there was a clear delineation between the U.N.S.C.R. and the A.S.C.R., even from the authorities' point of view. The *Note* from 24 August 1924 concerning the upcoming congress of the F.M.S.C. in Bistrița-Năsăud is telling, in which the Secret Service agent signalled the deliniation of the event from the one organised by the U. N. S. C. R. As follows: „**this event has nothing in common with the one organised by the student centres.** The federation of Christian students is an international association whose main headquarters is in America, whence the Christian propaganda is directed among European students, in Oxford, with the Archbishop of Canterbury as honorary president and the professors alongside the students of the renowned theology Faculty in this city as members in the leading committee. This congress has been announced ever since the end of July and although **the members of the association are Christian, therefore antisemitic, yet the propaganda relies on persuasion, not on violence,** as the members of the student centres saw it.” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, p. 15).

Of course the political and economic fractures and tribulations resounded with all levels of society and influenced students' life more and more, which somewhat justified the radical manifestations within the U. N. S. C. R.- affiliated students. The U. N. S. C. R. adepts saw the purpose of the Union in „organising the Christian student population based on **national struggle**”, „total and unabashed nationalism” was the fundamental identity criterion. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, p. 52).

THE YEAR 1925 AS A TIME OF TRANSITION: REDISCOVERING LOCAL VALUES

1925 was a border, a transitional time, when global openness made way for the rediscovery of local values, which took more and more categorical forms. Up to a point the route was predictable. The dialogue with other nationalities inevitably led our Christian students (members of the Y.M.C.A, the A.S.C.R., the U.N.S.C.R. etc.) to settle some fundamental aspects of self-awareness.

Surely, looking at this dialogue confronts us with a complex and complicated phenomenon, conditioned by the fact that the natural process of opening towards general human values and particularly towards universal theological values, must take into account the historical, cultural, political (etc.) context. However, it is certain that all these international contacts made it easier for A. S. C. R.-students to relate to the orthodox values typical of the Romanian cultural space, to make it their mission to find universal forms of expression of the Romanian soul. In other words it determined them to identify our people's authentic lifestyle by theological, philosophic, literary, scientific and artistic means, in order to justify a *forma mentis* of unparalleled specificity. More simply put, it obliged them to look within and become aware of a spiritual matrix.

A telling example is the Congress in Băile Herculane (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol.1, pp. 55-56) – the international Conference (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol.1, p. 55) – which also enabled them to benefit from the contact with the circle of Russian Orthodox students in exile: „**As Russian delegates, professors and students who have taken refuge in non-Bolshevik countries, will also take part in this Congress**, the Universal Federation, through its representative Mr Henri-Louis Henrios, has sent a letter to our Foreign Office, declaring itself glad to guarantee that the participation of these delegates will not damage the interests of the Romanian State (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol.1, p. 55).

We should point out that the dialogue with the Russian students was not restricted to this Congress because Mircea Vulcănescu subsequently, when in Paris to finalise his doctoral studies, resumed contact with them (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010769, vol. 1, p. 5). This is hardly irrelevant. Mircea Vulcănescu's authority and, implicitly, his influence in the A.S.C.R. were overwhelming and the frequent meetings with the Russian refugees in the French capital generated an emulation of ideas, which led to in-depth research in Eastern theology and philosophy, at the same time as that in the West, which in its turn led to clarifying the specificity of Orthodoxy. In other words, Mircea Vulcănescu brought about a significant understanding of the values of tradition and Romanian cultural ethos, *following the path of Eastern Orthodox thought*.

At the same time it is necessary to take into account that these concerns of the A.S.C.R. members did not have much influence on the national student movement, where the Christian values were interpreted differently.

THE STUDENT CONGRESSES OF 1926 – THE IDEOLOGICAL RUPTURE BETWEEN THE Y.M.C.A., THE A.S.C.R. AND THE U.N.S.C.R.

A short review of the U.N.S.C.R. Congress which took place in Iași from 28 November to 1 December 1926 proves that the meanings, aims and visions of these organisations were becoming more and more obviously divergent (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010769, vol. 1, p. 86).

The tension of all parts involved is also felt in the activities preceding the Congress. Besides, the option to hold the proceedings in Iași, where severe political conflicts were unfolding, some with a dramatic outcome, was in itself sufficient motivation. We think it enough to mention the history of the conflict between Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu and the prefect Constantin Manciu, head of police in Iași, which ended in the latter's death (on 25 October 1924), to understand such an attitude on the authorities' part.

Simply consulting the documents in the present volume renders the consistency of the informing activity by the Security Service and the Police, which conscientiously supervised all participants from an early stage. Thorough, successive informing reports were therefore written (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 52), evidencing factual aspects concerning the organisational proceedings prior to the event: the schedule and purpose of the congress, the location of the working sessions, adjacent activities, topics each university centre had suggested for debate, etc.

As early as 20 November 1926 the General Security sent a cyphered telegram to the General Security Inspectorates of Cernăuți, Chișinău, Constanța, Craiova, Brașov, Cluj and Timișoara providing information about: the timespan the congress will take place in; the number of railway carriages available for ensuring the transport of the congresspeople from Bucharest, Cluj, Oradea Mare, Timișoara, Arad and Cernăuți; the publication of a special issue of the newspaper „Cuvânt studentesc” (disseminated in Iași, Timișoara, Arad, Cluj and Cernăuți) and at the same time requesting to send in time the data on the participants (their name, number and departure time) as well as the local centres' decisions about this event (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 42). Under these circumstances, the authorities ensured they acted in a coherent and especially in an efficient manner. Taking this view we can find another justification for (or at least a different perspective on) the fact that the state authorities provided for the transport of congress students. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 42).

Their support for the U.N.S.C.R. cannot but seem surprising, given that the organisation's radical

overtone had repeatedly spurred mass movements, as part of which the demonstrators had taken a vehement, powerful stance against the system. There were certainly multiple reasons. On the one hand, tolerance could be a way of sending the young U.N.S.C.R.-students a conciliatory message of mutual acceptance and we cannot exclude the possibility that it was a way of winning their trust, of influencing (manipulating) them politically. On the other hand we must stress that providing free transport also proved an efficient way of rigorously monitoring the students. The scale of the event is stressed by the care all those involved take to give their support: „Throughout 27 November and during the morning of the following day the different student delegations from across the country, amounting to 2500, arrived in Iași and were greeted at the train station by the friendly demonstrations of their local colleagues. The town has been paved and the authorities have given their utmost support for the sessions of this congress to take place in the utmost peace and quiet.” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 87).

The event was inaugurated on 28 November by a parade of the students carrying flags and singing patriotic songs. At 10 o'clock they reassembled at the Metropolitan Cathedral where a Te Deum mass was held. The next meeting point was the auditorium of the National Theatre where the U.N.S.C.R. committee and the representatives of the university centres in Bucharest, Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Cernăuți and Oradea-Mare were assembled on stage. The inauguration ceremony was conducted by the president of the Union, D. Dănuțescu, succeeded by the Rector of the University of Iași, Prof. Dr. P. Bogdan, who after reading out the message of the Education Secretary held a lecture on history, in the same patriotic, enthusiastic tone. That is to say, the political, university, clerical, magisterial and law elite warranted for the scale of the event and that the Rector of the University of Iași, the Education Secretary, Ion Petrovici (who at the same time was a professor with the Faculty of Letters in Iași), and A. C. Cuza, founder of the L. A. N. C. and a professor with the Faculty of Law in the same location, attended as presidents of the event speaks volumes.

Clearly the organisation of the U.N.S.C.R. Congress was in keeping with different procedure requirements than those of the A.S.C.R. The speaking order shows that a clear hierarchy had been predetermined upon according to the clerical, political, administrative or university titles and roles. A new power paradigm is practically being drawn where the speakers are not ordered according to their popularity among and recognition from the audience but according to the rank and position held.

The polarisation of students onto two camps was also noticed by the Secret Service reports. When students from Iași, who supported A. C. Cuza's L. A. N. C. *Liga de Apărare Națională Creștină* [= the National Christian Defence League] (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 57) suggested that the U.N.S.C.R. students should join it, those from Bucharest argued that the apolitical character of the organisation should be maintained. The fracture had made itself known even before the congress started. The hosts regarded the massive presence of students from Bucharest – around 2000 – as a form of intimidation. They were also alarmed at the great number of meetings of students from Iași (one was taking place in the very house where A. C. Cuza lived). On pretext of adding the finishing touches to the schedule, they had tried to secure the collaboration of their colleagues from Cluj and Timișoara in stating their point of view. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 87). A general meeting of the Union Council took place before the congress (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 45), where each university centre was represented by a committee made up of the centre's president and a predetermined number of delegates (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 52). At this meeting the following topics for discussion were decided on: 1) Cluj: The new organisation of student societies; 2) Bucharest: The relations between Romanian students and those from other countries; 3) Cernăuți: The obligation for students to wear a uniform; 4) Iași: The new principles guiding students” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 54).

Predictably, A. C. Cuza was named honorary president, which caused general elation, although he had initially turned down the position on account of the more and more obvious disagreements between the L.A.N.C. and the U.N.S.C.R. Students (particularly those from Bucharest). The speech by the L.A.N.C. Founder and the audience's reaction are along the same lines: ”A. C. Cuza thanks for the confidence bestowed in him again, pointing out that this congress will be of historic importance as it has to solve some significant problems. He develops his ideas about the nation and speaking of the grand deeds of past generations mentions H. M. the King whom he wishes good health, then he details on the progress of the last six decades and mentions the army, which is acclaimed by the whole auditorium.” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 91).

According to A. C. Cuza, the fight for the national interest included treating the *Jewish question* vigilantly, which students could best and easiest

deal with by *starting a trend* (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 91).

The debate on this issue is pursued on the second day of the Congress with subjects such as: "Numerus – Clausus („*closed number*"), - an issue set out in Cluj and developed on 10 December în Iași" (A.C.N.S.A.S., Documentary Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93) and the Act of 28 October 1922 "when the rights of Jews were guaranteed by the Constitution" (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93) „the military takeover of the University and the activity of Corneliu Codreanu, Gârneață, Corneliu Georgescu, Mironovici și Tudose Popescu, whose sufferings particularly during detention in the Văcărești prison are movingly described" etc. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93).

The speeches of the conference speakers generally centred around the students' mission of being ready to defend the Romanian people and culture when in danger and of finding legal ways to do this. Awakening national feelings is also connected to approaching thorny subjects such as the corpses used for dissections within the Medical Universities (students' refusal to use those of Mozaic faith: „the disappearance of the Jewish corpse") (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93), the irregularities of the University rules and regulations, the poor state of students, the unhealthy living conditions in student dining halls and dormitories (veritable breeding grounds for syphilis and TB), "the percentage of Jews in different countries out of total births, invading the universities, the percentage of war dead" (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93). These topics were as many arguments in favour of adopting a Numerus Clausus.

The scale of conflicts among the students who were more and more visibly drawn into the fierce battles of the historic parties can also be deduced from the way speakers from Iași especially interpreted the violence, even murders which upset public life in the first interwar decade. As, according to the inhabitants of Iași, Romanians saw their very existence threatened, defending their national identity was a duty, a necessary sacrifice, which justified even resorting to violence should the legal means not be sufficient: "He then explains why [the prefect Constantin] Manciu was killed on 25 October 1924 and praises his behaviour, because he was brutal to students in all circumstances." (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93).

Another edifying example is the case of Nicolae Totu, which caused an ample debate, as the students from Iași wrote a *Memoir* out of solidarity with his deed (in high-school he had shot his Jewish colleague David Falik going out of the Court of Law in Cernăuți) which they wish to

publish urgently in order to acquit the culprit of murder. Again, the students from Bucharest protest at the overzealousness of the congress attendants who risk unnecessary exposure by bringing this document to public notice and overlook the natural order of things. Besides, as the president of the Union pointed out, such an act would minimise the position of Minister Goga who intends to take a student friendly stand in Parliament on the subject anyway (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 109-110). The exalted tone leads to sententious speech endings (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, p. 94). Through its representatives the Group from Iași demands the methodical education of the popular masses by the district organisations and suggests that the Union "give its support to that political group whose manifest will include issues that the students have raised" (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93). The firm reaction of those from Bucharest who plead for total, unyielding Christian nationalism leads to the session's suspension and on reopening President Dănulescu reads the following motion, a somewhat conciliatory synthesis of the points of view previously expressed: „The students will promote total, unyielding Christian nationalism and, as a student organisation, it can't be part of a political party but as citizens they can provide support for any organisation whose manifest will include the wishes formulated on 10 December 1922" (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93).

As to the ideological split between the Y.M.C.A and the Christian students of the A.S.C.R. and the U.N.S.C.R., it was foreshadowed by the stand the theologian Lupănescu took at this Conference. Put in charge of a History of Christianity, he tackles the issue of the proselitism of certain sects which, as the beneficiaries of important financial resources provided by „the Jews of America, in order to diminish the state Orthodox faith" (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 108), have come to enjoy an alarming popularity. Priest Hâncu shares the view of the previous speaker and suggests involving the students and the authorities in combating the sects by organising conferences and cultural events. Ultimately the blame articulated was that with the Y.M.C.A.'s settling inland came an important number of propagandists and foreign missionaries, from among which the founders of religious sects were being recruited. (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, p. 67).

Another sensitive issue is that concerning the overseas activity of the Y.M.C.A., which was under suspicion of spreading messages unfavourable to Romanian students, who would be accused of religious intolerance among other things: "Tudose Popescu claims the foreign press in Cernăuți

seriously insults the Christian religion, quoting a passage from a Hungarian paper, reproduced and interpreted unfavourably to Romanians in a newspaper from Cernăuți” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, p. 110).

The annual Congress ends with the President of the National Union of Romanian Students laying down his mandate as according to the Statute he was entitled to fill this position for one year. Before this, Dănulescu had sketched a history of student movements and implicitly of his activity as president and in the end he asked the audience “to solemnly swear that they will fight unconditionally to satisfy the students’ concerns in accordance with the decisions of this Congress. The whole audience stands up and replies in the words: »We swear!«” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 110).

Naming Iulian Sârbu as president is deemed a real success by those from Iași considering that he „is known as a devoted follower of L.A.N.C. and especially of professor A. C. Cuza” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 111).

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

We must point out the clear difference between the student meetings prior to 1925 – the year marking, as previously stated, a borderline, a movement from widely open universality towards rediscovering local values – and the one at issue. It is clear even to an untrained eye that the two directions – universalism and localism – had during this time developed stronger and stronger tensions, hence the contradictory viewpoints. In this context, the role of the Christian students from Bucharest was all the more important as they had the maturity not to join the herd, to distance themselves from the excessively nationalistic or xenophobic tendencies and thus succeeded in becoming a factor which counterbalanced the obviously politicised views of the congress students from Iași. The gap between the issues typical of the university environment and those that would naturally fit in with the agenda of a party meeting proves that the U.N.S.C.R. gradually turned into a national tribune whose meetings fulfilled specific commandments.

Another aspect requiring special attention is the attitude the students from Bucharest took concerning the Y.M.C.A. irregularities. We think the absence of major protests concerning the proselitism of this world organisation is a significant clue. In other words the rupture between the A.S.C.R. and the Y.M.C.A. had been predictable even at this date.

It is certain that there were no violent incidents and the congress unfolded in a relatively normal manner. Nevertheless, as results from the

Information Report nr. 4716 sent by the General Inspectorate for Security in Basarabia to the Head of Police and General Security, things were not the same in Chișinău and Călărași. How did events unfold there? Some of the congress students, mostly from Transylvania, who had never been to Basarabia wanted to take this opportunity and, as proximity is definitely an advantage, accepted the invitation of Archbishop Gurie to visit the recently (8 November 1926) inaugurated Theological Faculty. According to the *Report* the students arrived on 2 December 1926, were welcomed at the train station in Chișinău „by their local colleagues and taken to the Theological Faculty, where they were given accommodations. From there they went *in corpore* to the Cathedral, where a *Te Deum* was officiated, with speeches by the priest professor Pișculescu and the priest Vasilescu, head of the Cathedral. After the *Te Deum* the students went to the Archbishop’s seat where they were welcomed by the Reverend Gurie and a reception was held.” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, pp.119-125, pp. 127 -130).

The violence was not without echo. The Paris Committee of Jewish Delegations had written a *Memoir* presenting the event (and implicitly all those involved in the development of the Congress) through a distorting glass, as follows: the purpose of the congress had been obviously antisemitic, with a hostile attitude towards Jews as common trait of the participating students. The Congress had overlapped with the inauguration of the Theological Faculty in Chișinău, which had led to the molestation of a significant number of Jews at the stops along the Iași-Chișinău route. Likewise, the Jewish population of the Jewish society „Oze” and the Marmorosch Blank Bank in Chișinău had been molested by the congress students, who had walked around in groups of 50 to 70 shouting threatening messages and had devastated two synagogues. At the same time the skirmishes in the market town of Călărași (an eminently Jewish town) had been started exclusively by the congress students who had vandalised Jewish homes and beaten men, women and children. Another accusation was thrown at the mayor of Chișinău, Mr Sebastian Teodorescu, who had unwittingly stood by while these disruptions of public order were happening (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, pp.119-125, pp. 127 -130).

The report focuses on each accusation and demolishes it. The Israeli youth was in its turn organised – the Jewish Cultural League, the „Macabi” society (a sporting society training Israeli young people)(A.C.N.S.A.S., Documentary Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, pp.119-125, pp. 127 -130), so that the aggression was not one-sided.

Clearly the members of the A.S.C.R. were a group apart, looking for solutions to the otherwise significant issues of interwar student life in their

own particular manner. In a disconcerting historic context when *Christian* and *Nationalism* had come to be automatically associated with often violent vindictive acts they succeed in remaining rational, clearly delineating themselves from being turned into a manageable mass at the beck and call of the different political ideologies of the day.

REFERENCES & NOTES

- [1] Agrigoroaiei, Ion and Gheorghe Iacob, Ovidiu-Ștefan Buruiană (2012), *Politică și cultură în România interbelică*, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, pp. 32-33
- [2] The disorientation of young people avid for political, cultural, philosophical benchmarks was the topic of numerous press articles of the time. See also the suggestively titled article: „Curente anarhice“, in *Dacia nouă*, Cluj, II, 1933, nr. 27 (5 februarie), p. 1: „In such difficult times, the young generation has a great and difficult mission. To come together in order to save not the mould of old men risen to positions they dishonoured but to save what there is to save.”
- [3] Sdrobiș, Dragoș (2013), „O identitate disputată în România interbelică: intelectualul. Între tribulații generaționale și diferențe specifice”, in *Politici culturale și modele intelectuale în România*, Ed. Mega, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 295-328.
- [4] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol.1, p. 18.
- [5] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol. 8, p. 85.
- [6] Butoi, Ionuț (2015), Mircea Vulcănescu: o microistorie a interbelicului românesc, Ed. Eikon, București, pp. 110-116, chapter „Colaborarea cu Seminarul lui Gusti: ODAS și Oficiul Universitar”, which looks at how these social projects developed by the A.S.C.R. unfolded under the direct supervision of Dimitrie Gusti’s first collaborators. Based on careful research of the C.N.S.A.S. archives and of the yearbooks of the main university centres in interwar Romania, the author provides a detailed analysis of the objectives, actions and role played by the O.D.A.S. and by the University Office respectively – „social solutions“ inspired and coordinated by Dimitrie Gusti.
- [7] See A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol. 1, p. 6: „Besides the educational activity which consists of readings, conferences, discussion groups, foreign language classes, the scientific guidance of the youth is also of particular importance, especially guidance towards professions in accordance with each student’s inclination. Physical education plays an important part in the association’s timetable. The association owns gyms, volleyball and table tennis courts, boxing rings etc. Great attention is paid to the medical examination. The headquarters in str. Progresului nr. 8 hosts a **library and a reading room with over 3000 volumes, mostly science and religious books.**” (highlighting C.C.)
- [8] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol. 1, pp. 6-7.
- [9] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol. 1, p. 79.
- [10] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 014758, vol. 1, p. 96: „Under the protection of the Y.M.C.A. „the Christian Association of Students from Romania” was founded in our country in 1920. In its turn it is part of the Universal Federation of Christian Student Associations which it joined in 1924. The European Headquarters of this International Association are in Geneva. Since then the A.S.C.R. has been organising annual meetings, which are also attended by similar student delegations from abroad.”
- [11] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, pp. 27-33.
- [12] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, p. 5.
- [13] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, p. 10: „As the student leaders are certain they will not be granted the authorisation for the congress, they are currently working on naming the delegates that will attend, who will be contacted at their holiday residence to go to the appointed location.” and *Ibidem*, p. 13: „On 1 September of this year the meeting of the Federation of Christian Students will be held in Năsăud. As approved by the Ministry for Education. This congress is distinct from the congress of nationalist students which will take place during August in Iași and which will rather take the shape of small scale talks because they fear the government will take measures to prevent its happening.”
- [14] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 27-33.
- [15] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 27-33.
- [16] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, pp.27-30 și p. 33.
- [17] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, p. 26.
- [18] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 27-33.
- [19] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file nr. 010767, vol.1, p. 13: „About this latter congress there is dissent between the student centre in Bucharest and some of the students

who had attended the meeting last year, who claimed that the centre will determine them to further waste their university years with pointless antisemitic agitations.”

- [20] On 1 September 1924 the Subsecretary of State sent the Prefect of the Bistrița-Năsăud county and the General Police and Security Inspector in Cluj respectively a cyphered telegram requesting to take the necessary measures to avoid irregularities at the congress of F.M.S.C. students: „We take this opportunity to also draw your attention to the fact that a group of students from Iași supporting Cuza would arrive to create disorder at the congress.” A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, p. 21. On the same day the Head of the Bistrița Brigade, Teodorescu Petre, was wiring that: „A large group of gentlemen and lady students left last night from Iași headed for Năsăud.” (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, p. 22).
- [21] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, p. 15 [highlighting C.C.]
- [22] See the Information Report no. 10041/926 by the Secret Police Service Iași: „As the aim of the Union is organising the Christian students based on the idea of **national struggle**, it is always made up exclusively of nationalist students (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 52). Conversely, the *Informative Note* of 24 August 1924, regarding the nearing Congress of the F.M.S.C. in Bistrița-Năsăud, in which the Secret Police agent warned the authorities about the peaceful character of the participants, whose concerns did not match those of the U.N.S.C.R. members.
- [23] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol.1, pp. 55-56.
- [24] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol.1, p. 55: „At the Congress which took place in Poland, the Universal Federation expressed its wish to hold this year’s conference in Romania. Sixty delegates from the following countries will participate: England, Austria, Bulgaria, Tchechoslovakia, Danemark, Switzerland, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Norway, Holland, Poland, Sweden and Hungary. The timeframe set is from 22 April to 2 May and the guests will stay at the resort Băile Herculane.“
- [25] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, vol.1, p. 55 [highlighting C.C.].
- [26] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010769, vol. 1, p. 5: „[Mircea Vulcănescu shows] that ever since 1927 (when he was in Paris) he has been an Editor with the French Insurance Company *L’abeille*, earning 1200 Francs a month.“
- [27] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010769, vol. 1, p. 86: „From the beginning, when the students in Iași first read the telegrams of the students from Bucharest letting them know 2000 students would arrive, they thought those from Bucharest aimed to impose their will through sheer numbers and thus forewarned they sought to secure the support of the students from Cluj and Timișoara. Several talks took place between the leaders of the delegations prior to opening the congress, on the pretext that they should go over the details of the schedule. From the beginning a great difference was noticeable between these two centres on the subject of insufficient preparations for the success of the congress and on other minor matters.“
- [28] On 18 November the Secret Police Service wrote the *Informative Report* no. 9974, only to write another one just a day later (the *Report* no. 10041/926). See A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 52.
- [29] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 42.
- [30] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 42: „On 29 and 30 November and 1 December this year the National Student Congress will take place in Iași, which will be attended by a great number of students from all university centres across the country. Four wagons from Bucharest, three from Cluj and Oradea Mare, two from Timișoara, one from Arad and one from Cernăuți were requested for the transport of the congress participants”.
- [31] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 87.
- [32] The *Report* no. 16280 from 24.11.1926 by the Secret Police mentions that: „On the evening of the 22 ult. a meeting of the local Christian students took place again discussing the new principles structuring Christian students with an aim to fight for the national cause and two proposals were put forward, both to the effect that the student centres’ relationship to the L.A.N.C. should be one of friendship and mutual support.“ (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 57).
- [33] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 87.
- [34] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 45: „Prior to the Congress, on the 25 and 26 this month a general meeting of the union council will take place, where the topics for discussion will be decided on and particularly the report concerning the militarisation of students will be read.“

- [35] The *Information Report* no. 10041/926 by the Secret Police Service stated that: „Following our report no. 9974 of 18/11 this year we have the honour to report that last evening 19 ult. the mentioned meeting took place at the «A.S.C.» headquarters at Hotel «Bejan», with a view to drawing up the schedule of the general student congress on 29, 30 November and 1 December this year, called by the National Union of Romanian Students which represents all the Christian student population. It is made up of delegates from all university centres, amounting to 3 members from Iași, 3 from Cluj, 2 from Cernăuți, 2 from Timișoara, 1 from Oradea Mare and 5 from Bucharest. The union's president, vice-president, secretary and cashier are always elected from among Bucharest students, so that they can meet whenever necessary.“ (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 52).
- [36] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 54.
- [37] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 91.
- [38] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 91.
- [39] Latin phrase – „*closed number*“, which cannot be altered; in this case it refers to limiting the number of Jewish students who can be enrolled at Romanian universities.
- [40] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93.
- [41] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93.
- [42] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93.
- [43] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93.
- [44] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93.
- [45] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93.
- [46] „President Dănulescu, supported by those from Bucharest, rises and says that this memoir cannot be published as requested until Minister Goga will have replied to the interpretations of the events in Cernăuți and because Mr Goga will reply in such a way as to excuse the gesture caused by the events in the Capital of Bucovina, in order not to appear to be making these statements under pressure from the congress participants, he suggests publishing the memoir after Mr Goga's statements in Parliament, who by the way he has spoken with in this matter a few days before the congress.“ (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 109-110).
- [47] A.C.N.S.A.S., fond Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, p. 94: „... in the report's conclusion Sava asked the bureau to print a brochure about the movement's history containing as part of its conclusion the words: «Romania to Romanians only, Christ, the King and the Nation»“.
- [48] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 93.
- [49] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, pp. 99-100.
- [50] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 108.
- [51] The briefing the first Brigade of the Secret Police wrote on 18 April 1928 also mentioned this aspect: „While in the past only the adventists were known, today there are baptists, anabaptists, Bible and other sects, whose religious practice if we were to forbid, America would scream, so there would be a world scandal and the Y.M.C.A. central in America itself directs them by means of the press.“ (A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 014758, f. 67).
- [52] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, p. 110.
- [53] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 110.
- [54] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol. 1, p. 111.
- [55] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, pp.119-125, pp. 127 -130.
- [56] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, pp. 119-125, pp. 127 -130.
- [57] A.C.N.S.A.S., Document Section, file no. 010767, vol.1, pp.119-125, pp. 127 -130.