

SANDU TUDOR AND THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Keywords
Sandu Tudor;
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Orthodoxy;
Christian paradigm;
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Abstract

It is known that Sandu Tudor (alias Alexandru Teodorescu) belonged to the elite of the young interwar generation, certified, in particular, by his position as a journalist. What is less known is the quality of his ASCR membership (ASCR - the Christian Student Association in interwar Romania) in his student years. The sources that verify this latest information are the secret police archives as well as the testimony of Sandu Tudor himself – his autobiographical memoirs. The sources of the analysis come, in particular, from archive documents in Romania and from the interwar press. Thus, in particular six files from A. C. N. S. A. S. (the Archives of the National Council for studying the secret police archives) covered the field of documentation: first, the Y. M. C. A. (Young Men's Christian Association) files, but also the files of student congresses in Romania during the period dealt with by this study. The reader should be warned that the interpretative sketch below does not claim a substantial analysis of what the interwar young generation meant to Great Romania. The examination of this association aims to identify conclusive data on how the church was perceived and experienced especially by students and intellectuals during the interwar period.

JEL Classification: I20, K49, Z12

INTRODUCTION

The reconstruction of the route covered by Alexandru Teodorescu (alias Sandu Tudor), in the context of the Christian Students' Association in Romania, a movement whose doctrine focused on Christian ideals, can also be an authoritative source of information about the links between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the State, which were two key institutions, undergoing a fast-paced process of modernization and an inevitable crisis of legitimacy.

The sources of the analysis come, in particular, from archive documents in Romania and from the interwar press. Thus, in particular six files from A. C. N. S. A. S. covered the area of the documentation field: first, Y. M. C. A. files (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 010769, vol. 1 and file no. 014758, Documentary Fund, vol. 1, *passim*) but also the files on student congresses in Romania during the period proposed by this approach (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 010767, vol. 1 and vol. file no. 013653, vol. 1 and vol. 2, file no. 011545, file no. 011546).

This study, based on archival material, comes, thus, about 90 years after the events and brings back up to date the subject of relations between church and state in the first interwar decade (a subject that still arouses controversy), taking as a starting point Sandu Tudor's activity within the A. S. C. R. As the phenomenon of student organizations claiming their Christian affiliation is not sufficiently known, some of the files that constituted the sources of this chapter are found in the chapter *Documents* of the previously published volume- *Sandu Tudor and Christian Student Associations in interwar Romania* (Carmen Ciornea, 2017). The selection was according to both the relevance of the respective pages in relation to the proposed topic and editorial reasons.

Making this data available is an honest invitation for the potential reader (researcher) to learn, understand and, hopefully, even debate on the presented phenomena, institutions and personalities.

THE MOMENTUM OF A DEBUT. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN ROMANIAN STUDENTS (A. S. C. R.)

What does the Association of Christian Romanian Students (A. S. C. R) mean? What was the context of the emergence of this association? How did it get organized? What was its activity? Where did that association's funds come from? What were its links to other associations and, more importantly,

how was it regarded by the Romanian Orthodox Church and political parties? - Here are some of the strands of this subchapter.

The A. S. A. C. R. was founded by a group of enthusiastic students under the direct influence of the leaders of the Y. M. C. A. (Young Men's Christian Association) in Romania, a world organisation, which, in 1925, had branches in 35 countries. The beginnings of this international society are related to the Y. W. C. A. (Young Women's Christian Associations), *the Christian Association of young women*, which had been founded in England in 1855. The organization enjoyed a very good receptivity, proof that in a short time such associations were also established in America, Boston, France, Germany, etc. (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no.014758, vol. 1, f. 50).

PRELIMINARIES: IDEOLOGICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL REASONS FOR THE WORLD ORGANIZATION Y. M. C. A

According to the programmatic texts, the basic principle of the Association of Romanian Christian students was to unite young Christians who considered Jesus Christ as a model of their own existence. In other words, these organizations aimed to provide a framework for the relationships among young people who were animated to extent His kingdom on Earth, a goal which predictably had a significant number of followers at the end of the First World War.

It must be said, however, that the Association was kept within the sphere of a secular institution of private initiative, whose origin was, as shown, in the countries under the Anglo-American influence. Why is it important to consider this? Well, because the Association was an institution whose leadership was secular, not to be confused with an organization of religious congregations, which were subject to all other rules and goals.

However, it is an unavoidable truth that the stated purpose of the world Association of the Y. W. C. A., which was "responsible for" the creation of the A. S. C. R. –was built on the Christian ideal and the well-being of all parties concerned, in the sense of working together, the workers in the factory, in particular, young female workers. Four years later, a Federation of all national associations was formed, named the World Federation of Christian Women, led by a committee, residing in America, and in Europe, in London. The Y. M. C. A. had a student Relief Department, called the International Student Service, which, in our country, was located and represented by the O. D. A. S., part of the A. C. S. R. The latter, as the title suggests, dealt with the

social activity of the organization, where Sandu Tudor was the director in the period 1925-1928, as recorded in his autobiographical memoirs, (A. C. N. S. A. S., criminal fund, file no. 013495, vol. 2, f. 204).

In order to get a clearer picture of the purpose of the doctrine and the impact of this international association, a diachronic presentation of its development is first shown, the main source of research being an archival document. The Y. M. C. A. (Young Men's Christian Association) was an International Association, which derived from the Y. W. C. A. and gradually developed on federal principles throughout the world. The messianic purpose of this world association can be interpreted as a transposition of the evangelical message in social nuances. As its name suggests – the Young Men's Christian Association- the organization proposed a trans-confessional, trans-national unit by educating young people in a universal Christian spirit.

Educational concerns took heterogeneous forms, even though the emphasis was on cultivating religious and national feelings. Thus, charity and solidarity acts were combined with activities aimed at ensuring the intellectual and physical development of the members of the organization. The head office of the Association was also located in America, in New York, the president being the politician Dr. John R. Mott. For Europe, the Y. M. C. A. had its headquarters in Geneva. In America, the Y. M. C. A. was recognized as a youth association, formed on a Masonic basis, with tendencies to fight atheism and communism.

THE CONTEXT OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN STUDENTS IN ROMANIA (A. S. C. R.)

In Romania, the emergence of the A. S. R. C. was the result of Queen Mary's initiatives, who, together with other Romanian nationals studying in Paris and London sent an invitation to the central committee of the Y. W. C. A. in 1919, in which she proposed a programme for the Romanian army, similar to the one the association had devised for the allied forces during the First World War (A. C. N. S. A. S., the Documentary fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 52, ff.54-55, ff. 78-79, passim). More specifically, the initial purpose of this association was to give soldiers the opportunity to relax in their spare time by reading books and magazines or / and practicing light sports.

According to the archives of the C. N. S. A. S., General Moşoiu was directly involved in the development of this project; to this end he appointed a committee of officers, which included former general Bădulescu Virgil, who had become the director of the Physical Education Institute (the

A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 5). The purpose of the committee was to collaborate with the directors of the association and establish a programme of physical and intellectual education in the major military centres in Romania. The activity within the Romanian Army was carried out under the auspices of the "Prince Carol House ", under the patronage and under the supervision of the former King Charles II (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 5).

Gradually, the association began to work for the civilian population, especially in large cities, where free English courses were inaugurated. Also, sports fields were organized and *paintball and volleyball* games were introduced for the first time in Romania. At first, it was supported by a small group of students (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 50, F. 79). Starting with the year 1920, the organization was established under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A. Association, under the name of *the Association of Christian Students in Romania* (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, ff. 4-8 or f. 50, passim). The legal personality was obtained, however, much later – on 9 June 1927 (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 5) and then reconfirmed on December 14, 1936.

BRIEF CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ACTIVITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN STUDENTS IN ROMANIA

The modest number of members of the A. S. C. R. represented a constant of this organization, which comprised, over time, only a few dozen, at most hundreds of followers. In terms of this parameter, the question about the importance of the role and the impact of this movement on the young people may seem justified. However, the role of these associations did not rely exclusively on this criterion, and things turned out to be, in this case, much more complicated than at first glance.

In other words, despite the fact that the A. S. C. R. was not quantitatively a force, the impact of its actions on the cultural, social and theological environment was considerable. How do we argue? In fact, the A. S. C. R. carried out an intense activity, organizing camps, exhibitions, cinematographic performances, game teams, celebrations, conferences, etc., where those values that could keep the national spirit awake were promoted. At the same time, it can be said that it represented an effective form of Romanian propaganda, considering that some of the leading members of the association, as well as teams of national choirs and dances travelled abroad for this

purpose. Furthermore, it was the medium for the formation of Sandu Tudor (Alexander, Ta), who, together with Mircea Vulcănescu, Paul Sterian, gave this organization a clear direction, with multiple reverberations particularly among the younger generation (A. N. C. S. S. A., Documentary fund, file no. 010769, vol.1, f. 2; ff. 4-5).

Surely, in this sequence of arguments aiming at supporting the significant, if not the determinant role played by the A. C. S. R. for young intellectual people, there is a need for relevant examples and evidence, but these data will be the subject of the next subchapters.

The identification of the source of the funds of this association is also of paramount importance. According to the archival data, initially, financial support had been provided by the Y. M. C. A. This fund was intended to cover the expenses necessary for the completion of a basic infrastructure (a restaurant, dormitories, etc.) and the remuneration of the staff to explain the goals of the association (courses in English and French, the conferences on religious topics, etc.). The funds came from the war funds collected in America for the war work in Europe (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 50).

Continuing the logic of archival sources, the aim would have been that, as time went on, each country would become autonomous, that is, having the ability to lead and develop by its own means. In other words, the stated objective would have been to fully nationalise associations so that they could operate with national staff, according to a national programme and, in particular, on the basis of national funds.

In general, the strategy paid off: the A. S. C. R. managed to establish subsidiaries in Iași (A. S. C. I.) and Cluj (I. K. E.). So the target had been reached. Predictably, in the summer of 1923, A. S. C. R., A. S. C. I., I. K. E. joined *the Christian Association of Women and Youth*, and established *the Federation of Christian Student Associations in Romania* (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 55). At the time the Y. M. C. A. operated in 52 countries and possessed a handling capital of over \$ 2 billion (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 55).

The momentum with which this movement was received in Romania is also confirmed by the notoriety of the persons who formed the Honorary Committee of the Y. M. C. A., which brought together, practically, political, cultural and social peaks, such as: A.S.R. Principe Niculae high Regent; Dr. C. Angelescu, Minister of education; D. Gusti, university professor; N. Iorga, university professor; Oromolu Mihail, former governor of the National Bank; Romulus P. Voinescu, General Director of the secret police. The committee also

comprises major personalities such as: Colonel V. Bădulescu, Boncescu George, Caragea Constantin, engineer Stavri Cunescu, father Gala Galaction, Ion Lupășcu, engineer Traian Meșianu, D. Nanu, Professor C. Nedelcu, Mihail Negru, engineer C. Penescu Kertch, Professor N. Petrescu and Professor Rădulescu Pogoneanu (A. C. N. S. A. S., the Documentary fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, F. 52 bis).

Well, it is appropriate to point out that, as evidenced by this list, at that time even the people in the secret police service were not shy about guaranteeing the authority of the YMCA.

A STATE OF SPECIAL ENTHUSIASM

Therefore, on December 19, 1920, the inauguration of the headquarters of the Association, the Y. M. C. A., occurred and was attended by a plethora of authorities from all social strata, prominent personalities from the cultural, political and theological, national and international background (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 51). The contemporary reader might be intrigued finding out that this association was accredited by such a heterogeneous elitist group, which brought together the heads of the Romanian Cultural Institutions with those of the state institutions and, especially, with representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The enthusiasm of the governmental, University and theological authorities may seem suspicious since not once had the fractures of the Romanian interwar society placed them in opposed positions, especially in terms of the methods and ways of dealing with the interwar young intellectuals' problems. Besides, we also know that it was about the inauguration of an association built on English national values. How come no one saw an attack on national sovereignty? Was it cultural obtuseness or impure arrangements? Before we hazard a sentence, it is best to look into the conditions of the phenomenon worldwide.

As demonstrated by the programmatic texts, this Protestant student movement had a strong social-missionary and modernisation message, which was in line with the imperatives of those times (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol.1, ff. 4, 6-8, f. 50, ff. 48-49, 51, *passim*; A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 010769, vol. 1, f. 2, ff. 4-5, *passim*). In fact, we must admit that it developed not only in Romania, but also in the rest of the Orthodox East, according to a similar scenario (enthusiasm – refractory attitude – rejection).

Obviously, students' heterogeneous reception requires the same wide contextualization, without which the mechanisms that generated it cannot be

understood. In the face of the disturbing changes in the political life after the First World War, present both internationally (Bolshevik Revolution, the installation of the communist state, Hitler's Germany, Fascist Italy, France, France, Spain) and internally, the interwar young man acutely lived the tragic feeling of aimlessness. Once the desideratum of the Great Union was reached, against the background of a genuine euphoria the political factors were faced with particularly complex challenges arising from the obvious social, economic and cultural inequalities between the territories that made up Great Romania. This explains the focus of the political class on the (unfortunately often ambiguous) elaboration of various integration strategies based on a concept of a homogeneous Romanian state.

THE UNIVERSITY- THE GUARANTOR OF A NEW TYPE OF INTELLECTUAL

The old world was sinking and the foreshadowing of the new one involved direct participation, a massive involvement of *a new man*. However, the Romanian efforts were even clearer in the academic environment, the space that provided the foundation of the national culture, the physiognomy of which, by vocation, was inextricably linked to the formation of intellectual elite. The imperative of modernisation, generated by the historical context, was particularly consistent with the specifics of higher education institutions which, by their nature, had a universal purpose, attached to various ideologies and civilizing ideals. This explains the massive influence that universities (teachers and students alike) played in Great Romania, not only at cultural levels, but also on the level of socio-political transformations (*The future*, Viitorul, 1919).

It should not be neglected the fact that in spite of the background of general enthusiasm in the interwar Romania the pace of development of capitalism, as a solid support of modernisation, was marked by significant disparities compared to the spirit of the era. The imbalance of the economy was, and echoed the euphoria of the national policy plan, which was characterised by an excessive politicisation of not only the "state apparatus", but also the teaching staff. The Royal Decree No. 441 of 21 January 1919 was in line with the register of holding monopoly on the activities of universities; it stated no more and no less than the exclusion from education of university teachers who proved an *antinational attitude* (Lucian Boia, 2009). In goes without saying that politics, the revanchist spirit or the shaping of some interest groups were often the foundation of various fractures, crises and protests of young students. Besides these, after 1922, a genuine tradition of student congresses

began. The frequency of youth meetings is confirmed by archival documents, which comprise impressive tomes on the topic. Without going into the details of this phenomenon, it is proper, however, to note that the image of the young avant-garde, ground-breaking, often aggressive young man did not represent, by far, a peculiarity of the Romanian society, but was part of a pattern of the generational tribulations of a large circulation. One does not have to be a psychologist or sociologist to admit that adolescence is, par excellence, a time of identity crisis, a time of transition. It is the period when the human being abandons his old stage (child) in order to rediscover himself; he seeks new landmarks, personality models that will help him to integrate into a given social context, to become someone (adult).

What is spectacular is man's ability to shake off the young generation's revolutionary militant imperatives and find viable solutions to interwar student problems outside the political sphere. Abandoning the herd instinct implies, as we know, a great dose of maturity. Here is another argument that adds to the thesis that the role of A. S. C. R. was not insignificant at all.

Coming back to the diverse perception of students in inter-war Romania, the authorities of the universities were among the supporters of the A. S. C. R., as they felt more and more helpless in the face of students' protests and their subsequent problems (see: D. A. D.-the meeting of the 25th of January, 1929, publ. in M. Of. no. 18 of 14 February 1929, pp. 559-560, where in his speech Deputy V. Rășcanu pointed out some of the failures in the field of education: the increase in the number of intellectuals who had not been absorbed into labour market in our country, the lack of libraries, universities, laboratories, etc., hence the implacable conclusion: "the education of these obedient products of wretched high schools, was only in reality entirely illusory"). The end of the war created a framework conducive to the generalization of the meritocratic principle, for all social categories. The engine of these transformations had been the process of profound democratisation producing notable transformations of the society which meant if not a recalibration, at least, a balancing of the social hierarchy. The granting of universal suffrage, the new and profound land reform in conjunction with the abolition of the privileges of the old noblemen who had lost their political authority (power), were actions which led to an increase in the chances of access to education of the middle class (Our Future, 1925).

In other words, the aspirations of peasants' children would no longer be dependent on manufacturing or trade; they would turn to major urban areas, which opened their access to military, diplomacy, justice, and administrative positions of the state, etc.

So, after 1919, young people understood more than ever, that personal success in the new state was inextricably linked to school investments, especially of higher rank. In this context, emancipation was translated into terms of a cultural revolution – the successive wave of the achievement of the national ideal.

STUDENTS AND HISTORICAL PARTIES TOWARDS MODERNIZATION: SOCIO- CULTURAL CRISES OF THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

Obviously, objective measures were taken and universities were subjected to an accelerated and profound process of modernisation – associated with liberalism and market economy – a fact validated by the rapid expansion and diversification of the network of higher education centres: the four largest universities in Bucharest, Iași, Cluj and Cernăuți. The heterogeneous picture of higher education was confirmed by the fact that other higher education institutions subordinated to the above mentioned universities were founded. Thus, the Academy of Architecture, The Academy of Fine Arts, the Academy of music and Dramatic Art, The Polytechnic School, The National institute of Physical Education, the Academy of Agronomy and the School of War in Bucharest; the Faculty of Law in Oradea; the Polytechnical Institute in Timisoara; the Romanian Academy of fine Arts, the Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in Iasi; the Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, the Academy of Agriculture in Cluj and the Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in Cernauti.

The problem lay in the inability of the state to deal with the massive increase in the number of students who triggered a proportional increase in the state funds allocated to universities (*Cuvânt studențesc*, 1923), the growth of which, however, was not conform to reality.

The next question is, undoubtedly, how these university centres worked. The fact that all the faculties, in the spirit of autonomy, had, in addition to the budgetary provisions, a so-called "university fund", fuelled, as a rule, from various fees received from students. The simple enumeration of the fees necessary for university courses makes it easy to understand the interwar student's difficult financial route: enrolment fees, exam fees, fees for the equivalence of diplomas, fees for various competition commissions, fees for university stamps, fees for the library, fees for the doctoral and Diploma examination, laboratory fees, a. The fund was also open to any donations or sums resulting from *financial impoundments* (for unmotivated absences, replacements). In other words, interwar students' vindicative spirit was legitimized by socio-cultural crises of the

academic environment; the young man found himself facing the spectre of a society in convulsions and searches, in which the political class proved to be, if not disinterested, at least unfit to reconcile the disharmonies brought about by modernization. The feeling of humiliation and lack of respect that the young student lived was also generated by pragmatic issues: accommodation in dormitories, canteens, scholarships, study spaces (amphitheatres, libraries, laboratories, etc.). Efforts to identify effective educational policies, ensuring optimal social conditions for students, had often resulted in resounding failures. The general secret police' reports on student congresses, from the C. N. S. A. S. archive (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 010767, vol. 1, ff. 86-111), outlined a clear picture of the deplorable conditions of Romanian students.

In addition, the inconsistencies of political and ideological formulas worsened them. Moreover, as held by the periodical "The Voice of the students", the relationship between the political powers and the interwar youth evolved under the sign of politics (P. P. Negulescu, 1927); decision-makers were, it seemed, less confident (or, at the very least, less aware) about intellectual activity as the key to success in the development of Romanian society: "the Confusion of the youth, and, especially, the university students gets bigger as they are tempted by the rise of fascism to the West, by the communist regime to the East while in the country we take part in the most disgusting spectacle" (V. Marascu, 1934).

As mentioned, the poor conditions in canteens and dormitories (real sources of infections, tuberculosis etc.), the problem of fees and non-existent auditoriums, the lack of equipment necessary for laboratories and practical activities were just some of the numerous claims that made up their agenda. Of course, the most serious problem was unemployment and the reduced chances graduates had to integrate into labour market, most of whom joining the lines of diverse protest movements (Dragos Sdrobis, 2012).

STUDENTS THROUGH THE SECRET POLICE'S MAGNIFYING GLASS

Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that in the eyes of the governmental authorities interwar young people had also become a potential danger for the order of the state and social system, especially since political solutions for their claims (legitimate as they might have been) were not possible. Moreover, as some of the solutions offered by political officials led to the worsening of students' social condition, the secret police and the gendarmerie were the main supporting factors in dealing with this issue.

In fact, the conflict between the parties is confirmed by the extent to which the university environment university was monitored in inter-war Romania; the vigilance and surveillance were also mirrored in extensive reports of the commissioners of the political police on the occasion of the various events of the student associations.

The enthusiasm of the authorities, who, by their mere presence, guaranteed the credibility of the association (the international Y. M. C. A. – and by extension the S. C. R.'s- whose work had commenced under the auspices of the former), could be put down to the fact that they saw in this organization an efficient way to keep young students away from extremists of communist origin (A. C. N. S. A. S., the Documentary fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 6, F. 18) or Legionnaires, the latter enjoying hallucinatory popularity in those times.

The need for affirmation in the public eye, specific to 1929-1933, was followed, as an *avant la lettre* manifestation of the approaching world conflagration, by a stage of ideological and, inevitably, political regimentation. What were the consequences? The fulminant development of the Legionnaire movement and its popularity among young Romanian students reached the highest levels after 1930.

However, that did not mean that the overall safety vigilance of the state was diminished. As already pointed out, the fault between the younger generation and the authorities was based on all sorts of private or social frustrations, all kinds of resentments, most of which being right and justified. However, this whole range of exaltations was solved, in the spirit of the times, by means of coercion, which ultimately led to outbreaks of rough violence.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE DANGER OF MANIPULATION

The stylistics of the *report* signed by a special commissioner, in which the activity of the Y. M. C. A. Association was detailed from its foundation to June 7, 1921 – (the date of the signature of that document) can serve as a "model" of informative action of the secret police. In short, the document covered issues related to the financial resources of the structure, the specific features of activities (separated in six points), the supporters of various spheres (governmental, political, social, cultural and theological) and, last but not least, issues related to the credibility of those in power, etc. (See A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol.1, ff. 48-49, 51).

The paper focuses on this last point. How did *credibility* translate into safety? The research on the persons coordinating the Association usually dealt

with two aspects. The first was related to the fear of infiltration of foreign agents providing information of economic and political nature to the media: American spies (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 7, F. 51), English (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, ff. 7-8) or Jews – considered to be in the service of the Bolsheviks (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f.48), endangering the Romanian state's interests (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 7, ff. 48-49, 51). The second revealed the secret police' fear that due to the education mediated by the above-named Association, the young followers could turn into a powerful reactionary group, manipulated to serve the goals of progressive foreign organisations or even of the historical political parties (in opposition) (A. C. N. S. A. S., the Documentary fund, file no. 014758, vol.1, ff. 22-23).

While there is no place here for more complex analysis, the theme of the peril posed by foreign agents should not be overlooked. If fears of a possible infiltration of American and British spies were justified by the origins of the YMCA, the discovery of possible "Bolshevik and communist nests" whose members were, in particular, Jews, requires a broader discussion.

In fact, leafing through the press of the time proved that the subject of communist danger was almost the order of the day, the articles on the events in Hungary in the autumn of 1918 (revolution and proclamation of the Republic), in which the Jews had played a significant role, being predominant. If we add to them, and the reports from the Soviet Russia, where words such as "revolution," "the stranger," "communist," were often connected to the noun "Jew," it is easy to understand how intelligence reports had frequent references to Jewish students' activity.

The context deserves nuances, considering the flow of a traumatized memory. What does that mean? It is quite obvious that the incidence of accusations of Bolshevism was increased among Bessarabian Jewish students, just as, following the Treaty of Trianon, the *qualification* of irredentism (an annexation doctrine) was applied, especially, to the Jews from Transylvania, Hungarianised over time. It is true that a significant part had embraced the ideology of communism, which, must have appealed to them through its promise of ensuring equal opportunities, fraternity, homogeneous social classes, etc. Equally, the suspicions of the conspiracy were fuelled by the fact that the Moldovan students, most of them Jews, had a well-developed spirit of solidarity (which, in the circumstances, could easily pass as a sign of distinction, even contempt), using only the Russian language.

As for the second danger that loomed over student organizations' activities, when excessive politicization pervaded academic environment and party switching no longer scandalized anyone, it was no wonder that the secret police suspected possible enticements of young students by parties eager to strengthen their position.

RECONSIDERING THE Y. M. C. A.: FROM AN ORGANIZATION WITH WIDE POPULARITY TO AN UNDESIRABLE SOCIETY

The reception of the student movement is clear-cut in the light of the archival documents, so that, between 1920 and 1925, we can speak of a so-called "stage of exploration" and after 1926, the register of the reports of the secret police was not as favourable, as history established a new direction. This is how the Y. M. C. A. came to be perceived as a tool used by foreigners, the diagnosis having arguments from the two spheres that constituted the motive of the research from the very beginning.

The idea of transforming this International Association into an undesirable society, which may bring serious damage to the image abroad, was highlighted in the press of the time. Predictably, the main voice was that of Nae Ionescu, who knew the unrest of A. S. C. R. students in detail; he published a series of articles in *Cuvantul* magazine, aiming to draw attention to various irregularities within the International Association. Thus, this context justified the acid verb and the constantly negative and *deprecatory terms* which evaluated the Y. M. C. A., such as: "a false and tendentious informer about the circumstances of our country", an instrument in the hand of Jewish propaganda to slander the country (Nae Ionescu, 1927). His conclusions leave no room for doubt: "At this time, when the foreign propaganda inflates their cheeks to blow into the mouth of slander against us, the Y. M. C. A. is an enemy" (H. Smith, 1927). Coming back to the Christian education of the Association, the reaction of the Romanian Orthodox Church aligned the current upgrade of the Eastern Church; the initial acceptance of the Y. M. C. A., and its endorsement by prominent figures of the Orthodox Church was not a unique phenomenon manifested only in the Romanian space. It was *credited* by remarkable personalities of the Russian Orthodox Church, such as Bishop Ilarion Troițki (Ilarion Troițki, 2005), or the Serbian Church - Nicolae Velimirovici later canonized (Saint Bishop Nicolae Velimirovici, 2010).

In fact, in 1923, the Y. M. C. A., organized in Bucharest a conference whose agenda put forward its agreement with the Orthodox Church; the assembly comprised "representatives of the

orthodox church from Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia" (A. C. N. S. A. S., the Documentary fund, file no. 014758, vol. 8, a-f. 84), who agreed on the collaboration "on condition that **the Christian orthodox members of the Association of confessed their orthodox faith, remaining faithful practitioners of the church** and using priests within the ACT for the Christian education," (with A. C. N. S. A. S., the Documentary fund, file no. 014758, vol. 8, f. 84). However, it is important to note that the representation of the Association by prominent figures of the Orthodox Church was not a lasting phenomenon. Two years later, the first divisions began to be felt, and the church personalities, one by one, distanced trenchantly from this "ecumenical" movement.

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- [2] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 010767, vol. 1 (student Congresses in Romania (1922-1928)) and vol. 2 (student disorders in Oradea (year 1928)); file no. 013653, vol. 1 (Congress of the Student Union of Romania (28, 29, 30 November and 1 December 1926)), vol. 2 (Student Congress of Bistrița Monastery (1-2 august 1927)), file no. 011545 [student Congresses in Romania (1931-1932 years)], File No. 011546 [student Congresses in Romania (1933-1934 years)].
- [3] Ciornea, Carmen (2017), Sandu Tudor and Christian student associations in interwar Romania, Ed. Eikon, Bucharest, Romania [Sandu Tudor, and Christian student associations in interwar Romania, Eikon Publishing House, Bucharest], pp. 129-354.
- [4] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 50
- [5] A. C. N. S. A. S., criminal fund, Case No. 013495, vol. 2, f. 204.
- [6] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 52, ff. 54-55, ff. 78-79, passim.
- [7] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 5.
- [8] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 5.
- [9] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 50: "the movement has so far [November 1920] 40 members meeting every Sunday at 11 o'clock." See A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 79 : " at first the Association of Christian

- students from Romania (A. S. C. R.) counted only 40 members".
- [10]. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, ff. 4-8 or f. 50, passim.
- [11] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 5.
- [12] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 010769, vol.1, f.2 or FF. 4-5.
- [13] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 50: "following a request made by the Romanian ladies who were in Paris and London and who saw the association at work, especially a special request of M. Sale Queen Mary, addressed to the American Committee, the world Committee in London decided to establish an association in Romania. For this purpose a certain amount of money was intended for the necessary expenses at the beginning and staff was appointed whose purpose was to explain the work of the Y. W. C. A. in Romania and to ascertain whether or not it is necessary here. (...) The funds came from the war funds collected in America for the war work in Europe"
- [14] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 55.
- [15] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 55.
- [16]. A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, F. 52 bis.
- [17] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 51.
- [18] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol.1, ff. 4, 6-8, f. 50, ff. 48-49, 51, passim; A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 010769, vol. 1, f. 2, ff.4-5, passim.
- [19] Barbulescu, Mihai and Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Serban Papacostea, Pompiliu Teodor, Romanian history, Ed. Encyclopedic, Bucharest, 1998, p. 422: "[the interwar period was an] Age full of vitality and creativity in which Romanians from all social strata experienced new ideas, from philosophy to poetry and from politics to business. But it was also an age of disputes and divisions, because Romanians were forced to reorganize institutions established long before, to re-examine respected traditions and to confront the problems of a rising bourgeois society on the path to urbanization, a common phenomenon in Europe."
- [20] The role that the University played at that time appears described both in the literature and in the press of the interwar times. Thus, in one of its articles, (the issue of November 15, 1919), the "*Future*" stated that the universities are not just "schools where they teach knowledge and are endowed with material and external culture: laboratories, museums, libraries, lecture halls," but they are also "sources of national light, the sites and hearths where the ideals of the national culture and spirit are forged; the sites from which energies are driven towards cultural and national progress," "the alma mater of culture, the centre of the currents of civilization"(the *Future* year for the XII, no. 3,520 of 15 November 1919).
- [21] Paprika, Lucian (2009), "*Germanophiles*". *The Romanian intellectual elite in the years of the First World War*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, passim.
- [22] In this context, there were articles with a focus on the principles of the organization of the higher education system, in which the common subject was the analogy between the old school, "which aimed to form a group of well-prepared intellectuals and provide them with the existing stock of knowledge – intellectuals who are able to easily work with abstract concepts but are still completely bewildered and helpless with the demands of reality", and the new school which aimed "to better prepare young people for life, providing them with social values and a little knowledge, preferring instead of a scholar, who can barely walk but crawl, a guy who is humble, manages a bit of knowledge but firmly stands on his in life" (the *Future*, the year the TWENTY-first century, no. 6.005 of 25 February 1928).
- [23] Agrigoroaiei, Ion Gheorghe Iacob, Ovidiu-Ştefan Buruiană (2012), *Politics and culture in interwar Romania*, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Publishing House, Iaşi, pp. 24-34.
- [24] "*Considerations on the causes and character of the student movement*", in: *Cuvântul studentesc*, Bucharest, I, 1923, no. 1 (7 Jan.), p. 2.
- [25] The informative report prepared in December 1926 and signed by the General Safety Inspectorate of Iaşi, is enlightening: a detailed presentation of the activity of the 4 days of the General Congress of the National Union of students of Romania from Iaşi is made: the programme and the purpose of the Congress, its venue, the management of some thorny issues in the agenda, such as: Numerus - Clausus, the corpses used for dissections at the faculty of medicine (the refusal of the Jews to use them if they are Mosaic), the irregularities in the rules and regulations of the university, the precarious status of students, the unsanitary conditions in the dining halls, and the student dormitories (sources of syphilis, and tuberculosis), transportation, the membership of the student movement to a political party (in this case, A.C. Cuza's L. A. N. C.), relations with the outside world, the breach of discipline on the part of some academics, Totu's case (the murder of Manciu), the Y. M. C. A. as well as the Jews' slander of the country

- abroad, the Jews' scholarships abroad, the struggle of particular groups of interests (political interference) for the appointment of a new chairman of the U. N. S. C. R. (A. C. N. S. A. S., the Documentary fund, file no. 010767, vol. 1, ff. 86-111).
- [26] See P. P. Negulescu (1927), "Education reform" for a broad treatment of the subject on politics in education and university administration, Draft laws, second edition, Ed. House of schools, p. CXVIII.
- [27] Mărăscu, V. (1934), "Where are we going?" in: *Glasul studențimii*, I, no " 1 (18 March), pp. 2-3.
- [28] Sdrobiș, Dragoș (2012), *Elites and Universities in interwar Romania*. The problem of "intellectual unemployment" in the yearbook of the Institute of history "George Barițiu", Historica series, LI, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 255-285.
- [29] See the safety report stating: "the I. M. C. A. currently operates in 52 countries and has handling capital of more than \$ 2 billion. **In America, the I. M. C. A. is a youth association composed on a Masonic basis, with tendencies to fight atheism and communism.** In Romania, young and generally high school students from all classes, constituted a vast field of activity of the association from the beginning. The collaboration of high school principals was precious, organizing groups of students under the leadership of a well-trained staff, proceeding to general and especially sociological discussions, **in which Christian issues were dealt with in opposition to Marxist doctrine**" (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 6) and A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 18: "to this end, the leaders of the I. M. C. A. secured the collaboration of high school principals, organizing groups of students under the leadership of a well-trained staff in order to address sociological issues" **the main objective being to show that Christian doctrine opposes Marxist dialectics** "[underlined. C. C.].
- [30] See A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol.1, ff. 48-49, 51.
- [31] If in the report of 7 June 1921 the Commissioner of Secret police noted that "the Association is under the direction of the secretaries: Miss Wilsohn and Mr. Jones Tuel, **Americans known to the Covenant as persons above any suspicion**" (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, F. 51) subsequently the content of the reports changes its optics: "FRANK STEVENS, who occupies a leading place in American intelligence, takes over the reports and then sends them directly to Washington. Also, Seraphim BUTA from the American mission comes almost every day to the headquarters in Progress Street, where he has secret meetings with ZAHIRNIC. Also Mr GEORGE MAC DONALD, ROY WALTERS and JEANE MAGMUSSON of the American Mission are present daily at the I. M. C. A., where they hold various meetings" (A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 7).
- [32] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, ff. 7-8: "Locot. Col. MASTERSON and Le ROUGETTEL of the **British mission** offered large donations to the association, with the aim of intensifying anti-communist propaganda."
- [33] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, f. 48: "the investigation findings regarding the Y. M. C. A. Association in the capital about which the counterintelligence Bureau of the General Staff with address no. 35 of 10. 12 of the now expired year [in 1920], informs us that **many Jews are among the members of this association and could be in the service of the Bolshevik power**, among whom a certain Geferson Dicksohn, an alleged cinema operator (...)", and Ibid., f.51: "Continuing my research to find the said GEFERSON DICKSOHN reported by M. S. Staff **that would be working for** the Bolsheviks being in the service of the association, we have found out that he is not known in the circle of the operators at the cinemas, the Control of the Foreigners', the Office of the Population, the Control of the Hotels, the Police of the Capital..."[printed. C. C.].
- [34] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, a-f. 7: "**the head Office of the association**, led by CONSTANTINE ZAHIRNIC, in addition to educational and cultural services, **also deals with spying, having at his disposal a dozen agents spread out in the city and the province,**" A. C. N. S. A. S., the Documentary fund, file no. 014758, vol. 1, ff. 48-49, 51.
- [35] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol.1, ff. 22-23: "at present, the Y. M. C. A. supported financially by the English and American missions, while receiving substantial subsidies from the tops of the local opposition parties maintains **an intense reactionary propaganda in favour of historical parties** and tendentious interpretations with sociological character **among young people**" "[underlined C. C.].

- [36] Ionescu, Nae (1927), "Y. M. C. A", in the *Word*, third year, no. 866, Thursday, September 15, p. 1.
- [37] Ionescu, Nae (1927), "Y. M. C. A", in the *Word*, third year, no. 866, Thursday, September 15, p. 1.
- [38] †Troitsky, Ilarion (2005), *The New Confessor, Christianity or the Church?* translation by Constantin Făgețean, Ed. Egumenea.
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- [40] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 8, f. 84.
- [41] A. C. N. S. A. S., Documentary Fund, file no. 014758, vol. 8, f. 84.