

REVISITING A PROBLEMATIC FILE FOR THE ROMANIAN DIPLOMACY: THE GOJDU LEGACY

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ABSTRACT

Emanuil Gojdu has remained to this day the absolute landmark of Romanian philanthropy, of Aromanian origin, but his legacy continues to remain a difficult subject to deal with, especially because for more than a century it has generated and continues to generate a series of debates and controversies on this subject, inflaming the national political scene, but also the Romanian-Hungarian foreign relations. Although there is the impression that this is an exhausted issue, the course of which is largely known, the subject of the Gojdu legacy deserves to be revisited, if only as a necessary exercise in historical memory.

Keywords: Emanuil Gojdu, Aromanians, philanthropy, Gojdu Foundation, diplomacy.

AROMANIAN ROOTS

Emanuil Gojdu was born in 1802 in Oradea, into a family of Aromanian merchants (father, Athanasie Popovici-Gojdu, mother, Ana Poynar) who emigrated at the end of the 18th century from a powerful commercial center for the southern Danubian Macedo-Romanians, Moscopole³⁹².

This biographical information on the great philanthropist's Aromanian ancestry may at first surprise some, being considered a detail rather a footnote in the illustrious patron's destiny. We believe, however, that more generous explanations are needed regarding the way in which Gojdu's Aromanianness was a structuring part of his personality and projects.

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³⁹² The biography of Emanuil Gojdu and the destiny of his foundation were supported by the bibliographical works:

1. Maria Berényi, *Viața și activitatea lui Emanuil Gojdu 1802–1870 [The Life and Activity of Emanuil Gojdu (1802–1870)]*, Giula, 2002a.

2. Cornel Sigmirean and Aurel Pavel, *Fundația „Gojdu”. 1871–2001 [“Gojdu” Foundation. 1871–2001]*, Târgu Mureș, Petru Maior Printing House, 2002.

3. Cornel Sigmirean and Aurel Pavel (editors), *Emanuil Gojdu – Bicentenar [Emanuil Gojdu – Bicentenary]*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Printing House, n.y.

4. Titus Serediuc, *Fundația Gojdu – Dimensiunea Economică [Gojdu Foundation – Economic Dimension]*, Sibiu, University Lucian Blaga Printing House, 2006, as well as numerous articles published in the press of the time or in the Gojdu Fund Files of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives in Bucharest.

Today, most Romanian and foreign historians and philologists agree that the Romanian people was formed on a territory stretching both north and south of the Danube, a territory that obviously goes far beyond the borders of today's Romania. From a single common trunk, the Daco-Romanians, *i.e.*, the North Danubian Romanity, and the Aromanians, Megleno-Romanians and Istro-Romanians, *i.e.*, the South Danubian Romanity, were later separated.

The Romanic element (called Vlah in the chronicles) was in a continuous retreat from the successive Slavo-Turanian invasions towards the mountainous areas, less exposed to the ravages of time, where it can be localized until the modern era. This shows a continuous regression of the Romanic population, but on the other hand it also proves the reaction of preservation of the specificity of an ethnic individuality towards the oncoming Slavic wave. In documents, the Romanic population appears under the ethnonym of Vlachs, but they have always called themselves by a name inherited from Latin: Romanus. The most widespread variant today is that of Aromanian, with a prosthetic specific to their language (especially in front of the sounds r- and l-) with an unaccented o closed to the u, the syncopation of which is not absolutely obligatory. The Aromanians of northern Pindus (especially the Fârșeroti) have preserved the old form without- a- Rumăn, Rămân (the latter with the delabialization of o after r).

At the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century, most of the Balkan Peninsula came under Ottoman rule, and thus the possibilities for the Christians, and thus the Aromanians, to assert themselves politically and culturally became extremely limited.

However, Sultan Murad II (1422–1452) issued a capitulation to the Aromanians, later confirmed by subsequent sultans, which from the very first point specified:

“High justice will be distributed in the country in the form of a *cadi*, according to Wallachian laws. The Wallachians will be able to travel freely throughout the empire, practicing whatever profession they see fit”³⁹³.

These facilities granted to the Aromanians were no coincidence, as in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Aromanians became suppliers to the conquering armies in full expansion, whose maintenance required meat, dairy products and clothing, beasts of burden, etc.

The Aromanian settlements of Kleisoura (a.k.a. Clisuri), Șiatista, Linotopi (Aliakmon river valley), Măcove (a.k.a. Aminciu), Călarli, Șipisca, Gramoște, Grabova, Moloviște, Siracu, Samarina, Malacaș and last but not least Moscopole, developed in the 16th – 18th centuries and became important centers of trade. Aromanian merchants made their mark in international trade by land and sea,

³⁹³ „Înalta dreptate va fi distribuită în țară în ființa unui *cadiu*, conform legilor valahe. Valahii vor putea călători în toată libertatea, prin tot imperiul, exercitând orice profesiune li s-ar părea bună.”, in Aravantinos, *Chronographia tis Ipiru*, I, Athens, 1856, p. 57, quoted by Anastasie Hâciu, *Aromânii [Aromanians]*, Constanța, Aromanian Book Publishing House, 2003, p. 35.

especially on the eastern Adriatic coast, doing business with the Italian states, especially Venice³⁹⁴.

The starting point for all this intense trade was the Aromanian settlement of Moscopole, which reached its peak in the mid-18th century. This town appeared in the documents of the time as an “*urbs amplissima*”, with over 12.000 houses and a population of around 50.000³⁹⁵. It was probably the second largest city after Constantinople in the entire Balkan Peninsula. Pouqueville gave for Athens at the same period only 10.000 souls, mostly Albanians and Turks³⁹⁶. Moscopole had several schools, a printing press, an academy inaugurated in 1750 and an important library. Against the backdrop of the Russo-Turkish (1768–1774) and Russo-Austro-Turkish (1787–1792) wars, Moscopole was sacked twice in 1761 and 1769, and in 1788 it was plundered and completely destroyed along with the surrounding Aromanian settlements of Shipiska, Bitcuchi, Niculița, Linotopi, Nicaea, Lanca, Grabova and Birina³⁹⁷.

Much of the population uprooted by the barbarity of the Albanian Muslims, the perpetrators of the destruction, would eventually settle in Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, the German States, the Danube Principalities, Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, etc. In their new homeland, the Aromanians, although recognized as Greeks – a religious term, which was applied to all Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire – made a name for themselves among the commercial and financial bourgeoisie (the Aromanian families of Sina, Dumba, Tirca, Curti, Tricupa, Kapra von Zsuppa, von Mitta, Zotta, Șaguna, Mocsonyi, Gojdu or Manno, who distinguished themselves through charitable foundations and patronage and thus came to enjoy special consideration in their new homeland, often even receiving noble titles)³⁹⁸.

For the Aromanian intellectuals in the diaspora, the Latin origin and the attraction of Rome proved strong enough to create an awareness of their own individuality, which then tended towards the development of a modern national consciousness. While in the diaspora the Aromanian intellectuals were able to cultivate and assert their identity, at home, in their homelands under Ottoman rule and Byzantine Greek influence, there was a meandering and sometimes contradictory manifestation of identity. Modern Hellenic nationalism supported by a propaganda-driven educational system severely weakened the identity consciousness of Balkan Roma groups.

As far as the Aromanian element was concerned, the Greek authorities practised a series of assimilation policies which altered the demographic balance in

³⁹⁴ Matei Cazacu, „Vlahii din Balcanii Occidentali” [“Western Balkan Vlachs”], in Neagu Djuvara (coord.), *Aromânii: Istorie, Limbă, Destin* [Aromanians: History, Language, Destiny], Bucharest, Humanitas, 1996, p. 97.

³⁹⁵ Max Demeter Peyfuss, *Die Druckerei von Moschopolis, 1731–1769* [The printing works of Moschopolis, 1731–1769], Habilitation, University of Vienna, December 1988, p. 35.

³⁹⁶ Anastasie Hâciu, *quoted work*, pp. 154–155.

³⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 164.

³⁹⁸ Max Demeter Peyfuss, *Chestiunea Aromână* [The Aromanian Question], Bucharest, Encyclopedica Publishing House, 1994, p. 16.

the area and produced huge waves of displacement of this population. The intervention of the Romanian state in the mid-19th century, by supporting a network of consulates, schools and churches serving in Aromanian, attempted to limit the extent of this phenomenon of denationalization and to offer an alternative for the cultural and linguistic preservation of this group.

Arriving in Central Europe as early as the 18th century, the Aromanian refugee communities from the Balkans would always carry with them the ambition to become professionals, to validate their community. They had the experience of surviving in a hostile environment and a range of skills developed mainly in the area of trade. Not by chance, this ethnic group was recognized in modern times as the “Jews” of the Balkans³⁹⁹.

In 1783, Emperor Joseph II granted a special ordinance drawing the attention of the authorities to these refugees as those who brought great benefit to the monarchy’s great trade and needed special protection⁴⁰⁰.

In the Romanian territories of the Habsburgs, the Aromanians settled especially in large urban centers such as Brasov, Alba-Iulia, Blaj, Cluj, Oradea, Beiuș, Timișoara, Sibiu, Lugoj, Caransebeș.

In Oradea, the birthplace of Emanuil Gojdu, the Aromanians are not a discreet presence. Theodor Capidan notes that a bishop, Meletie Covaci, a native of Neagușta (now in Greece), was appointed bishop in 1748⁴⁰¹.

The same author thus appreciated the role played by the Aromanian communities in the Romanian regions:

“As far as Transylvania is concerned, there is no church that has not received the donation of a Macedo-Romanian family. No archival research is needed to prove this. A simple glance at the inscriptions on the tombstones in the older cemeteries of these churches is enough to discover their great donors. In this respect the churches of Budapest, with the largest donation from the great merchant Dimitrie Arghir of Moscopole, the church of Miskolc, on the frontispiece of which is written ‘at the expense of the Romanian confraternity of Macedonia’ the church of Tokay, the residence of the Mocioni family, and finally the church of Zemlin, etc., will remain for a long-time living testimonies to the generosity and generosity of this invaluable Aromanian element. The role played by the Macedo-Romanian families in the provinces under Hungarian rule inhabited by Romanians is, unfortunately, still not well studied. All that is known is that they came into contact with the Romanian element in those parts and immediately became its brothers, taking an active part in all its national upheavals and giving it a number of men who, through their genius and patriotism, wrote the most beautiful page in the history of the rebirth of the Romanian people over the mountains. From the way in which these Romanians behaved in the Romanian provinces in Hungary, it follows that where, in their estrangement, they encountered a

³⁹⁹ Ronald Matthews, *Sons of the Eagle Wanderings in Albania*, Londra, Methuen, 1937, p. 234.

⁴⁰⁰ Maria Berényi, *Cultura românească la Budapesta în secolul al XIX-lea [Romanian culture in Budapest in the 19th century]*, Giula, 2000.

⁴⁰¹ Theodor Capidan, *Macedoromânii. Etnografie, istorie, limbă [Macedoromanians. Ethnography, history, language]*, Bucharest, Royal Foundation for Literature and the Arts, 1942, p. 84.

Romanian environment, they quickly returned to national consciousness, identifying themselves with the aspirations of the Romanians; where this environment was lacking, they lost themselves, by encusading, in the midst of the foreigners with whom they lived”⁴⁰².

One of the ancestors of the Gojdu family, named Naum, is among the founders of the Orthodox church in Miskolc⁴⁰³, Hungary, built between 1785–1806 “at the expense of the Wallachian brothers from Macedonia”, as the origin of the church’s benefactors is specified in the church’s inscription⁴⁰⁴.

According to the preserved historical information, Emanuil Gojdu’s father was a cattle merchant, thus preserving the traditional socio-professional profile of the Aromanians. Athanasie Popovici-Gojdu and Ana Poynar had 6 children together, Emanuil being the second.

After attending elementary school in Oradea, he began his studies at the Roman-Catholic high school in the same town, which he completed in Eger, Hungary. He began his legal studies at the Academy of Law in Oradea, continued them at the Academy of Law in Pojon (Bratislava) and completed them at the University of Pest, where he obtained his law degree in 1824.

Emanuil Gojdu made himself known to Romanian circles in the Hungarian capital during his traineeship with a recognized lawyer, Vitkovics Mihály. During this period, he contributed to the first Romanian literary magazine, “Romanian Library”, published and edited by the Aromanian Zaharia Carcalechi, and it was also during this period that he came into direct contact with the Romanian elite of the time and met the man who would later become the Metropolitan of Transylvania, Andrei Şaguna, another Aromanian. The friendship between the two can certainly be traced back to this period when Emanuil Gojdu frequented the home of the Aromanian Athanasie Grabovski, an Aromanian, uncle of Andrei Şaguna and one of the most active members of the Aromanian colony in Pest.

⁴⁰² „În ce priveşte Transilvania, nu există locaş bisericesc care să nu fi primit donaţia unei familii macedoromâne. Pentru dovedirea acestui lucru, nu este nevoie de cercetări în arhive. Ajunge o simplă ochire pe inscripţiile de pe pietrele mortuare din cimitirele mai vechi ale acestor biserici, spre a putea descoperi pe marii lor donatori. Sub acest raport bisericile din Budapesta, cu cea mai mare donaţie din partea marelui negustor Dimitrie Arghir din Moscopole, biserica din Miskolc, pe frontispiciul căreia stă scris, «prin cheltuiiala confracţilor Români din Macedonia», biserica din Tokay, reşedinţa familiei Mocioni, în fine, biserica din Zemlin, etc. vor rămânea multă vreme mărtuturii vii despre generozitatea şi dărnicia acestui nepreţuit element românesc. Rolul pe care familiile macedoromâne l-au jucat în provinciile de sub stăpânirea maghiară locuite de Români, din nenorocire, nu este încă bine studiat. Atâta se ştie numai că ele venind în atingere cu elementul românesc din acele părţi, imediat s’au înfrăţit cu el, luând parte activă la toate frământările lui naţionale şi dându-i o seamă de bărbaţi care, prin genialitatea şi patriotismul lor, au scris cea mai frumoasă pagină din istoria renaşterii poporului român de peste munţi. Din felul cum aceşti Români s-au comportat în provinciile româneşti în Ungaria, rezultă că acolo unde, în înstrăinarea lor, dădeau de un mediu românesc, ei reveneau repede la conştiinţa naţională, identificându-se cu aspiraţiile Românilor; acolo însă unde acest mediu lipsea, ei se pierdeau, prin încuscrire, în mijlocul străinilor cu care trăiau.” in *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰³ In this church was baptized Andrei Şaguna, the future metropolitan of Transylvania, today canonized by the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Metropolitan’s ancestors are also among the founders of this imposing church.

⁴⁰⁴ Maria Berényi, *quoted work*, 2002a, pp. 9–10.

After his traineeship he opened his own law office in Budapest and from that moment on he became an authority on civil law, his pleadings being studied in the textbooks of the time. His fame began to be increasingly coupled with financial prosperity, with Emanuil Gojdu acquiring over time numerous plots of land and buildings in central Budapest and investing wisely in shares in Hungarian banks. He thus became one of the influential figures in the Hungarian capital. He felt the political temptation, and in 1848 he was one of the political leaders of the Transylvanian Romanians. He was elected Supreme Committee of Caraș and, in this capacity, became a member of the House of Magnates in Budapest, the equivalent of the Senate. Parallel to this political activity, Emanuil Gojdu also strongly supported Romanian cultural institutions: he was a founding member of the Association for the Culture and Literature of the Romanian People (ASTRA), organized a committee to help Romanian students in the Hungarian capital, prepared the establishment of a Romanian high school in Lugoj, etc. In 1869 he was appointed member of the Supreme Court of Justice in Budapest and at the end of the same year, in November, he made his will.

Ioan Cavaler de Pușcariu recounts in his memoirs that together with other friends he was called as a witness to the authentication of Gojdu's will:

“Then Gojdu said to us only this, that he would like in a hundred years to rise from the grave to see what had become of his will? Then he added: Why! As a lawyer, I have made hundreds of wills for my clients, but no one has been able to attack them, and I don't think anyone will attack my will either!”⁴⁰⁵.

Only a few months later, on February 3, 1870, he died. It was his close friend Andrei Șaguna who was to open the will in which the bulk of his estate was to form the material basis of a foundation to support young Romanian Orthodox scholars in Transylvania. In the absence of proportionate political representation, Transylvanian civil society was forced to strengthen itself ecclesiastically and culturally by setting up numerous foundations to take over the task of an absent ministry of culture. There are countless cases in which wealthy people, but also peasants with a small property, bequeath a piece of land or a sum of money after their death to set up foundations bearing their name and working for the cultural emancipation of the area. This institution of patronage meant the cultural and ecclesiastical survival of Romanian Transylvania in the modern era.

WILL

In article 7 of the will left by Emanuil Gojdu it was stated:

⁴⁰⁵ „Atunci zise Gojdu cătră noi numai atâta, că ar vrea peste o sută de ani să se scoale din mormânt ca să vadă ce s-a ales de testamentul lui? Apoi adause mai departe: Măi! Eu ca avocat am făcut sute de testamente pentru clienții mei, dar nu le-au putut ataca nimenea și cred că nici testamentul meu nu-l va ataca nimenea!”, in *Ibidem*, p. 107.

“I leave my entire estate to that part of the Romanian nation in Hungary and Transylvania which is bound by the Eastern Orthodox law. From this bequest I wish to establish a permanent foundation, which will bear the name ‘Gojdu Foundation’”⁴⁰⁶.

This foundation was to be headed by a representative body which was to include: the Orthodox metropolitan or archbishop (at the time of the will there was only one Orthodox metropolitan see of Romanians in Hungary, the one with its seat in Sibiu), all the Romanian Orthodox bishops of Hungary and Transylvania and three laymen. Gojdu also made it clear that all the members of the representative office would not be materially remunerated for their work within the Foundation

“feeling remunerated by the consciousness that they have also helped to process the material given by me for the flourishing of the beloved nation”⁴⁰⁷.

The scholarship was to be destined for:

“young Romanians of the Orthodox religion, distinguished by good behavior and talents, whose parents are not able with their own wealth to provide for the upbringing and education of their children”⁴⁰⁸.

The Representation, in fact a board of trustees, was to submit to the financial control of the Metropolitan all the capital of the foundation to be invested. This testament is not a dead letter, and we are still within the validity period of its provisions, Gojdu having devised a scheme to grant scholarships until 2020 after which it would enter another funding cycle.

The provisions of the will were intended for the exclusive use of Orthodox Romanians, thus excluding Orthodox Serbs or Greek-Catholic Romanians from the possibility of stipends.

Emanuil Gojdu thus left an extremely clear message to future generations also in terms of his confessional, but also national identity, one of the articles of his will stating unequivocally:

“If in time the Eastern Orthodox Church in the homeland should be so constituted, that Serbs with Eastern Romanians should hold church synods together, or if in national matters Romanians of the Eastern religion should hold congresses or other national assemblies prescribed by law together with Greek-Catholic Romanians, otherwise called united, – in such convened assemblies, my foundation would under no title be able to make itself the subject of discussion; – on the fate of this foundation, not only the vote, but not even the opinion of the Serb and of the united Romanian should be disregarded”⁴⁰⁹.

⁴⁰⁶ „Întreaga averea mea, o las în întregul ei acelei părți a națiunii române din Ungaria și Transilvania care se ține de legea răsăriteană ortodoxă. Din lăsamântul acesta voiesc să se constituie o fundațiune permanentă, care va purta numele ”Fundațiunea Gojdu”, in *Ibidem*, p. 172.

⁴⁰⁷ „simțindu-se remunerată prin conștiința că au ajutat și ei la prelucrarea materiei date de mine spre înflorirea iubitei națiuni.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 175.

⁴⁰⁸ „tinerilor români de religiunea ortodoxă, distinși prin purtare bună și prin talente, ai căror părinți nu sunt în stare cu averea lor proprie să ducă la îndeplinire creșterea și cultivarea copiilor lor”, in *Ibidem*, p. 174.

⁴⁰⁹ „Dacă cu timpul Biserica Ortodoxă Răsăriteană din patrie s-ar constitui astfel, ca sârbii cu românii răsăriteni să țină împreună sinoadele bisericesti, sau dacă în privința națională românii de religiunea răsăriteană ar ținea împreună cu românii greco-catolici, numiți altfel uniți, congrese sau alte adunări naționale premise de lege, – în astfel de adunări mestecate, fundațiunea mea nicând sub nici un

The above passage suggests that Gojdu did not accept at the helm of the foundation Romanians without an Orthodox confessional criterion (Greek-Catholics), or Orthodox without a Romanian ethnic mark (Serbs). For Gojdu the influence of the Serbs, even if of the same faith, was not acceptable, the memory of the Serbian hierarchy's domination over the Romanians from the Carpathian arc, exercised in a denationalizing spirit, was still alive and further enhanced by the complications of the process of ecclesiastical separation.

We therefore note the very well-defined symbiosis of confessional and ethnic consciousness in the case of Emanuil Gojdu.

If at the beginning the assets of the foundation consisted of a number of shares in the most important banks and credit houses in Budapest, as well as vineyards and orchards on the outskirts of Budapest, thanks to an intelligent administration – the name of Ioan Cavaler de Pușcariu should be mentioned here – since the end of the 19th century the foundation's wealth has grown considerably, as well as investments in land and buildings (the 7 buildings of 28 floors in total that are today in the center of Budapest, known generically as the Gojdu Courts, were built between 1903–1908).

As for the number of scholarships awarded to Romanian Orthodox students, some 6.200 scholarships and over 1000 other grants were awarded between 1871–1919.

A good example to characterize the wealth and prosperity of this foundation is that in 1920 alone it supported 251 students to study in the universities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and other universities⁴¹⁰.

The amount of the scholarships varied according to the needs and financial problems of the scholarship holder. The names of those who benefited from these scholarships are, in fact, the Orthodox elite of Transylvania: Ioan Lupaș, Victor Babeș, Valeriu Braniște, Traian Vuia, Aurel Vlaicu, Octavian Goga, Silviu Dragomir, Aron Cotruș, Lucian Blaga, Andrei Oțetea and Dumitru Stăniloaiie – to name but a few of the generous list of beneficiaries. Unfortunately, the generation of 1919–1920 would be the last generation to benefit from the Gojdu scholarships.

In an article of the Treaty of Trianon, which officially sanctioned the union of Transylvania with Romania, recognized by the Great Powers, but especially by Hungary, it was specified that Hungary was obliged to return all movable and immovable property to the owners, natural and legal persons in the successor states (Romania in this case). In 1924 an agreement was signed between Romania and Hungary on the settlement of the affairs of the Gojdu Foundation.

There were to be a series of working meetings, which were to be systematically postponed until 1928, when the Hungarian government announced that it had frozen the foundation's accounts and appointed a Hungarian commissioner to administer its assets, to be paid from the foundation's own wealth. Not coincidentally, the period marks a serious setback in the Foundation's income.

titlu să nu se poată face obiect de discuțiune; – asupra soartei acestei fundațiuni nu numai votul, dar nici chiar opiniunea sârbului și a românului unit să nu se asculte”, in *Ibidem*, p. 215.

⁴¹⁰ Maria Berényi, *Moștenirea lui Gojdu în oglinda presei române și maghiare (1995–2005)* [*Gojdu's legacy reflected in the Romanian and Hungarian press (1995–2005)*], Budapest, 2005, p. 179.

This delaying tactic, in which the Hungarian partner excelled, was to continue throughout the inter-war period (a number of agreements were signed during this period, which would decide future negotiations on this issue, but which were always put on hold). The tension between the two sides that should have been at the negotiating table was also growing because of the list of claims that the Hungarian governments displayed whenever the Gojdu Foundation's assets were brought up for discussion. However, under repeated pressure from Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, an agreement was signed on October 27, 1937, whereby Hungary was to hand over to Romania within 30 days of the entry into force of this decision the entire patrimony of the Foundation that was located on Hungarian territory.

However, the neighboring state carefully premeditated this move, ratifying the treaty only in 1940, shortly before Horthy's troops occupied Northern Transylvania.

In a letter dated February 5, 1941, Bishop Nicolae Colan, the only remaining Romanian Orthodox hierarch in the occupied territory, wrote to Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan expressing the hope that the Emanuil Gojdu Foundation could be reactivated, especially in the new context when a large number of Orthodox Romanians who had escaped foreign domination in 1918 had returned to Hungarian occupation with the Vienna Dictatorship. For the Vulgate Nicolae Colan

“the reactivation of the ‘Em. Gojdu’ is expected by the entire Orthodox community in Transylvania. But it is especially awaited by our faithful in Transylvania ceded to Hungary (...)”⁴¹¹.

The bishop of Cluj insists to his metropolitan that once the Hungarian-Romanian negotiations resume, the Gojdu issue should be at the top of the Romanian demands.

Of course, the importance of the effective functioning of this foundation for the Orthodox people of occupied Transylvania became a priority for Bishop Nicolae Colan in view of the increasingly complicated financial situation of the Orthodox diocese. From September 1940 onwards, it remained within the framework of a state whose official apparatus had from the very beginning engaged in numerous abusive seizures of land and real estate, leaving the church institution without much money income⁴¹².

After World War II, the Hungarian People's Republic issued a decree in 1952 nationalizing all houses in Hungary with more than 6 rooms. Unjustifiably, this list of nationalizations also included the Gojdu Foundation's properties. The following year, in 1953, on the recommendation of the Soviet Union, the two sister-states of the communist camp signed an agreement by which they renounced all claims for compensation. The Gojdu estate remained closed for almost half a century. At the beginning of the 1990s, the Romanian Orthodox communities in Hungary demanded

⁴¹¹ „reactivarea fundației «Em. Gojdu» e așteptată de toată obștea ortodoxă din Ardeal. Ea este așteptată însă mai ales de credincioșii noștri din Ardealul cedat Ungariei (...)”, in Archive of the Archdiocese of Cluj, Manuscripts Fund, unpaginated.

⁴¹² *Ibidem*.

the restitution of the foundation's assets, invoking the 1992 Hungarian law on compensation for damage caused to religious denominations during the communist regime. In this context, in 1993, the Hungarian authorities allocate the sum of approximately 200.000 euro and a building of almost 1000 square meters to the Romanian Orthodox Vicariate in Hungary.

On September 30, 1996, on the initiative of Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală, the Gojdu Foundation was re-established in Sibiu with the aim of bringing the forgotten will of Emanuil Gojdu to the attention of the authorities and public opinion. In 1998 several members of parliament will propose to the Parliament's Foreign Policy Committee to open negotiations with Hungary to recover the Foundation's assets. In the meantime, the municipality of Budapest's 6th district sold the Gojdu buildings to several owners for derisory sums. In order to have a concrete picture of this real estate heritage in the center of Budapest, it is worth mentioning that the Gojdu complex comprises 38 shops, restaurants and cafes, 340 parking spaces, a medical rehabilitation center and about 249 luxury apartments.

In 2002, on the occasion of the Gojdu centenary, the question of the foundation became more and more pressing, with the ecclesiastical, cultural and part of the political elite insistently demanding the reopening of the Gojdu file. In order to settle the issue once and for all, the Romanian government came up with a new idea that ignored practically all Romanian demands to date: it proposed the establishment of a joint Romanian-Hungarian Emanuil Gojdu Foundation, which would operate in parallel with the Gojdu Foundation in Sibiu and would grant scholarships not only to Romanian Orthodox students but also to Hungarian ones. This project will be signed at the end of 2005. The haste with which the two executives have moved is explained, as High Bartholomew suggests, by the administrative vacuum in the Metropolitanate of Sibiu caused by the death of Metropolitan Antony and the failure to appoint a successor. The whole process of setting up this new foundation was a case study in how the manipulation of a nation can be practiced.

Here is just a cynical quote from the then Foreign Minister

“The agreement concluded on October 20, 2005, makes no reference to Emanuil Gojdu's will. It is merely a source of inspiration for the Romanian-Hungarian Public Foundation”⁴¹³.

Here is also the opinion of Hungarian MEP Zsolt Nemeth in the Budapest Parliament session

“The agreement between Hungary and Romania on the Gojdu estate puts an end to the discussion that has dragged on for many years. The essence of this issue is that Romania renounces the claim to the material property that it has formulated on several

⁴¹³ „Acordul încheiat la 20 octombrie 2005 nu face referire la testamentul lui Emanuil Gojdu. Acesta este o doar sursa de inspirație pentru Fundația publică româno-ungară.”, in Civic Media, „UNGARIA a pierdut «Afacerea Gojdu» în Senatul României” [“Hungary lost the ‘Gojdu affair’ in the Romanian Senate”], in *Civic Media*, January 22, 2007, Available at: <https://www.civicmedia.ro/ungaria-a-pierdut-afacereagojdu-in-senatul-romaniei>, Accessed on September 10, 2024.

occasions. This means that Romania accepts Hungary's view that in 1953 the material law treaty settled the Gojdu issue⁴¹⁴.

Despite the media bombardment, the mystifications, under pressure from the hierarchs of the three Transylvanian metropolitan orders, the Chamber of Deputies rejects (by a difference of only 1 vote) the emergency ordinance calling for the ratification of the Romanian-Hungarian agreement on the foundation, as does the Senate. As a result, the act orchestrated by the then minister Mihai Razvan Ungureanu and his Hungarian counterpart did not enter into force.

After this date we have no further high-level action. Despite the fatalistic voices around, it should be noted that this matter of the Gojdu estate is not time-barred, it remains current awaiting worthy people to recover it and implement the testamentary provisions. Fortunately, the issue was taken up again by Metropolitan Andrei of Cluj, Maramureş and Sălajului on February 19, 2013, at the metropolitan meeting in Cluj, where he requested the public resumption of the legal steps to obtain and administer the Gojdu Foundation.

It should be noted that there are precedents in relation to the recovery of church property in Dualist Hungary. Thus, the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate, with the help of the Belgrade politicians, recovered in the late 1990s several buildings of considerable value near Budapest, which belonged until 1920 to the Karlowitz Patriarchate.

The cessation of these Gojdu scholarships from 1919 to the present has impoverished us not only materially, but also morally and culturally. Let us beware, however, of two attitudes that are equally damaging to the good of this cause. It is the seizure of the Gojdu issue by two types of discourse that are equally unproductive in our opinion. The first is the discourse used by those who empathize so much with the subject that they believe that the mere emotional charge it generates is enough. To the mass of arguments this extremely vocal chorus will respond either affectively, not infrequently using the pretext of Gojdu to plunge into lamentations about the fate of Hungarian-Romanian relations or to turn the same subject into a political platform for others. Surprisingly, such an attitude, started in some cases with the best of intentions, is blocking the issue of the Gojdu Foundation.

Let's be careful: the subject is indeed prone to strong emotional charges, and it is legitimate to be so, but these must be coupled with lucid, informed attitudes on our part. Another discourse that undoubtedly represents a major obstacle to a favorable resolution of this issue is the attitude, unfortunately common among most members of Romanian diplomacy, who, invoking good-neighborly relations with Hungary and a certain predisposition towards compromise that should guide foreign

⁴¹⁴ „Acordul dintre Ungaria și România asupra averii Gojdu pune punct discuției prelungite de mulți ani. Esența acestei probleme este că România renunță la revendicarea bunurilor materiale pe care a formulat-o în mai multe rânduri. Aceasta înseamnă că România acceptă punctul de vedere al Ungariei conform căruia în 1953 tratatul de drept material a rezolvat problema Gojdu.”, in ***, „Stenograma ședinței Senatului din 20 februarie 2012” [“Stenogram of the Senate plenary session of February 20, 2012”], p. 56, Available at: <https://www.senat.ro/pagini/stenograma/Stenograma2012/12.02.20.pdf>, Accessed on September 9, 2024.

policy, are blithely advising us to give up clinging to the past of this foundation that can no longer be resurrected and to try to find formulas that are as politically correct as possible so as not to upset anyone. As I was saying, the Gojdu issue is being blocked in the project in two ways at the moment: that of tearful drifts without solutions or arguments and the other of renunciations with the value of betrayal that we are being urged to accept resignedly.

THE FUNERAL

In Article 6 of his will, Emanuil Gojdu stated:

“I entrust the burial of my earthly remains to my beloved wife, but I ask her to do it as simply as possible and with as little expense as possible, calling only the Romanian priest from Pest to operate exclusively; instead of futile expenses to distribute among the poor on the first Saturday after my funeral one hundred (100) fl. v.a.; may my beloved wife be assured that the costly luxury of an hour for nothing will not change the judgment of the world, which on every man only after his death has been accustomed to be said without reserve”⁴¹⁵.

These lines show that we are dealing with a man who looked beyond the “judgment of the world”, with a particular spiritual attitude, for whom the question of death was a matter of a clear assumption. Emanuil Gojdu, on the other hand, maintained the same reflexes of humility and generosity in organizing his own funeral.

The will ended with an exhortation to forget which Emanuil Gojdu himself proposed:

“In order that these testamentary dispositions may not be forgotten, I order that this testament be read every year in all the eastern Romanian parish churches on February 9, as on the day of my birth”⁴¹⁶.

After his death, the will of the great patron was carried out in all Romanian Orthodox parishes in Transylvania. The archival documents we have found certify that on the penultimate or last Sunday in February of each year a solemn mass was solemnly celebrated in memory of Emanuil Gojdu in all the churches in Transylvania. This ancient parastas became an annual tradition observed even in parishes outside Romania’s borders: Cuvin-Serbia, Bătania-Hungary, etc. Even during the period of the Horthist occupation of Northern Transylvania “the service

⁴¹⁵ „Astrucarea rămășițelor mele pământești o încredințez iubitei mele soții, însă o rog, ca să o facă cât se poate de simplu și cu cheltuieli cât se poate de puține, chemând să funcționeze numai exclusiv preotul român din Pesta; în loc de cheltuieli zadarnice să împartă între săraci în prima sâmbătă după înmormântarea mea o sută (100) fl.v.a.; fie încredințată iubita mea soție că luxul costisitor de o oră întru nimica nu va schimba judecata lumii, care asupra fiecărui om numai după moartea lui s-a obișnuit a se spune fără rezervă.”, in Maria Berényi, *quoted work*, 2002a, p. 172.

⁴¹⁶ „Pentru ca dispozițiunile acestea testamentare să nu se dea uitării, dispun ca testamentul acesta să se citească în toți anii în toate bisericile parohiale române răsăritene la 9 februarie, ca în ziua nașterii mele.”, in Maria Berényi, *Istoria Fundației Gojdu 1870–1952 [History of the Gojdu Foundation 1870–1952]*, Budapest, 2002b, p. 16, and Titus Serediuc, *quoted work*, 2006.

of the funeral Mass for the repose of the great patron”⁴¹⁷ was considered by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan in the circular sent to the suffragan bishops

“(…) as a duty of gratitude and as a model, especially in these times, for the great benefactor of the Romanian Orthodox students in Transylvania (…)”⁴¹⁸.

The discontinuation of the tradition of Gojdu’s funeral mass in Transylvanian parishes occurred with the establishment of the communist regime when any reference to the philanthropic past of church foundations had to be erased from the collective memory. After 1990, however, the Orthodox churches in Transylvania only sporadically observed the question of celebrating the funeral Mass dedicated to Emanuil Gojdu.

It is worth noting, however, the initiative of His Beatitude Andrei this year to celebrate a memorial dedicated to Emanuil Gojdu in the entire diocese of Vadului Feleacului and Cluj as a beautiful renewal of the pre-war tradition, even if only in one of the 12 dioceses in the area where the Gojdu Foundation has poured its benefits during its period of operation arbitrarily stopped by the interference of political factors. From now on, the service of the funeral mass and the reading of the will left by Emanuil Gojdu in every town, commune or village parish throughout the intra-Carpathian arc must be the natural consequence of the legitimate will of the testator who asked for nothing else in exchange for his enormous contribution to the formation of a Romanian elite.

It should not be forgotten that the Gojdu inheritance is not just a matter of bank accounts or real estate, but it represents potential that could have changed the face of a country. In the vacuum of the 1920s and the present, we have lost the chance to form an elite under the aegis of the Church, the chance to develop this corner of the world in a different way. After all, it is human capital that has been lost all these years.

We cannot help but wonder what Romania’s history would have looked like without Ioan Lupaș, Victor Babeș, Valeriu Braniște, Traian Vuia, Aurel Vlaicu, Octavian Goga, Silviu Dragomir, Aron Cotruș, Lucian Blaga, Andrei Oțetea and Dumitru Stăniloae? How many of them have we lost in this parenthesis?

The Gojdu Foundation is based on an imprescriptible will, with no expiry date, above the times. Its cause can never be closed. Therefore, we hope that its destiny awaits only worthy and courageous people who will reopen the file of our powerlessness...

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⁴¹⁷ „slujba parastasului pentru odihna marelui mecenat”, in Archive of the Archdiocese of Cluj, Archive of the Orthodox Parish Cuvin-Serbia, Archive of the Orthodox Parish Bătania-Hungary, etc.

⁴¹⁸ „(…) Ca o datorie de recunoștință și ca pildă mai ales în aceste vremuri pentru marele binefăcător al studențimii ortodoxe române din Ardeal (…)", in *Ibidem*.

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