

Emőd VERESS – Zsolt KOKOLY

**Jogászképzés a Bolyai Tudományegyetemen 1945–1959**  
**[Legal studies at the Bolyai University of**  
**Kolozsvár/Cluj 1945–1959]**

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Transylvania: a land of rich cultural heritage, with a diverse population and in the last 150 years the Game of Thrones of universities. The population of Transylvania which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century consisted of Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons, Swabians, Jews, and Armenians. At that time the language in which public administration was organized was mostly Hungarian. At the time the first university opened its gates in Kolozsvár<sup>1</sup> the Romanian community aspired for higher education in their own mother tongue as well. Thus the saga of universities began.

I would like to present the book with the title: *Legal studies at the Bolyai University of Kolozsvár/Cluj (1945–1959)* authored by Emőd Veress and Zsolt Kokoly. Both authors are teachers at the Faculty of Law of the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania. The topic of the work is the story of the short-lived *Bolyai University* which used to be a Hungarian-language university in Romania.

On its 300 pages the book focuses on the history of the *Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences*, although quite some research is presented concerning the foundation and the forced dissolution of the Bolyai University.

A history of higher education in legal sciences commenced in Transylvania in 1774 when Austrian Empress Maria Theresa founded a university in the city with legal academy, for the first time. Soon the academy was downgraded into a high school until 1863 when it again reverted into a university. From the year 1866 the course lengthened to four years and the language of education changed to Hungarian.

This academy constituted the foundation of the Faculty of Law and State Sciences of the newly created *Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University*, founded in 1872.

At the end of World War I, when Transylvania became part of Romania, the university first moved to Budapest, and a few years later to Szeged. Using the remaining infrastructure of the Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University at Kolozsvár/Cluj the King Ferdinand I University was established with Romanian as the teaching language.

Between 1940 and 1944 Northern Transylvania along with Kolozsvár was annexed back to Hungary so the university moved back to the city from Szeged, while the King Ferdinand I University was relocated to Sibiu, Romania.

<sup>1</sup> The name of the city is Cluj in Romanian and Klausenburg in German.

90	<b>REVIEWS</b> <b>Csongor Balázs VERESS</b>	<b>Jogászképzés a Bolyai Tudományegyetemen 1945–1959</b> <b>(Legal studies at the Bolyai University of Kolozsvár/Cluj 1945–1959)</b>	
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It is easy to observe that historically the nation who controls Transylvania is the only one to have a university: between 1872–1919 only Hungarians, between 1919–1940 only Romanians and between 1940–1944 only Hungarians again. The reason is simple, every ethnic group considers higher education as a tool for achieving their national goals. For a nation to have a university is not only a linguistic question, it is more about control. Higher education can give both a mental and physical frame where thoughts and capital can be managed. Surprisingly, after the return of the King Ferdinand I University from Sibiu in 1945, the same year a Hungarian institution of higher learning was established by the name of *Bolyai University*. How was this possible taking into consideration the aforesaid? This could happen because of political interest, and prosperity of that time. Unfortunately, it was not based on an enduring compromise, because it failed to solve the question of minorities in the country. This was just a stop-gap measure.

After World War II, the Hungarian university which moved back to Kolozsvár did not cease to exist. However, the new Romanian regime in Transylvania closed down the Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University. Because of the political climate after the war; the Soviets used Transylvania as a ramp to the Romanian government; they established a new Hungarian institution.

The second reason why this new university was born was due to Stalin's minority policies. The new Romanian regime had to prove to the Soviets that they are handling the question of minorities in a socialist way.

As the third reason we could mention is the idealism of the Hungarian political left. They believed in the justification of a Hungarian university – in Romania – in this new, socialist era and they acted accordingly.

Because in the formation of this institution prosperity played a major role, it was quite predictable that it would not be longstanding. The new, socialist regime viewed the university as an undesired one; this is why its coming into existence was fraught with hardship. With other words its fate was sealed from the beginning. Even so it kept functioning for 14 years as an independent academy until 1959 when it was forcibly merged with the Romanian Victor Babeş University.

Although, this establishment was remarkably important for the Hungarian community in Transylvania, from the point of psyche it was not ideal. In Romania after 1945 a totalitarian dictatorship started to be built. This meant that only one idea was tolerated, and this was the Stalinist one. The law academy had one political goal to raise a new generation of socialist lawyers. The old ones, especially the judges and the prosecutors, had to be eliminated because they were not trustworthy, and they were the remnants of an old system. The new lawyer generation had to implement the socialist jurisdiction, it was more important to impose death-sentences and adjudicate in show trials. Indoctrination was an absolute necessity in that period.

In fear that the Hungarian Revolution from 1956 could spill over to Romania as well, the regime took severe actions. One of them was the forced merger of the Bolyai University – as a possible threat – with the Babeş University, thus the Babeş-Bolyai University was formed. Most of the faculty members from the Faculty of Law were taken over by the new institution, but new Hungarian teaching staff was never employed. This was a deliberate, guided maneuver. So in 1959 the education returned to the rule the nation who controls Transylvania is the only one to have a university.

The authors really put the effort into presenting the special situation of a Hungarian university in Romania. They argue that there is a necessity for teaching law in Hungarian in Romania for the ethnic Hungarians because it is more efficient to learn something in the mother tongue and then translate that knowledge to other languages. The students who graduated at the Bolyai University prove that this is possible. Many of the graduates, who learned the law of Romania in Hungarian, became successful lawyers while the official language at the courts was Romanian.

My personal suggestion to the authors is that they should continue the good work and extend their research. It would be interesting to examine what the new leadership in 1945 in Bucharest thought about the foundation of the Bolyai University or how did the Soviets blackmail the regime.

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