

Playing to Win, Learning to Lose: Sport, Nation and State in Interwar Romania

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Statement

I hereby state that this dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions. The thesis contains no material previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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Abstract

The dissertation explores the role of sport in the making of the modern Romanian nation-state. It argues that sport has been instrumental for national unification, integration, and homogenization and for the consolidation of the Romanian state. In their turn, I show that these pressures operated to produce a distinctively Romanian sporting tradition premised on the Romanians perceived Latin “*élan*”. Romania’s extensive territorial expansion in the aftermath of the First World War inaugurated a historical conjuncture dominated by the need to affirm the new polity both domestically and internationally. At the same time, regional unevenness, ethnic diversity, conflicting views of modernization and development and a turbulent international environment heavily affected the structure, operation and results of the interwar Romanian state. The ascendance of modern sports and of programs of physical education during the early decades of the twentieth century made them into obvious and relatively ready available institutions to pursue these goals. Hence, I show that sports and physical education were soon taken up and encouraged by members of the Romanian elite in their effort to affirm Romanianness. This process was nowhere more visible and critical than in the region of Transylvania, where urban spaces were overwhelmingly non-Romanian and Hungarian, Jewish or German sporting clubs and associations were already in place since imperial times. Consequently, to explore the critical and often neglected role of sport in the making of the Romanian nation-state the current work is built around a case study of *Universitatea Cluj*, the *par excellence* Romanian club in Transylvania. Founded in 1919, the students’ sports association at the University of Cluj was a quintessential vehicle in establishing and safeguarding the nation locally, regionally and nationally. Universitatea’s history confounds with the history of Romanian administration in Transylvania. I devote major attention to the football section of the club, by far the most popular sport in Romania ever since the early interwar. The analysis of the club’s emergence, of its history and of the memories it triggered among its members afford crucial insights into the ways in which football worked to both support and undermine nation making and state consolidation. As an institution of sportsmen/intellectuals, a rarely observed sociological category, the analysis of its historical trajectory adds new facets to the making of modern sport. Moreover, Universitatea’s historically low levels of sporting achievement allow for a history of football rarely underwritten by performance and glory, as is often the case. This is a history of identification, loyalty and belonging that could do without sporting triumph in affirming and widely popularizing the national values that it stood for. In conjunction with the national developments that I explore, the case of “Universitatea” makes for a particularly interesting history of sport, nation and state, one where a rhetorics of cultivating bodies, minds and souls produced a sporting culture at odds with modern and contemporary developments in sport. To show that, wherever possible, I trace the history of the ideas that have animated Universitatea and the Romanian movements of sports and physical education beyond their formative years during the interwar into Romanian socialism and post-socialism. Overall, the dissertation refines and adds substance to oft-repeated claims that sports are essential in the making of modern nation-states and endorses understandings of modern nationalism that stress its Janus-faced character.

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Introduction

The present study explores the place of sport in the making of the modern Romanian nation-state. Its major temporal focus is on the interwar period. Wherever possible it traces the reconfiguration of sport, state and nation beyond the formative years into the postwar and post-socialism. Due to its unique place and crucial role in the making of modern Romania, developments in the region of Transylvania receive a special attention. Consequently, the study is built around the programs designed and implemented at the region's most distinguished institution of higher education – the University of Cluj and its sports club “Universitatea”. This University was a central institution in the definition and cultivation of Romanianness since the creation of Greater Romania in 1918. Its programs of sport and physical education were endowed with a special role in the struggle to achieve national integration and state centralization soon after Romania's territorial expansion in the aftermath of the First World War. As such, they open a vast space to explore the tensions, the contradictions, as well as the common points of reference that have set the limits and shaped the trajectory of Transylvania's incorporation into Romania. The history and memory of “Universitatea” students' sports club impressively shows the ways in which sports were used to forge a nation and to empower its state. At the same time, that very history also shows how sport could also work against nation-state making, reproducing and hardening local and regional forms of attachment and belonging.

Sports and physical education played a significantly more effective role in the establishment of the Romanian nation-state than current social science research has so far indicated. During the interbellum and the post WWII periods, the most pressing problem facing the Romanian ruling elite was how to consolidate the newly emerging nation and the newly

expanded state. The significant territorial expansion following WWI, no matter how exuberantly celebrated, posed formidable difficulties: integrating an imbalanced economy, reconciling divergent political cultures, and forging populations with radically different histories and notions of belonging into a coherent national society. Unsurprisingly, the result was an obsessive preoccupation on the part of politicians, intellectuals or journalists with “integration”.

In broad brushes, from a Romanian standpoint the post-World War I “Transylvanian question,” and its post-World War II reformulation, contained the following components: first, an urban/rural divide that neatly reproduced ethnic and economic lines of separation. The countryside was overwhelmingly made of Romanian peasants, the towns were dominated by Hungarian, German and Jewish middle- and working-classes. Second, a tiny Romanian elite, mostly trained in liberal professions in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, held the sway of state power and was looking to stabilize it, secure it and advance it. In doing so, it had to navigate a fine and narrow line between local contestations from the representatives of the newly emerging “minorities” and the centralizing pretensions of the Bucharest-based elites of the Old Kingdom. Third, the relations with the minorities were complicated by the lack of Romanian trained cadres at almost any level of administration and their much stressed “disloyalty”. Hence, the skills and knowledge of ethnic minorities were often indispensable for the running of the Romanian administration and public services. At the same time, any social closeness was, seen through the lens of the dominant nationalist dogma, dubious and potentially treasonous. Fourth, the Romanian elites of the capital city pushed for an accelerated state centralization and nationalization. They often did so with little knowledge, concern, experience or sensitivity towards local divides and experiences as well as with meager economic resources to materialize their plans. What this amounted to, otherwise a recurrent configuration in the peripheries and

semi-peripheries of the world-system, was that material progress never quite matched the level of the national elite's rhetoric inflation and exuberance.

In this context, it should come as no surprise that the taking over or the parallel development of Romanian sport clubs and associations, along those "foreign" ones that were already in place, was a critical way to engage with the masses. In the eyes of Romanian nationalists, the drives for modernization and reform always came with the hope that industrialization and urbanization would also change the ethnic balance of Transylvanian towns. However, their inquiries and studies and the encounters with their students soon showed that peasants were diverging quite sharply from the blueprint that was held of them and for them. For the Romanian nation to survive and thrive, everything from people's physical condition to their cognitive faculty and ideological dispositions had to be transformed. The prescribed antidote was "an integral education", a complete refashioning of peasants into loyal Romanian citizens, from head to toes.

The Romanian society of the interwar was constructed, primarily, as a society of men. The question of the participation of women in public and political life was certainly on the agenda (see Bucur, Miroiu 2002). However, as elsewhere at the time, progress was slow. Women did secure voting rights in 1938 in Romania, but a major political breakthrough regarding their civic position, political and social participation came only with the instauration of the communist regime in the late 1940s. However, women were a constant presence in stadiums and arenas, alongside men, but usually as spectators and only rarely as direct participants. The patriarchs of the University of Cluj were clearly sensitive to the issue of rights for women, but overall they tended to reproduce the existing social hierarchy of gender in more or less dramatic forms.

Tracing its sources, praxis and effects through a conceptual framework informed by sociology, social anthropology and history, my study looks at the social relations and processes that promoted sports and physical education as a panacea of modern ways of life. Buttressing physical endurance as a supreme measure of healthy being, feeling and performing, helped suspend uncertainty, alleviate doubt and, not least, squelch the potential disquiet that modern transformations engender. The region of Transylvania, with its complicated and often conflictual history, guarantees an exciting narrative of not only physical education and sports, but also of modern state and nation formation, of ethnic strife and claim making, and of class domination and contestation.

This positioning has numerous implications, not least for the frame of reference in which the coming narratives are embedded. Each of the coming chapter adds, refines and further elaborates the theoretical framework laid in the introduction. The first two chapters offer, in their turn, social and political histories of sport and physical education in interwar Romania. These are skewed towards the national scale and set the background for the more locally sensitive and analytically more incisive discussions that follow. The third chapter presents and debates the original program of physical education and sports developed at the University of the Cluj at the time by the professor and medical doctor Iuliu Hațieganu. The next two chapters explore the memories and the histories of “Universitatea” students’ football club and trace its development. They present the ways in which its student sportsmen came to embody a sense of national character premised and fashioned out of their much taunted “youthful élan”. In the process, I stress the ways in which “Universitatea” became a focal point of the nation in Cluj, in Transylvania and in Romania, that in spite of its lack of major sporting achievements. The sixth chapter further explores the notion of “élan” and its importance in the making of the Romanian

sporting nation. It does so by following the effort to produce a national tactics and style of play in football by one of its leading theoreticians - Virgil Econonu. I conclude by drawing the main implications of the formative years of modern Romanian sport and physical education for its subsequent history up to the present day.

Sport, Nation and State

Norbert Elias has long argued that sports are an integral part of the civilizing process, intimately connected to the pacification of social life in Western Europe (1986). Other scholars have noted the tremendous expansion and worldwide accommodation of sports as well as their significant reworking across societies and cultures (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007; Giulianotti 2009; Markovits 2010). Major case studies have well documented the development of sport and physical education in the great nations of Western and Eastern Europe, Asia, South and North America (Archetti 1999; Cronin 2003; Edelman 1993, 2009; Hargreaves 1986, 2000; Holt 1981, 1990; Mangan 1981, 1999; McDevitt 2004; Naul and Hardman 2002; Nolte 2002; Riordan 1977; Rossol 2010; Walker 2013; Walton 2011). Recent analyses have placed the spotlight on “globalization” and its implications for the world of sport. Such studies have well captured the historical connections accounting for the dissemination of sporting practices, ideas and institutions (Armstrong 2008; Giulianotti and Robertson 2007; Giulianotti 2009).

The relations between the local and the global have been a key point and source of analytical strength in a double sense. First, by exploring the global reach of otherwise locally embedded practices through the mediation of colonialism, imperialism, war, national determination or modern state formation. And second, by insisting on the theoretical and methodological relevance of remaining sensitive to the tensions between the local and the global, as mutually reinforcing as well as diverging arenas. However, the stress on globalization did

somewhat undermine the analytical and explanatory powers of the older eliasian figurational analysis. Pace its detractors, Elias's analysis did capture in more profound and intriguing ways the historicity and timing of sporting phenomena, certainly much more so than the inherent "before and after" of sports going global. The latter understandings are consonant with at least some of the contemporary treatments of nations and nationalisms, perceived to have gone past their peak and thus expected to pave the way for a global world. I believe that the historical connections of sport, physical education and the modern nation-state remain worthy of serious scholarly attention, able to reveal unknown facets of the contemporary predicament regarding the becoming of bodies, minds and souls, as of states, institutions and nations.

By exploring the Romanian sports and physical education in a period of fervent nationalism and state affirmation, my arguments attempt a departure from mainstream explanations of the making of modern physical education and sports and of their role in modern nation building and state consolidation. The coming chapters present some facets of the relation between sport, physical education, the nation and the state in interwar Romania. They follow the interplay between national, regional and local conditions and processes in the creation and legitimization of institutions, ideas and practices of sport and physical education. I describe in detail the establishment of national unions, federations and institutes and take the case of "Universitatea" sports club in the town of Cluj, in central Transylvania, as a critical counterpoint to state led efforts of nationalization and unification. Most of my attention is devoted to association football, soon to be the most popular game in the land, and an arena that exposes the crucial role of modern sports in nation-state making. Wherever possible the arguments transgress the key period under consideration to follow the historical unfolding of the relation between sports, physical education, state and nation in socialism and beyond.

To that end, one could start with some of the suggestions made by Eugene Weber in his “Gymnastics and Sports in *Fin-de-Siècle* France: Opium for the Classes?” in what probably remains the finest piece of historical research devoted to the subject. From the onset, Weber presents the meager state of research on the topic attributing it to “the strange suspicion, or even antipathy, that men of pen and study still show for research in the more vulgar manifestations of physical activity” (1971:70). Next, he remarks that “physical exercise and the role that men attribute to it, that society envisages for it, can document times and mentalities as suggestively as can their industrial enterprises” (1971:70). He goes on to devote his attention to “how sports came to France and whom they were meant to serve” and suggests that “sports were integrated and integrating activities, part of the contemporary scene, reflecting social and ideological preoccupations, and very likely affecting them in turn” (Weber 1971:72). Weber clearly places physical education and sports at the center of modern social life, on a par with factories – the *par excellence* locations of modernity, and treats them as an integral part of the massive social and ideological effort of modernization. What is more, he argues that developments in this area of social life have implications well beyond their boundaries and shows their important part in the making of the modern French nation, society and state. This conceptual triad will come under scrutiny in the coming pages, where I elaborate an analytical framework to match Weber’s challenge.

When reviewing some of the multifarious empirical, analytical and disciplinary resources that need be mobilized for a convincing theory of nationalism Tom Nairn comes to a similar conclusion to that of Eugene Weber when he asks: “How can a theorist deal with popular culture and political nationality, for example, yet ignore the colossal weight of sport upon that culture? If pre-nationalist countries tended to be configured by gods, ‘tribes’, rural myths and localities,

their contemporary successors are analogously affected and influenced by sporting identifications and contests” (1997:16). If we are to take Weber’s and Nairn’s points seriously and place sports at the heart of modern processes of state and nation formation the following questions need to be raised: what is the relation between physical education and sports and modern political power? How are they defined and what social functions are they supposed to fulfill? How to best account for their autonomy? How do physical education and sports contribute to the making of modern states and nations? What kind of effects does the introduction of physical education and sports have in particular social formations? Before we proceed let us take a look at the existing body of knowledge.

The enduring importance of organized sporting and physical activities in the historical becoming of states and nations is underlined by their fundamental reworking in modern times. Sports and physical practice share an illustrious chapter in the history of humanity. However, their formalization and global dissemination are quite a recent phenomenon. Their appeal could hardly be detached from their vivid dramatization of the quintessentially modern principles of social and cultural organization. The nurturing of the body, ideals of beauty, unhampered competition, the will to succeed, defeating ones enemies, take a heightened meaning in the world of sports and situates them in a close connection with the sphere of modern politics. Moreover, the essential tension between the masses and the presumably illuminated and rational elites is played out in the arena of modern sports in the never-ending saga between mass or professional, performance prone sports. This is not to argue for the existence of a distinct domain of sporting activity, somehow operating in a splendid isolation from the realms of social life. Quite to the contrary, as the studies investigating the acquiring of *consent* in various polities have already shown (see De Grazia 1981), the creation and maintenance of sporting institutions and activities

is a major political instrument of political legitimation and social integration. At the same time, such institutions can also be highly subversive, coming to define themselves in opposition to the politically sanctioned categories of state and nation by drawing their identity from the myriad possibilities of local and regional meanings and experiences.

The prodigious evolution of sporting institutions and practices has often obscured the intricate processes through which they came to play such a prominent role in modern social life. Especially since the institutionalization of the autonomous discipline of “sport studies,” scholars in this field appear to have shared into a kind of work of purification, required to justify a distinct area of research and specialization. The awkward result was the creation of an independent analytical category of “sport,” that was to be reconnected with the phenomena that were first erased in a more parsimonious, elegant, or scholarly way. Therefore, the intellectual production in this field often presents itself gripped in mechanistic analytical visions, loaded with commonplace dualisms and binarisms, of the “sport and...” type, where the dots are filled by the usual suspects of the social sciences: nations, states, politics, class, ethnicity, gender etc. The current analysis refuses this type of analytical separation by addressing the bulk of relations and events that have historically made sports and physical education a constitutive part of modern nationalisms, of state formation, or of class, gender, and ethnic politics.

Theoretical developments in the historical sociology of the state and nation, in the anthropology of the state, in the anthropologically and historically oriented studies of nationalism, in the historical anthropology of class relations or in the historical sociology of ideas all enthusiastically support a move towards more open, relational and processual visions of historical practices and events. Similar trends and calls are emerging in the historically and sociologically informed studies of sport (see Tomlinson and Young 2011). An important

common denominator of such studies is the interest in unraveling socially and culturally specific forms of ritualization and normalization of social relations with often unexpected consequences. In this respect, it is surprising that forms of physical education and sports have received only marginal attention from most of the scholars involved in this effort, whom have usually privileged others forms of association and sociability. As Eugen Weber humorously put it: “Grandfather clocks, balloons, and potatoes have benefitted from historical studies that games and sports still lack” (Weber 1971:70).

It is now certain that physical education and sports are some of the most salient and enduring phenomena of Western modernity. These are among the few spheres of social life where progress was steady, visible and palpable. One cannot help observe that political regimes of all creeds and colors have defied even economic hardships to invest in and to attract as many people to sports and physical education. Pace Weber, historians have long documented the “rise and rise” of modern sports, from the outmost local places of their inception to modeling and fascinating the bodies and minds of players and followers at any point on the global scene, but he is certainly right to argue that little came by way of explanation. It is symptomatic for the state of the field that a lot of the attention has been devoted to document the workings of sports and physical education in fascist and communist societies. The focus on the political “aberrations” of Western modernity coupled with the conspicuous absence of comparable studies elsewhere has only reinforced the view of their “normal” functioning in some corner of Western societies, untainted by state intervention. In this way, the modern Western demarcation of state and civil society is tacitly and all the more effectively reproduced. So much so, that even the analytics deployed to explain sports and physical education take this distinction very much for granted.

Much of the subsequent effort in analytical clarification will be devoted to show that this is unwarranted.

Nations and Nationalisms

The conundrum of sports and physical education has been inextricably linked to the making of modern nations and nationalisms. Scholars of nationalism have been astute in revealing the process of rationalization, ritualization and historical reinterpretation that the idea of the “nation” brought about. The positive and negative facets of modern nationalism are suffused in the totalizing pretensions of physical education and sports. “Education” already points to the complex transition from “traditional” modes of life to “modern” ones with all the displacement, integration and reintegration that this process entails (Gellner 1983). The shared dispositions towards and the sheer popularity of sporting competitions and activities would have probably never come about without the advent of “print capitalism” and its impact in producing a collective sense of “imagined political community” (Anderson 1983). Consequently, I reserve a great deal of my focus to the literary production and dissemination of notions regarding sports and physical education. The emergence of Romanian sporting journalism in the early interwar as a form of nationalist frame-making will be of particular interest in the pages to come. I consider it as one of the most powerful and prominent sites for the creation and the shaping of priorities, loyalties, feelings, and ideas regarding the Romanian state and nation. At the same time, an analysis of sporting journalism also reveals the fractured nature of the spread of Romanian nationalism, as it had to operate and to mediate in the tense terrain of class, ethnic, gender, generational and regional oppositions and divergences. Moreover, the focus on journalism, alongside the work of other intellectuals, does well to unravel just how a national sporting “tradition” got “invented” and reinvented (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) and to expose both the

ideational and the material consequences of such invention. Part and parcel of these processes were questions and answers regarding belonging, participation, expression, and representation in the body of the nation, a continuous and conflicting process of boundary making and identification that played itself out in the arena of sports and physical education.

The making of national boundaries and identities makes yet another problem loom large: the force, the energy, the persuasion, and the plausibility of “the nation” as a historically constructed idea and way of being modern. In this respect, Goswami’s constructive critique and development of Anderson’s insight regarding the “modularity of the nation form” provides some fine-tuned analytics to capture the transposable, dynamic, doubled and durable structure of modern nationalism (2002), a historically grounded way of showing its “Janus faced” character (see Nairn 1975, 1997). Beyond inequality, in all its forms, modern nationality assured the relative internal stability of societies and states by eschewing it through a promise of equal treatment for all nationals. Crucially, belonging to a national community was emphatically not at the mercy of immanent forces, allowing for the possibility of being acquired, lost or exchanged. It was given at birth, in principle once and for all, and thus rather at the mercy of divine forces. The flourishing and triumph of this idea made possible and prompted both intellectually uninspiring carefree football afternoons in the West *as well as* the curiosity to inquire into the functioning of totalitarian physical exercise more to the East, among other things.

All the available clues hint at the fact that physical education and sports have been part of the tidal wave that is modern nationalism. We can turn to association football for a quick example. The football World Cup, held once in four years, is clearly one of the most popular global sporting competitions. Its inaugural edition took place in 1930 in Uruguay and it is essentially a contest between national teams. It is only recently that F.I.F.A., football’s governing

body, introduced the Club World Cup (first held in Brazil in 2000), a competition between the most successful clubs across continents, with debatable success. Now, in a world where nationalism would not exist or would be far less prominent, one could reasonably expect the Club World Cup to be the more successful and popular event. In a kind of feudal world dominated by major city-states their clubs would get all the attention. It is fun to imagine just how a clash between say “London City” and “Amsterdam” might have unfolded any time between the 16th to the early 19th century. However, actual history shows that the World Cup, bringing together national representatives after long fought struggles for qualification, stirred passions and ideas of national glory or defeat. It seems highly likely that it will continue to do so.

Consequently, the thrilling history of physical education and sports can be in no way separated from the quintessential processes of modern times: the creation of a world of states and nations premised on an ideology of progress set in motion by either a capitalist or a socialist mode of production and societal organization. Taken in conjunction, Elias’s observation regarding the synchronous development of parliamentarism and sports in mid-nineteenth-century England (1986) and Wallerstein’s massive exploration of the liberal “geoculture” becoming hegemonic on the course of the same century (2011), suggest that the formalization of sporting practices might well be a quintessential component of this very culture. Physical education and sports have been a central component of the “cultural revolution” required in the massive process of transforming populations and territories into citizens of nation-states (see Corrigan and Sayer 1985). Their development is shot through and through with the tensions and contradictions between old and new, high and low, rich and poor beliefs, values and practices that got temporarily and specifically stabilized in particular social formations, times and places. The ambiguities surrounding modern sport closely resemble and mirror those of modern nationalism.

The disjunctions appear in that the former is much easily perceived as a success story and accepted as such, while the scholarly treatment of the latter often suggests and expects its demise. Nevertheless, the history and theory of nationalism, ever since Ernest Gellner, shows such expectations to be no more than wishful thinking and consequently such oppositions to be a fake. In short, the history of modern sport is part and parcel of the history of nations and nationalism. A successful one at that, if we take success to consist of things like dissemination, manifestation or expression.

On the assumption that sports are an integral part of the making of modern nations a plethora of implications follow. Analytically, the boundaries between modern sport and economic, political and social processes are blurred, pace the elaborations familiar from the sub-discipline of “sport studies”. Methodologically, the same repertoire of historical and relational tools deployed to describe, interpret and explain modern nations and nationalisms should be extended to incorporate the study of modern sport. Empirically, the materials and records allowing for the reconstruction of sport history could be treated as of the same kind to those mobilized in the analysis of nationalism. For example, the content of local or national sport journals is no less relevant to the study of nationalism than the content of more highbrow journalistic publications.

Taking Gellnerian glosses further one might argue that a more accurate graphic representation of the structure of human history would be plough, sword, *ball* and book, in a temporal double sense (see Gellner 1991). On the one hand, students of societies past and present assure us that balls were being kicked, bounced, and thrown alongside ploughs, swords and books all over the big ball that is the globe since times immemorial. On the other, ball games appear to have taken a heightened meaning in the passage from “Agraria” to “Industria”,

virtually exploding in industrial times, somehow domesticating the excesses marring the first *as well as* those of the latter, presumably allowing both body and mind to stay alive, consume their conflicts and regenerate themselves for other ends and other days. However, the serious point here is to remark that the practice of games appears to be universal, while the meanings attached to the bouncing ball over the ages have been infinitely diverse. With or without a ball, formalized competitive practices engaged, at least in principle, only for the momentary pleasure that they provide for the participants are a widespread phenomenon. The forms and meanings that games and sports have taken appear to vary widely across societies and cultures, and even the recent global expansion of Western sports was emphatically not followed by the dissemination of the meanings that Westerners attach to them. Wherever “modern” sporting practices were taken over they were bound to be interpreted in relation to local ideas and values, more often than not opposed to those held by the people introducing them.

As it was already stated, this story cannot be separated from the history of capitalism and the unequal predicaments that this entails. For the people in the peripheral or semi-peripheral courters of the world, physical education, sports and games were among the resources used in the race to catch up with the “advanced” Westerners, and unlike economic development, in the field of sports it was reasonable to believe that this might actually happen, not to mention that in specific disciplines it was possible to envisage taking of the lead. For one, Tom Nairn has long argued about the Janus faced character of modern nationalism (1975). Politically, its positive and negative manifestations could hardly be reconciled. Both liberation struggles and fascist regimes have been fundamentally premised and legitimated by it. However, following Gellner’s original insights, Nairn also showed that an understanding of nations and nationalism is only achievable if one goes beyond its moralizing pretensions and places it into historical perspective – that is the

uneven history of capitalist development taken at least since the 18th century (1975:6). He perceptively reminds us that:

The idea of an even and progressive development of material civilization and mass culture was characteristic of the European Enlightenment. It reflected a forward view natural to the élites of that time and place. Like their predecessors in eras of high culture they still thought in terms of civilization versus ‘barbarians’ in the outer mists. But the new convictions of Progress made the outlook for the barbarians more favourable: given time, and help, they might catch up. This redemption was conceived of as a process of steady acculturation, both outwards and downwards. Outwards from the centre to these peripheric regions, and sociologically downwards, from the cultivated classes to the servants and laboring people. (Nairn 1975:9)

This is a highly relevant insight, not only because it allows for connections and comparisons to be made between various nations and nationalisms, but also because it shows that previous developments, location and timing matter awfully much in their making. Nairn explicitly makes this point. It is worth quoting at length, not least because of its contemporary relevance:

From the very outset, part of the ‘superiority’ of the development leaders lay in their political and state systems. It lay in the fact that they had invented the national state, the real proto-type of the *nationalist* ideal, by quite empirical processes extending over many centuries. They discovered and proved its power long before nationalism had been formulated as the general, systemic response to that power’s incursions throughout the world. When it came, that response could not help being highly overdetermined ideologically.

In this general sense, nationalism was obviously generated as a compensatory reaction on the periphery. Its ideal intensification corresponded to the absence of a material reality: the economic and social institutions of modernity, those developmental arms now being wielded with such effect by England,

France and later on by the other territories that achieved them. It was the absence of these arms, and despair about getting them, which made the compensating ideological weapon of nationalism a necessity: the idealist motor of the forced march out of backwardness or dependency.(Nairn 1975:14)

Returning to our ball, we should only think of the genesis stories of football in various lands to make some sense of what the relation between capitalist development, nationalism and sports is about. In numerous instances the narrative is about *the man* that has brought the first ball from somewhere in the West. Usually that man, and maybe a few others, had become acquainted with the ways in which to use it while acquiring an education away from his native lands. On his return home, he fortunately did not miss to place a ball in his luggage and started persuading others for a game of foot-ball. This first instance is usually highly praised by authors, and at times it is even possible to detect the exact dates. From that moment on, the story goes, football is not longer “foreign”, it is national: “Romanian”, or “Hungarian” or whatever. Typically, these first enthusiasts go on to set up a club and, in the mean time, others take on their footsteps to set up others, or - better - dissenters from the initial gathering, unhappy with the ideas, rules, recruitment, etc. of the initial group, part ways and make their own association. In no time, the second mythical moment bursts in, the first “official game,” regularly between “rival” opposition. This is the first *national* club game proper. It is, of course, of no import if this event had any resonance beyond the margins of one (lousy) pitch, and from this founding moment a whole history of clubs, associations, federations, referring bodies can be more or less easily traced. The point is that a foreign practice has been domesticated; it was made national and bound to acquire meaning in a *national* web of meaning. We should also note that the emergence of a first “national team” is only a few years away, or at times even months, ready to take on foreign opposition and prove the national abilities and skills at the *international* level.

However, developments on the ground are rarely, if ever, that neat. Such narratives do well to document the highs and lows of sporting performance and to incessantly affirm the image of the nation along the way, but, at the same time, they do equally well to silence all the developments, meanings, tensions that would crack the neatness of the image thus presented on its road of progress. Crucially, what comes to be silenced is the inequality of the initial and most often subsequent predicament. By nationalizing an imported practice - sport is in focus here, but this applies to many other regions of social life - the responsibility to develop it becomes national, that is it becomes the task of the people, the society, the nation and the state to make it work successfully, with all the fun and sacrifice that this effort requires. However, from that moment on it becomes highly difficult, if not impossible, to argue that the structural inequality of the modern world makes some select few more likely to succeed at the expense of a sea of others. What this realization usually entails is a massive mobilizing effort to create a modern nation and state able to defend itself and to compete in stadiums, courtrooms, high-offices or markets. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the meanings and ultimate goals attached to modern sport and physical exercise make an impressive list. Here are some of the possible entries: to diffuse social or ethnic tensions that might exacerbate into violence and war as well as to mobilize social and national sentiment if conflict is in sight; to contribute to a healthy physical development that should increase productivity inside the workplace and assure the reproduction of the community/nation; to develop specific forms of morality and character; to display the innate or acquired virtues of a people to both foreigners and fellow compatriots; etc. To me all these expectations of modernity hint to what Philip Abrams once called “politically organized subjection” and then suggested to direct our research interests towards “the actualities of social subordination” (1988:63).

It is my contention that some of the best analytical resources to analyze the connections between sport, state and nation are to be found in some of the critiques and debates emerging ever since the late 1970s on the intellectual left. What I specifically have in mind are the interventions of Philip Abrams regarding “the state” and Tom Nairn’s regarding “the nation”. Each in its own right is a scathing critique of theoretical developments and failures within Marxism, and both have prompted a renewed interest in the historical study of states, nations and societies. Probably the most inspired example of the latter is Corrigan and Sayer’s discussion of English state formation as cultural revolution to which I also turn. More recently, within anthropology, Yael Navaro-Yashin has made the most out of these discussions when analyzing the faces of the contemporary Turkish nation-state.

State/society

One of the common roots in the study of state formation is the notion of “the idea of the state” advanced by Abrams (1988). This conceptual elaboration has been fruitfully debated and applied in varied social and national contexts to show the ways in which the state and the nation are actively being constructed and reconstructed in everyday social life (Alonso 1994; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Navaro-Yashin 2002). Abrams reputedly argued that any research on this topic must investigate the historical processes of “politically organized subjection,” otherwise risks in sharing into the work of reification that the state idea is all about (1988). By placing the emphasis on the ongoing flux of social relations, this type of theorizing does well to unsettle some of the most enduring dichotomies of the social sciences: state versus civil society, structure versus agency or class versus culture. When it comes to the historical production of physical education and sports this perspective diverts the gaze towards the active involvement of these institutions and of their followers in preventing or espousing certain ideas and visions of the

state. Moreover, Abrams' definition does well to capture the plurality of state-views championed at any one time by variously positioned social groups. More often than not, these find themselves in disaccord in a continuous quest to establish hegemonic representations of not only the state, but also of nation and society. In this sense, I believe that the development of physical education and sports in Transylvania and Romania can rewardingly be engaged as a major site in the definition and redefinition of the ideas of Romanian stateness and statehood in this region. However, if we are to stay true to the "idea of the state" notion we must immediately stress that this theorization does not confine itself to a simple discussion of ideas, discourses, texts and the like, which would make it a variety of intellectual history. Quite to the contrary, Abrams devotes his attention to the very material and mundane social relations in and through which the state comes to be represented and reified.

The well-known gist of Abrams' discussion of the state is that both political sociologists and Marxists have failed to accurately capture "the state" in theoretical terms. This is so, Abrams suggests, because for different reasons these scholars have tended to assume a reified notion of "the state" – one that uncritically grants it materiality, agency, power and prowess, albeit the efforts to empirically identify and locate any of the above have systematically eluded them. Through this move, the argument goes, researchers of "the state" have systematically fallen into the ideological trap awaiting them by sharing into the discourse that generates the modern capitalist state and makes it appear as a coherent, friction-free, unitary and unifying agent. Abrams' proposal is to altogether abandon the search for such an entity, endowed with such characteristics, simply because it is nowhere to be found - it does not exist. Instead, research of the state would be better off by analytically investigating "the *idea* of the state". How this idea produces actual, empirically identifiable effects, making the state to look as a unity in face of

disunity, coherent in face of incoherence, peaceful in face of struggle, in short “the mind of a mindless world, the purpose of purposeless conditions, the opium of the citizen” (Abrams 1988:82). I should add that I see little friction between, for example, Ian Hacking’s historical ontology (2002) and Abrams’s ontological and epistemological position for the study of the state. They diverge in orientation and analytical scale, with the philosopher more interested to parsimoniously explore being, becoming and ways of knowing in tune with contemporary minds, while the historical sociologist is on a mission to grasp the complex of materialities and ideas that go into their making.

For Abrams the royal way of tracing the “idea of the state” is by studying its historical becoming. What this means is inquiring into the ways in which this notion has acquired its massive contemporary dominance, essentially looking at how “the political institutionalization of power is legitimated” (Abrams 1988:82). But there is more, Abrams continues by arguing that: “It is of some importance to understand how that legitimation is achieved. But it is much more important to grasp the relationship between political and non-political power – between Weber’s terms class, status and party” (1988:82). The point of emphasis and the reference to Weber are I think crucial for what is at stake here. Remember that Weber, after defining “classes,” “status groups,” and “parties” as “phenomena of the distribution of power within a community” (1999:118) – respectively of the economic, social and political order, concluded by arguing that:

Concerning ‘classes’, ‘status groups’, and ‘parties’, it must be said in general that they necessarily presuppose a comprehensive societalization, and especially a political framework of communal action, within which they operate. This does not mean that parties would be confined by frontiers of any individual political community. On the contrary, at all times it has been the order of the day that the societalization (even when it aims at the use of military force in common) reaches beyond the frontier

of politics. [...] But their aim is not necessarily the establishment of new international political, i.e., territorial, dominion. In the main they aim to influence the existing dominion. (Weber 1999:128–129)

Moreover, Max Weber defined social relations as either “communal” or “associative” based on the fundamental principle that informs social action in each case. The former, are “based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together”, while in the latter “the orientation of social action within it rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similarly motivated agreement” (Weber 1978:40). What Weber had in mind was to effectively distinguish between social relations of the market type, purportedly cold, rational and emotionless, and of community or social belonging type, although he knew full well that such a radical separation rarely, if ever, obtains in actual social life. The examples that he provides for the latter are first and foremost the family, alongside “a religious brotherhood, an erotic relationship, a relation of personal loyalty, *a national community*, the *esprit the corps* of a military unit” (Weber 1978:41). Having written this, it is all too easy to identify Weber’s communal relationships with the irrationality of modern life, but that would be a mistake. He is adamant on this point:

It is by no means true that the existence of common qualities, a common situation, or common modes of behavior imply the existence of a communal social relationship. Thus, for instance, the possession of a common biological inheritance by virtue of which persons are classified as belonging to the same ‘race’, naturally implies no sort of communal social relationship between them. (Weber 1978:42)

Thus, communal relations are not simply an outburst of latent irrationality, of some essential feelings of belonging or of irreducible emotions. To the contrary, Weber goes on to argue that the solidarity and purposeful action of communal relations might or might not emerge, and they only do so under certain conditions. Beyond that, Weber's arguments can be read to the effect that any form of association ultimately needs a communal type of bonding if it is to become politically effective. Cast in historical perspective the problem becomes to decipher the kind of communal connections that were sanctioned and deemed legitimate at any one time in particular social formations. Consistent with Abrams' observations, it is at these points of association and belonging that ideas of the state and nation become visible in their full force.

Read alongside Abrams' proposal to treat the state as an idea, Weber's insights, contrary to commonly held views, suggest that institutions, practices and ideas that apparently fall outside of the realm of the state, somewhere in society or civil society, do play a massive role in producing and reproducing political power. The whole point is to follow the changing form and content of both what Weber calls "associative relationships" and "communal relationships" on the backdrop of what Abrams calls "state" in their historical interconnection. The most developed, visible and enduring social realm I can think of systematically defined as autonomous and systematically mobilized to produce forms of social belonging and community is that of modern physical education and sports. Cast in historical perspective they cover the whole range of communal relationships espoused by Weber from the military *esprit de corps* of physical exercise, to the affirmation of the national community or to forms of secular religious brotherhood. Through the aid of Weber it becomes obvious that a modern systematic process of political organized subjection is in place in some of the most non-political areas of modern societies. Ultimately, the return to Weber does well to unveil the spurious political relevance of

market modeled social relations and in doing so it allows one to start exploring some of the forms of the making of modern belonging and their political instrumentalization. Given that the case at hand invites for a serious consideration of the modern nation and nationalism alongside the modern state we have to move past Weber in search of more analytical resources. As Perry Anderson has cogently showed, the German sociologist had precious little to say on these issues and remained committed to the greatness of the German nation (see Anderson 1992b).

Within anthropology, Navaro-Yashin made a powerful intervention along the theoretical lines opened by Abrams. In the study of the contemporary Turkish state she has astutely observed that the major conceptualizations mobilized to explain the becoming of modern states, societies and nations settle on Marx's theorization of "false consciousness," with the implication that exposing the erroneous ideology would presumably have a direct bearing in social and political life (2002:155–166). Anderson's notion of "imagination," Foucault's "discourse," or Taussig's "fetishism," appear to fall short of explaining just why do states and nations endure in spite of their, by now, continuous exposure of their illusory, incoherent, contradictory, or interested character (Navaro-Yashin 2002). She finds a limited solution in Žižek's reworking of the lacanian notion of "fantasy," that grants a greater degree of agency to political subjects and allows for the theorization of a "cynical" subject, one that acts in spite of her ability to recognize ideology. Piercing together the insights of Abrams, Taussig and Žižek, Navaro-Yashin perceptively notes that: "As they perform rituals of reification of the state, fetishists know that the state does not exist as an entity, as such. Yet, as Žižek's insights would have it, they persist in carrying on with their everyday practices *as if* the state were a unity, actively and with agency reinstating the fetish" (2002:161). She is among the few anthropologists to note that modern

sports are among the most powerful rituals of such reification, as is the case of wrestling and football in Turkey.

Navaro-Yashin's interpretation is tempting in light of contemporary developments, thus exerting a great deal of pressure to apply it in the analysis of historical processes, where states in their national modality have strongly asserted their dominance over territories, populations and minds up to the point that "to achieve emancipation from the chains of statism" (2002:159) does no longer appear as a reasonable option. She presents two historical processes that have worked to the present end. The first refers to the historical developments by which the idea of the state coupled with visions of the nation have encroached even the most intimate spheres of daily life. Navaro-Yashin hints at that by engaging "the everyday life of statism," the very mundane and material processes by which notions pertaining to the nation-state come to define and redefine modern ways of life. In this sense, one can argue that the contemporary inescapability from the states has its peculiar history. I suggest that a close look at the initial moments of disseminating and grounding ideas of modern state and nation could well advance our knowledge of such processes. The second, addresses the field of social relations that appears to be rather downplayed in "The Faces of the State," that is the history of class relations and the unequal predicament that they entail. Scholars on the intellectual left have long insisted on the importance of seriously engaging the dynamics of class, both nationally and internationally, in order to make sense of the historical prominence of modern states and nations (see Nairn 1997). While the contemporary destitution of the working classes in the West might have tempered the willingness to engage the notion as well as the processes that it crucially describes, a history of the state and nation can hardly do without it. However, only by looking at the conflicting history of class relations the ideas of states and nations reveal their very material grip on social life and

their effects in drawing and redrawing of boundaries between inclusion and exclusion, entitlement and disentanglement, participation and non-participation or speech and silence.

National character and moral regulation

The major advantage of investigating state formation and nation building through the ideology and practice of physical education and sports is provided by their often claimed distance, autonomy or neutrality in face of political dynamics. However, the available information ridicules such statements creating a suspicion towards the actual establishment of modern states and nations and inviting questions regarding their social role and long-term effects. Following the line opened by Abrams, Corrigan and Sayer have pugnaciously showed just how the idea of the state is all about “moral regulation: a project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word ‘obvious’, what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order” and that “state formation is a totalizing project, representing people as members of a particular community – an ‘illusory community’, as Marx described it. This community is epitomized as *the nation*, which claims people’s primary social identification and loyalty” (1985:4). These are valid general points, pace the exceptionality of English state formation, that provide a starting point for the history of the state, nation and sport in Transylvania and Romania attempted here. It is the socialization into the state and nation through physical education and sports in a specific time and place (a region in Central Europe in the first half of the 20th century) that forms the concern of the present analysis.

Throughout their work, Corrigan and Sayer repeatedly insist that limited attention has been devoted to the “the extensive organization of ‘the State’ as *nation*” (1985:122), only to synthetically conclude that “the State” is “the nation made manifest” (1985:195). The processes

that they identify as key in the constitution of this relation are the management of so-called “idle time” among the laboring class by the ruling elites and organized education. Analytically this amounts to tracing the historical dynamics of “cultural rationalization” and “moral regulation” in the integration of the English state and nation. The concept, at once emic and etic, that ranks prominent in this endeavor is that of “*national character*”. I would argue that there are few other social sites where this notion has been so actively, vigorously, and powerfully deployed as in physical education and sports. Physical education and sports are prime sites for the molding of national character.

Through “national character” the bureaucratic logic of modern states, that Handelman cogently defines as “the logic of the forming of form” (2004:22), is afforded the power to mould, shape, bound and close virtually any practice deemed “national”. However, it is also the case that available practices and meanings at any one time limit and restrict the endless combinatory possibilities of this logic. These might be more decisively local, regional or way too cosmopolitan to afford any simple, immediate reconfiguration. Such processes are best observed in what Handelman calls “public events”, the ritual processes through which practices and meanings are brought together in an ordered, disciplined and stately form. Overall, the notion of “national character” appears to have been one of the most enduring ways to stabilize the imbalanced power relations making up modern nation-states both vertically and horizontally. At the same time, it shows that any achieved stability is but momentary, making the formation of states and nations a continuous effort of producing material as well as imaginative results, ones convincing enough to maintain legitimacy. As the career of “national character” shows, it did so effectively only for a limited period and found itself recently dethroned by “national identity”. The two are clearly not to be confounded.

Perry Anderson lucidly clarifies this distinction when critically engaging Fernand Braudel's late work on France's national identity (1992a). He notes that since the 1980s "the discourse of national difference has shifted from character to identity" and although their meaning is distinct they are usually used interchangeably (Anderson 1992a:267). In a nutshell:

The concept of character is in principle comprehensive, covering all the traits of an individual, or a group; it is self-sufficient, needing no external reference for its definition; and it is mutable, allowing for partial or general modifications. By contrast the charge of the notion of identity is more selective, conjuring up rather what is inward and essential; relational, implying some element of alterity for its definition; and perpetual, indicating what is continuously the same. (Anderson 1992a:268)

Whereas "identity, [...], always possesses a reflexive or subjective dimension [...] character can at the limit remain purely objective, something perceived by others without the agent being conscious of it" (Anderson 1992a:268). The implications of the difference between "character" and "identity" are crucial for the political strategies and procedures mobilized to produce and uphold one or the other. It also accompanies a major shift from the collective to the individual level. If the distinction holds as suggested, then a national integration premised on character is theoretically quite different from one premised on identity. "Character" could be nationalized by a distinct group of intellectuals/politicians by simply listing the perceived traits of a people, whatever those may be, *à la* Hume or Montesquieu. The subsequent political problem is to make "society" live up to the blueprint. This could be observed by the same potentates, into a whole series of public manifestations, especially those of international competition. Of course, it was always a major advantage if people actually believed in what they were doing. On the other hand, nationalizing "identity" is more complicated as there is little way to ascertain "true" belief,

sentiment, attachment, or loyalty. It follows that, in a sense, identity and national identity are always in crisis, individually and collectively searching in the reservoir of memory for whatever might be of use.

A quick illustration from football should put the point across. In interwar Romania the national character of the players and of the national team would be observed in how they fought, to what extent did they conform to a specific (Latin) tactic and style of play, in how engaged (or not) some of them were, how willing they were to sacrifice for a positive result, and, of course, the result proper. These observations had direct repercussions in, for example, recruitment patterns for the national side and more immediate ones in how the representatives of the nation were depicted to the wider nation via reports in the press. When it comes to national identity, the questions contemporaneously being asked and the observations made are significantly different: can a player born abroad or just playing for a foreign club be trusted to perform well for the national team? Do current players and the team live up to the high standards established by the successful ones of previous generations? Is being called to the national team enough of a motivation or should it be compensated financially? What such questions usually lead to is a never ending, and this is precisely the point, discourse of corruption, degradation, decay, demotivation, and disinterest in case of defeat and one of efficiency, rebirth, triumph, will, and courage in case of success. Movement between the two poles is often more than sudden.

Returning at the general level, we can now grasp the pertinence of Philip Abrams's observation to the effect that:

It is impossible not to see how decisively political life is conditioned by national character.

I use the term national character deliberately.

... much of what political sociologists are doing is little more than an attempt to explain systematically what an older generation had in mind when they spoke of national character or used terms like ‘not ready for democracy’ (1964: 54) (Quoted in Corrigan, Sayer 1985:142)

Somewhat paradoxically, to forge “national character” supposes a higher and more stable moral ground than in the case of “national identity” and a much stronger belief in reason. The continuous “search” for the latter systematically subverts the possibility of finding a sound moral ground, while the definition of the former has it, as it were, inbuilt. This is one chief reason why Corrigan and Sayer refer to “moral regulation” almost as often as to “cultural revolution” in their discussion of English state formation. Durkheim, the main instigator of this debate within sociology, has made it plain that the moral education transmitted in French public schools “must be the guardians par excellence of our national character” (1973:4).

Most of Durkheim’s scholarly pursuits have been devoted to understand and explain that “morality” and “character” are socially determined and just how they operate, a theme thoroughly explored in his “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life” (Durkheim 1965:22). Commenting on Durkheim’s contribution, Gellner well sensed what is at stake – the compulsory nature of concepts and the ritualized process through which they are disseminated and inculcated (1991:56). Hence, according to Gellner:

Men are not free to think as they wish; they are in thrall to their ideas, and their ideas are socially shared. Like Kant, Durkheim supposed that moral and logical compulsion had the same root, though he differed from Kant as to what that single root was. The primary function of ritual, according to Durkheim, was the imprinting of concepts, and hence the compulsions and obligations built into them, onto our minds and feelings. Collective excitement makes us malleable and fit to receive, not so much indoctrination (that

was only to come much later), as *inconceptualization*. Shared concepts and shared compulsions made us into social men: in fact, they alone made us both social and human. (Gellner 1991:57)

Modern ‘Society’ has certainly not abandoned categories to the free choice of individuals, as Corrigan and Sayer perceptively show. Some of their most compelling illustrations present precisely the ways in which the 18th and 19th century ruling English elite, making up what they call ‘Society’, has made ‘society’ in its own image through the process of “improvement”, later “progress”. National character and morality were the central conceptual tools of intervention, constituting the backbone of “inconceptualization”, “socializing into society”, through the “rituals and routines of the state” (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:5). Representations of “true” national character came loaded with proper ways of behaving, relating, and showing deference. This was most visible before the electoral franchise became universal. Character and the moral prescriptions defining it afforded a key leverage in the struggle to extend or not electoral rights.

Beyond the analytic usefulness of the notion of “character” its material effects should also be noted. Durkheim clearly suggests and Gellner powerfully stresses that forms of ritual practice are the most effective ways through which ideas are spread and inculcated. If we uphold the view that modern physical education and sports do not actually function in some splendid isolation from the social relations making up and sustaining modern states, nations and societies, it can easily be argued that they have been some of the most powerful arenas for the development and dissemination of national character as well as of inculcating sanctioned modes of social being and feeling. The methodological and empirical problem becomes to probe how this process of inculcation unfolded historically. Treating manifestations of physical education and sports as powerful “rituals” or “public events” in their historical making and becoming should allow us to

better grasp their political role in integrating societies, nations and upholding states, as well as to track moments of divergence and dissent.

Tracing the career of national character into the field of physical education permits the analysis to come full circle, as Eugene Weber once suggested. It is in and around modern physical and sporting practices that a whole array of meanings has coalesced to produce and reproduce ideas and images of state and nation, ultimately coming together as nation-states. The focus on national character and moral regulation has two major implications in the economy of the present study. Broadly stated, it renders visibility the biological and cultural aspects of state formation and nation building and to the connections between them. On the one hand, developing a strong national character more often than not meant tackling the biological stock of any one national population. Thus, a continuous preoccupation with eugenics, social hygiene, racial hygiene, amelioration is readily discernable on the part of all sorts of administrators. Physical education and sports provided the stage to present their achievements. On the other hand, the moralizing pretensions of the same events should also be noted. Their pedagogical design and component is key to make sense of the ways in which ideas of the state and nation have been produced and reproduced over time, not in a passive way, but by the active involvement of a growing number of men and women. Like many other institutions of higher education throughout the 20th century, the University of Cluj has been at the forefront of creating and materializing the knowledge produced on both fronts.

Chapter 1 – Playing for and against the Nation: Football in Interwar Romania

“It’s inadmissible to create a state within a state”. This short quote appeared in large, bold letters on the front page of a Romanian sports newspaper in August 1937¹. The line was taken from an interview with Viorel Virgil Tilea, president of the Romanian Football Federation, a distinguished member of the National Peasants’ Party and a reputed diplomat. Almost twenty years after the creation of Greater Romania, Tilea was publicly voicing and reacting to one of Romanians greatest historical fears – the perceived danger of statehood in peril, jeopardized by an enemy within. Tellingly, he was doing so as the chief administrator of the game of football, translating one of the major tropes of Romanian political history onto the realm of sport. For Tilea, the passionate debates surrounding the alteration of the national football league were clear signs of instability and danger at the very heart of the state. Throughout the interwar Romanian sports administrators were at odds regarding the ways in which to best balance the highly uneven regional participation in elite competitions, skewed towards Transylvania and Banat, and to redress the ethnic composition of the participating clubs. He envisaged a solution in the complete Romanianization of the game and promised measures in that direction.

By engaging from the very top the organizational and political problems of Romanian club football, the interview clearly depicted three central dimensions of modern Romanian nation-state making: territorial unification, state centralization and nationalization. Looking at the regional distribution of the clubs contesting the national league Tilea noted that “twenty years since the Union, the championship is still disputed between four Transylvanian cities and Bucharest.” Clubs in all other regions were still trailing well down the line. He warned that the uneven regional development of the game was perpetuated since the establishment of Greater

¹ “Creiarea de Stat in Stat nu-i admisibilă”, *Sportul Capitalei*, An 1, No. 162, 9 August 1937.

Romania and was likely to be reproduced without determined state intervention. Geographically, the “national championship”, was hardly “national” in its membership, and failing in its scope to bring together representatives of towns and cities across the land.

To that effect, the Federation’s president argued for measures to alter the geographical distribution of the participants in the national championship, allowing clubs from the major towns of Wallachia, Moldavia, Bukovina and Bessarabia to take part, alongside those from Transylvania, Banat and the capital-city Bucharest. While cartographically reasonable, the expansion collided with the ethnic distribution of Romanian interwar society, where most towns and cities were homes for large numbers of ethnics other than Romanians. Fully aware of the issue Tilea retorted that the included clubs might not be Romanian when it came to their players, “but they are Romanian as an environment (*mediu*)”.

This chapter tells the story of the Romanian “environment” that Tilea hinted at, one emerging out of the juncture of state formation and nation building aggressively pursued by Romanian interwar administrators of football. The Romanian “environment” consisted of an array of often-conflicting practices, institutions and interactions that hardly resembled the promoted image of a “national sport”. Moreover, his choice of words is highly suggestive for the process of naturalizing the Romanian nation-state. “*Mediu*” strongly emphasizes the geographical and ecological determinations of one’s being and in Tilea’s usage is highly consistent with the politics of “national character” being forged in this period all over Central and Eastern Europe (Banac and Verdery 1995; Trencsényi 2012 Chapter 1). Scholars of nationalism have long stressed that making the “nation” appear natural is key to understanding its enduring salience in modern times (Anderson 1983; Handelman 2004; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). Research on the formative years of the modern sporting movements in both Western and

Central Europe have shown the critical role of sports and physical education in grounding and disseminating precisely such understandings of the nation (Cronin 2003; Hargreaves 1986, 2000; Holt 1981, 1990; McDevitt 2004; Naul and Hardman 2002; Nolte 2002; Weber 1971).

However, studies of sport and nationalism have tended to emphasize the importance of the national scale in the historical development of sport. Pace Eugen Weber's foundational studies on the establishment of French sport (1970, 1971), this tendency worked to subdue the dynamic interplay of scales in the making of modern sports. Analyzing the development of Romanian sport in the interwar, particularly of association football, allows me to expose the uneven and incoherent nature of the state's territorial policies, thus debunking the myths of territorial unity and cultural contiguity that modern Romanian nationalism holds dear. The emerging geography of interwar Romanian sport provides an alternative spatial vision, made out of towns and regions found in unexpected configurations that cut across administrative national and international boundaries, challenging the pretensions of a uniform national space. I find a potential solution to such conceptual and empirical problems in a recent intervention in the historical sociology of the nation which has emphasized and reworked the "modular" character of the "nation form" (Goswami 2002), prompted by a critical reexamination of Benedict Anderson's classic "Imagined Communities" (1983).

For his part, Anderson (1983:4) notoriously noted that the nation is a specific "cultural artifact" in the making at least since the eighteenth century, crystallized by the interplay of "discrete historical forces" and established in a "modular" form – that is ripe for transplantation in various other social formations. In her substantive reworking of "modularity", Manu Goswami (2002) observed that subsequent research has enthusiastically taken up Anderson's suggestion of the nation as a cultural phenomenon opening the way for culturalist analyses of the ways in

which nations were and are imagined. This shift has favored the observation and analysis of the particular practices, categories, institutions and narratives mobilized into the making of nations, but have obscured the logical and historical similarity of the “nation form” beyond its particular instantiations. Goswami (2004) argued that this culturalist tendency, partly derived from Anderson’s loose attention to the notion of “modularity”, has reinforced varieties of methodological nationalism and hampered the development of a “sociohistorical” analysis of the nation able to grasp the at once universal and particular character of the modern nation form.

The analytical force of Goswami’s conceptualization derives from the fact that it recognizes and dynamically integrates the spatial and temporal unevenness of the world system expanding it well beyond Anderson’s understanding of the “nation” as a transferrable model. By acknowledging the unevenness of the modern predicament, this theorization opens a major route to investigate the interplay between local, regional and global scales in the making of the nation into the privileged locus of politics, economics and culture and the sustained and incessant work required to that end. It puts into perspective the formal equality and substantive inequality of the modern world of nations, presumably equal on the international scene and often highly fragmented and internally unbalanced. The result is the exposure of the contradictions at the heart of the world-system, of regions and of local communities that the modern nation-state attempts to fix.

While Goswami underscores Anderson’s major insight regarding the transferable character of the nation form, she crucially adds that its “transposable” character, should be understood as “dynamic” allowing for “the agentic and dynamic reconfiguration of cultural categories, institutional repertoires, and meanings” in its transfer (Goswami 2002:785). This configurational dynamism accounts for the nation form’s “doubled” character, at once universal

and particular, objective and subjective, highly similar relative to other such national forms and highly different in their particular discourses and structures (Goswami 2002:785). All of the above, account for the “durability” of the nation form which in its historical unfolding has thoroughly permeated “practices, institutions and conceptual categories” in the process becoming “second nature” and “treated as natural” (Goswami 2002:786).

It is at this point that modern sports, most notably association football, decisively operate to accomplish or to undermine the territorialization of the nation form. It does so materially, through the construction of stadiums, parks, or sporting grounds; institutionally through the setting up of clubs, federations, competitions, and their regulative frameworks; culturally through inventing its own national traditions, national styles of play or nationally specific forms of fandom. Hence, the organization of modern sport materializes the infrastructural power of the state (Mann 1984) in its national modality. I argue that the modularity of the nation form is neatly paralleled by the modular character of modern sport, making it instrumental in the dissemination and grounding of modern nationalism. I start by presenting the institutional infrastructure designed to establish and develop Romanian sport. The tensions and frictions underwriting this effort of making the inter-war Romanian nation-state appear as natural were immediately obvious in the game of football, soon to be the most popular game of the land. Accordingly, I follow the founding moments of the “Universitatea” Cluj sports club, the leading Romanian sports club in central Transylvania as depicted in the recollections of some of its members. Finally, to depict the vagaries of national representation, I move to explore the early days of the Romanian national football team through its contested participation at the 1924 Paris Olympics. Overall, the institutional transformations, the assumed positions and ideas, the sporting scandals present a historical configuration that by the late 1930s made the calls for a

Romanian “environment” increasingly radical and exclusive.

Unification through sport

In the realm of sports, the task of centralization and homogenization was delegated to the Romanian Federation of Sports Societies (F.S.S.R.). A sports federation had already been founded in 1912 in the Old Kingdom of Romania and significantly reshaped in 1921 to accommodate the territorial expansion of the country. Significantly, the Sports Federation’s constitution pre-dated Romania’s territorial expansion of 1918, when Greater Romania was formed through the addition to the Old Kingdom of Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina sanctioned at the Paris Peace Conference. The institutionalization of sport in interwar Romania and its efficiency as a strategy of nation building and state formation obviously rested on a work of mediation and articulation between dispersed and diverse local institutions and central authorities. Throughout the interwar, the Federation and the subsequent specialized federations sought to harmonize and integrate the existing sports clubs into a national framework of competitions and regulations. Thus, the Federation was dominated by top down initiatives to introduce and disseminate modern sporting practices. Writing the history of these endeavors, one active participant and observer made it clear that a small group of elite enthusiasts were behind the initial attempts:

In our country, there were almost no sports clubs at the time [1912], and the few in existence were pursuing different sports and did not care at all about one another. On the other hand, some sports were little practiced, while others were completely unheard of. In this context, the founding of the FSSR [the Romanian Federation of Sports Societies] did not spring out of a real need of coming together, but was created by a few pioneers, following the Omni-sportive model of the French USFSA [Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques], to disseminate the taste for practicing physical exercise, for the founding

of sporting associations, to regulate sports, to acquire fields and to establish a central sports park.²

After 1918, the Federation was confronted with a plethora of thriving sports clubs in Transylvania, a large majority of which were owned and used by non-Romanians. Transylvania's incorporation posed serious problems of leadership and regulation. A cohort of Transylvanian Romanians took positions of management in sports regulatory bodies, mirroring their presence in central political institutions. Given the better shape of Transylvanian sporting institutions, their bargaining power was bound to be high relative to their counterparts from the Old Kingdom. The case of association football is probably most instructive in this respect, where from 1925 onwards the football committee of the Federation and from 1930 the Romanian Association Football Federation (FRFA) were run by Transylvanians.

Faced with these national and nationalizing developments, the “minority” sports clubs and associations in Transylvania had little interest in sanctioning and abiding the rules of a *Romanian* Federation. They could easily pursue their activities through private arrangements. From 1921 onwards, reports abound in the Romanian sports press presenting competitions that went ahead in spite of the interventions of the Federation or simply by neglecting its jurisdiction. For example, in 1921 the newly constituted club “Makkabea” Oradea went on to play its inaugural football game against “Törekvés” Satu-Mare although the regional committee of the Federation did not recognize the legitimation of its players³. The report noted that the event went “down the road of nationalism and anti-Semitism” as “the Jewish public in Oradea believes that this was a hit directed towards Jews”⁴ and ended by stressing the “mistake” of allowing the

² Boerescu, Neagu. 1931. F.S.S.R., U.F.S.R si O.N.E.F. Începuturile și organizarea sportului in România. *Boabe de grâu*, Anul II, Nr. 6-7.

³ Chestiunea clubului “Makkabea” din Oradea. *Sportul*, Cluj, 27 Iunie 1921, p. 2.

⁴ *Idem*.

creation of clubs based on “race and nationalism”. At the same time in Cluj, the Hungarian club K.A.C. (*Kolozsvári Atletikai Club*) was castigated for dragging sport down the line of “minority hypernationalism” when it failed to send its athletes to compete against Romanian students of “Universitatea”, only to presumably repeat the trick when the “Society for the Care of War Orphans” organized its own sports festivity⁵.

Hence, when the FSSR convened its first Congress on the 21st of June 1921 under the patronage of Prince Carol the participation was less than humble. Alongside the representatives of students from Bucharest and of two Bucharest-based clubs, only three other bodies – all Transylvanian – cared to send delegates⁶. The turnout was surprisingly low considering that the modification of the Federation’s Statutes topped the agenda. However, the turnout provides an accurate picture of Romanian sports in the early days of Greater Romania. On the one hand, the sporting activity outside Bucharest, in the Old Kingdom, in Bessarabia or Dobruja, was in the least modest. On the other, wherever sports were thriving, namely in the towns of Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina, the Germans, Hungarians or Jews supporting them found little interest in upholding a Romanian umbrella institution like the FSSR.

The Transylvanians’ position in relation to those problems were clearly addressed by Silviu Dragomir. Dragomir was a reputed professor of history in Cluj, president of the “Universitatea” sports club, and later minister in the right-wing governments of the late 1930’s (minister secretary of state in the Goga-Cuza government of 1937/1938 and minister of minorities during King Carol II dictatorship in 1939/1940). Dragomir’s intervention appears contradictory were it not for the compromise he was trying to bridge. Faced with the centralizing pressures from the capital city of Bucharest the professor tried to secure the high regional

⁵ Sport sau politică? *Sportul*. Cluj, An I, No. 5, 30 Mai 1921, p. 1.

⁶ Congresul Federației Societăților Sportive din România, *Sportul*, Cluj, An I, No. 9, 27 Iunie 1921, p.1.

bargaining power of Transylvania. The compromise was designed to leave enough space for the establishment of Romanian sporting institutions in Transylvania, without much affecting the non-Romanian ones. Thus, he first stressed that existing sports societies should be independent and that “private sport” (read “non-Romanian”) should not be obstructed by the coming reforms⁷. Through this, he addressed the pressing question of property and use rights over existing infrastructures as “in Transylvania there are sports arenas built from private money, arenas that the army also asks for its own societies. Such requests can hardly be satisfied, given the large number of private societies whom have the right to use them. Professor Dragomir proposes to start the construction of new pitches”⁸. He went on to ask for a tax exemption on sporting competitions as well as for a reduction on railroad travel for sports societies. However, the professor also asked and saw approved an amendment stating that the official language of the Federation is Romanian, and that all the correspondence between societies, regional committees and the federation must take place in Romanian. One can hardly fail to note the overall strategy at work there. By catering to the needs of the militaries, a powerful force in the aftermath of the war and after, Dragomir worked to secure the material basis of the Romanian sporting movement in Transylvania, making sure that public investments will not eschew it, while with the appeal to exclusive language use, he worked to silence the voices of its non-Romanian competitors.

The position of Prince Carol, the later to be King Carol II, is also telling for the visions of sports development at play in the early interwar and does a lot to elucidate why only a handful of Transylvanians and Bucharesters attended the Congress. His major contribution in the field came towards the end of the period, with the creation of the fascist inspired “Sentinel of the Country”, a full-blown national militarized youth organization of physical education and military training.

⁷ *Idem.*

⁸ *Idem.*

Nonetheless, as soon as 1921, Carol was envisaging a so-called “House of People’s Culture” (*Casa Culturei Poporului*) that was supposed to include physical education and sports in its broad competencies, where private sporting societies would stand on an equal footing with military ones, under a unique regime of regulation and taxation⁹.

However, it was not only Transylvanians posing problems for the centralization and national integration of sports institutions. In 1926, Cernăuți, capital of Bukovina, probably the most cosmopolitan urban setting in Greater Romania, was the scene of an intricate feud between the German and Jewish football clubs dubiously mediated by the local and central committees of the Romanian Federation. The feud concerned the winner of the local football league due to play in the eliminatory rounds of the national league. The end of the season hierarchy was hotly contested by the officials of the Jewish rivals “Maccabi” and “Hakoah”, seconded by the players and followers of the German club “Jahn”. According to one “Maccabi” representative, his club contested to the local subcommittee a game played by its rivals “Hakoah” against the local Polish club “Polonia” on an unapproved pitch. They had initially won the appeal, only to see the decision overturned by the central committee following the intervention of a rival official. In this situation, yet another contestation was made regarding “Hakoah”’s right to field a certain player¹⁰. At the same time, a local army major was pointing fingers at the workings of the local subcommittee, accusing the partiality of its leadership¹¹. Depending on the ways in which the hierarchy got altered, several clubs felt entitled to play the league’s final. Things descended into chaos when the final eventually got organized. The local Germans felt that their club - “Jahn” - was the rightful winner of the local league. Meanwhile, the local subcommittee of the Federation failed to assign referees for the encounter, due to a boycott against “Hakoah”. Prior to the game,

⁹ *Idem.*

¹⁰ În jurul rebeliunii de la Cernăuți, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An II, No. 251, 3 August 1926, p. 3.

¹¹ *Idem.*

an ad-hoc meeting of the subcommittee was summoned on the pitch and only the intervention of the central committee in Bucharest gave the go-ahead for the game. The game did finally kick-off, but was abruptly called off when the fans and players of “Jahn” invaded the pitch to request their favorites be declared winners. The referee decided to abandon the game for a later date, but when a venue was found for the re-match, the pitch was found devastated with broken goalposts and seats and pickax holes across the pitch. A police investigation found that an engineer in a local factory sent four of his workers to destroy it. Nonetheless, the game did somehow go ahead on that day¹² and was clinched by “Fulgerul” Chişinau against “Hakoah”.

The situation in Cernăuţi shows the remarkable ethnic diversity at play in club football and the dominant position of minorities within it. As such, at a time when football was still largely amateur the passions were bound to flare quickly and remain high. At the institutional end of the spectrum, only a month prior to the events in Cernăuţi an anonymous member of the Federation was complaining in the sports press of “the lack of order” holding sway in the institution¹³. He identified two major problems that have brought this situation about: “unjust statutes” and “an abusive minority”. On the one hand, reproaches were directed towards the autonomy and subsequent influence of committee presidents across the country, whom were presumably able to pursue their personal interests, to protect their “friends”, to easily get reelected, while the central committee had no power “to intervene regarding selection, which would mean: determination, ample views, sporting management and strict financial control”¹⁴. On the other hand, one sports journalist noted that the “ruling minority is abusive”¹⁵. The minority that he had in mind was not that of the usual suspects represented by non-Romanian

¹² Un scandal fără precedent în istoria foot-ball-ului român. *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An II, No. 243, 15 Iulie 1926.

¹³ Nedreptăţi şi lacune. *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An 2, No. 222, 27 Mai 1926, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁵ *Idem.*

ethnics, although this was obviously implied. This time the minority hinted at was that of the Transylvanians in charge of the FSSR. The reasoning rested on the simple calculus that Transylvania only had one hundred and ten clubs affiliated to the FSSR, while the rest of the county, “the disconsidered majority”, was made of one hundred and sixty clubs¹⁶. In a series of radical allegations, the official went on to question the loyalty, leadership skills and financial ethics of the Federation’s Transylvanian leaders. They were found wanting on every account: taking advantage of the national institution’s financial resources, plotting for the creation of alternative, regionally based institutions, for example the Football Federation envisaged in Oradea and Timișoara¹⁷, and obstructing the financial central committee in its regulatory dealings. With the “honor of Romanian sports” at play, the press went on to call for a thorough regulatory transformation, one that would suit the perceived need for central coordination and control.

The anonymous observer correctly noted that a different organizational dynamics was at play in Transylvania and Banat. By the late 1920’s the Western town of Timișoara emerged as the hotbed of dissent in relation to the central sporting authorities. The professionalization of the game in Hungary and Austria had placed a huge pressure on players, especially so among those of Transylvanian Hungarian extraction, to try their luck at Hungarian and Austrian clubs in search of substantially increased earnings. This posed a major dual problem for the Romanian administrators of the game. On the one hand, one might have expected Romanian officials to easily and happily dispose of the services of players that were members and visible representatives of a minority population. However, there was little “home-grown” talent springing up in their place. These were the finest players that could be recruited for both

¹⁶ *Idem.*

¹⁷ *Idem.*

Romanian clubs and country. On the other hand, the departure of players to Hungary, the arch political rival and enemy, could easily be seized upon as an act of aggression, one strategically presented and used to undermine the legitimacy of claims coming from across the new border.

The situation is telling for the ambiguous position of Hungarian Romanians, not only in football, but also in many other spheres of life. Hungarians made most of the urban Transylvanian population, and were consequently better educated and much more familiar with the workings and opportunities offered by modern urban institutions relative to most Romanians in the region. Not only sheer numbers made them unavoidable. Their resources and skills were often critical for the functioning of Romanian institutions. As one commentator aptly put it, at odds with stereotypical accounts of resentment between Romanians and Hungarians, “when the Romanian international Albi Ströck defended the Hungarian flag against Austria, we’ve all felt a painful heart ache.”¹⁸ Moreover, with professionalization, a new occupation was making its way into the world of football, that of player manager or impresario. This shadowy figure could not help but fuel the stories of conspiracy against Romanian interest. Thus, “the mirage of the Hungarian coin forcefully introduced in the minds of our round ball artists by Hungarian emissaries, swarming along our Western border, has bared fruit.”¹⁹ The efforts of Romanian administrators constituted strong reactions to such developments and there was a discernible tendency to support ever more statist and nationalistic forms of sport, which would ultimately culminate in their full militarization in the late 1930s. The creation of the “Universitatea” sports club at the University of Cluj, one of the pillars of Romanianess in Transylvania, allows a more in-depth reading of the issues at play.

¹⁸ Exodul jucătorilor români în Ungaria. *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An V, No. 453, 21 Ianuarie 1928.

¹⁹ *Idem*.

The Transylvanian Arena

The modern and contemporary history of Transylvania has been described as emerging “between states” due to the claims and counterclaims made by Hungarians and Romanians regarding sovereignty rights over this territory and its population (Case 2009). The ongoing disputes, synthesized in the so-called “Transylvanian question”, have made their way to the forefront of European politics, often in a make or break fashion that threatened regional and even continental peace and stability (Case 2009). In the post-World War I period, with its yardstick of national self-determination, both Romanians and Hungarians were keenly aware that the short-, medium- and long-term sustainability of their states could only be assured by trenching, once and for all, the national question. They were trying to do so as close as possible to the ideal of one nation, one state. Consequently, the Romanian Transylvanian elites of the interwar were left to navigate a narrow and mine-packed path between Bucharest and Budapest, if they were to have a say on national and international developments. This highly constraining situation manifested itself in both local, regional and national politics and in everyday life and was immediately obvious in the development of competitive sports. Given the intensity of the debates and conflicts and the suspicions arising on both sides, any public action or development was bound to be charged with contradictory meanings and intentions.

For the agents of the newly consecrated Romanian state, the obvious ultimate aim was to achieve and represent Romanian greatness in the world of nations, a scope turned into the developmental national credo that has marked the last century of their social formation up to the present day. The territorial greatness of “Greater Romania” obscured the fact that the post-World War I social and economic situation was far less than great. Greater Romania was an overwhelmingly rural society where state institutions were chronically understaffed and often

under-skilled making the meeting point of modern state and society in the form of citizenship difficult to achieve in any meaningful way (Livezeanu 1990). Uneven regional development and contrasting historical trajectories (Murgescu 2010) posed a major pressure for accelerated state integration and centralization. In Transylvania, a large contingent of minorities other than Romanians was overwhelmingly urbanized and holding large swaths of the available pool of private capital. This situation made Romanianization a key political effort actively pursued in public education (Livezeanu 1995) and, more generally, in political and economic life (Case 2009). The perceived artisans of nation building and state formation - the Romanian lower middle-class intellectuals from Transylvania – were caught “between state and nation”, often tending to stress the failures of the former in relation to the needs of the latter (Livezeanu 1990).

As soon as the Great War came to a halt, long before the peace accords were even drafted, Transylvanian towns were arenas of population displacement and replacement. As proud victors, Romanians were taking over what they came to perceive as their territory, while Hungarians were either leaving to a much reduced homeland or socially retrenching for the hardships and confrontations to come. Triumphant Romanianness was attached, materially and symbolically, to public spaces and institutions and little remained untouched by this frantic effort of nationalization (for the case of Cluj see Iuga 2010). The former “Franz Joseph University” in Cluj, re-baptized as “The University of Dacia Superior”, was a prime locus and battleground of these transformations (Brubaker et al. 2006). As latecomers to the thriving international sports scene of the early twentieth century, the Romanians were retying the knots of old debates when they sought to find the best ways to introduce and establish physical education and sports in the Romanian society of the interwar. Similar processes have already been at work in Western countries, and elsewhere on the European continent, with Hungary as a better documented

regional case (Hadas 2007). Transylvania shared in the developments taking place in this area in imperial times and was rightly perceived as more developed than the Old Kingdom of Romania not only in sports, as well as in other spheres of life.

In this situation, the written testimonies of some of the players and officials at the club at the time of its founding provide a unique window to what was at stake in the early days of Romanian football in Cluj. Written roughly half a century later, part of a drive to gather information for an intended history of the “Universitatea” sports club, in a vastly different socio-political environment dominated by the nationalistic turn of the Romanian socialist regime, the recollections present ways of drawing and fixing connections between personal memory and national history, as well as ways of reconciling individual biographies with fast changing social and political forces²⁰. The sports club at the University in Cluj, founded in 1919, was designed from the onset to affirm Romanianness in the world of sports and physical education. Thus, one active participant to its creation remembered the dawns of the Romanian “Universitatea” football club in Cluj in the following terms:

On the 22nd of October 1919 I was demobilized from the Romanian Army as a university student through a telegram of the 6th Army Corps of the “Horea” legion where I had served as a sub-lieutenant in reserve. Once back in Cluj, on the 15th of November 1919, after meeting some high-school colleagues, friends and war comrades, we started inquiring about the local sporting life. So it was that us, a few *orădeni* [from Oradea], *bănăţeni* [from Banat region], known sportsmen since high school, discussed and decided to begin a sporting activity. We went to the sports arena where we found out that ever since Hungarian times

²⁰ The documents that I allude to were collected by the medical doctor Mihai Iubu in 1978-1979. I analyze them in depth in Chapter 4. Iubu was the president of the football section of “Universitatea” during the Second World War when the university and subsequently the club relocated to Sibiu following the Second Vienna Arbitration. He sent out a questionnaire to former players and officials across the country, but many of them went on to produce extensive memories. The doctor did not live long enough to use this material. It was passed on to the local historian Gheorghe I. Bodea. It is thanks to the generosity of the late Gheorghe I. Bodea that I am able to use these materials. I have gained access to thirty such recollections. Extensive quotations in Romanian are available in Bodea (2004, 2009).

students had a sports club called K.E.A.C. (Kolozsvári Egyetemi Atletikai Club) (the University Athletic Club of Cluj). We tried to get in contact with its representatives, with its leaders, but we were not able to reach an agreement with them. After several attempts and struggles we did manage to take over the dressing room, which was located under the stands of the sports arena, and thus the “U” Cluj Sports Club was born, the great and much-loved Cluj University’s Club.²¹

Another one, more prone to historicizing, remembered the constitutive moments thus:

In the autumn of 1919, after the bell on the Caporetto in the Italian Alps sounded the closing of the First World War armistice, the arms went silent and young fighters were returning to their homes. Peace was perfected in Paris, Romania got whole (*s-a reîntregit*) with Transylvania and the other Romanian regions in its natural boundaries, constituting what history called “Greater Romania”. In this new situation, in Cluj, Transylvania’s cvasi-capital, where the University was, young Romanians came by their thousands to pursue different faculties, to obtain university titles and to become legitimate leaders of the Romanian people.

In the period November 1919 to January 1920, the young students started organizing themselves by faculties, in order to start a spiritual Romanian activity living up to the surrounding atmosphere, full of an impressive enthusiasm. As countless students were sportsmen ever since high-school, the initiative was soon taken to create a University Sports Club, the more so given that rooms, a gym for indoor sports like fencing, gymnastics, Greek-Roman wrestling, boxing, and an office were already available.²²

These memories are telling in relation to the actions of appropriating a newly conquered territory as well as for the narratives legitimating those very actions. On the one hand, Sabin Țîrla, a left-winger at the “Universitatea” football club from 1919 to 1920, pointed to the mundane practices involved in this effort and their highly charged symbolic content. According to his narrative, the

²¹ Sabin Țîrla, Dr. Iubu Collection, no. 2. Note that I use the ordering numbers assigned by Bodea.

²² Dr. Meșianu Ioan Eugen, Dr. Iubu Collection, no. 40.

taking up, by Romanian students, of the already existing dressing room of the Hungarian students' football club meant, no more, no less, than the birth of a new institution. Our player does not forget to add that it did not go quite smoothly, thus adding a bit of heroism to the scene. In this act of appropriation a material continuity, an ideological rupture and a startling process of ethnic exclusion are affirmed at once. First, the unfolding of highly ethnicized class relations was at play to account for the preservation and taking over of even such modest things as the belongings of one lowly football club. Alongside Tîrla, soon after disbanding from the army, "thousands" of Romanian youths were heading to Cluj – "the cvasi-capital of Transylvania" – to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the newly Romanianized university. Just like him, most of these youths were not born and raised in town and were confronting an urban space that was by and large thoroughly Hungarian. In this situation, Romanian private investment in sport was nowhere to be found, making a parallel development of clubs along ethnic lines a veritable non-option. Concurrently, this lack of resources made the destruction and renewal of the existing structures into yet another dead-end. Hence, Romanianizing the local and regional public sphere provided the strong incentive to quickly redistribute and nationalize whatever modest means there existed.

Second, the ideological back-up of this type of appropriation rested on a form of restorative justice central to modern Romanian nationalism which placed territory at the heart of any argument. As Dr. Ioan Eugen Meşianu, a left-back in the football team at "Universitatea" and an official at the club throughout the interwar, made plain in the second quoted statement, the constitution of "Greater Romania", from the Romanian standpoint, simply meant a return to "natural boundaries". By way of implication, it was all but natural that all the goods of the land were Romanian. Note the ubiquitous absence of any reference to Hungarians in his written

record. Fortunately, rooms, a gym and an office happened to be “available” when Romanian students needed them most to start their “spiritual Romanian activity”. This type of Romanian radical national discourse effectively operated to immediately and universally trench the thorny issue of property and rights, at once affirming full Romanian sovereignty and blocking any claim of any other ethnic group even before it could be voiced.

The constitution of the “Students’ Sporting Society of the University” further clarifies what this kind of decision-making actually meant. By May 1920, the “Sporting Society” notified the University’s Senate to officially sanction the destitution of the Hungarian Athletic Club²³ and at a subsequent meeting in June one of its members notified the Senate that the Society did not present any records or inventory of the goods that were taken over²⁴. Nonetheless, the Senate authorized the Rector to “make an intervention at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, so as to declare the disbandment of the old “Egyetemi Athleikai Klub” (University’s Athletic Club) and to pass its assets to the new “Sports Society”²⁵. Alongside the arbitrariness of the nationalizing process, it is crucial to stress the centralizing mechanism at work here and its quasi-personal mode of operation. In order to solve and provide some sense of legitimacy to what was essentially a local and minor problem, the Rector was summoned to make a personal “intervention” at one of the highest order institutions of Romanian government. Finally, the suspension of previous history and the silencing of alternative claims obscures the violent nature of this process of national appropriation, an issue that would resurface time and again in disputes between Romanians and Hungarians during the interwar and after (Case 2009). However, the actual reality of local social and ethnic relations could hardly be brushed aside.

²³ Romanian National Archives – Cluj County Direction (Henceforth: RNA-CCD), Fond Documentar “Universitatea Regele Ferdinand I”, Proces Verbal al Senatului Universității, 28 Mai 1920, p. 215.

²⁴ RNA-CCD, Fond “Universitatea Regele Ferdinand I”, Proces Verbal al Senatului Universității, 4 Iunie 1920, p. 221.

²⁵ *Idem.*

To be sure, Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania did make a living, did entertain strong social relations and were to be found in the most unexpected places and arrangements. From the recollections of players and officials at “Universitatea” there emerges a pattern of arrangements meant to accommodate the ethnic divides. From Constantin Buga, a goalkeeper raised and promoted at the club from 1919 to 1933, we learn that a Hungarian trainer from Szeged, Döme Francisc, coached the team at one point, remembering him as “a good knower of football, a good technician, a good pedagogue, and... a big mouth. In his time, the team reached one of its highest levels.”²⁶ Virgil Dalea, an official at the club from 1926 until the outbreak of the Second World War, dealing with propaganda and later in the committee of the football section, notes that the Austrian Eckhardt from F.C. Wien was also in charge of the team at one time in this period²⁷. We also find that “Universitatea”’s senior team was at one time sharing the pitch in training with the players of the local Hungarian club K.A.C., and often practicing against each other. One former player strongly stresses that “on the pitch we were arch rivals, but of an exemplary fair-play, and not that much rivals, but playing partners. Outside the pitch we were best friends, a friendship that lasts, among those left, until today”²⁸. The goalkeeper humorously redeems one interaction that took place in one such training:

There was a training at one goalpost, at the other the K.A.C. team was training. At one time, one of the “veterans” from our team sends me (at the time I was a novice in first team) to the player nicknamed “Kayla” to ask him to train at two posts. I go and I address him thus: “Kayla úr” (I thought this was his name, but in Hungarian “kayla” means “crotch”, as his legs looked like brackets.) He does not even allow me to finish and sends me back with a beautiful swear. Anyhow, the training did go on at two posts. Many years after, I’ve learned that his name was Kovács and what “kayla” means. On top of that, we had been

²⁶ Constantin C. Buga, Dr. Iubu Collection, no. 27.

²⁷ Virgil Dalea, Dr. Iubu Collection, no. 20.

²⁸ *Idem.*

living for years on the same street, a few houses away from each other. We've ended up good acquaintances after all.²⁹

Such recollections are probably typical of the ways in which people of different ethnic backgrounds got along on a day-to-day basis. The language barriers or the sporting rivalries appear subsumed by good humor and fair play, ultimately leading to long-lasting friendships. Nonetheless, recollections that bridge the ethnic divide remain extraordinary. This is what accounts for their evocative power. In their memories, most of the players of "Universitatea" produce clearly bounded national narratives, where experiences extending beyond the national ties have already fallen into silence. This is hardly surprising provided that modern nation building in Eastern Europe powerfully worked precisely to that end and points to the durable historical connection between sport and nationalism in the region. As we have seen, Romanianization meant the erasing of old inscriptions, the taking over of properties, and the dissemination and fixing of sanctioned narratives of the nation. The University of Cluj was the prime locus of such national pedagogical work in Transylvania from the early 1920s onwards.

The University in Cluj and its sports club were obviously not the only sporting institutions looking to secure fame and glory and to make their national message heard. On the contrary, a simple browsing of the most notable football teams in operation in town in the early 1920s shows an impressive list of five Hungarian teams, two Romanian and one Jewish. The city was a cosmopolitan football scene that reflected not only the town's demographics, but also the class structure of the early interwar. Four of the Hungarians teams were workers' clubs or associations, thus the commercial employees, the railroad workers, the butchers could take up some sport activity in their club, alongside a workers' club proper and a municipal athletic club.

²⁹ *Idem.*

The Romanian teams were catering to students and to the residents of the Romanian neighborhood on the outskirts of the Old Town, while “Haggibor” was a Jewish Zionist club.

To place things into perspective, we should only look at the situation in Iași, the capital of the historical region of Moldova, where by 1929 an emerging sports newspaper had to contend on its front-page that this was “a sports newspaper in a city without sports”³⁰ and its publishers could only hope to somehow aid to remedy this situation. Telling for the crucial importance of state supported initiative in this field is the description of the three existing football clubs of the time in Iași, to be found in the same issue. “Victoria” and “Concordia” were run and staffed by militaries and students respectively, making the Jewish club “Hakoah” the only private initiative in the field, thus the only club where, according to our reporter, “players are free men, playing out of pleasure and not to obey orders.”³¹ The interwar sporting scene in Iași probably presents an extreme case of underdevelopment, but as the debates of the time show little could be left to the mercy of private enterprise thus making the state and its agents key actors in the process of grounding Romanian sport. Owing to their relatively superior industrialization and urbanization in imperial times, Transylvanian towns espoused a far more significant number of clubs whose identity was largely focused along class lines. To this extent, they represented an asset in supporting Transylvanians’ claims of having a leading role in the development of national sport. Nonetheless, these clubs were perceived as minority institutions, potentially destabilizing the Romanian state and hampering the development of the Romanian nation, while the fact that they were representing urban centers where “minorities” made large “majorities,” worked to curtail such claims.

The effort of post-war Romanian unification was thus immediately confronted with at

³⁰ Un ziar sportiv într’un oraș fără sporturi. *Sportul*, Iași, An I, No. 1, 19 Iunie 1929.

³¹ Culisele sportului ieșean. *Sportul*, Iași, An. I, No. 1, 19 Iunie 1929, p. 2.

least two major obstacles. On the one hand, while clearly supporting the goals of the nation, Transylvanian Romanians were nonetheless continuing and establishing intense social connections with their neighbors Transylvanian Hungarians, Jews or Germans. Sports, especially team-sports, were prime arenas of such ethnic interaction. Due to the organizational format of modern sports, these were placing the politically feuding ethnics on an equal footing, at a time when the agents of the Romanian state were making every effort to affirm their “rightful” control over this territory. On the other hand, the incorporation of Transylvania posed the problem of integrating a social formation often more advanced and more endowed with modern institutions relative to the center of power. Sports were again one major and immediately visible arena of such advancement.

A National Team?

As we have seen thus far, beyond the anachronisms of unity, historical destiny or brotherhood professed by romantic nationalist historians, the integration of Transylvania into Romania was never a friction free process (Bucur 2002; Livezeanu 1995). After a millennium of Imperial administration, with an elite, although vociferously nationalist, born, raised and educated in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and a massive Hungarian population that dominated all the important regional urban centers, many eyes and ears were as much oriented to Budapest as to Bucharest. The tumult from the stadiums of the old imperial capital certainly caught the attention and interest of many Transylvanians, Hungarians and Romanians alike, and resounded well into the Old Kingdom. Invitations for Budapest-based clubs to come and play in Transylvania soon followed and were recurrent and highly popular events throughout the interwar. Talented players were soon signing contracts with these clubs and went all the way to play for the Hungarian national team. Unsurprisingly, for a majority of Romanian politicians and

bureaucrats, keen to develop national sports and to Romanianize Transylvania's urban spaces, such practices were anathema in no time. All of these tensions and frictions were at the fore in the scandal surrounding the participation of the Romanian national football team at the Paris Olympics of 1924. The relevance of this scandal is heightened by the fact that it was the very first to be amply reported in the emerging Romanian language sports press.

The creation of Greater Romania in the aftermath of World War I soon posed the problem of affirming the new polity on the international scene. Major international sporting competitions, most notably the modern Olympics and Olympic movement, had already devised a framework geared precisely towards that end. The Paris Olympics of 1924 thus presented itself as a golden opportunity for a new nation to present its image to the world, not to mention the symbolic strength of a return to Paris, the place where the new map of postwar Europe got its official consecration. What Romanian politicians, sports officials and sportsmen sought to present was an image of unity and national solidarity. What they ended up with showed that the task of national integration run into much deeper problems than expected. The story of the Romanian football association team at the 1924 Olympics vibrantly makes this case, in that it draws together most of the problems of post-unification: a regional bias towards Transylvania in terms of recruitment, the overwhelming presence of ethnics other than Romanians under the national flag, never ending questions of betrayal and deceit voiced on both sides of the Carpathians, and the pressing problem of materializing and affirming Romanianness.

The difficulty of fielding the “best” and “proper” Romanian football team for the Paris Olympics is immediately obvious in the highly intricate process of selection devised by the Federation to that end. The central figure of the process was the “national captain” Adrian Suci. He was assigned the unenviable task of recruiting the best line-up out of a series of test games

opposing local/regional teams to teams of the “Rest” of the country. Thus, the team called “the Rest” was in fact close to the line-up of the national representative less the players from a certain region. “The Rest” was due to play a game against a representative of the Cluj region, followed by games with other regional representatives, and a final game against the Bucharest region. Once established, the national team was expected to engage difficult opponents like Hungary, Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia, in several test games to be held in the capital city of Bucharest³².

The process set in motion by the need to recruit a Romanian representative laid bare most of the lines of fracture dividing Romanian society at the time, ethnic and regional ones ranking prominent among them. After a good performance in Cluj³³, the series of selection games culminated with two humiliating defeats for “The Rest” at the hands of the regional teams of Timișoara and Bucharest. While the defeat in Timișoara was rather expected, as most of the footballing talent was concentrated in this Western region of Romania, the result in Bucharest was utterly shocking, especially so in Transylvania. Although a test game, the match in the capital was largely perceived as an encounter between Bucharest and Transylvania, as in this case all of the players of “the Rest” were coming out of the latter region, most of them of Hungarian and German extraction. One sports reporter from Cluj immediately stressed that “on this occasion an undeniable hostility towards Bucharesters” was felt in Cluj and thus the result, when unofficially announced by a journalist in a local café, came down “like a lightning out of the blue”³⁴.

The selection made for the Bucharest regional team said much about the strained relations between Transylvania and the Old Kingdom. It synthetically presented the dissonant understandings making up Romanian citizenship in the interwar. The pattern of selection locally

³² România la Olimpiada VIII-a, *Sportul*, An I, No. 3, 22 Martie 1924.

³³ Echipa restului țării învinge reprezentativa Clujului 2-0, *Sportul*, An I, No. 8, 10 Aprilie 1924.

³⁴ Părerii din Ardeal asupra înfrângerii “Restului” la București. *Sportul*, An I, No. 17, 15 Mai 1924.

replicated the one devised for the selection of the national team. Four line-ups were initially formed out of the existing clubs in the region that played a mini-championship to establish the final one³⁵. In spite of the fact that the game was meant to aid the selection of the Romanian national team, most of the recruited players of Bucharest were actually Hungarians playing for Bucharest based clubs, thus few of them were actually eligible for the national team³⁶. Local newspapers of Hungarian language quickly seized the opportunity to pronounce that a weak Hungarian team had defeated the Romanian Olympic team, pouring scorn over Romanians' inability to produce sporting talent³⁷. It appears that in the contemporary hierarchy of priorities it was much more important to clinch the game in the name of the capital in front of Transylvanians than to aid the selection of a Romanian national team. As our reporter aptly noted, these developments only helped fuel the already sensitive ethnic relations.

In the end, the national captain did complete his Olympic line-up in May 1924 but failed to select any player coming from a club outside the Carpathians. Out of nineteen players, six were from Cluj based clubs, six from Timișoara, five from Oradea and two from Târgu-Mureș³⁸. The training plan of the team on its way to Paris included two test-games in Bratislava and Vienna. The events surrounding the former ultimately tarnished Suciu's already weakened public image. The Bucharest based sports press started questioning the selection as soon as the list was out, stressing the obvious: no player from the Old Kingdom got capped. In these circumstances, the first test game played in Bratislava represented the chance of proving the selection right. Unfortunately for Suciu and his lot, the football game was not advertised take place between

³⁵ Matchurile de selecționare pentru reprezentativa Bucureștiului la foot-ball asociație. *Sportul*, An I, No. 8, 10 Aprilie 1924. It seems that the interest was not running high among the footballers in Bucharest. The first game was delayed by an hour as some of the players failed to show up and no ball was available in due time!

³⁶ *Idem*.

³⁷ *Idem*.

³⁸ Echipa română de foot-ball spre Paris. *Sportul*, An I, No. 18, 18 Mai 1924.

Romania and Czechoslovakia, as everyone expected, but was presented as an encounter between Transylvania (in some reports, the “the Representative of Transylvanian Hungarians”) and Bratislava (or “the Representative of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia” or “the Association of Hungarian Footballers from Slovakia”). Agreeing to replace the national name with any other in an international sporting encounter was highly likely to completely destroy the public image of all those involved. This was just what the Romanian sporting press set out to do with the national captain Suciu. It mattered little that in the early 1920s Bratislava was a Hungarian-German town where teams fielding Hungarian players were much more likely to attract public interest and spectators. The accusations against Suciu went on to border national treason³⁹, his Transylvanian background was invoked to suggest close relationships with the Hungarian “enemies” in a conspiracy against Romanian interests.

Suciu’s national team went on to lose the second test game against Austria in Vienna, 4-1, before being utterly crushed by the Netherlands in the Olympic competition proper in Paris, 6-0. A report in a local newspaper in Cluj synthetically rounded up all the problems and accusations, by now extending well beyond the errors of a single individual:

What makes Cluj’s sportsmen nervous is not so much the defeat, but the doubt that quietly enters everyone’s souls that the traditional lack of organization led us to the failure in Paris. The football team was selected at random and the players were assigned roles other than their usual.

Finally, we get to the central point, symptomatic for all of Romanian sport. Partly out of the words of the returned players, partly from the correspondence of foreign newspapers, it comes out clearly that the lack of liveliness (*însuflețire*) of our players led to these result. Even worse, they showed a complete carelessness.

How are [we] to enliven for the cause of Romanian sport those nine, out of eleven players, Jews and

³⁹ Nemulțumiri în lumea sportivă din Ardeal. *Sportul*, An I, No. 19, 22 Mai 1924.

Hungarians brought up in the school of Budapest? The facts have dismissed any illusion of a sporting federation. The Judeo-Hungarian chauvinism in Transylvania has shown its teeth once more, this time in Paris, managed from Budapest.

The Romanian players showed throughout their journey their Hungarian quality; and in their turn, the representatives of Budapest and their people have cheered for the Romanian team as if it were a second-hand Hungarian team. [...]

The one making this manifestation possible is to blame. If the responsibility in question might be glossed over, at least our sporting ruling circles should look for a new mission in sport: a Romanian national.⁴⁰

The article expressively shows the complex web of relations between regionalism, ethnicity, nationalism and statism historically at work in Romanian football and sports. There is a discernible pattern emerging regionally and nationally throughout the interwar, linking sport and politics in a highly fluid dynamic of regional affirmation, re-affirmation of central state power and ethnic backlash. Any success or failure against Bucharest was seized upon as affirming Transylvanian superiority and distinctiveness, as shown by the dismay brought about by the defeat of the Transylvanians in Bucharest. Such claims were soon countered from the offices in Bucharest, regularly with an emphatic stress on the divisive nature of actions and plans readily attributed to minority populations like the perceived Hungarian conspiracy regarding the recruitment of players in the national team. Crucially, as soon as such claims were made, the regional opinion shifted to denouncing the nefarious values and actions of ethnics others than Romanians. At the same time, the same regional voices called for *the state*, seen as the protector of national interests, to do its job of regulation and control. The failure of state agencies to do so usually prompted yet another cycle of this dynamic that the world of sport has so vividly dramatized on an almost daily basis for almost a century now.

⁴⁰ România la olimpiada din Paris. *Clujul românesc*, An II, No. 23, Cluj, 8 Iunie 1924.

The major point to be made is certainly that it is in such chains of action and reaction that the state takes on a life of its own and is invested with power and will (Abrams 1988), detached from the social and cultural relations constituting and upholding it. It is in this modular dynamic configuration (See Goswami 2002, 2004) that modern sports work as major institutions of state making and nation building. At least during the formative years of national sporting traditions and movements, little straightforward attachment and loyalty can be granted to either to the players, the officials or the sports enthusiasts. The process to ground sports, and football in particular, as “national” operated in the much more complex, indirect and mediated way described above. Ultimately, the fortunes of the 1924 Romanian Olympic football teams and of its coach might have been soon forgotten in Transylvania and elsewhere, but the accusations, claims and proposals made in this context did certainly have traceable repercussions in the subsequent projects and policies. This particular Romanian team might have humiliatingly lost, playing under various designations, but the jurisdiction of national institutions was once more affirmed and calls for state backed nationalization got renewed and more thoroughly legitimated.

All in all, exploring the complex web of ethnic, regional and local relations during the formative years of Romanian football does reveal but one side of the efforts of nation building and state formation. As a modern competitive team-sport, football was bound to share into the tensions and conflicts of identification and belonging that defined the unstable Romanian society of the interwar. Depending on the social, cultural, political or ethnic position of its practitioners and supporters it could be mobilized for or against the newly emerging Romanian nation-state. As such, football never fully worked and could have hardly worked to exclusively promote the interests and programs of the centralizing and nationalizing Romanian state of the time. However, football and sports in general were not the only instrument available to ground and

disseminate national ideas via the efforts of the athletic body. Their modern counterpart, in the form of physical education, appeared at times to be much better suited for the tasks of modern nation building. It is to the top-down efforts of nation making through physical education that I now turn.

Chapter 2 – A Romanian Palaestra: Physical Education in Interwar and Postwar Romania

In spite of their shared purpose of developing and improving the health, beauty and performance of the human body, physical education and sports have a distinct and often opposed take on how and why to fulfill these aims. While the human body is the focal point of both, the timing, places and sources of their emergence reflect largely different dispositions and needs. Physical education, in the form of gymnastics, was mostly a German development of the late eighteenth century, although the initial theoreticians and practitioners were largely articulating and integrating practices that were widespread on the European continent (Naul, Hardman 2002). Ever since its initial defining, by the likes of Johann GutsMuths and Friedrich Jahn (Mosse 1996), the German gymnastic movement, or *Turnen*, “was linked with nationalistic notions of unifying the German states and liberating them from French occupation by Napoleon” (Naul, Hardman 2002:16). The early movement of physical education was inspired and a part of the much broader rediscovery of antiquity in Western Europe, when Greek and Roman representations of the body were made into the modern standards of beauty and morality (Mosse 1996). At the other end, modern specialized sports, most notably association football, emanated from the public schools of England in the mid-Victorian era, the sites of the historical alliance of the aristocratic and bourgeois factions of the British ruling class (Hargreaves 1986). However, the sports emerging at this time soon caught on with the working class and the global outreach and dominance of the British Empire assured their external dissemination (Holt 1990). Beyond their respective geographical origin, their overall orientations made integration difficult. The English game of football and team sports in general appeared to undermine the perceived

elegance, harmony, or grace of *Turnen*-type gymnastics, as a ruthless pursuit of winning at all costs.

Crucial for the present arguments is that the practices of body development that came to be known as physical education and sport are distinct ways to locate and manage the problem of the human body as it emerged in Western modernity. German *Turnen*, and diverse subsequent strands of physical education, were geared towards the unification, building and empowering of the nation and accompanied the drives for state centralization and national uniformization. At the other end, British sports appear to have served well the thirst for competition and excitement in an industrial capitalist state (Elias 1986). The latter's orientation was towards individuals and communities associating to make themselves visible and heard at a local, regional and national scale. In this respect, physical education and sports emerge out and talk to two different forms of modern state formation and nation building. Their historical trajectory across the shifting boundaries of state and society is highly compelling. German gymnastics was programmatically oriented to a complete refashioning of German political subjectivity (Mosse 1996) that only the state's monopoly over education could uphold. The logic behind it was a centripetal one that sought unification and centralization. British sports did emerge out of public schools, but their logic was rather centrifugal. Its main innovation was the notion of "fair play" that ought to preside over any competitive encounter, thus securing the stability of the overall system (see Markovits 2010).

The tensions between physical education and sport and, within sport, between amateurism and professionalism greatly shaped the modern forms of organized physical movement. A certain affinity is discernible between physical education and amateurism on the one hand, and modern nationalism on the other (Weber 1971). The obvious reason is that for

nationalists the national community had to be created anew and physical education appeared to best serve this principle. That was due to its promise of reworking not only physical bodies, but also their biological, psychological, esthetic and moral outlooks. Its immediate corollary is to be found in the problematic reception of modern sports almost everywhere outside England. These were prone to emphasize the distinctive talents and labors of individuals in competition, rather than the virtues of whole nations (Naul, Hardman 2002). The incongruence runs deeper if we only consider the temporal orientation of programs of physical education and sports. Just like projects of national development, the former are mostly future oriented, mobilizing the past in the present to produce a utopian vision of harmonious bodily development for all members of any given community. If need be, the skills, strengths and energies of these impersonal bodies that find their personification in the body of the nation can be used to secure, defend, increase or affirm the material and ideal communitarian resources. Parades, festivals and all sorts of modern public displays of coordination and skill are a testimony to that. Implicit in the modern conception of physical education is the assumption of a highly unequal power relation between a mass of similarly well-trained bodies and an individualized coordinating center endowed with the reason to arrange and orient their chains of action and reaction. The terms identifying the prescribed roles are suggestive in this respect. At every level of organization physical exercise is directed by a “maestro” or “educator” who has to be obeyed and whose activities must be closely replicated by “students”, “disciples” or “pupils”, or to remain close to the Romanian context and usage, by highly impersonal human “elements”.

Modern sports have a much more immediate spatial and temporal scope, coming closer to an economic rationality of the cost and benefit type where profit is ultimately sought for. In spite of that, sports have been equally enmeshed in the making of modern states and nations (Dyreson

2003:95). However, at least in principle, the aim of sports, especially team sports, is to best manage the available pool of talent and skill, usually conscripted to such manageable units as schools, neighborhoods, towns, in order to produce results as quickly and parsimoniously as possible. As such, the conflict-prone process of selecting national representatives is but an indicator of the elusiveness and inherent instability of the nation as a spatial and temporal form.

Unlike the coordinated displays of strength, vigor and harmony in physical education, sports are publicly performed without a preset script (Markovits 2010) in a series of competitive encounters resembling the operations of the economic market or that of party politics in a parliamentary system (Elias 1986), as well as their pitfalls. Thus, their central and distinctively modern characteristic is uncertainty. Uncertainty and the unexpected are at the heart of any moment of play, not to mention the outcome. Ideally, any sporting encounter is fully unpredictable and some degree of certainty only develops in its unfolding. Tactics and strategies are adopted, tested and refined, but there is little predetermined control that they will work before confronting the tactics and strategies of the opponent in actual practice. What this amounts to is that any sporting triumph offers only a momentary, partial and necessarily limited answer and fix to questions of worth, strength or skill. As such, modern sports are akin to history, while physical education commonly seeks to transgress it. The impossibility of a universal and eternal outcome produces partisanship and excitement, but at the same time makes it a politically dubious and muddy affair.

Consequently, relative to the world of physical exercise the ideology of modern sports is undoubtedly more open to individualization, more decentralized and somewhat more democratic. At least in principle, anyone is welcome to participate and prove herself or himself in sport, but just like with the markets the problem soon arises of sticking to and fulfilling this principle in a

social world marked by highly unequal power relations and predicaments. In short, questions of class, ethnicity, gender, political or religious affiliation have always fed into the operations of sport, working to produce and secure boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. The formation of modern nation-states has been paramount in effecting and upholding such distinctions. This is of major importance in order to understand the favoring of physical education over and above sports in many societies outside Western Europe and North America from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. With its militaristic, statist and disciplining under- and over-tones as well as its promise of future national revival and glory, physical education was better suited to address and respond to the needs of peripheral societies that lacked extensive, grounded, urbanized and politically well supported leisuring classes. It is such a process and the forms it took that I move to describe in the Romanian context of the interwar.

Unification in and through Physical Education

The domination of physical education over sport was in the making ever since the creation of Greater Romania. As distinct pedagogies of the body geared towards national construction, the two were in a constant tension throughout the interwar. However, physical education and sports were never quite on an equal footing, with the former always tending to include and subsume the latter. Symptomatic of this tendency were the laws passed to regulate these domains in 1922, 1929 and 1933 respectively. All these legal interventions bared the names of Laws of “Physical Education”, although each addressed the framework and development of both. Thus, an expanded understanding was given to the notion of “physical education” from the early days of Greater Romania, one inclusive enough to fully incorporate the realm of sport. As we shall see, the broader notion of “physical culture” introduced in the postwar will subordinate, rearrange and reorient this hierarchy. The interwar understanding neatly paralleled the

hegemonic modernizing ethos of the period, one where the state was summoned to create, expand and defend the nation and affirm itself in the process. Modern sports, with their propensity to affirm local or, at best, regional identities en route to representing the nation, were less conducive to serve the Romanian state's interests, although their grassroots recruitment and competitive framework of organization offered a powerful strategy and image of nation-state formation. Nonetheless, coupled with the felt need of quickly catching up with the more "advanced" nations, the intricate and conflictual pattern of nation building through sports made the hierarchical and far more parsimonious model of physical education into a much more appealing option for the agents of the newly expanded Romanian state.

Consequently, the situation inaugurated by the end of the war with the creation of Greater Romania made state intervention into a duty. According to Neagu Boerescu, an aristocratic pioneer of sports in the Old Kingdom of Romania, "stimulated by the activities and efforts of private initiative, the State, whom had previously all but neglected the important problem of physical education, had finally took the required measures."⁴¹ Among the "required measures", he listed the passing of the 1922 "Law of Physical Education" which "decreed the obligativity of physical education for all youths before regimentation, in schools and in special organizations" and devised the legal framework for the establishment of the National Office of Physical Education (O.N.E.F.) – "an organ of guidance, care and control". The paternalistic functions of the institution were to be fulfilled by its graduates, both men and women, as future professors in secondary schools able to replace "the old-fashioned maestros of gymnastics" whose "fastidious sessions" were presumably despised by pupils. The task of the forthcoming graduates appears to have been the introduction of modern strategies and procedures of physical education and sports

⁴¹ Boerescu, Neagu. F.S.S.R, U.F.S.R. și O.N.E.F. Începuturile și organizarea sportului în România. *Boabe de grâu*, An II, No. 6-7.

for youths including: “games, Swedish gymnastics, athletics: running, jumps, throws and sports: fencing, boxing, wrestling, swimming, ski, national dances, shooting, medical gymnastics, etc.” At the same time, they were required to organize and supervise excursions, summer camps and colonies. The enumeration shows that the distinction between sports and physical education in their emergent phase, not to mention the distinctions within each, was hardly clear-cut, presenting as elsewhere a source of numerous misunderstandings.

Moreover, a parallel institution to ONEF was created for the exclusive use of militaries, destined to spread the joys and benefits of physical education among soldiers. From the onset, civil and military physical education were highly overlapping domains. There is a recognizable tendency towards fusion throughout the interwar, culminating in full militarization towards the end of the period under the monarchic dictatorship of King Carol II. The strong presence of military officers in physical education institutions was doubled by a growing encroachment of such activities on the part of the state. Boerescu rightly notes that the outstanding amendment made to the Law of Physical Education in 1929 was the one regulating and framing “private initiative sport into the structure of the state”. This amendment allowed the creation of a unitary institutional body able to exercise internal jurisdiction and to legitimately entertain external contacts and relations with other national and international bodies. Its institutional outcome was crystallized in the Romanian Union of Sporting Federations (UFSR). The power of the state to exercise organizational and representational monopoly over such prosaic practices as sports and physical education marks a decisive moment in the modern process of state formation.

Modeled on Western examples, state-led institutional initiatives in Greater Romania saw the creation in Bucharest of the “National Office of Physical Education” in 1923 that expanded into a fully-fledged academic establishment, the “National Institute of Physical Education”

(INEF)⁴² by 1926. The Office was led by militaries, among whom the efforts of its director, Colonel Virgil Bădulescu, clearly stand out. Its organization and activities responded to the post-World War I perceived need of both militaristic as well as general physical education training. In an invited talk for the series of conferences held by the “Eugenic and Biopolitical Section” of the Astra Society, titled “Physical Education a National Problem,” Colonel Bădulescu spelled out the mission of his institution: “the regeneration of the nation (*neam*) through the cultivation of vigor, of physical resistance and of national solidarity, by providing to children of both sexes health, energy, joyfulness as well as a spirit of polite cavalierly”⁴³. The Office was initially composed of two sections: one exclusively for militaries and another one open for the public, the latter having the distinct task of training professors of gymnastics⁴⁴. The colonel did not miss the chance to denounce the neglect of physical education in Romania invoking “the neglect of individual hygiene” and “the simplistic beliefs in the supernatural strength of the Romanian”⁴⁵. The constitution of INEF betrays many of the difficulties of grounding physical education and sports in early interwar Romania, ranging from the lack of financial resources to the lack of knowledge and enthusiasm of the public and the problematic categorization of physical education as either military, civilian or somehow reconciling the two.

Already in 1924 the popular sports journal “Gazeta Sporturilor” dedicated ample materials to the presentation of the new Institute⁴⁶. This came part of a drive to popularize the project and attract more funding for the development of its facilities. Placed under the patronage of heir prince Carol, INEF was struggling to draw enough donations for the construction of its

⁴² For a vivid description of the initial project and building of INEF in Bucharest see: Institutul Național de Educație Fizică, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An I, No. 12, 4 Oct. 1924.

⁴³ Col. Bădulescu: Educația fizică, *Societatea de mâine*, An IV, No. 9, p. 129. This is a resume of Bădulescu’s actual presentation delivered on the 23rd of February 1927 in Cluj.

⁴⁴ *Idem*.

⁴⁵ Colonel Virgil Bădulescu: Educația fizică o problemă națională. *Buletin eugenic și biopolitic*, An I, No. 3 (March 1927), p. 89.

⁴⁶ Institutul Național de Educație Fizică. *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An I, No. 47, 23 Dec. 1924.

buildings and public funds were nowhere in sight. For the leaders of the project, presided by colonel Bădulescu, to blame for this state of affairs was the low level of public knowledge concerning physical education alongside a declining level of morality. One of the initial press reports presented the case of Belgium, where a supposedly energetic state intervention cleared the minds of the public and powerfully made the connection between physical education and national defense by establishing its own institute. This intervention had presumably allowed “professors to perceive more indulgently the wilderness of free games, the great enemy of peaceful meditations and the eternal reproach for the ‘friskiness’ of youth” at a time when the participation of women in sports “made the citadel of morals to collapse at the feet of frightened nuns”⁴⁷.

In the Romanian case, similar and several other obstacles had to be overcome to see the successful completion of the project. One of INEF’s officials, an army major, called for clarifications through circulars in public institutions stating that the Institute was subordinated to the Ministry of Instruction (Education) and only held administrative relations with the Ministry of War⁴⁸. He was expressing his regret that “the great public does not know of the existence of the Office and National Institute of Physical Education and its role for the health of our nation”. While he was not expecting everyone to be familiar with this project, the officer considered the level of ignorance “inexplicable when it came to the members of organized institutions: pupils, clerks, etc.”⁴⁹ Thus, as of 1924, INEF was making an impact only upon students in medicine whom were expanding their knowledge to include notions of “anthropometry, psychology, pedagogy, hygiene, and the mechanics of the human machine.” It was envisaged that the institute would start granting diplomas and prepare teachers of physical education for secondary schools.

⁴⁷ *Idem.*

⁴⁸ *Idem.*

⁴⁹ *Idem.*

For his part, colonel Lascăr, the medical doctor at INEF, took up the chance to emphasize the need to inculcate a sound knowledge of both physiology and gymnastics among the students of the Institute, as a whole culture appeared to be working against the establishment of physical education. According to Lascăr, the slow progress of physical education is not due to some “physical inferiority” of Romanian youth, but due “to the complete ignorance regarding scientific and moral discipline”⁵⁰. He went on to illustrate his arguments with the example of the great Finnish athlete Nurmi, whom he presented as simultaneously industrious in developing his body and a moral “saint”. His conclusion pointed to the agency that might produce such an exceptional athlete: “this is what accounts for the superiority of those *states* where morality is the base of education”⁵¹.

Some of the defining topics of the interwar state-led physical education readily emerge out of this presentation. Overall, the project was geared towards the regeneration and reworking of the Romanian nation and premised on the eugenic notions found in circulation at the time (Bucur 2002). Each in his own way, the military officers took a decidedly modern position towards bodily movement, stressing its benefits for health and hygiene, while denouncing any traditional, retrograde views towards it. The crux of the problem crystallized in a certain modern *morality* that was to be disseminated and instilled by the workings of the institute. Ultimately, this new morality espoused by such institutions was a statist and nationalist one characterized by discipline, obedience and loyalty towards a hierarchical, paternalist and pedagogic nation-state, in a vision that highly resembles the political and societal views of some Romanian eugenicists of the period, for example Iuliu Moldovan (see Bucur 2002).

⁵⁰ Institutul Național de Educație Fizică. *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An I, No. 47, 23 Dec. 1924.

⁵¹ *Idem.*

However, the accomplishments were relatively modest. The first graduation at the Institute took place in 1926. The number of bachelors in physical education during the initial eight years of activity was 397, where the number of women well surpassed that of men: 244 to 153, respectively⁵². By 1930, 408 “maestros of gymnastics” were activating in secondary schools, but only about half of those were titular holders of their teaching position⁵³. However, very few schools and high-schools had any proper infrastructure or installations for physical exercise⁵⁴. Overall, these numbers stress that by the middle of the 1930s modern physical education made rather modest inroads into the Romanian educational system. Alternative projects did also emerge, most notably the programs of physical education devised by Iuliu Hațieganu at the University of Cluj (discussed in the next chapter). Material constraints, coupled with the remoteness of ideas regarding modern bodily development gave an acute sense of urgency to find, refine and adapt the available models of physical education.

From foreign models to national morals

A review of the articles dedicated to physical education during the interwar displays three quite distinct periods: presentations of foreign models of physical education in the 1920s, an effervesce to push for their implementation in the late 1920s and early 1930s, followed by evermore radical calls for etatization and militarization in the second half of the 1930s. In the immediate aftermath of the Great War, the staging of the Inter-Allied Games in Paris where American and British soldiers displayed their physical fit and sporting prowess did produce quite some impression among Romanian officials looking to accommodate physical education and

⁵² Kirițescu, Constantin. 1964. *Palestrica: O istorie universală a culturii fizice*. București: Editura Uniunii de Cultură Fizică și Sport, p. 548.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 544.

⁵⁴ *Idem*.

sports back home. Stressing the benefits of good physical training among American and British soldiers in their ability to win the war constituted a major argument⁵⁵ in the grounding of INEF.

This recognition certainly aided in making the connection between military and civilian physical education and exercise in the sense that the ultimate mission of such bodily development was military, serving the defense of the country. Nonetheless, beyond this initial Anglo-Saxon impetus, it was soon obvious that little came by way of a model to be emulated in a country that was modestly attempting to create a tradition of physical training and exercise. An integral part of the idiosyncrasies of modern Western state-formation and nation-building is the split between Anglo-American sports and Scandinavian, German, French and later Italian physical culture. The old and new hegemons of the world system in the nineteenth and twentieth century produced varieties of body culture that were tilted towards social acquiescence, social health and individual competitive participation in the form of “sport.” The nation-states that were either peripheral or late in the making sought a full-blown mobilization of the people into the body of the nation with more extensive, tightly regulated and mass participation in the form of “physical education.” Given the comparative perspective afforded by the case of China, Susan Brownell astutely captured this split trajectory and showed its major impact in the making of the Chinese modern body culture (1995).

Consequently, the Romanian pioneers in the field soon turned their attention to the models that could best be emulated. Throughout the 1920s articles appeared presenting French, German and Italian developments, describing the practices used in the Nordic countries or analyzing the working of the Czech Sokol movement. In short, it could be said that the Romanian endeavor to physical education mirrored the French institutionally, sought to instill a German spirit and combined a Swedish with a Central European practice. Overall, every effort

⁵⁵ O Nouă Universitate. Institutul Național de educație fizică. *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An I, No. 47, 23 Dec. 1924, p. 3.

was made to represent this blend as distinctively Romanian. We have already seen that the French institutional model of an all-encompassing union was taken up in the early days of Romanian sports and physical education. French developments were noted for the comparatively lavish spending on sports and physical education by the French state in calls for Romanian politicians to follow suit⁵⁶ and for having introduced physical education in the educational system starting with the primary level⁵⁷.

Hence, it was the French model of organization that came under intense scrutiny when the tides turned in the early 1930s. In 1933, during a major and long-lasting political crisis, a parliamentary debate ensued to abolish the “Direction of People’s Culture”. The institution had little beyond a symbolic character since its creation in the early 1920s under the auspices of prince Carol. Physical education and sports were key components of the “culture” that the prince had in mind, designed to alleviate the medical and physical condition of the Romanian people. This is immediately obvious from the vacillations regarding its proper tutor. During its existence, the institution was disputed and passed between the ministries of health and education and never acquired a clear-cut position in the government’s setup. Beyond the vicissitudes that marred the development of the direction it is significant how in a time span of roughly ten years the attitudes have turned in relation to the French model. The ample article describing the situation⁵⁸ included a vicious exposure and denouncement of institutional mimicry. A section titled “We’ve imitated France, but we were just parrots” stated that:

We’ve always liked to direct ourselves after what France does; it is in our being to take ready-made, without inquiring whether the conditions there match the ones over here. There exists a sub-secretary of

⁵⁶ *Idem.*

⁵⁷ Franța predă Educația fizică în toate școlile învățământului primar. *Sportul*, An I, No. 52, 13 Dec. 1924, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Se desființează direcția Culturii Poporului?, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An XI, No. 1266, 8 Nov. 1933, p. 1.

Physical Education. With the means at our disposal, we have set up a similar service. Just that, over there this served a pressing need, while in our case the initial aim was to grant titles to people with a still incomplete collection. We've purely and simply imitated like parrots. What's worse is that although this situation lasts for years, there was no one to take the bull by the horns and restore the funds blocked at the ministry of education to their proper mission: the effective aid of sports.⁵⁹

Notice that the critique is not pointed to the content proper of what came to be seen as something like a "French model" of physical education. What comes under fire is the process of imitation and the degree of fit between French developments and domestic ones. This is consonant with one of the most salient debates of Romanian modernization, one going well back into the nineteenth century, opposing modernizers and traditionalists in an intellectual feud concerning the adequacy of Western models to Romanian development and progress (for detailed analyses see Chirot 1976; Trencsényi 2012; Verdery 1991). Moreover, the fragment exposes the corrupt management of funds coupled with the leaders' quest for personal aggrandizement detrimental to the development of physical education and sports, yet another long-lasting "vice" of peripheral modernization. As such, the modest funds available for investment during and after the Great Depression, their dubious management, and a disenchantment with the French institutional infrastructure (most probably aggravated by France's loss of international political standing in the 1930s), made the Romanian promoters of physical education and sports look elsewhere. Developments in the field in Italy and Germany have been already noted in the 1920s, while the political success and rhetoric of fascism appeared to have secured their position as world leading models.

⁵⁹ *Idem.*

The French institutionalism in physical education with its emphasis on public money spending to develop the bodies and morals of the nation went into impasse during the turbulences brought about by the Great Depression. The fascist and later Nazi models of national physical culture appeared to promise not only a new, more effective, way to develop the strength of the nation. Much more consequentially, these pointed to an active force of improvement other than money. The fascist ideology of bodies, energies, and spirit, operating to make the nation great, could be interpreted as an untapped resource able to assure physical and moral betterment. As such, hidden bodily energies could be used to replace or even fully compensate for the lack of financial resources. In the 1920s developments in Germany were already under scrutiny in the Romanian sporting press. “Sporting Germany”⁶⁰ was one of the most extensive and elaborated pieces of reportage of the time, a result of a rare occasion when a Romanian sporting journalist could observe and describe developments at their face value during a visit to Berlin in 1930.

The observer started by noting the tremendous “newness” of the German capital city, stressed that there is little knowledge in Romania regarding German sporting life and that the creation of relations with Germany would be most beneficial for Romanian institutions of physical education and sport.⁶¹ As such, he immediately noted the overarching principle of German sport: “*sport that is not practiced on masse is not a sport*”. This principle was the supposed result of the Western quest for “quality” that could only be reached by devoting attention to “quantity” by applying the cutting-edge lessons of science. One learned that in the case of Germany the historical conjuncture emerging out of the Great War concurred to produce the need of a physically fit youth and the “regeneration” of the nation.

⁶⁰ Germania Sportivă, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An VII, No. 851, 29 Nov. 1930, p. 1; Educația fizică, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An VII, No. 852, 2 Dec. 1930, p. 1-2.

⁶¹ Germania Sportivă, *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An VII, No. 851, 29 Nov. 1930, p. 1.

Institutionally, the journalist observed that the efforts to attract the people into sports and physical exercise were much aided by the creation of a unique and competent organization that unitarily managed such programs across the land under the patronage of the German state. He singled out the key role of the “*sportlehrer*” – the teacher of physical education – and their association, which assured a high degree of competence in physical training at all educational levels. The excellent preparation of these teachers assured that the newest procedures and techniques of exercise were immediately introduced among German youths making it into a “vigorous social stratum”. In his first intervention, our reporter did not fail to note the arrangement between private and public initiative, respectfully underlining the massive role of the German state in such endeavors as well as the ability of private initiatives to complement and support the general policies set out by the state. He concluded by striking a sensitive comparison between German and Romanian developments. As expected, all of the positive observations regarding developments in Berlin found their negative counterparts in Bucharest:

In a series of articles I will try to review the general aspects of the immense organization created by the German state, an organization which – for someone familiar with the complete disinterest of [our] officialdom – appears purely and simply formidable. Used with the repugnant indifference of leaders for all that is sport and physical education, the citizen leaving the banks of Dâmbovița, remains purely and simply ecstatic by what he sees in Berlin.

I have no doubt that these lines – were they to reach the bored eyes of our rulers of public affairs – will remain without an echo. That is because for them sport and physical education are not yet objects worthy of interest. As such, I do not intend to describe what I saw there by entertaining the hope that people might be found to do the same.⁶²

⁶² *Idem.*

In spite of his rhetorics of hopelessness, the journalist did go on to publish an extensive review of the German organization of sport and physical education. In a subsequent issue, “Gazeta Sporturilor” presented its readers with an article titled “Physical Education” which described the German institutional framework of physical education and noted the developments concerning infrastructure that were changing the urban space of Berlin. First, the correspondent stressed that the Reich “forcefully abdicated” the principle “that the function creates the organ”. This abdication supposedly allowed for a much improved training of cadres for sport and physical education, where teachers and professors were first thoroughly schooled and prepared to share their acquired knowledge instead of cursorily developing as small cogs in a bureaucratic hierarchy. “Calculation” – supposedly a key German national trait – was presented as crucial to this development in that it permitted the counter-intuitive policy of public spending on physical education and sports in spite of extremely weak finances. The crown jewel of the German institutional architecture was the “*Deutsche Schule für Leibesübungen*” that vigorously pursued all aspects of mass physical education. To familiarize his readers, the journalist compared it to the Romanian INEF and found some words of praise for the efforts of colonel Bădulescu.

However, the reporter was truly in awe when he came to describe the facilities available in Berlin. For him the German “technical spirit” was at its best in creating a monumental and fully functional infrastructure for sport and physical education. The stadium, the tracks, the classrooms, the laboratories, the museum in West Berlin were a clear sign that a triumphant German history of sport was in the making. The “universality” of the German endeavor was assured when he saw that Japanese and Chinese students were developing their bodies and skills alongside hundreds of German ones. In time-honored fashion, this second presentation also

concluded with a disclaimer that emphasized the massive gap between German and Romanian developments:

I've made this more or less succinct description not to show the superior technique that the Germans manifest in all domains and even less to make a comparison with our present state. Comparisons are risky when it comes to Germany and especially so when it comes to technique.

I had only wanted to show the exceptional conditions in which the German state cultivates its future professors of physical education, the agents developing the taste for sport and the true apostles of national regeneration.⁶³

Such statements add substance to Nairn's perceptive theorization of the historical relations between backwardness and nationalism (see 1997). Faced with impressive German developments in physical education and sport the Romanian observer could not help but stress the meager state of the Romanian situation. Telling in relation to later developments is the type of argument being made, one that at the same time stresses the relevance of the foreign model while denying the relevance of any points of comparison. As such, the presentation leaves open a twofold set of possibilities: either replicating and implementing the German model were certain conditions to be met or simply eschewing it to create a national approach to physical education and sport. By the early 1930s it was quite obvious that the latter were gaining ascendancy over the former.

Besides the case of Germany, Italian programs and policies of physical education and sport gave even more food for thought in interwar Romania. The successes of Italian sports in the late 1920s, most notably the triumph in the football World Cup, brought its type of

⁶³ *Idem.*

organization under intense scrutiny. In 1928 an extensive article on the front page of “Gazeta Sporturilor” presented the working and institutional architecture of the “Dopolavoro” – the massive organization of the fascist state designed to manage the leisure time of Italian men and women (for an astute analysis see De Grazia 1981). The article was suggestively subtitled “Physical education and the Italian social problem”, already hinting at the ways in which physical education might be used for social acquiescence. In general, the reporter observed two major facets of “Dopolavoro”. First, that it was intimately related to the new Italian ruling elite which sought to alleviate the condition of its *race*. Thus, “*the camiccia nerro* [sic!] regime, the regenerator of Italian energy, has listed among its numerous preoccupations the education of the masses of factory workers in their free time, removing them from activities that undermine the race (drinking, gambling, etc.), make brutish individuals and degenerate the species.”⁶⁴ Second, that the organization of workers’ free time sought and managed to balance and transcend the private/public divide in Italian society. According to the observer, “Dopolavoro” was a private initiative amply supported by the Italian state. These two tenets were followed by an ample presentation of its organizational framework for physical education.

The Romanian readers of the sports journals found that “the physical education of workers is a key preoccupation of the Italian leaders” which “our Latin brothers” perceive as a “means of regeneration and of social eugenics”⁶⁵. To support his claims the author translated two of the associations’ rules to the effect that “Dopolavoro” aimed to “bring together bodily and spiritual exercises oriented in a patriotic sense” and to make the after-work sport of workers so as to “deny advertising” and “exhibitionism” allowing those lacking the financial means to pursue

⁶⁴ “Dopolavoro”. Educația fizică și problema socială italiană. *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An V, No. 558, 20 Oct. 1928, p. 1.

⁶⁵ *Idem*.

sport only “for their pleasure”⁶⁶. Its success was underlined by the number of workers enrolled in the program (three hundred and eighty thousand at the time of writing), both men and women, pursuing recreational activities on modern stadiums, flanked by cinemas, libraries and conference halls. The attractiveness of “Dopolavoro” was supposedly aided by a whole series of reductions and discounts for travel and entertainment.

In Romanian eyes, the future prospects of “Dopolavoro” were clear-cut: “... I am sure that the groups of worker gymnasts, just like the legions of fascists will expand, having set out to save the nation and the national prestige of the people of the old cradle of an old civilization.”⁶⁷ The article stressed that the Italian model should inspire a Romanian “Dopolavoro.” If only Romanian politicians were able to rise above petty interests and take up the real interests of the nation. Hence, “there is no other comment to be made. The example of wisdom, the work and care for the productive energies of the nation is so beautiful, that the authorized leaders of the Romanian state should not delay for a minute the imitation of this shining example.”⁶⁸

Only a few days prior to the presentation of “Dopolavoro” the same sports journal had emphatically presented the care that the Italian government devoted to sports. That article concluded in italicized and bold letters that “Italy could serve as an example to all countries. It is a completely new mentality that justifies Italy’s progress.”⁶⁹ In reaching this conclusion, the article insisted that the merits of the Italian model are to be sought in the massive involvement of the Italian state and of its leaders in the sporting movement. According to the presentation, the Italian state had secured the financial resources, the institutions and the incentives for millions of people to take up physical activity. Moreover, it has placed sports “in the service of propaganda”

⁶⁶ *Idem.*

⁶⁷ *Idem.*

⁶⁸ *Idem.*

⁶⁹ Guvernul italian și sporturile. *Gazeta Sporturilor*, An V, No. 473, 28 March 1928, p. 1.

realizing the impact it can make in the international arena. As such, the prospects of Italian sports looked more positive than ever. Read in conjunction the descriptions of “Dopolavoro” and of the Italian state’s involvement in sports display a telling contrast. Although published days away from each other, the points of emphasis and the lines of argumentation of the two articles show a remarkable difference in the interpretation of the Italian model. By the late 1920s the Romanian movement of physical education and sports was still looking for patterns to best emulate as well as for those active elements that might support its expansion. The two descriptions well illustrate the alternatives between on the one hand, a top-down rational-bureaucratic approach emphasizing order and hierarchy where the bodies of the nation are externally moulded by the intervention of the state’s agents. And on the other hand, an approach no less preoccupied with order, but much more interested in releasing the energies believed to exist in those very bodies for the advancement of the racial nation.

Overall, the two alternatives might not have differed much in terms of their practical content and they were both keen in stressing the role of the state in developing the physical well-being of the nation. However, their ideological orientation pointed into quite divergent directions. The rational-bureaucratic model of physical development was aligned with a parliamentary-democratic view of the state, where the nation’s representatives dialogically defined goals and sought to best accomplish them. Inherent to this approach is an emphasis on consensus, compromise and balance looking to smooth the oppositions between, for example, mass physical education and sporting performance or between amateurism and professionalism within sport. The model premised on race is vastly more ambitious, assuming as it does, that the vitality and energies deposited in the members of the nation must be made manifest and best used to secure the very survival of the nation and its state. In the latter case physical education

and sport move center stage to assure the very becoming and survival of the people. In many ways, the institutionalization of physical education and sports in interwar Romania could be seen as an attempt to bridge this divide, with moments when one or the other gained the upper hand.

Palaestrica

While concrete developments in physical education were rather meager throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the institutional developments of physical education did receive some scholarly attention that saw them embedded in a master-narrative of development. Constantin Kirițescu, professor at INEF since the late 1920s, was responsible for this achievement, which he completed in monumental fashion. A zoologist and historian, founding member of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, Kirițescu is best remembered for having produced the most authoritative history of Romania during the First World War (see Bucur 2009:81; Wingfield and Bucur 2006:176). His largely ignored “*Palaestrica: The History of Physical Education in all Times and at all People*” is a remarkable book: first, for its content, minutely tracing the vagaries of physical exercise from animals and “primitive” people to contemporary developments. Second, for the historical trajectory of the work itself, reworked in the framework of historical materialism when reprinted in 1964 in the wake of the nationalist turn of the Romanian socialist regime. The second edition was titled “*Palestrica: A Universal History of Physical Culture*”. I will show that the shift from “physical *education*” to “physical *culture*” in the two titles is key in understanding the perceived roles of physical exercise in the prewar and postwar Romania.

To capture the specificity of Kirițescu’s “Palaestrica” it might help to contrast it with one of the magisterial works on the subject to be later published in the West, George Mosse’s “The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity” (1996). For Mosse, in terms of the content proper of programs of physical education two models readily presented themselves. One was

Swedish, and more inclusively Scandinavian, gymnastics while the other emerged out of the German Turnen movement. In his analysis of modern masculinity, he documents the overlapping history of the two movements since their formation in the late eighteenth century and demonstrates their decisive importance in tying the notions of body and soul, of character and the nation (1996). In contrast, Kirițescu's "Palaestrica", designed as a manual for his students at the institute, is made of a much richer inventory of everything pertaining to physical education, oriented not towards conceptual genealogy and clarification, but to the "objective" presentation of all practices physical. "Palaestrica", is a generic term derived from "palaestra", the Latin translation of the Ancient Greek word referring to the closed space of the Greek gymnasium where physical exercises, wrestling and fights took place.

Having emerged in vastly different historical contexts, the two works hardly make for adequate "cases" of comparison, nonetheless some of their overlapping themes and treatment do make for an illuminating contrast. Written on the outskirts of "the West" Kirițescu's history is a survey of ideas and evidence having been produced in the West, distilled and arranged to be accommodated in the Romanian context. In many ways it continues and gives a systematic treatment to the themes entertained by the sporting press. As such, "Palaestrica" is a piece of scholarly erudition with an encyclopedic aim. "The Image of Man," relying as it does on a vast Western tradition of scholarship, is the intellectual product of a leading historian of Western modernity, but whose ambitions are anything but encyclopedic. Mosse parsimoniously uses the empirical evidence to render visible the emergence and establishment of the category of "modern masculinity". Consequently, where the Romanian historian presents, for example, the ideas and practices concerning physical development in Greek antiquity as objective facts, the German-American cultural historian prefers to show just how those very ideas and practices were made

into facts by eminent scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Alternatively, take as an example the analyses devoted by the two to the founding father of German *turnen* movement Friedrich Jahn. In Kirițescu's synthesis:

Jahn's gymnastics (*Turnkunst*) is an educational-moral activity that aims to raise the human soul. It must restore the lost equilibrium of the human being, to give back its lost bodily liveliness through a unilateral spiritualization, to counterbalance excessive refinement through the necessary counterweight of regaining virility and to include all people in a youthful community of life. However, Jahn was too much the embodiment of a German to give these conceptions a universal character, one that could tend towards the formation of a sort of "world citizen" close to the ideal of the old philanthropists. The bodily and moral virtues that Jahn painted he saw embodied in the old Germans that he took as his model. In this way, he ended up wrapping his moral conception in the form of a purely German *national* and popular education. Transposing old German traits into the slogans of his time, he requires physical education to provide the necessary corporal strength and moral virtues to the German youth able to uplift the German people from the deep disgrace in which they fell: fidelity and truth, the simplicity of habits and talk, sociability, work and mutual help, equal praise of merit without consideration of rank or fortune, trust in their own forces, the willingness to defer and submit to the laws; and finally, the hate against foreignness, especially against the French world, enemy to the patria, the embodiment – in the context of the epoch – of oppression, of the kidnap of liberties and of national goods. With this ensemble of qualities the Turner not only has to be bodily powerful, but has to become a model of moral life: austere, chaste, and sincere.⁷⁰

In Mosse's understanding: "He [Jahn] called gymnastic exercise the "lifeline of the German people" because it alone would lead to youthfulness and manliness, to a community of Germans without regard to religion, region, and caste. Jahn, unlike Guts Muth, from the very first saw gymnastics as shaping true manliness and also as a preparation for military skills, and he never

⁷⁰ Kirițescu, Constantin. 1943. *Palaestrica: Istoria Educației Fizice din toate timpurile și la toate popoarele*. București: Casa Școalelor, p. 279.

tired of reiterating this purpose of gymnastics from the German Wars of Liberation until mid-century. Jahn view gymnastics as a public and communal activity, creating an esprit de corps for a future German elite. [...]

His emphasis upon a communal spirit among gymnasts, endurance, and selflessness was meant to create German patriots ready and able to fight in Germany's cause at a moment's notice. Jahn stressed that gymnasts themselves must be "chaste, pure, capable, fearless, truthful and ready to bear arms." These specific qualities need emphasis, for they will accompany us throughout the modern construction of manliness. [...]

Jahn's definition of gymnastics was all-encompassing. It took in not only fencing but also swimming, dancing, skating, riding, and the martial arts. These are athletics as opposed to team sports, an important distinction. The male body had to be sculpted in order to approach the male ideal, and here team sports were thought to be useless. Such sports, moreover, meant competition, but patriotism required solidarity. Jahn's gymnastic exercises were not only meant to form healthy and beautiful bodies that would express a proper morality but were designed in fact to create new Germans. He wrote that it was the most sacred duty of German boys to become true German men. Training in manliness was always his aim."⁷¹

There are remarkable points of emphasis as well as of divergence in the two interpretations. Both Kirişescu and Mosse identify the same dimensions of Jahn's thought: the preoccupation with morals, the strengthening of the body, its use to develop the capabilities of the German nation, the liberation and defense of the German nation. Nonetheless, the Romanian interwar analyst, writing in Romanian for a audience expected to be made up of Romanian students, finds it important to stress the potential *universality* of Jahn's program of physical

⁷¹ Mosse, George L. 1996. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 43-44.

education, in spite of the obvious nationalist aims underwriting it. According to Kirițescu, these are due to the idiosyncrasies of the person and of his time. The claim of universality meant that Jahn's – as well as other programs of physical education – could be reclaimed and reused beyond the national context of their emergence. In his extensive and elaborate presentation of “national schools” and their leading figures Kirițescu never fails to note that in spite of their peculiarities having to do with race, temperament, climate or ideas French, Scandinavian, German, English or American programs of physical education had been “eclectic” creations from their very inception – borrowing and adapting ideas and practices developed elsewhere.

The emphasis on universality and eclecticism was geared to serve the future development of Romanian programs of physical training that were still in their “infancy”. As such, I find the encyclopedic narrative strategy, the emphasis on objective history and the strive to represent and display models of development symptomatic for the spatial and temporal peripherality of Romanian pursuits in the field. As a mode of history writing Kirițescu was close to the sort of Machiavellian approach where the scholar presents alternatives and instructs the sovereign without, at least principally, having the power to pass judgment, that de Certeau so well captured (1988). The overall message was clear enough: in order to develop the Romanian nation the state's agents had at their disposal a panoply of alternatives, they only needed the will to select and implement – that is, to make a Romanian history in the field. As such, it is in this gallery of national programs of physical exercise that Romanian “exhibits” must find their “place” – again in de Certeau's understanding of the notion⁷² – witness Kirițescu's only original contribution in “Palaestrica's” last chapter devoted to the historical sources of Romanian physical pursuits. This

⁷² In his introduction to “The Writing of History” Michel de Certeau argues that: “By taking for granted its distancing from tradition and the social body, in the last resort historiography is based upon a power that in effect distinguishes it from the past and from the whole of society. “The making of history” is buttressed by a political power which creates a space proper (a walled city, a nation, etc.) where a will can and must write (construct) a system (a reason articulating practices)” (1988:6).

is in no way meant to curb his merits, as a historian writing and teaching in interwar Romania Kirițescu probably did the best one could with the epistemological and empirical resources at his disposal to specify the historical sources of a Romanian tradition. Moreover, it has to be noted that this frame of mind and strategy of thinking will gain acute currency during the Cold War and to a large extent even after.

At the other end, Mosse's clear-cut identification of Jahn with a German tradition and a national project of development leave no space for any claims to universality, at least not in the rather straightforward way of Kirițescu. It does however speak to an order beyond the scale of the nation, the pseudo-universal Western model of masculinity, which Mosse admirably works out and substantiates. As such, this is the narrative of a late modern historian, removed (certainly not detached) from making direct claims to action on the part of any agents of power. However, Mosse's writing is still "*writing that conquers*"⁷³ or rather that is meant to conquer, if no longer the bodies and souls of "savages", but the minds of a broad learned public at home in English language and preoccupied with the question of masculinity's historical becoming. This is immediately visible in the closing remarks and recommendations that our authors make in the conclusions of their works. For his part Kirițescu closes his work of 1943 in tune with some of the cutting-edge notions of his time stressing that the new science of *Eugenics*, with the importance that it affords to physical education, aims to "physically regenerate the race", to

⁷³ In his preface to "The Writing of History" Michel de Certeau analyzes Jan Van der Straet's famous painting "America" claiming that: "Jan Van der Straet's staging of the disembarkment surely depicts Vespucci's surprise as he faces this world, the first to grasp clearly that she is a *nuova terra* not yet existing on maps – an unknown body destined to bear the name, Amerigo, of its inventor. But what is really intended here is a colonization of the body by the discourse of power. This is *writing that conquers*. It will use the New World as if it were a blank, "savage" page on which Western desire will be written. It will transform the space of the other into a field of expansion for a system of production. From the moment of a rupture between a subject and an object of the operation, between a *will to write* and a *written body* (or a body to be written), this writing fabricates Western history. *The Writing of History* is the study of writing as a historical practice" (1988:xxv–xxvi)

achieve “a raising of the soul and intellect” and “to ameliorate individual and racial qualities”⁷⁴ and identifies the key subject that is to be worked upon – the Romanian peasant.

Thus, “the physical life of the Romanian peasant gives us the best indication for the method to follow. Tradition has conserved the practice of old athletic games that gave Romanian people its past vigor; today’s childhood adds to it its thesaurus of games which sharpen the spirit and steel the body; popular dances complete the ideal of harmony and beauty of the human being; the forms of association peculiar to village life offer the framework of these activities. To use these natural and traditional dispositions, to develop them according to the instructions of science and pedagogy, in order to uplift the basic element of the Romanian nation, constitutes a vast field of action for physical education, framed in the great national commandments.”⁷⁵

In making pleas and recommendations on behalf of physical education, Kirițescu poignantly returns to the perceived cradle of the Romanian nation – the village and its peasants. In his view, the Romanian village is a repository of all the practices and associative patterns needed to create a Romanian physical education with the aid of modern science and pedagogy. The “tradition”, “childhood” and “popular dances” make a powerful triad out of which a national program of physical exercise could emerge. However, the connections among the three are no longer immediately evident. We should note that consonant with interwar understandings of the sources of physical education Kirițescu also saw dance, especially ritual dance, underwritten by humanity’s distinctive sense of *rhythm* as the spring out of which physical exercise developed (for a perceptive discussion see Toepfer 1997). Consequently, the Romanians had in their popular dances the transformative and dynamic element to move things forward. “Tradition” and “childhood” supplanted the historical and respectively biological raw material to be worked

⁷⁴ Kirițescu, Constantin. 1943. *Palaestrica: Istoria Educației Fizice din toate timpurile și la toate popoarele*. București: Casa Școalelor, p. 453.

⁷⁵ *Idem*, p. 454.

upon. By preserving them both in his conclusions, the historian strikes a conciliatory note between the advocates of national specificity based on historical grounds and those close to biological determinisms. In this respect, eugenics, with its insistence on the impact of both in social and national life, afforded a proper framework to round off this tension.

In contrast, Mosse's conclusions read as a plea on how to best advance knowledge regarding masculinity and related topics doubled by careful considerations concerning future trends and potential change. I only wish to reproduce the one conclusion that is most consequential for the present study, which reads:

Modern masculinity and modern national consciousness had grown up at the identical time, and while the image of the warrior was needed, the nation itself looked beyond war as an ideal type, a living symbol, that like other national symbols might breathe life into an abstract concept. Words and pictures told of "the German" or "the Englishman," and they nearly always connoted a definite type who would represent the national character. The man who was said to fulfill this role, with some national variations, approximated the masculine stereotype. We have seen that even socialists and Bolsheviks could not resist its appeal as they, too, sought to become respectable (Mosse 1996:192).

Mosse well captured the relationship between modern masculinity and modern nationalism emphasizing the template of the warrior as the repository of national character. In many ways, Kirițescu's work strived to advance a heroic image of the Romanian fighter emerging out of the ranks of the peasantry. However, given the dire living conditions in the rural Romanian of his time and the ambiguities regarding the directions of future change made his understanding of physical education into a panacea of potential transformations. Through physical education, Romanian peasants could theoretically develop into athletes, sportsmen, responsible citizens,

national warriors or nationally conscious fathers. By the time of his reworked second edition of his book that came out in 1964 in a vastly different socio-political conjuncture the peasants turned into workers appear to be into the same need of refashioning.

The Socialist Palestrica

Nicolae Ceaușescu's ascension to power in the middle of the 1960s marked a nationalist turn inside the Romanian socialist regime or rather a return to some of elements of the Romanian nationalism of the interwar. For one, Verdery astutely grasped this last point in her discussion of Romanian intellectuals and national ideology (1991:99). Kirițescu's reworking of his history of physical education was probably an early sign of this drive to recapture a dimension of the Romanian nationalism of the interwar. Reissued in 1964 the book precedes by one year Ceaușescu's becoming the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party. As such, it probably hints at a process that was already in motion towards the end of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's leadership. Relative to publications with a similar trajectory that came out in the late 1960s and 1970s Kirițescu's work does read as being part of an early moment of inflexion where nationalist rhetoric is as yet straitjacketed and kept in check by the all-mighty categories of communist official discourse.

A comparison of the two works speaks legions to the politics of history at play during the Romanian interwar and postwar and to the envisioned role of physical education in the development of Romanian society in each historical conjuncture. First, in spite of Kirițescu's disclaimer that the second edition is a brand new work, the whole text of the 1943 edition was reprinted with carefully chosen and pointed deletions, additions or replacements wherever necessary to meet the politically correct line of the day. Second, the initial work was rearranged in a remarkably well executed "historically materialist" framework that worked to pack and

partly reorient the meanings of the previously made arguments with the notions of “physical culture” and “work” that held sway. Third, the 1964 “Palestrica” is expanded with the addition of a massive chapter on physical culture in the Soviet Union and succinct presentations of developments in the field in all other socialist countries across the globe, where in the first edition a meager two pages were devoted to it. Last, but not least, a more extensive discussion of contemporary developments was made possible under a regime much more willing and able to fix, implement and invest into a national program of physical education and sport relative to the interwar ones. Overall, in the new conjuncture the epic becoming of physical education was now geared towards the betterment of workers lives, the development of the nation on a “scientific” basis, the maintenance of peace, the contribution to the anti-colonial struggle, while offering the opportunity of a savage critique of capitalism that had to be mounted during the Cold War.

The artifice that allowed Kirițescu to rework his book was an analytical one. While his initial history of physical education very much took for granted its chief category broadly defined as “the conscious physiological activity of the human organism, led by the methods of pedagogy, aiming to maintain and expand the biologic potential of the individual, in order to increase his social yield. Its place is in close connection with the intellectual and moral education, being influenced by the first and influencing the second.”⁷⁶ This definition was almost exactly reproduced in the second edition, only adding the “aesthetic” dimension alongside the moral one, but was now subsumed under the all-encompassing notion of “physical culture”⁷⁷. Physical culture is a larger than life category defined as “the ensemble of material and spiritual values represented through all the institutions, the schools and the systems of physical education known through the history of human culture, which have sought the physical and spiritual

⁷⁶ *Idem*, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Kirițescu, Constantin. 1964. *Palestrica: O Istorie Universală a Culturii Fizice*. București: Editura Uniunii de Cultură Fizică și Sport, p. 19.

development of the human being to ends determined by the socio-economic order of each respective epoch. It materialized through its organizational structure, through its theory and practice, through its material basis, through their frames and profiles of training, through the pedagogical process and the effects realized in light of the order and the ideology that this order created.”⁷⁸

The superimposition of the analytical layer that expands the focus from education to culture is certainly not the original contribution of our author. In her exquisite analysis of Chinese body culture, Brownell has shown that “physical culture” – the English translation of the German *Körperkultur* – was the leading analytical category already used by Marx and by subsequent workers’ movements to render for analysis pursuits pertaining to the development of the physical body (1995:18–19). Kirițescu astutely notes that in this theorization “physical culture” is essential to the human process of transforming nature through work⁷⁹. Consequently, “work” is now seconded by “dance” as the genetic source of physical education, while the fourfold “origins” or “impulsions” that have created physical exercises among “primitive people”: the biological, the social, the mystical and the psychical⁸⁰, are abolished in favor of the central principle of “work”⁸¹. Moreover, the focus on physical culture defined as a function of historical order and ideology introduces the Marxist temporal framework of humanity’s evolution from a mostly undifferentiated “primitive commune” to “capitalism”, “socialism” and later “communism” that provides the organizing principle of the later “Palestrica.”

⁷⁸ *Idem.*

⁷⁹ *Idem*, p. 34-38.

⁸⁰ Kirițescu, Constantin. 1943. *Palaestrica: Istoria Educației Fizice din toate timpurile și la toate popoarele*. București: Casa Școalelor, p. 22.

⁸¹ Kirițescu, Constantin. 1964. *Palestrica: O Istorie Universală a Culturii Fizice*. București: Editura Uniunii de Cultură Fizică și Sport, p. 42.

The implications of this analytical move extend well beyond the reorganization of a historical narrative. On the one hand, in the sense introduced here, the “culture” part in “physical culture” was general and elusive enough to include the tensions and contradictions of a development that was at once national and socialist. Moreover, it made “culture” into a thing that could be acted upon by the agents of power in order to advance the cause of physical education. On the other hand, postulating the very existence of a “physical culture” as a distinctive part of any social formation settled most of the problems and questions that marred the issue during the interwar. Affirming its existence made the question of how to best create a national system of physical education that would aid in creating a national bodily culture superfluous.

As we have already seen, the interwar was marked by the introduction and debates surrounding the models of physical education that could be best emulated in the Romanian context. As such, it was a debate of intellectuals and sections of an interested public with only limited and disconnected concrete achievements. As these voices grew evermore anxious regarding the future of physical education and of the Romanian nation the more practical solutions, policies and programs, appeared to them in an ever more elusive light. Telling in this respect are those odd final words of the 1943 book that allude to some unspecified “national commandments”. Published during the war under a personal-military dictatorship the text shared into the warlike language of the time, but I suspect that those “commandments” remained undefined precisely because there was little to specify other than the need to develop the bodies of Romanians. In stark contrast, the socialist “physical culture” prescribed a clear set of commandments: physical education is to be used to improve the medical condition of the workers, must have a mass character, is to be based on science, should strive to achieve international glory for the nation and so on, while each of the tasks was backed by a powerful

institutional infrastructure. As such, it is often forgotten when parodying the socialist rhetoric of “success” and “progress” that the stories of the preceding regimes were all about “failure” and “decline”.

The most common places of intervention in Kirițescu’s old text are those where the categories pertaining to the nation are replaced by those of class. Nonetheless, this is not a simple editorial procedure where the first are simply cut out to make room for the addition of the latter. Class analysis presents a more extended and more complex vocabulary, not to mention a more intricate set of theoretical relations, while the categories of the nation are not discarded in their entirety nor are they abandoned. This reworking of the history of physical education shows how the language of class came to supplant and refine the simplistic formulation of one people-one nation-one state, whose end result was first, a more or less explicitly recognized push towards social history; second, the erosion of the master narratives of national becoming and third, the necessity to somehow reconcile the unstable relation between class and nation. For example, the historical context for the emergence of Jahn’s ideas was no longer dominated by an all-encompassing German “strive to create its own spiritual life by liberating it from foreign influences”⁸², but “by the strive of the bourgeoisie...”⁸³ to create the same. Jahn was no longer a hater of the French⁸⁴, but sharing into “an aversion towards the Napoleonian Empire”⁸⁵, while his overall attitude and activity “in light of the modern conception” was presented for the Romanian public of the 1960s as the following:

Jahn appears as a representative figure of his time, the flag-bearer for the sentiments and hopes of national liberation of the German people, a characteristic episode in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The

⁸² Kirițescu, 1943, p. 266.

⁸³ Kirițescu, 1964, p. 289.

⁸⁴ Kirițescu, 1943, p. 271.

⁸⁵ Kirițescu, 1964, p. 293.

struggle of the masses for popular liberation against national oppression, for national sovereignty, is progressive. Later Jahn sinned through exclusivism and intolerance, through reactionary, antidemocratic attitudes.⁸⁶

An even more dramatic shift is afforded by the analysis of the scouts system in the two historical moments. While in 1943 Kirițescu is very much in favor of the system for it comes close to achieving the ideal of an “integral education”, his critique denounces the “internationalism” of scoutism, thus precisely due to the “integralism” of this pedagogy “it cannot claim to mould the soul”⁸⁷. The critique came out of a context in which “education in all countries receives a more and more pronounced national colouring, tying the soul of the child to a certain environment, crystallizing the education around the notions of patria and race”⁸⁸. Two decades later, the historian did also note a few positive aspects of scoutism (e.g. “contact with nature, utilitarian movements, sensorial education”), but went on to savagely criticize its colonial emergence in the British Empire and its role “in the economic, politic and ideological subordination of other people”. The historical context as well as the context of interpretation had changed, consequently the scouts were now furthering the interest of British imperialism “on the one hand, as a powerful means of instructing the English youth for its domination, and on the other hand, to destroy the youth in colonial and dependent countries from the struggle for economic, social and national liberation”. Nonetheless, while anti-colonial struggle was now in the background of his interpretation the overall critique had remained very much the same as “the spread of scoutism had as its effect the neglect of the national forms of the education of youth and their replacement

⁸⁶ Kirițescu, 1964, p. 296.

⁸⁷ Kirițescu, 1943, p. 381.

⁸⁸ *Idem*.

by a cosmopolitan spirit, favorable to the ideological, political and economic penetration of imperialism.”⁸⁹

The tensions of concurrently building socialism and the nation are nowhere more visible than in Kirițescu’s discussion of physical education for women. The section devoted to this topic is one of the most severely revised ones in the second edition of his book. While in the initial publication the physical education for women was included in the section dealing with “Esthetic, Rhythmic, Harmonic and Expressive Gymnastics”, the second included a distinct one titled “Biological considerations regarding physical education for women” alongside the presentation of those four types of gymnastics. The teachings of the interwar recognized the decisive “biological and social role of the woman” in modern society, emphasized that all programs of physical education contend that women should not be excluded. However, it went on to stress that “the feminine specificity” should be kept in mind and that exercises should be “adapted” to match this specificity. This meant “the elimination from feminine education of difficult exercises which are not compatible with the delicate body and weaker strengths of the woman and the introduction of exercises able to emphasize the harmony, elegance and grace of movement”⁹⁰. As such, feminine physical education displayed “the psychic and esthetic value of movement” adding two dimensions and rounding up the old Greek ideal of beauty where “the forms of exercise were closely connected to the spiritual life of the individual and the nation”⁹¹. By stressing the weakness of the feminine body, by psychologizing and esthetisizing it Kirițescu was sharing into some of the dominant categories of his day. Nonetheless, this stress came with the

⁸⁹ Kirițescu, 1964, p. 396-397.

⁹⁰ Kirițescu, 1943, p. 374.

⁹¹ *Idem*, p. 373-374.

recognition that physical education for women could not be “reduced to utilitarian reasons”, that is to the single objective of creating a powerful and healthy race⁹².

The later reformulation acknowledged that “the social conditions of modern life have turned [the woman] into a worker and even a fighter”, that “many biological and esthetic arguments regarding the so-called <<specific>> feminine education were prejudgments with a reactionary character, cultivated by the exploiting classes”, that her tasks cannot be restricted to those of “being a mother, of leading the household and beautifying it with the charm of her body”⁹³. Kirițescu now insisted that programs of physical education for women should be revised to include exercises that were exclusively dedicated to men, allowing women to develop physical power and skill. In spite of that, the reminder of the section insists upon the role of feminine physical education in relation to birth-giving, maternity and motherhood and recommends exercises that would strengthen the abdominal muscles or would increase the mobility of the pelvis. The “feminine specificity” still crippled in to signpost the possibility of abusing physical exercise. Discursively emphasizing gender equality, while making practical recommendations regarding “the noble mission that nature blessed upon” women – “the perpetuation and perfection of the human species”⁹⁴, the socialist reformulation of feminine physical education appears to have in fact deepened and hardened the divide of the feminine body and the image of the woman now caught between the requirements of work and those of motherhood. This split will be at the forefront of Romanian social life only a few years later underwriting the tensions and dramas of Ceaușescu’s pro-natalist policies (see Kligman 1998; Penn and Massino 2009).

⁹² *Idem*, p. 374.

⁹³ Kirițescu, 1964, p. 384.

⁹⁴ *Idem*, p. 383.

Conclusion

Physical education in Greater Romania was a top-down project backed by a handful of elite military and civilian enthusiasts with a strong belief in its potential to invigorate, ameliorate, unify and strengthen the Romanian nation. The obstacles faced in the institutionalization of physical education emerged out of a conundrum made of limited financial resources and the difficulty of grounding a national system of physical education. The general economic conditions of the time as well as the rather low penetration of ideas regarding the development of the human body among the Romanian ruling class or opposition to them kept the level of investment in the field low. Nonetheless, the supporters of physical education were vocal and consistent enough in calling for the agents of the state to pursue this line of national development and secured the establishment in the capital city of a series of institutions to advance their mission. Given the constraints imposed by this context, the debates regarding physical education in the popular sports press far surpassed actual achievements. The interwar thus witnessed a proliferation of international models that might be reworked and emulated in Romania. We have seen that the initial appeal of Anglo-Saxon and French models was by the 1930s surpassed by a rising interest in the programs put forth by the fascist regimes. The latter's appeal was due to their promise to significantly improve the nation by tapping into its inner moral and physical resources, thus leaving into the background the relevance of financial investments.

The introduction of Western models and the debates surrounding them got a systematic treatment in the history of physical education that emerged at the time. I have shown that this was a variety of history that strived to create a framework to accommodate a distinctive Romanian type of physical education and sport in the world of nations. This work depicted physical exercise as a quintessential and universal human practice and produced a panoply of

modern Western systems of physical education to which Romanians should aspire and where they rightfully belonged. The entry passage was to be assured by devoting attention to the qualities and abilities of the Romanian peasant, the subject *par excellence* of the Romanian nation. This piece of history found a remarkable afterlife in the 1960s with the nationalistic turn of the Romanian socialist regime. The reworking of the history of physical education in light of historical materialism under the auspices of the all-encompassing notion of physical culture shows the relevance of interwar debates for postwar developments. At the same time, the contrasts between the two works, well grasp the differences and points of convergence in how physical education was meant to serve the making of the Romanian nation under opposed political regimes.

Chapter 3 – Trainers for the State and Nation: Physical Education and Elite Social Vision in Interwar Transylvania

The diagnosis

In his 1934 address at the National Office for Physical Education (ONEF), university professor and medical doctor Iuliu Hațieganu from the University of Cluj made the case for the necessity of implementing programs of physical education and sports at the university by arguing that:

In the 20th century, and especially since the war, we witness great changes among all people. In these new, difficult circumstances, universities and students everywhere accommodate to the exigencies of state and society. The state and the nation need leaders with a sense of duty and responsibility, resistant and courageous, capable to lead and organize, imbued by a sense of collectivity, who know to give orders through examples, through acts in their collective and private life. The era of leaders made up of discourses, interviews, empty talk and trickery has passed. For the new times, universities have to prepare *vigorous, disciplined and conscious men*, instead of savants with lots of knowledge and very little life experience, mostly selfish, with a cerebral hypertrophy often accompanied by an atrophy of character. The current times ask for a harmonic, vital and complete man. The scientific man, the intellectual man, have to be tripled by the physical, moral and social man. A dynamic man is needed, ready to serve the community, the nation.

A social, national, and moral education is not possible *ex catedra* but only *through living* in the midst of the people. A more ideal, more rhythmical and unshaken living can only be achieved through a democratic physical education, which allows for an intensive and constructive living in the midst of collectivity. The body has mobilized the greatest and most creative energies in all epochs of universal history. The great triumphant battles of history are but the mobilization of physical energy under the flag of a blessed idea. “The best condition to succeed in life is to be a good animal” says Emerson. Spenser [sic!]

conditions the prosperity of a nation on being made of solid animals. This solidity can only be achieved through physical education.⁹⁵

Hațieganu's arguments specify a distinctively modern project of elite formation that fuses in intriguing ways the ideas of nation, society, state and morality in circulation in post-World War I Central and Eastern Europe. These were articulated in a complex program of physical education and sports that proved to be a catalyst of national passion and elite social vision as soon as it was translated into practice. Hațieganu's endeavor was to create and implement an educational program that could mediate and overcome the rift between "the hypertrophy of the mind" and "the atrophy of character" affecting old time intellectuals that he so poignantly diagnosed and sought to eradicate. He made a compelling case for the need to introduce physical education to students for reasons of hygiene and harmonious bodily development. He sensed and stressed the cultural and political relevance of sporting institutions in the establishment of the Romanian rule in Transylvania, the unprecedented historical importance of universities in social life and of their educational programs in the making of modern nations.

Hațieganu's endeavors partly share into the ideas discussed in the previous chapter. The need to observe and adapt notions and institutions that have proved their efficiency elsewhere. The crucial role of the peasantry in the making of modern Romania and of intellectuals in improving their condition. Physical education and sports as reformatory processes capable to produce this uplift. A strong emphasis on the biological and social determinations that go into the making of the nation. For the latter, Hațieganu's reference to Emerson and Spencer is directly taken from Constantin Kirițescu's "Palaestrica", showing the emergence during the interwar of

⁹⁵ Hațieganu, Iuliu. 1934. *Educația fizică în Universitate. Conferință de Prof. Dr. Iuliu Hațieganu*. București, Tipografia Ion C. Văcărescu, p. 5-6.

an intellectual space of shared ideas. Nonetheless, Hațieganu's Transylvanian background and positionality do come with a twist in relation to the ways in which physical education might work to establish and defend the modern Romanian nation-state. Consequently, this chapter explores the projects of physical education and sports and their conditions of emergence at the University of Cluj. I treat them as specific dimensions of the making of a national bourgeoisie in Transylvania. Hațieganu's undertakings sought to set in motion concrete reformatory processes operating via the body meant to adjust the perceived misbalance between the physical shape, the character and the intellect of its best citizens.

Beyond the triumphalism that followed the creation of Greater Romania in the aftermath of World War I, the region of Transylvania had to be governed, administered and ruled by a Romanian state that often lacked the skills and resources to do so (see Livezeanu 1995). Transylvanian intellectuals were a small, albeit critical group, that immediately took up the task of consolidating stateness and nationhood, with the University in Cluj as their main institutional stronghold. Hațieganu's written documents can aptly be treated as limited interventions in these intricate process, defining goals as well as means by which to produce an elite that shared into the "proper" loyalties and categories of rule. His publications present a specifically positioned vision that merges into an integrative project of physical education all the aspirations of the bourgeois, Romanian, male and Christian elite of interwar Transylvania.

The early establishment of sport and physical education at the University of Cluj is inextricably linked to the activity of Iuliu Hațieganu. A distinguished member of Transylvania's "educated bourgeoisie" (Maior 2008), Hațieganu got his diploma in medicine from the Franz Joseph University in Cluj in 1909. He thus studied and matured at the height of Transylvanian Romanians political activism in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was active among the first

generation of intellectuals who contributed to the centralization and the strengthening of the newly created Romanian state in Transylvania. The medical doctor and professor was two times rector of the University, leading the institution in its most dramatic periods: at the height of the “great depression”, in the academic year 1930-1931, when the Romanian higher education system was effectively bankrupt, and again during its period of relocation to Sibiu during World War Two from 1941 to 1944. He was a *factotum* Romanian intellectual, actively producing theoretical arguments regarding the benefits of physical education and sports, using his academic and political standing to see such projects accepted and making private donations to see them materialized.

The chapter offers a contribution to the intellectual history of physical education and sports of the interwar. It uses an exceptional biography to illuminate some of the ideas that have animated and shaped the Romanian society of the time and to capture the sense of urgency and mission that aroused the Transylvanian elites in their quest to establish the Romanian nation and state. By concentrating on the distinctive characteristics of the generation of Transylvanian intellectuals that Iuliu Hațieganu belonged to it adds a little known side to the history of Romanian nationalism in interwar in Transylvania. By devoting attention to the historical configuration that contributed towards their rise to prominence, it seeks a sociological move away from the largely apologetic presentations of “the men that made the nation” type practiced by the Romanian nationalist historiography. The presentation of the “life and works” of any historical figure is at many times obscured by the neat narratives that come to pass as their biographies. This is certainly the case of the individuals whom made it into the panoply of the icons of the nation, with all the purification work that accompanies it. From a staunch nationalist vantage point, all of the ideas and actions ever attributed to such iconic figures come to pass as positive additions

enhancing the development and prestige of the nation, with the corollary that questioning them often appears indiscrete or misplaced.

While Doctor Iuliu Hațieganu is not top ranked in the overall hierarchy of Romanian national icons, he nevertheless makes it into the rankings and scores very well in the Transylvanian charts. In this respect, he is not the kind of minor figure to be uncovered through laborious and often fortuitous archival work and literarily revived to illustrate hidden and critical facets of social and cultural processes (see Stoler 2009 chapters 6 and 7). Quite to the contrary, Iuliu Hațieganu was a public figure that many could relate to, be they his students in medicine, sportsmen, politicians or sport enthusiasts and could pass on their stories of meeting him or about him. His written records are well kept and easily accessible in local libraries and archives and one is easily directed to them. The University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj now bears his name. In this sense Hațieganu's story is not one coming from the margins, but very much one emanating from the center (sociologically and geographically) of public life in interwar Cluj and Transylvania. However, Cluj is and has been only a regional center displaced by the dominating images of the Romanian nation emanating from the centralizing politics of Bucharest, the capital city and the major arena of Romanian power and politics. Consequently, the analysis of programs of physical education in central Transylvania is an effort to reaffirm the importance of local and regional developments in the making of modern states and nations, making it an exercise of "retrospective significance" (Trouillot 1995).

The emergence of a Transylvanian educated middle-class in the second half of the 19th century presents striking similarities to the history of *Bildungsbürgertum* elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe (Kocka 1995). The differences, however, are fundamental, due to the specific ethnic content of the Transylvanian class relations and, consequentially, to an almost

complete absence of a local Romanian economic bourgeoisie – *Wirtschaftsbürgertum*. In his history of Romanians in the Habsburg Empire Maior aptly notes that although “Romanians, Serbs, Slovaks, and Ruthenians, gained social freedom” after the Imperial Decrees of 1853-1854, which abolished feudal privileges, their poor economic position made education their main source of legitimization (Maior, 2008, 257-258). A “totally atypical bourgeoisie” was born as a “product of the educational system” which compensated “the slow development of the liberal professions and of the middle class” (Maior 2008, 259). In the second half of the 19th century, the number and political force and voice of Romanian intellectuals grew steadily as did their cultural and political organization in cultural institutions, foundations, and political parties. There appeared to be a high and increasing demand for training in law and medicine among Romanian students. They would pursue their studies at the universities in Vienna, Budapest, Graz or Bratislava and from 1872 onwards at the Franz Joseph University in Cluj. The educational system accounted for “the creation and validation of [a Romanian] intellectual bourgeoisie” in Transylvania (Maior, 2008, 258). University education provided an efficient social mobility path, especially for the Romanian sons of rural notabilities and better off peasants.

The creation of the Romanian National Party of Transylvania in 1881 represented an important moment in the Romanians’ campaign for political, social and cultural rights within the empire. The party led the major social and political movement that came to be known as “memorandism”, from the memorandum that its leaders drafted and sent out to the Imperial Court and European publications to show the plight of Romanians in Transylvania and to publicize their claims. The movement culminated with the prosecution of the party’s leaders and their trial in Cluj in 1894 (Pascu 1971:50–72). The trial proved a catalyst for national passion as thousands of people gathered from all over the region took to the streets of Cluj to show their

support. Yet another important decision came in 1905 when the National Party decided to run, for the first time, in the parliamentary elections of that year and to send its elected representatives to Budapest. This moment inaugurated the period of Romanian parliamentary “activism” and proved decisive in extending the claim making of Transylvanian Romanians.

In light of the political activism, the generation of intellectual leaders to which Iuliu Hațieganu belonged can rightly be treated as a truly reformatory one. Its members took up all of the available educational and financial opportunities to construe and advance visions of a Romanian nation, culture and society. The decisive break was afforded by the dramatic collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the redrawing of national boundaries in post-World War I Central and Eastern Europe. The animating ideal of this generation was to make as well as to write national history, to acquire and defend as well as to describe national territory and to get to know as well as to create a national population. The extent to which intellectuals have contributed to such historical processes is an open and debated question that I briefly turn to in the following section.

Intellectuals, Nationalism and Social Reform

I should note from the onset that whenever reference is made to “intellectuals” there is no implicit reference to a distinct “intellectual field” operating more or less autonomously in relation to other fields, especially that of politics. To paraphrase a famous French sociologist (Bourdieu 1992), Romanian intellectuals of the interwar were very much part of the dominating fractions of the dominant class. The academics grouped at the University of Cluj in the interwar were part of the Romanian educated high bourgeoisie, a position quite consequential in relation to societal visions and programs of social reform. They were not Zola-type intellectuals,

“speaking truth to power”. Quite to the contrary, the universities of the time were places where social power was invested with truth – the truth of the nation. And to the extent that interwar intellectuals were “a free-floating intelligentsia” they were the elite groups “floating” over a sea of peasants, a social vision very much of their own making.

In this respect, my work finds inspiration in the historical analyses of the middle-class that emphasize the social relationality of cultural visions and their acute impact in the creation of class boundaries (Boyer 2005; Frykman and Löfgren 1987). Such works provide a potent analytical tool to short-circuit and counter the still dominant and often partisan narratives of Transylvanian history, in their Romanian or Hungarian varieties. These narratives are in need of a historical explanation themselves, rather than being explanatory frameworks per se. To take the first example at hand, instead of stressing the exceptionality of the sporting activities at “Universitatea” as a Romanian nationalist historical narrative would have it, a closer look at the early modernizing programs through the lens of class relations shows how the initial development of the club was very much in line with the social reform projects of the day, in which notions of physical development and well-being, hygiene and morals ranked prominently. Students, the future Romanian bourgeoisie, received an exceptional training, both intellectually and physically, were engaging in modern sporting activities, like football or tennis, in programs specifically designed for them. Such activities stand in stark contrast with lectures on basic matters of personal hygiene and cleanliness received by many of their peasant parents at the time.

What narratives of the Romanian nations’ historical becoming often miss is that a Romanian “society” was also in the making. That the elites that took the task of implementing reforms did so according to a societal vision developed in the ongoing interaction between these

elites and the lower social classes. A relational perspective cast on the activities of nationalist intellectuals does well to uncover the congruencies as well as the disjunctures in the bulk of relations and institutions making up the state, nation and society. Claims of their identity were and are often made, but such an ideal overlap is rarely, if ever, achieved in actual practice. This recognition immediately destabilizes the terms of the state – nation – society triad. A strong version of it is obviously untenable given the complexity and murkiness of the relations that constitute them at any one historical moment.

The relevance of located individuals, social processes and institutions in the making of modern nationalism is strongly emphasized by scholars investigating the historical connections between intellectuals and nationalist ideas (Boyer and Lomnitz 2005). Reassessing the birth of modern nationalism in Latin America by devoting more attention to local context, Lomnitz forcefully and constructively expands Anderson's thesis of the "imagined community" showing that *nación* not only developed a sense of sacrificial solidarity among heterogeneous people, but also allowed the reworking of the "connections between social institutions, including, prominently, the relationship between state institutions and other social organizational forms" (Lomnitz-Adler 2001). According to Lomnitz, the force of nationalism lies in the fact that "it provides interactive frames in which the relationship between state institutions and various and diverse social relationships (family relationships, the organization of work, the definition of forms of property, and the regulation of public space) can be negotiated" (2001, 13-14). In relation to my case, this last point is highly relevant as the university and its programs of physical education and sports of the interwar can beneficially be seen as places of nationalist frame-making - that often came with quite precise instructions of use. The importance of this last point is worth stressing, especially so in the aftermath of the world historical events of the late

19th and early 20th century which afforded the establishment of national ideas and the emergence of national histories, not only in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in many other social formations (Hill 2008).

Boyer's analysis of the transformations of shared knowledge among German intellectuals from the late 18th century onwards provides a major insight into the making of the conceptual models that were taken up and reworked by the Romanian nationalists of the interwar (see Boyer, 2005). The Romanian case can be used to show just how social knowledge came to be assumed and embodied outside of its immediate context of production, how it was normalized and materialized in social spaces that were, more or less, foreign to it. Moreover, Boyer's work reminds us of the specificities of the post-World War I historical conjuncture when Central European intellectuals creatively and powerfully fused negative and positive visions of social life into highly convincing and pervasive narratives of the nation. His ambitious discussion of "dialectical social knowledge" with its negative and positive facets, the backbone of modern German culture, serves well to disentangle the complex historical connections and configurations that socially relate subjects and ideas. The long historical struggle of German intellectuals to accommodate social content to ideal, but no less social, form and vice versa goes to the very heart of European intellectual modernity and presents an image of intellectuals actively involved in forming and reforming social life.

The discussion of Iuliu Hațieganu's work should make apparent that it is more fruitful to understand the notions and programs of physical education and sport below and beyond the framework of the nation on a continuum of social reforms ranging from eugenics, to hygiene, to ethics and morals. This is not to deny the importance of ethnic and national competition and conflict in the history of the region. Quite to the contrary, the "backward" condition of

Transylvanian Romanians relative to that of Hungarians, Jews or Germans in the region, made it abundantly clear that an “uplift” was needed in all spheres of life (see Livezeanu, 1995, Maior, 2008). Livezeanu cogently showed that the field of higher education was one of the main pillars of this effort. The history of physical education and sport in Cluj, organized via the University, presents this competitive and conflicting process. Through the enactment of modern public rituals, such as sports, a distinctively Romanian public space was forged. The impact of sporting activities went well beyond the selectively opened and closed boundaries of the University. When sports, particularly association football, were performed by Romanian students, “the youth of the nation,” in an ethnically tense setting, it is not all that surprising to learn that it soon became popularly appealing and quickly attracted quite a large following. Moreover, the works of Bucur and Turda have opened up a new region of academic questioning that moves well beyond the nationalist historiography that dominated domestic scholarship for more than a century (see Bucur 2002; Turda 2010, 2011). By taking up for analysis the work of eugenicists and eugenic societies these authors engage the expert knowledge, the policies and the practices that were in circulation at the time, showing aspects of how the nation was being built rather than sticking to the claims of its making.

Taking up these perspectives allows me to shed some light on areas usually obscured by the massive image of the “nation” and the problem of historical rights that often accompanies it. Questions of class direct one to look at the bulk of social relations on which the nation is essentially premised, thus allowing for a consideration of the real or expected social transformations likely to be interpreted in nationalist terms. In this respect, the institutionalization of physical education and sports at the University in Cluj shows the importance of both ethnic competition and of social reforms targeted to create a modern

Romanian nation in a post-imperial territory, with its distinctive class and ethnic dimensions. It can be argued that in the case of the latter we can do better by moving to consider the whole process in line with the projects of modernization advanced at the time by intellectuals that were not only nationalist, but also a varied group ranging from hardcore eugenicists to promoters of hygiene or to laissez-faire minded liberals.

Hațieganu's intellectual contribution

The program of physical education and sports devised by the professor and doctor Iuliu Hațieganu at the University of Cluj during the interwar can be best understood by expanding the scope of our relational vision and assuming the basic socio-historical tenet that the university and its academics acquired social prominence and prestige *in relation to* and *at the expense of* the social groups beyond its gates. In this sense, this modern academic institution could only emerge as central to the making of the Romanian nation, could only produce loyal Romanian intellectuals and could only strive to institute hegemonic projects by confronting its radical alter: the impoverished and marginal rural subjects, haunted, in elite eyes, by material misery and spiritual confusion. The logic and aims of the educational projects instituted at the university make more sense when seen in line with the programs of reformation designed for various social categories, among which the peasantry ranks prominent. It can be argued that the early 20th century generation of Transylvanian reformers defined and implemented a typically bourgeois social vision, one in which the further one was from the centers of power – the more backward was her or his state considered to be – thus, more radical was the administered reform. It is in this framework that we should evaluate Iuliu Hațieganu's contributions.

The best entry point for the present discussion is Hațieganu's 1925 text titled "*The social role of the Romanian medic in the consolidation of the nation-state*"⁹⁶. This is a succinct piece of work, as all of his written contributions are, that addresses the main social problems of the time and states the crucial importance of the medic in alleviating the state of the Romanian nation. What comes forcefully out of this text is the sense of mission and urgency that animates its author, making Hațieganu one of the most authoritative voices of social reform and national rebirth. Hațieganu introduces his argument by addressing the tasks of a victorious state. As opposed to the defeated states that are trying to accommodate and create welfare within a reduced territory, the winners have a bigger and more complicated task to achieve, what Hațieganu calls "consolidation"⁹⁷. This means creating "a new framework and a new equilibrium" as "Greater Romania – our millenary dream – demands every citizen, and even more so the medic, to sacrifice for the consolidation and multiplication of the nations energies."⁹⁸ The contribution of doctors is perceived as crucial – the doctor is "a social factor of prime importance"⁹⁹ who should "fight with all his élan to achieve hygienic conditions as dictated by the scientific dogmas of the time."¹⁰⁰ The strong emphasis on the social role of the medic underlines their importance and compels him to present a snapshot of the society in which they operate.

The critical groups to be engaged with, given their poor record in matters of hygiene and physical condition, are the peasantry, the workers, the pupils and students. Beyond matters of hygiene, the naming of these social groups is by no means fortuitous and can readily be

⁹⁶ Hațieganu, Iuliu. 1925. Rolul social al medicului roman in opera de consolidare a statului national. *Transilvania*, Vol. 56, nr. 11-12, p. 587-591.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 587.

⁹⁸ *Idem*.

⁹⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁰⁰ *Idem*.

interpreted along ethnic and class lines. The peasantry and students, mostly of peasant origin, were at the time overwhelmingly Romanian; while the working classes could be expected to be Romanianized as policies were in place to attract Romanian populations in Transylvanian urban centers, where Hungarians made clear majorities, alongside a not at all negligible number of Jews and Germans (see Brubaker et. Al., 2006). His comparative strategy in introducing these categories is worth quoting, as it is one of the main rhetorical devices used at the time to socially locate the critical groups making up the body of the nation:

...in Germany the burning problem is the protection of the workers, in France the protection of children, for us it is a must to keep in better shape the immense value, in terms of human capital, represented by *our peasantry*. At the same time attention should be devoted to our *workers*, now in formation, to early childhood, school hygiene, and to our university students, whom are totally neglected.¹⁰¹

Beyond strictly medical practice the doctor is called to wage “an intense struggle of illumination” as an agent able and called to educate the masses. It appears that there was a lot to fight against. The masses still “believe in fairytales”, “children and the old die without any help”, as “the little child and the man beyond sixty years of age have no value in the eyes of the peasant”¹⁰².

Disturbing signs could be seen among many of his younger colleagues whom were “exercising pure clientele”, treating “the ill as a commodity, acquiring their value by the gain they offer”¹⁰³. Equally problematic was the younger medics’ tendency “to invade the towns”, thus neglecting the rural areas where their help was much needed, and seeing their careers

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 590.

¹⁰² *Idem*.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 588.

strictly in terms of business. Hence, he bluntly concluded that: “Commercialization brings about a decrease in professional morality” and reminded his readers that in the “struggle for consolidation” everyone’s participation is much needed¹⁰⁴. The implications of this critique of economic interests that have come to dominate human relations must be stressed. Such negative interpretations of economics made culture, in its national modality, the locus in which to ground projects of reform. Moreover, the historical frailty of the Romanian *Wirtschaftsbürgertum* in Transylvania made the coordination of such projects the royal way to amassing capital in all of its bourdieusian forms (see Bourdieu 1986).

Hațieganu was reacting to a narrower understanding of political economy that was gaining currency in the early interwar. This was one of the major obstacles in the way of his programs. The medic had to confront a double provocation: to attenuate the dire medical conditions of peasants and workers as well as to convince politicians of the actual importance of proper hygiene, that is to make “both state and society understand the relevance of social hygiene”¹⁰⁵. Hațieganu is unequivocal:

The efforts of the Romanian medic and especially his results will contribute to radically change the conceptions of state politics, of our politicians. Public health is not among present preoccupations and is not an integral, organic part of any political program. All of our politicians are preoccupied with matters of political economy. But if they were to be pervaded by the knowledge that the political economy of a country is a function of the country’s health, then they would give due attention to matters of public hygiene. The productive labor of individuals is a function of health. It is only when our statesmen will understand the economic value of the individual that they will accept to place public hygiene on the same plane with economic problems. As the economic problem can only be national, similarly, hygiene must be national. Although hygiene has to match the latest scientific triumphs, we also have to put it in tune with

¹⁰⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 589.

the degree of culture and the economic state of the nation. Who can do this better than the Romanian medic?¹⁰⁶

The implications for politics and policy are quite clear. Hațieganu decried the indifference of the states' agents regarding public health and saw a potential solution in the actual practice of the Romanian doctor, called to demonstrate his public utility and worth. The heroic vision of the medic in his civilizational role appears on the backdrop of narrow minded politicians and of the inertia of a massive population of peasants. This perspective was not at all uncommon in interwar Romania. The “national characterology” produced by the leading Romanian intellectuals of the time had placed, in one way or another, the a crucial social emphasis on the large mass of peasants and took “the village” as the spatio-temporal icon of the nation, that was to be uplifted by an illuminated elite (Trencsényi 2008). Particularly interesting is the social location of this elite in Hațieganu's discussion of the Romanian medic. Elite members of society were to be found activating in voluntary associations somewhere in between state institutions and the masses, an early cry for the establishment of a Romanian “civil society”. It is very much this model that the students at the University in Cluj were supposed to embody, as the successful outcome of their “integral education”.

It is in this broader field of social and cultural reform that we have to place the developments regarding physical education and sports taking place at the University in Cluj in the interwar if we are to better account for both its centrality and social efficacy. As we have briefly seen in the quote that opened the chapter Iuliu Hațieganu made some penetrating arguments on the potential of modern physical education for the creation of an elite able to lead and implement ample social reforms. His 1934 presentation at ONEF titled “Physical Education

¹⁰⁶ *Idem.*

in the University” is probably the most articulated and refined intellectual justification of making physical development a central component of the educational process. To convincingly locate and transmit his views of physical education Hațieganu started his presentation with an excursus in the history of the university as an institution and a listing of the state of affairs in various countries in the postwar period. He set out to observe the historical variety of perspectives on education influenced by states, societies, universities and students¹⁰⁷ and stressed from the onset that institutions of higher education have never been as important in their historical and social role as they are after the war. This early emphasis is highly important as it makes the university part and parcel of projects of social reform. The university is no longer and cannot afford to be a place “of meditation between four walls”¹⁰⁸ as was the case in the 16th and 17th centuries when the dominant culture was “*humanistic, antic, latin*”, students would learn lots of theory and rhetoric while engaging in “beatings, duels, and tea dance”¹⁰⁹. Overall, education, Hațieganu contended, was in those times warlike and aristocratic with the University of Jena providing the model to be emulated. With the advent of the “*neohumanist culture*” of the 18th century some attention started being devoted to professional education and the student body showed signs of autonomization, as in Göttingen, where dedicated student organizations were created. However, Hațieganu reminded his audience that the state and society remained essentially aristocratic and the end result of higher education was still that rich students learned to live a life “à bon gou”¹¹⁰.

“The 19th century is the century of extreme specialization of science and the university isolates itself from state and society in order to practice it.”¹¹¹ According to Hațieganu during the

¹⁰⁷ Hațieganu, Iuliu. 1934. *Educația fizică în Universitate. Conferință de Prof. Dr. Iuliu Hațieganu*. București, Tipografia Ion C. Văcărescu, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁰⁹ *Idem*.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

¹¹¹ *Idem*.

19th century students received a “passive and static” education. Nonetheless, the very same students could not completely isolate themselves from “the great popular movements stirred by the national idea”. They quickly entered into “national life” and contributed to the “cultural and political rebirth of the nation”. Significantly, the student body “wants to be the prototype of the people, it wants to represent the full splendor and power of the entire popular life”¹¹². A new approach to education was needed in order to articulate “the intense scientific life inside universities” and the “pulsating national life” outside their walls. Consequently, Hațieganu argued that it was Fichte, some of the German rectors and Prince Wilhelm to have found the means to reconcile “science and life” through physical education. In this historical context animated by national ideas the first university sports club, the “Berliner Akademischer Turnverein”, was created in 1860.

Following Hațieganu’s historical exposition we can already shed light on some of his suggestions regarding the place and scope of universities and physical education in the post-World War I period. In his interpretation, the history of the universities, especially in the 19th century, amounts to a move towards autonomization due to the rise of modern science followed by a process of integration in the body of the nation. While the former is a much debated and well-known process, partly because of that, the latter is relatively obscured, albeit of massive importance. As we have seen at the beginning, the doctor made it plain clear that in the post-World War I context the autonomous view of science – producing hypertrophic minds and atrophic characters – will not do. In his own words: “Our universities are disoriented, they cannot be placed on the pedestal of autonomy, given the type of education demanded by the state

¹¹² *Idem.*

and the nation. [The University] has to go down in the middle of the nation and participate with all science and all enthusiasm to national rebirth.”¹¹³

In the historical realization of the modern nation, science and education are to be subsumed and geared towards the effort of radical social and cultural transformation. The university becomes one of the primary spaces of articulation of a social formation in its national modality. In its modern guise, it conjures social and cultural power for its intellectual elite and simultaneously makes institutions of higher education into repositories of national values and into icons of the nation. This was clearly the case with the University of Cluj. The institution topped the agenda of Transylvania’s Ruling Council in the immediate aftermath of the World War I and reopened as a thoroughly Romanian institution as early as the autumn of 1919, well before the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty (for a detailed discussion of this moment see Pálffy 2003).

For the discussion of physical education and sports both the power dimension and the representational dimension are highly relevant. In my reading, Hațieganu’s emphatic presentation of the importance of physical education derives its force from his serious consideration of these two dimensions in their conjunction. On the one hand, physical education, exercise and sport move the student – as future intellectual, leader, loyal citizen, brave soldier, etc. – out of the ivory tower into a social space of orderly movement and interaction, where national awareness and solidarity emerge and can be reinforced. On the other hand, it is assumed that the rest of the nation can only look up in awe to the individuals inhabiting and modeled by this social space, thus the exemplary importance of students – again, seen as future intellectuals, leaders, etc. - in social life. Overall, one can argue that beyond physical education’s claimed potential to produce harmonious subjects - socially adapted, nationally loyal, physically fit and

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

morally clean, what stands out is the disciplining and ritualization of bodily practices, a highly relevant move in the advance of any modern hegemonic project. This leads us to the question of translating theory into practice. Hațieganu knew all too well that a neat theoretical exposition does little to change existing practices and convictions, and his views were far from being widely shared. Voices on the extreme right were arguing contrary opinions, many treating physical education as already a part of peasants daily work routines, thus in no need of further investment, while notable intellectual figures, such as that of the historian Nicolae Iorga, were quick to denounce modern sports as “childish”¹¹⁴ or a return to barbarism.

Before advancing any recommendations, Hațieganu took up a strategy that we are already familiar with from his previous texts, that of first looking at developments in other countries. In his hand this was a source of inspiration, but also a powerful tool to criticize the current state of affairs. He introduced this part of his presentation thus:

Current necessities of state life and social life, the disoriented balancing of youth, these wanderings between Scylla and Charybdis of a thousand and one political and social parties and currents, the destructive explosions of unused forces, but also the constant desire of youth to get out of sterile contemplativism and isolation and to actively enter into a reuniting collectivism, the growing sporting current, all these have contributed to open the doors of universities for physical education in almost all countries. [...]

Today physical education equals scientific education in Italy, Russia and Germany. Physical education means the education of the complete man. True physical education hardens the body as much as it does so to the psyche and character. Today physical education is the preoccupation of all universities.

¹¹⁴ See Nicolae Iorga, După “victorie”, in *Neamul Românesc*, June 14, 1933.

Happy are those universities that have organized it by themselves and were not forced to receive it by surprise or by imposition from the state, which often has unilateral and selfish conceptions.¹¹⁵

Hațieganu's assessment resembles the mood of many other Central European intellectuals of the interwar, poised to denounce the trends towards disorder and chaos and to advance calls for the restoration of order (see Boyer, 2005). In his particular case state interests, that can often be "selfish", the wandering of youth, the inconsistency of political parties, social upheaval can be partly countered by the "desire" of youth to take up leadership and practically make history. It should immediately be noted that the call oriented towards the young generation to fulfill its desire to lead is another major trope of Romanian reasoning of the interwar. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the major models of physical education that Hațieganu presents are taken from the German, Italian and Russian contexts, although he does not confine himself to that.

In the exposition of the German case Hațieganu stressed that physical education is mandatory in all universities, that there is a "unique leadership" in both ideological and organizational terms and there appears to be a recent trend towards the expansion of "combative sports" and of "sports practiced in the fields or in labor camps". The result was the creation of "*a <<hero>> soldier at war and a <<gigantic>> worker in peace time*"¹¹⁶. Italy appeared to be a "fully enrolled nation", where physical education programs were at the same time military, national and social. The road to adulthood passed through Balilla, avangurdia, fascist militia and proper military service. Soviet Russia was distinguished by two types of physical education: an elite one pursued in "academies" and, more importantly according to Hațieganu, the physical education for the masses. The latter was noted because it "tends to dynamize the masses towards

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

¹¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 7.

action, work, defense and struggle” with the final purpose of “making the soviets triumph over all people”¹¹⁷. The doctor noted developments taking place in Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Turkey, before moving to Hungary where he observed that “the emphasis is on sports, devised to create champions serving to document racial superiority”¹¹⁸. Moreover, Hațieganu drew attention to the “Levente” organization, mobilizing the entire nation aged 14 to 21 with the distinct aim “of realizing <<Greater Hungary>> into its old borders”¹¹⁹. The new Polish state was pursuing a policy of creating a “military citizen” through physical education. Hațieganu moved to note that massive organizational work does also take place in France, where a democratic system of physical education and pre-enrollment education was put in place extending via various branches to incorporate the whole national territory¹²⁰. England, “where sport is a philosophy of life”, was supposedly being transformed into “a massive barrack”. Students were engaged in both sporting and pre-enrollment activities and the ones in Oxford and Cambridge would already obtain a military rank alongside their academic diploma.

The striking element of this country-by-country presentation is the extent to which Hațieganu stressed the move towards militarization via physical education all across Europe. For an astute Romanian observer of the 1930’s this was probably not surprising, but the this observation and emphasis adds a lot of substance in relation to the Romanian case. (“What the other nations teach us is to quickly get organized.”¹²¹) As we have partly seen, for Hațieganu the state of the post-World War I Romanian society and its educational system was rather meager. The Universities in Bucharest, Cluj and Timișoara had made but small and insufficient steps to reform the educational process towards a type of education that was simultaneously scientific,

¹¹⁷ *Idem.*

¹¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ *Idem.*

¹²⁰ *Idem.*

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

social and national, centered on physical education, the only method capable of bridging “university and life”. He listed a series of six factors that hampered the institutionalization of physical education in the university. These provide a sense of both the state of affairs and of the radicalism of Hațieganu’s proposals.

The first two problems were very much related; when it came to physical education “the insensibility” of politicians was only augmented by “the indifference” of university professors. Misunderstandings abounded. Instead of seeing physical education as “an inexhaustible source of health and equilibrium” some professors thought it as “a return to the primitive man”¹²². The third obstacle was the slow pace of transformation. Romanian universities had remained traditional, tributary to the conception of “forced-feeding with books”¹²³. The fourth problem to be dealt with was the controversy surrounding the distinction between sports and physical education, as the latter’s “ideology is still in the making”. Fifth came the lack of appropriate student leadership. This was mostly meant as a political charge, as student leaders were prominent in organizing support for political movements on the extreme right, such as the Iron Guard. Sixth, and probably the most interesting point, was “the students’ resentment to physical education”. This was due to the fact that exercise was “recommended to them as a pain-killer, as a morphine injection, to get them out of anarchic movements”. Hațieganu found this approach completely erroneous arguing precisely the contrary that “physical education is fortifying them to serve the nation and the country”¹²⁴.

Through this last point Hațieganu’s theorization meets the developments on the ground and his reformatory vision becomes more clearly visible. His insistence on the need for physical education in the university presumed a much broader program of social reform. The students,

¹²² *Ibidem*, p. 10.

¹²³ *Idem*.

¹²⁴ *Ididem*, p.10.

well on the road of “anarchism”, were to be brought back into a program of integral education premised on the harmonious development that physical education is supposed to create and oriented towards the goals of national and social progress. This is a “conception of physical education that wants to put the highest spiritual and bodily capacity in the service of the people, nation and state.”¹²⁵ He had already made a similar point in his inaugural address when elected rector of the University in Cluj in 1930 (similary titled “*The Importance of Physical Education in the University*”): “we need a vigorous, disciplined and scientifically well prepared youth. We need no mysticism [at this point the historian Gheorghe I. Bodea noted that “he was referring to the legionary students whom cultivated religious mysticism and hooliganism”] in the educational process, but a method premised on real elements. Through physical exercise, games and dance, we want to reactivate, to valorize the physical, moral and intellectual energies of our youth.”¹²⁶

The type of education that Hațieganu proposed radiated outwards in a double sense, differently for those who share into it and for does who did not. For the students transformed by “the spiritualized physical education” a move is imagined into the “Hellenic” direction, which involves music, singing, poetry and literature, in conjunction with a move towards “the Christian conception, into the religion of love in the church of Christ”¹²⁷. For the categories in need of education, showing “a visible lack of culture”, these well trained students would provide medical and cultural assistance, by “fulfilling their duty towards the villages, towards the people” regenerating the nation through physical, moral and intellectual education. Besides, pre-enrollment training and “the life in camps” will sharpen, Hațieganu argued, the “sense of

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Bodea, 2004, p. 182.

¹²⁷ *Idem*.

collectivity” and will “accentuate the national sensitivity and spirit of sacrifice”¹²⁸. Thus, the universities via physical education programs will increase their prestige and “will become not only springs of science, but will also form citizens with character, healthy, strong, powerful, embodying the sentiment of solidarity – a social sense, and especially a vibrant and always alight national consciousness”¹²⁹.

In short, the doctor set out a program of educational and social reform that made the university one of the main engines of nation building. Its main contours were represented by academic transformations taking place elsewhere on the European continent, with the German and Italian models as major sources of inspiration. Besides, Hațieganu offered a broad societal view that legitimized the drive towards social reform of an educated elite that was both the image and the active transformative force of the nation. During his first period as Rector of the University, between 1930 and 1931, Hațieganu energetically pursued his goal to establish physical education for students in Cluj. It is during this time that the sports park that now bears his name started to be built and we get to follow him in amassing the support of his colleagues for his cause. To that end, in 1931, he sent out a letter to all the professors of the University persuasively stating his goals and addressing practical problems of implementation. He made it clear that this was a crucial problem that could no longer be avoided:

DEAR COLLEAGUE,

To have a starting point in the debate concerning the introduction of physical education in the University I have thought it useful to make some proposals that I advance for your appreciation. For a better orientation, I remind you that since 1925 there functions a commission that deals with this problem. [...] The University’s Senate has taken no decision in this direction. Taking into account the importance of this

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

¹²⁹ *Idem*.

issue, I take it to your kind sentiments towards this problem, asking you to read these proposals – make the observations that you deem good, so that we can soon call the Commission and put into practice this problem that can no longer be delayed.

After this short preamble, Hațieganu briefly summarized the arguments that he would later present at ONEF. He stated that physical education is “not only a cultural problem, but a national one”, “of great value in the realization of an *integral education*” and “the perfect method to shape character and an admirable procedure to create *harmony between body and soul*”,¹³⁰. What concerns us here is the institutional setup that he envisaged for the introduction of physical education at the University of Cluj. According to Hațieganu, the first step should be “*the creation of a cathedra of physical education*” with three distinctive aims: *scientific research*, *the preparation of professors of physical education* and *the physical education of students*.

In terms of “scientific research” the problems to be addressed concerned physiopathology, with a distinct emphasis on the “physiopathology of work”¹³¹. This scientific program was supposed to give “a healthy scientific guide for physical education”¹³². The preparation of cadres was meant to fill a lacuna in the body of professors and experts. Professors of physical education would receive a “universitary training” and be on an equal footing with the rest of the professors. To counter potential critique, Hațieganu suggested that the German model might be desirable, where students of physical education also specialize in a “theoretical discipline” and this “harmoniously completes their culture”¹³³. Training in physical education should not be pursued “due to some lack” and these professors should have a “vast general

¹³⁰ Reprinted in Bodea, 2004, p. 184-185. Professor Bodea states that he decided to reproduce Hațieganu’s letter in full for its “documentary value”.

¹³¹ *Idem.*

¹³² *Idem.*

¹³³ *Idem.*

culture”¹³⁴. The task of this body of experts would be to offer training inside and outside the University, for students and professors, but also for “educative commissions” and “sporting societies”.

When he came to physical education for students, Hațieganu diverged quite sharply from some of the arguments he was to make in Bucharest, especially so on the issue of militarization and “military discipline”. What pleased elite ears at ONEF in Bucharest was not, it seems, to happen in Cluj. Hațieganu stated that physical education should be “easy and pleasant, it should not represent a new burden for students; it should provide health, a better working capacity and should be remote from any military discipline”¹³⁵. Besides, physical education was to become mandatory for two semesters with a two hours weekly session, a regulation that is still in place in spite of the fact that the student population in Cluj increased roughly twentyfold since his time. He moved to present the institutional setup made of an “Office of Physical Education” and an “Interuniversity Superior Council of Physical Education”. Each would consist of both professors and students, the former, mandated to take care of the routine functioning of physical education activities (schedule, competitions, regulations, discipline) and the latter, acting as a mediating body dealing with the arbitration of conflicts and “general directives”. This latter body would also supervise the organization of “student Olympics” expected to be “true festivities of national vigor”.¹³⁶

Hațieganu concluded his letter in his distinctive style by restating his plea, his call, and his final aim:

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 186.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 186-187.

These are the general ideas, which should be respected when introducing physical education in the University. The University cannot delay the realization of the program of physical education. It is only [through such programs] that our Universities will become Institutes not only for the culture of the soul, but also for the culture of the body – it is only thus that out of Universities will come future leaders with harmonious qualities of the body and soul – Leaders, able to lead the Romanian nation (*neamul*) towards harmony and work – the only guarantee of any constructive and durable opera.¹³⁷

Cluj, 8th of January 1931

RECTOR,

Dr. Iuliu Hațieganu

Conclusion

This chapter presented the history of Transylvania's Romanian educated bourgeoisie of the interwar framing it in line with some of the new developments in the sociology of ideas. On this background, I brought forth the intellectual contributions of the university professor and doctor Iuliu Hațieganu from the University of Cluj. I analyzed in depth his struggle to formulate and implement a major program of physical education for the university's students. I argued that the emphasis on physical education and the categories and notions that he mobilized was born out of a historical conjuncture profoundly marked by the efforts to integrate the region of Transylvania into the newly created Greater Romania. Intellectuals, such as Hațieganu, were truly instrumental not only in formulating the general lines of policy, but also in actively implementing such policy. Hațieganu's program of physical education shows his complete involvement, from a vantage point deeply shaped by his class position, in the effort to ground the

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

Romanian nation and to further statehood in Transylvania by producing a modern elite able to loyally serve and lead the state and nation.

The main argument advanced here is that these projects of bodily transformation are best seen as programs of social reform, that capture the specific class dynamic of interwar Transylvania, where a limited elite took upon itself the historical task of bringing modernity to a society mostly made of peasants. What comes out forcefully from Hațieganu's texts is precisely the sense of mission and urgency to reform the body of the Romanian nation, via a unitary and integral training of individual bodies. For the doctor, to consolidate Romanian rule in the region meant, first and foremost, to forge a distinct elite character that would move out of its ivory tower to act, by any means necessary, for the reformation of the whole society. The manifestations and expressions of the educated bourgeoisie thus become a model to be pursued by all other social classes and the sporting activities on the university's arenas are prime examples of that.

Equally relevant is Hațieganu's position as an intellectual at a specific moment and in a particular place in European history. For a thinker on the cultural margins of Europe that has made it to power with the sanction of the Great Powers of Western Europe after World War I, the developments taking place in "advanced" societies soon become reified in the form of ideals or targets for local development. In this respect, Hațieganu, as most of the intellectuals of his day, functioned as a broker of culture and power mediating and adapting local realities to continental standards. His writings thus present and represent a distinctive blending of the *social knowledge* available at the time, not only on physical education and sports, but also on economy and politics, where one finds a mixture of the problems the went on in the building and consolidation of modern nation-states. Hațieganu's concentration on the strategies, procedures

and mechanisms of bodily reformation articulated these tensions in a complex program of physical education, which is in itself as much a solution as it is a symptom of interwar intellectual and political developments.

By following his texts, we were able to see just how various political, cultural, social and economic tensions and contradictions were brought together and given a sense of coherence through a plan centered on physical education and sport. He effortlessly argued for an integral education that mirrored the drive to integrate the nation, for a hygienic way of life that mirrored the perceived need of a clean nation and population, for a well-equipped individual body able to defend itself and the national interests. By taking seriously the content as well as the practical consequences of his repeated calls the current arguments moved beyond and below the essentialized and burdensome image of the “Nation” that has dominated as still dominates historical scholarship on Transylvania to present an entry point for an alternative and better problematized history of the region and of its still open question of integration into Romanian state.

The sporting arenas of the university endured as sites to affirm past and present Romanianness and consecrated Hațieganu’s hope that physical education and sports at the university were to realize a much needed for social integration of the nation via a well-trained and well-qualified elite. Iuliu Hațieganu did make it to see his “opera” of physical education put into practice at the University of Cluj and at least a generation of students did get much of the training that he designed. Bodies and characters were shaped according to a well-integrated vision of the nation and of social reform, joining the complex process of weaving the Romanian rule in Transylvania from multiple ethnic and class wires.

Chapter 4 – A Sporting Arcadia: Memories of Nationalism and Poverty at ‘Universitatea’ Cluj

The Alma Mater

In an exquisite blending of history and memory the writer Virgil Dalea, a student at the University in Cluj and member of its sports club throughout the interwar, summed up the mission of the University and the feelings it triggered among its students in the opening paragraphs of his short memoir titled “Like the leafs in the rush of the autumn’s wind...” only to continue:

...so the memories of the past clutter, twist, tumble, spread and gather back. As you begin to spin the fleece of time and the long thread of images shrouds and drowns you in the emotion of feelings past, the more distant the faces appear they present themselves in an ever more shining light. How much time might have passed since you came down from the train that brought you from a corner of the country, from the endless plain or from the spellbound mountains where you were born, in the grey station, covered in the evening fog of Transylvania’s capital, only to leave, shy and baffled, in a cart pulled by some slender nag towards the “Avram Iancu” or “Victor Babeş” dormitories or “The teachers’ house”? So that on the next day, pervaded by the warm shiver of a bold dream, to step, crushed by the moments’ greatness, over the threshold of the coveted and blessed “ALMA MATER”. Half a century? Maybe more? Nonetheless, just how fresh and alive does the magic film of your youth develop in your memory, the enlightened and laborious years of studentship, when you formed and hardened for life, for society, for the motherland (*Patrie*).

Now, in the long retrospective of year past, you nostalgically, respectfully and gratefully think at what it meant for you, for your generation and for those since – the eminent professor that have strengthened you wings for the big flight, the teachers that have nourished your soul with the generosity and devotion of apostles of Romanian culture, in that country corner that had just returned to its natural strait, just made whole in the two millennial boundaries of the country and of the nation; to the pulsation

and experience of university life to which all those lucky ones we had the chance to enlighten our thoughts at the ever lit torch of knowledge, we've lived it and appropriated it, each to his capacity; to the city that housed and fostered us during the long years of study, to the books that have elevated our spirit and have kneaded our character for the struggle of life; to each detail that enriched, beautified and ennobled your mind and soul.

You've felt apart ever since your first day – probably since the moment when you've received the “index of studies” from your faculty. From that moment on you could no longer be the one you've been before – you now had other worries, tasks and duties. A different optic, vision, option. You were building your future and the work and responsibilities were becoming overwhelmingly great. And you could only become a man and citizen in the strictest sense of the word by taking them to their rightful end.

However, you were not a student just yet and you could only truly be one from the day when you took up the red velvet cap, with the signs of the faculty knitted in golden thread and only after you've received the membership legitimation of “UNIVERSITATEA” sports club and the round badge of black enamel in the center of which the magnificent letter “U” shun blindingly white.¹³⁸

The Alma Mater of the interwar is emotionally depicted as the transformative place of social and cultural passage, a space of radical alteration of body and soul under the gaze and guidance of illustrious professors. The locus of sport in this pedagogical program aspires to bring the process of intellectual and physical remolding full-circle. The students' sports club became the ultimate symbol and sign of distinction consecrating the appropriation of the virtues of a distinctively Romanian character. Each of the former players and officials in his own way add to describe the emergence and grounding of a peculiar ethos under the aegis of the letter “U”. The key features of this ethos, pervading the memories and the histories of the club, were the postulated interdependence and attention devoted to physical development and intellectual betterment among students, deference in relation to the moral and intellectual authority of the

¹³⁸ 20. Virgil Dalea. Capital letters and underlining in the original.

educators, a sense of duty and sacrifice that bordered heroism, all projected unto an image of national improvement. Unsurprisingly, modern organized sport was an obvious point of reference to develop and disseminate this array of understandings, feelings and notions among students. Their recollections are both a result as well as a symptom for the durability of this process that fostered a localized national modality of identification and social relatedness.

By referring to the University as the “Alma Mater” the writer introduced a key trope for its perception, understanding and experience. The “Alma Mater” of Cluj was designed to imbue the novices with the strongest sense of Romanianness, with its sporting institutions at the forefront of this transformation. This Roman and later Christian idea and image of motherly nourishing and upbringing, a common symbol of higher education establishments, was particularly powerful among Romanian students and professors in their struggle to affirm the existence of a unitary national culture and to emphasize the durability of the newly expanded Romanian nation-state.

As we have already seen in Chapter 3, the chief architect of the sports program at the University of Cluj, Iuliu Hațieganu, had envisaged it as part of an integral national education geared to create the future leaders of the nation. One of the officials at the club reverently quoted Hațieganu, a quote taken from the inaugural talk of a series of courses of medicine applied to physical education and sports of 1937, where the professor and doctor stressed once more the decisive role of the medical doctor in the improvement of the nation:

Today, when physical education is so wide-spread, when a nation's vigor is a to be or not to be problem of the state, the medic - who is always closer to the man - cannot miss out from leading this educative work. Physical education is an excellent method of the nation's hygiene, thus the medic must mobilize in the service of this movement for the activation of the nation's prolific forces. The sports medic examines,

diagnoses, selects, advices and controls those whom practice sport. At the same time, he practices a sport, because only through personal experience can one understand his function as an educator of the nation and of its youth.

Each and every one has to take part according to his strengths, but all must equally share into the enthusiasm and devotion, for the physical, moral and intellectual prosperity of the nation. This attitude returns us to our mission, not only of healers, but the nation's leaders towards health.¹³⁹

The message was clear enough: physical education and sports were crucial for the improvement of the nation, able to reform – in eugenic fashion – the very essence of the individual and to affect his most intimate patterns of thought and action. The power and knowledge of the medical doctor worked to guarantee their success. However, the effects of Hațieganu's project of national education and the possibility to affirm and debate them came decades after the passing away of their founder. In this chapter, I mobilize the written testimonies of interwar players and officials at 'Universitatea' to depict the centrality of the sports club in promoting Romanian nationalism in Transylvania's leading urban space. In the memoirs that I allude to the University and its sports club emerge out of the tension between the high ideals of the nation and the material realities of often chronic poverty, bridged by the heroism of its students, professors, or administrators.

These documents bear witness to the historical conjuncture of their making and the process of their creation. In the late 1970s the medical doctor Mihai Iubu, president of the football section at "Universitatea" during the Second World War and an intimate of the club ever after, set out to gather material for a history of the club to mark its 60th anniversary. Dr. Iubu completed an extensive work of data collection by sending out a questionnaire to most of the available players and officials that had activated in the club since its founding, up to the end of

¹³⁹ 26. Anton Vraști, Bacău.

the war, but unfortunately failed to live long enough to make use of it. This is the material that I will engage here, made available to me due to the kindness of the late Gheorghe I. Bodea, the local historian who went on to complete Dr. Iubu's job some two decades after he had started it.

In the context afforded by the nationalist turn of the Romanian socialist regime, the service of "Universitatea" for the cause of Romanian nation during the interwar was bound to take a heightened meaning. Judging by the eagerness of former *U-ists* to share their stories and to move well beyond the limits of Iubu's questionnaire it appears that the actors themselves were keenly aware of the renewed worthiness of their and their clubs' experience in the new political context. At the same time, they were most often than not ready to stress theirs and their University's service for the cause of Romanianness in Transylvania grew out of poverty and privation. In their conjunction, praise and defense of national ideals on the backdrop of material lack, create and imbue the actors involved and their institution with a strong sense of heroism. Nonetheless, by the time of fixing their testimonies in writing all these men had accomplished mostly successful sporting and later professional careers. By the late 1970s they were mostly retired. A sense of independence and a willingness to engage sensitive political topics is soon visible in their prose (or, at times, poetry). As such, corroborating their accounts does offer a glimpse into the unfolding of some of the historical events that made into the making of "Universitatea".

Four decades after Hațieganu's keynote address, in a vastly different socio-political conjuncture, one of the student/player active at "Universitatea" at the time could thus offer a terrific counterpart to his professors' calling from the standpoint of one whom passed through his program. Confronted with the question of "heroism" he set out to explain what this meant for him in a veritable tour de force of the character forged at "Universitatea". Disputing one of the

recently published historical accounts of “Unversitatea” (discussed in detail in Chapter 6) for its perceived blind-spots he started by arguing that: “History does not pause; it is made of epochs that we like or not, that we agree with or not, that we are in accord with or disprove. We don’t deny their existence. We don’t have this right.”¹⁴⁰ Only to continue unabated:

Heroic acts in the sporting activity at the University of Cluj? I don’t think I’ve done any, neither myself, nor others. It all depends on the angle of looking, on the content and limits afforded to the fulfillment of duty. To my mind, heroism starts from the moment when the situation asks and the sincerity of the act imposes to transgress all that duty implies. Heroism is but the extension, with total abnegation of a detachment from the ballast of personal interests, at a superior level of duty. Offering an all-embracing understanding of the notion of duty and fulfilling it in the totality of its moral commandments, there emerges a peak that cannot be conquered with the usual means, inaccessible to all people; this is the peak that only the heroes attack and conquer with a firm determination, an exquisite character, an unbridled will, an unchained courage. Heroism needs exceptional people in exceptional conjunctures, it presupposes efforts to exhaustion, devotion to sacrifice. Happy those afforded the chance and able to fulfill it without being asked. Because the hero is not pushed, but flails forward on his own initiative, to heights that appear inaccessible to others.

All the rest is but fulfilled duty, of course, with sustained efforts, inherent privations, imposed renunciations. Only by lowering the exigency’s bar of duty there appear that many heroes; light, superficial heroes. By offering the proper meaning to the notion of duty and providing for the person, through education, the skills to practically realize it, the number of heroic acts and of heroes will lower, but at the same time their value and glow will increase in all domains, including the defense of the country.¹⁴¹

There can hardly be a more concise and hardened definition of duty and heroism, while the emphasis on the country’s defense at the end emphasizes its orientation. This was no duty for

¹⁴⁰ 22. Ion M. Păunescu, *idem*.

¹⁴¹ 22. Ion M. Păunescu.

duty's sake, but the duty to serve the nation. Indeed, our author immediately continues by presenting the ways in which he fulfilled his duties in the struggle against "Hitlerism" for which he received "the Star of the Republic". We learn that the sources for his "love for the country and the people", were the example of his father, hurt in the "war of 1916-1918", the inspiration from "high school and university professors" and "a reaction to the Hungarian chauvinism of the time". In this context, sport was but "a place of work and struggle", of "unconditional" support for "Universitatea". Most importantly, it was the student's sport club in Cluj that provided the crucial link between a stated program of national development and the subject that comes to embody and identify with it, very much in the way intended by the designer. The understandings of most of the interwar's club members come to specify what character, duty or heroism practically meant and how they came to appropriate and reproduce it.

The active force of individual as well as collective development was commonly referred to as "élan". The deployment of the term suggests the existence of an inner drive moulded through physical and intellectual education to manifest itself in certain ways. As such, the élan – the energy or the vitality – is what students brought to the "Alma Mater" of the University that provided the tools and the stage for its manifestation and expression. The élan, mediated by sporting activity, can be best seen as bridging and providing meaningful content to the triad of mind, body and soul to produce a finely shaped character. Most of the players note that their performance was full of "youthful élan"¹⁴², that the "thought and soul were full of élan"¹⁴³ or that "plenty of élan was consummated"¹⁴⁴ on the field of play. The students' élan soon became an enduring trait of the sports club and best displayed by the perceived trajectory of its football team. In its play, the team at once presented an unfettered enthusiasm and a will to courageously

¹⁴² 52. Ștefan Ioanovici.

¹⁴³ 31. Vasile Gain.

¹⁴⁴ 34. Ion M. Păunescu.

take on any opponent no matter of its reputation while failing, most of the time, to secure the results needed for major triumphs. However, in the historical conjuncture of the interwar and very much so thereafter it was much more important for the Romanian public to affirm the former while tending to disregard the latter. As one artist and former footballer succinctly put it: “U’s history is the history of football in Cluj. The sporting movement of winsome popularity cannot be conceived without U. Enthusiasm, youth, passion, a cult for the collective spirit and the team, ideal... Symbol of uninterrupted presence on the Someș river.”¹⁴⁵

In a situation where little else could be counted upon, the containment and manifestation of *élan* on the playing fields of the University got consecrated and hardened through the memories of its members in the history of the club. In short, beyond all else, “U is an idea” goes the saying of past and present aficionados of “Universitatea”. This notion, already hinted at by some of the club’s players and officials in their testimonies, was articulated by the former forward Ion M. Păunescu in one of his written recollections. He did so when presenting a discussion he had entertained with the goalkeeper of one of the finest football clubs of the interwar and Universitatea’s rival Ripensia Timișoara. Păunescu could not but recognize Ripensia’s superiority of training conditions and sporting prowess when confronted by his opponent, relative to the ones he enjoyed in Cluj. Nonetheless, he supposedly countered the arguments in the following terms:

...I’ve told him that they exist and will only exist as long as the respective conditions are met and that they’ll disappear as soon as the lacks will come their way. Universitatea – I was telling Pavlovici – represents an idea and not a group, and the lacks join, unite and hearten [its players]. She has lived and lives out of the *élan* and devotion in the field and of the love and enthusiasm in the stands. And will forever

¹⁴⁵ 17. Petre Abrudan.

last – with inherent periods of ascent and decay – as there will always be youth, there will always be élan, there will always be legitimate ambition, because the youth only is capable of disinterested effort and sacrifice.¹⁴⁶

This memory was translated into history in the narrative of the local historian Gheorghe I. Bodea. The proud statement to counter the superiority of a rival, this description was essentialized in the dictum: “‘U’ was born and travels the decades as an *IDEA*”¹⁴⁷. The historian went on to clarify what this meant. On the one hand, the idea ‘U’ is the analytical instrument needed to make sense of “the fervor that shivered the senses of many generations”, to grasp “the secret poetry incorporated in its existence” as well as “the reverberations emerging in many souls when naming it.”¹⁴⁸ On the other, ‘U’ was a part of “Romanian history” profoundly affected by: “all the spasms of the inter-bellum, the social-political dissociations, the tragedy of the Vienna Diktat, the war, the pressures and humiliations of “popular democracies”, the underground struggle for survival and verticality”¹⁴⁹. The “Universitatea” sports club thus emerged as one ideal of Romanianess in Transylvania bridging and giving sense to a tumultuous struggle for national becoming. As we have seen, the players and officials of the interwar were keenly aware of the part they played in affirming the nation locally, regionally, nationally and internationally through their sporting activity backed by assiduous study. However, it is poetry rather than the historical narrative that provides a better sense and understanding of the depth of the connections and meanings synthesized in the idea ‘U’. Thus, one poet and committed fan of the club devoted a sonnet and a hymn for the prospected 60th anniversary of the club. The first reads:

¹⁴⁶ 22. Ion M. Păunescu.

¹⁴⁷ Bodea, Gheorghe I. 2004. *Agora “U” – 85. 1919-2004. Vol. I 1919-1946. File din istoria sportului românesc din Transilvania*. Cluj: NAPOCA STAR, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ *Idem.*

¹⁴⁹ *Idem.*

ALMA MATER's
To the Universitatea Cluj Club

The ruthless destiny strikes at times
Only the powerful, because the weak bend
You, serene as always, should defy it
Dressed in your old white-black

But if it happens
That your shy children can't break through
The hard times ahead
Call those with snowflakes at the temples

Surlașu, Sepi, Sepci, Luca, Sfera,
Will always brighten the atmosphere
In our beloved Cluj

Many hard passions will melt,
And 'come on U', will be again the wreath
Sung in my verses¹⁵⁰

The image of youthful struggle for and in the name of the personified motherly University depicted in the poem, a key component of the idea 'U', was earlier synthesized in the anthem of the club composed during the time of "the exile" to Sibiu during the war. We are lucky to have in the bulk of recollections gathered by doctor Iubu the story of the making of this

¹⁵⁰ 6. Ioan Gușan

hymn, narrated by one of its co-authors and initial performers, which provides an acute sense of symbols and images in their making, with all the passion and struggle that this entails. The moving of the University to Sibiu in the aftermath of the Second Vienna Arbitration that returned Cluj within the boundaries of the Hungarian state afforded a period of major reconsideration and rethinking of the aims of the University and its programs. To be sure, every effort was made to see it returned to a Romanian Cluj. In this context, the need to synthesize and represent the principles of the club became an urgent duty.

The opportunity is rarely afforded to follow the process that leads to the creation of songs, anthems of hymns praising the activity of sports clubs. However, Universitatea's centrality for the Romanian nationalism in Transylvania as well as its fraught and intricate history afforded major significance to every statement made in its name. Consequently, it is not that surprising to find one of the authors of the club's anthem summoned to tell the story of its birth. Mircea Olteanu, at the time of writing (in 1979) a medical doctor in Bucharest, a student in medicine and wannabe artist in Sibiu during the war, minutely described how "Come on "U" ("*Haide "U"*") came into being. He appears to have been a devoted fan of the football team, intimately knowing the players as his friends and colleagues, but not activating in the club. The background of his story is clear from the very beginning: Sibiu, during the refuge, as is the understanding of what "Universitatea" signified and stood for: the symbol of youth and student solidarity struggling for a swift return to Cluj¹⁵¹. The place of the unfolding story is one humble, improvised "bar" called "Arizona" – "one musty tavern in the barracks' basement" – serving nothing more than halvah and beer, in an atmosphere dominated by student performances and the musical competition between two rival bands: "The Beasts" quintet and "Zomby" quartet. Our

¹⁵¹ 19. Mircea Olteanu

narrator was a member of the latter, and alongside his colleagues went on to produce one of the most well-known songs of Romanian club football.

The story of the anthem started in spring 1944 when the leader of the “Zomby” quartet, Nelu Brateş, (named such “due to the striking resemblance between himself and the character of a well-known movie”¹⁵²) was in danger of failing an exam. Thus, seconded by his band colleagues he went on to persuade Dr. Iubu – none other than the instigator of these testimonies – for a reexamination. The doctor suggested that the student compose an anthem for the club in return for his retaking of the exam, knowing his abilities as a composer and performer. It appears that this “superb” idea got the student-artist crashed under its burden. So much so, that in spite of “solving” the exam he went missing for days only to returned transfigured by the “mission” that he had received, a “mission of honor”, “a moral obligation” that needed “four brains”, that is all the members of the band, to see it done¹⁵³. Pace the complicated negotiations that went on between the friends on how to best tackle the problem, they were soon at work and “the birth, like any other birth, was full of sweat, pain, and screams”¹⁵⁴.

The authors opted for a tempestuous opening with a long and powerful “Come on U” while the subsequent text sought to provide the answers to this strong calling. Thus, the line that followed the refrain went “You’re the symbol of student youth”, while the next stated that “you’re the pride of Romanian hearts”¹⁵⁵. While the first stanza appears to have been trenched rather easily, the following was a matter of painful creation. In here, the authors had to engage the cumbersome problem of what their club stood for and do so as parsimoniously and persuasively possible. Olteanu remembers that it took days and several nervous “working

¹⁵² *Idem.*

¹⁵³ *Idem.*

¹⁵⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁵⁵ *Idem.*

sessions” for the zombies to come even close to a proper formulation. The fervor continued in the classrooms, involving colleagues and friends, and an assiduous exchange of notes during one ophthalmology class where “the beautifully coloured iris on the blackboard” was but “a transparent screen beyond which our imagination was racing in search of some notes and words to happily round up the song and the text which simultaneously persecuted and roused us”,¹⁵⁶. However, by the break a clearly articulated version had emerged that went:

We fight to rise
Through élan, will, smile and song:
A new body... (Ironed arm)...
A new soul... (Snatched from the sky)...
Come on U! Tempo U!
Come on U!¹⁵⁷

A more synthetic version of the club’s driving force and mission can hardly be imagined. Nonetheless, the creators felt that the confident and optimistic note of the passage had to be mitigated in the circumstances surrounding the club, thus providing a more accurate depiction of its past and current historical situation. Consequently, they went on to introduce the “march” with a nostalgic theme that stressed the same key tropes while adding and emphasizing the university’s connection with the city of Cluj. Tellingly, the music was taken from a composition titled “It snowed on the chestnut alley”, a reference to the alleys of the city park in Cluj leading then and now to the stadium. The anthem was thus introduced with the following lines:

¹⁵⁶ *Idem.*

¹⁵⁷ *Idem.* In Romanian: “Noi luptăm (ca) să-nălțăm / Prin avânt, voință, zîmbet și prin cînt: / Un trup nou... (braț de fier...) / Suflet nou... (smuls din cer) / Haide U! Tempo U! / Haide U!”

We're the *U-ists* of beloved Cluj

United in our élan

We start again with a twinned soul

For struggle with one thought...

The sense of unity and common purpose is palpable in both the text and the song, making consecrating Universitatea's role in forging through struggle the élan of its students into the body and soul of the Romanian nation. The anthem was first performed in Sibiu's Municipal Theater in 1944, in front of an enthusiastic public. Remembering that performance our author notes that the public was initially quiet and curious, only to erupt when "after the refrain we've melancholically interpreted that sentimental intermezzo where we truly thought that "we're the *u-ists* of beloved Cluj... united in our élan...", showing that we're ready to "start again with a twinned soul for struggle with one thought..." (We all knew this thought, we all wanted it: it was the retaking of Cluj, the return to our homes, something that was about to happen as we were close to the 23rd of August 1944) Then the public, completely taken away, erupted in ovations and a stormy round of applause. It was obvious that our march – just like our colleagues predicted – won everyone's hearts.”¹⁵⁸

Baloney and mustard, third class trains and a hut

Apparently, in contradiction to the high national ideals that animated "Universitatea" during the interwar its student sportsmen almost never tire to note that the material foundations of the ideals they sung in prose or verse were often far from ideal. For example, in the thirty written memories of players and officials at my disposal there is rarely one to miss the

¹⁵⁸ *Idem*. Underlined in the original.

description of travels to away games in lousy third class train carriages. These are commonly followed by an invariable presentation of the contents of the food package received by each player: half a kilo of baloney, a bread and a shared jar of mustard. True that, the last item of Dr. Iubu's questionnaire prompted most such memories. At that point the doctor invited his respondents to "describe a few heroic and a few funny happenings about 'U' [involving] the colleagues, the fans (*drukerii*), the leaders, the coaches, the referees or the adversaries". However, the invitation was introduced by a highly directive proposition stating that "the material lacks of this elite club of our country in the span of time are well known", thus making sure that everyone understood what he was after. Framed in such a way the item opened up a space of recollection espousing the poverty of the club in a strategy designed to embolden the heroic or the humorous character of whatever followed. One such standard description went:

When we were travelling on longer distances we took the train, on shorter distances some truck (there were few buses at the time), the situation of the club only allowed the third class (wooden benches) and in trucks wooden benches and a cover above. When we went to Bucharest we took a midday train to arrive in the evening. The journey was long, as were those to Timișoara or Arad, the benches were stiff, but we never felt these journeys due to the never-ending joyfulness. Jokes were plenty and had them prepared in due time. The food for these journeys was invariable: in a package, a piece of baloney of about 500 grams and a bread. The mustard: a big jar for all, except for Tabacu who could not stand it. Whenever we wanted to take away his food we took the jar under his nose and Tabacu could no longer swallow a thing.¹⁵⁹

Another player recounts the arrangement pattern of such travels, organized to reduce the costs to a minimum:

¹⁵⁹ 5. Marius Ștefănescu, 1929-1935, retired economist, 68, Bucharest.

When going away we received cold food packages and ate on the wooden benches of the third class wagon. When we reached destination we enjoyed proper housing and dining. After the games, we only ate if there was any time left, if not the same already bought packages and up on the first available train to meet our work and obligations. Thus, a difficult journey came on top of the effort and fatigue of the game and we were utterly wasted by the time we reached home.

Nonetheless we played. We were full of youthful élan, full of ambition justified by our love for the colors of the club.¹⁶⁰

Memories of food shortage and privation were constantly on the minds of the student/footballers when remembering their everyday life in Cluj. Travels to away games provided an opportunity to receive foodstuffs from the families in their home cities and we learn that such food “trafficking” was a major practice back then as is for students today. Returning from a hardly fought cup semi-final in 1934 in Reșița one of the players recounted a meeting at the Timișoara railway station where “the parents, relatives and friends [were] loaded with packages of goodies “for the mouth”, in such quantities to feed a single person for three weeks.” However, “the plentiful quantity for one person became infinitesimal for a whole team of hefty mouths”¹⁶¹. The same footballer remembers that packs full of “ham, pork fat and cakes” were regularly dispatched to Cluj, although “never enough to fill the many hungry mouths” and thus “there were periods when I lived on a kilo of milk and a bread a day”.

At the time, there was hardly any difference between the alimentation regime of regular students and sportsmen. The system consisted of coupons that could be used in student canteens or at various restaurants in the city. A slightly better off member of the team remembers the modest situation of most of his teammates stressing that “the applause and the great love of our

¹⁶⁰ 34. Ion M. Păunescu, late 1930s, retired school teacher, 66, Bucharest.

¹⁶¹ 21. Lazăr Sfera, 1930-1934, retired economist, 69, Bucharest. Underlined in the original.

student fans for the football we played [...] made us forget the meager and humble meal we had had on the free coupons received from the police headquarters.”¹⁶² He goes on to tell the story of his best friend dining on such coupons at a restaurant in the city center: “When he went to the restaurant he would tell me: Puiule, they’ll again give me carrot sauté and as soon as I enter the door I hear them say: még jót az ingyenes¹⁶³ (something like that) and immediately appear with the damn carrot sauté.” In his recollections, the friend in question duly observes that he “banned the ragout from his diet for good” after having enough of it at “the boot makers restaurant”¹⁶⁴.

As it happens, the player in question – Vasile Gain – was one of the finest midfielders of his time, well known by football enthusiasts across the land. Thus, one can hardly understate the surprise of one railway agent that found him sleeping on the carriage floor when returning from a game in Bucharest: “how can the international Gain, whom kept CFR [Bucharest’s] [offensive] trio in check, be sleeping on the floor?” The situation at the other sections of the club was no better. A member of the water polo team remembers how they would place the children and some juniors in the luggage carriers above the heads and cover them with clothes and bags all the way to Bucharest¹⁶⁵. Train travel in a sleeping car was so rare that when it occurred one player recounts how himself and his teammate, the same Gain, kept inviting each other to go up first not knowing what to do¹⁶⁶. He went on to lament comparing the conditions enjoyed by football players in the 1970s that “I feel like dying of envy that I was not born forty years later.”¹⁶⁷ Back in Cluj the housing conditions do not seem to have been much better.

¹⁶² 5. Marius Ștefănescu, *idem*.

¹⁶³ “He came [to eat] for free”. Hungarian in the original.

¹⁶⁴ 31. Vasile Gain, 1932-1937, economist, 66, Timișoara.

¹⁶⁵ 24. Constantin Dumitru, 1927-1933, retired actor, 77, Cluj.

¹⁶⁶ 22. Ion M. Păunescu, *idem*.

¹⁶⁷ *Idem*.

Many of the football players at ‘Universitatea’ in the interwar shared a tiny house in the proximity of the stadium. One of them described the accommodation, the regulations and its atmosphere in the following terms:

The problem of sleeping had been solved. Some two or three slept in the city, at relatives or in a furnished room (myself), all the rest slept at the ‘U’ dormitory as we called it. This was a deserted and wretched house on the second [training] field made of two rooms and a hallway. Major Băleanu with the soldiers had made some reparations. There were ten or twelve beds, a few chairs, some wardrobes and a washing bowl. There was also a monitor, a self appointed supervisor, Silviu Bulzan. He used to keep the evidence of delays, after ten o’clock in the evening. For those used to divert from the set rest regime, he had opened a list on one of the wardrobes and noted each delay with a line. He was very serious in the mornings when making observations to the guilty ones. And how could one laugh on this matter.

The great advantage of this ‘dormitory’ was that the boys were always together. They all knew the sorrows and joys of all others and shared them brotherly and openly. Thus, from joys and sorrows a mighty force was kneaded, the will to work more to perfect ourselves, to be better, more compassionate, to defend with all our strengths the white-black colors.¹⁶⁸

Others also note the comradeship emerging in this dormitory. The already mentioned Gain, recounts “the three musketeers”: himself, the midfielder Ploșteanu and the famed goalkeeper Sepci, collecting small pieces of wood in the city park to heat their “freezing room” harassed by cold winds¹⁶⁹. In pre-season or prior to some important game the players would take it a few hundred meters away to a room located under the wooden stand of the stadium for centralized training, where they would sleep on hay covered with tarpaulin and take cover under

¹⁶⁸ 5. Marius Ștefănescu, *idem*.

¹⁶⁹ 31. Vasile Gain, *idem*.

military blankets¹⁷⁰. However, the footballers were slightly better off relative to other sportsmen at the club as “the players had the advantage – the least – to get dressed in the cabins below the stand and to take a hot shower after the games. Throughout the week they would also use cold water from the tap.”¹⁷¹ The sporting equipment was more than humble and a constant reminder of the poverty of the club. A pair of shoes, two shorts and a few shirts was all. It is on this issue that the most scathing critique of the club that I came across emerged. Teddy Țereanu, a distinguished forward at the club during the war, remembered his initial encounter with the club:

I was 14 years old, a pupil at Gh. Barițiu with only one aim: to play for ‘U’, first for the juniors and then we’ll see...

On a Tuesday, I went to the stadium, I’ve timidly entered ‘U’s dressing room and expressed my wish. I was given a pair of boots some five or six numbers bigger than my foot and an equipment that failed to be washed for quite some time. I’ve expressed my dissatisfaction with this welcome to which the team’s steward – I don’t remember his name – replied ironically: “you’re not yet into the team and you’re already acting the star”. I left very sad and the next day I was in ‘România’s wardrobe. I was given a clean equipment, boots on foot. On Sunday I was playing center forward for the junior team and scoring four times.¹⁷²

At the other end of the spectrum, another teammate was proud to take up the available equipment, humble as this was:

I’ve worn my first complete football equipment at Universitatea Cluj and there I’ve put up my first boots. The equipment, although old and displaying visible signs of being used by other generations of players, and relative when it came to cleanliness. While the boots were shabby and missing crampons they still gave me

¹⁷⁰ 10. Bulzan Silvestru, 21. Lazăr Sfera, 37. Vasile Deheleanu.

¹⁷¹ 20. Virgil Dalea, 1926-1941, publicist, 72, Bucharest.

¹⁷² 9. Teddy Țereanu.

a great satisfaction, [they were] an unexpected triumph. Even if I had worn this less than modest equipment only for that trial I was still proud to take up the shirt with the ‘U’ on its chest.¹⁷³

This was still better than the earlier period when even the quintessential object of the game, the ball, was at times missing¹⁷⁴. The financial calculations and arrangements of the club’s leaders do also present an image of a club in poverty. The club’s officials as well as many of the players were keenly aware of this fact. Already in the early 1920’s “Universitatea” found itself in considerable financial strain following its first international tour in France and Italy in 1923. The person in charge of liquidating this debt shows that it took two years to settle the accounts of the club “after knocking at the doors of all Banks in Cluj”, soliciting the support of fans and using parts of the enrollment fees of students applying at the University¹⁷⁵. The late 1920s brought little financial respite, although the club had expanded. A member of the water polo team at the time recounts waiting several times in the central square with the ready-made luggage for “the section’s delegates to return from the banks and shops with the list of donations, which hardly covered the train tickets”¹⁷⁶. The squeeze continued in the 1930s and called for extraordinary measures. One player tells the story of Major Băleanu, president of the football section, selling “the regiment’s cow” to keep his student-players in Cluj over the summer having previously arranged some international games, only to buy the cow back in the autumn¹⁷⁷. Arrangements to ease to financial burden came to put even the sporting achievement in danger. In 1933, one of the best years of the football team of the interwar in the newly inaugurated national championship, the official and players could not resist the tempting offer of disputing a crucial game away from

¹⁷³ 22. Ion M. Păunescu, *idem*.

¹⁷⁴ 33. Vasile Huza, 1922-1927, retired lawyer, 78, Cluj.

¹⁷⁵ 40. Ioan Eugen Mețianu, 1919-1940, retired military magistrate and later lawyer, 81, Bucharest.

¹⁷⁶ 36. Gavril Orosz, 1928-1940, retired professor of physical education, 73, Cluj.

¹⁷⁷ 24. Dumitru Constantinescu, 1927-1933, retired actor, 77, Cluj.

home for a hefty reward promised by a Bucharest-based club. As it happens, the team went on to win, adjudicated a place in the final of the championship and was triumphantly celebrated by its fans on its return to Cluj¹⁷⁸.

Overall, the players paint a picture of pioneering sporting amateurism where financial payments were for most of the period out of the question, although with the creation of the national championship in the 1930s some rewards were being offered after exquisite performances. The players of the 1920s and early 1930s conclude, alongside the goalkeeper Buga, that “our only pay was the satisfaction to play for ‘U’”¹⁷⁹. Things had slightly changed in the 1930s, the midfielder Gain humorously remembers that “the reward for won games was 20 lei – to be read correctly: twenty lei –, that made us happy to pay a cinema ticket for the girl we loved.”¹⁸⁰ In 1933, after a major win in Bucharest against the rivals Venus – the club controlled by the minister of internal affairs and protégé of King Carol II general Gabriel Marinescu – the president of ‘Universitatea’ gave “three thousand lei to each player out of his own pocket” for “defeating Marinescu’s mercenaries”, which produced “great satisfaction among us poor youths”¹⁸¹. The end of the period, with the relocation of the club to Sibiu alongside the University following the Second Vienna Arbitration and the start of the Second World War, further eroded the material condition of the club. One of its followers succinctly and passionately presents the overall situation at the time:

‘U’ – the emanation of studentship, living and suffering through the ardent hearts of students – could not but share into the destiny of all the other refugees: enduring lacks and sufferings, getting reorganized,

¹⁷⁸ 5. Marius Ștefănescu, *idem*, 21. Lazăr Sfera, *idem*.

¹⁷⁹ 27. Constantin C. Buga, 1919-1933.

¹⁸⁰ 31. Vasile Gain, *idem*.

¹⁸¹ 34. Ion M. Păunescu, *idem*.

making colossal efforts of rebirth out of its own ashes, taking further the fighting flag of the students with the living thought of returning to the Romanian *Ardeal*, to our beloved Cluj.¹⁸²

The situation in the “Arcadia” of the University sports club in Cluj of the interwar presented by the insiders shows a social space marred by poverty and lack, while bursting with enthusiasm and hope. On this background, the image of one lowly member of the club stands out as a symbol of uncompromising devotion and loyalty. Surprisingly many of the former student sportsmen stress the beneficial presence at the club of one ‘Sanyi Bácsi’ - the handyman (*ispravnic*). The presentations of this character are instructive for the ways in which comfort and solidarity were produced and reproduced among the players and staff and offers a glimpse into the mundane interactions that kept the club going in spite of innumerable constraints. Moreover, these memories are telling for the ways in which they expose some of the subtle facets of Romanian nationalism as it played out locally in the everyday life of Cluj. Sanyi was a Hungarian living and working among consciously nationalist Romanian students for a thoroughly Romanian club.

The organizational hierarchy of the club from the standpoint of players/students displays three clear-cut levels. On top stands an illustrious series of university professors, most of them medical doctors, known to students through their statements in classrooms and conferences. An intermediate level composed of the various presidents of the sections of the club, more closely attending to the needs of the players, functioning to bridge the distance between the grand ideals of the institution and its mundane materialization. Last, but not least, the small group of coaches, handymen, devoted fans that were in everyday contact with the team. Provided the massive social, cultural and political standing of the professors, and to some extent of the section’s

¹⁸² 19. Mircea Olteanu, Bucharest.

presidents, the depiction of one humble handyman by so many of the players is all the more remarkable. Moreover, the way of calling him – the shortened “Sanyi” (from Sándor), followed by the colloquial Hungarian code of addressing older men by younger peers “baksi” – presents a high closeness and social intimacy, doubled by the nickname “Mister Professor”, in a comic status reversal. One of the longstanding members of the club introduces him in the following words:

“Domnu’ Profesor” was probably the most Romanesque and unwonted figure of student sporting life between the two wars. At the same time, he was the utmost necessary and useful person in the organization of the football team. There is nothing pejorative, there is irony in this title. He was called “mister professor” because without him, without his contribution, without his help and participation, there was little or none that could be done for the good work of the football activity. In fact, his name was Sándor. He had lost a leg in the First World War. It was crafted for him – or rather he had crafted it himself – a sort of prosthetic to help him walk. He would still drag his leg with difficulty, but he never got too discouraged by it. I could never identify his main trade, because “mister professor” was a shoemaker, a tailor, a plumber, a masseur and I believe he knew all the trades in the world. He had his home in a tiny room right next to the teams’ cabins under the stadium’s stand. He spent most of his time in that shabby room. He would repair the boots of the team: he soled them, patched them and fixed their crampons. He would inflate the balls, sew their loose edges, and waxed them with a cream not to lose their elasticity. At that time any team had no more than two, maybe three balls and played them until they were all worn out. He would wash the shorts, the shirts and the socks. He dried them in the sun on a rope behind the stand and ironed them as if for a holiday. Out of boards, gathered from God knows where, he made a wardrobe with drawers, and wrote the name of each player so that the equipment was always available and could not get lost. The old and primitive water installations would always break down. He hammered day and night to fix them. On game days, he would make the fire in the boiler so that the boys could enjoy a hot shower after the game. He massaged them and treated their traumas, although half of the players were either doctors or students in medicine. The unsuspecting public thought him the man of the arena. But “mister professor” was solely in

the service of “Universitatea.” From the side he assisted to all training sessions, knew the form of each player and took part, knowingly and competently, in the discussions to select the best line-up. When the team played away “mister professor” would put on his black suit, would get the straw box where he had already placed the equipment and his tools in a cart and went to the railway station to reserve the compartments on behalf of the players. “Mister professor” was a man of gold, an industrious and animated worker whom cared of “his” players as if his own eyes. He was in the service of “U” for two full decades. A pillar of resistance and a blaze that burned for the glory and prestige of his club.¹⁸³

The character’s presentation shows the attributes of a professional writer, skilfully and vividly selecting and blending the traits and activities of the person in precious words. The author was himself an official at the club overseeing the labors of players and staff. Written in the late 1970s, the depiction can easily pass as a sign of the times – a politically correct socialist fiction that focuses on the everyday life of one lowly worker and downplays his ethnic affiliation, to present a space of harmony centered round labor. However, the full literary testimony of our writer as well as the recollections of the players who knew him mitigate such an easy identification. One presents “Söny bacsi” [sic!] as the “wardrobe guy, shoemaker, tailor, masseur and stoker and any other craft that “U” needed to live honorably”. Adding that “there was hardly anyone who could do that much for the team, although he often failed to receive his modest pay”. As for Sanyi bacsi’s outlook: “He loved us. Quietly, with paternal modesty and tenderness.” Defeats affected him like no other although “he would hide his tears, not to produce more bitterness”. In short, “all those living at “U” could not imagine an “U” without Söny bacsi. He was loved and respected by us all.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ 20. Virgil Dalea, *idem*.

¹⁸⁴ 5. Marius Ștefănescu, *idem*.

Still others depict him in evermore positive light as “the “nanny” of U’s generations, the warmhearted “Sanyi bacsy” – Komcsomy Sandor”¹⁸⁵, the person willing to share the little food he had with the players¹⁸⁶ or as someone ready to substitute himself for the president of the club if need be in face of unsuspecting hosts in a humorous role-reversal¹⁸⁷. However, the place of Sanyi bacsi in the panoply of the club’s interwar characters was sealed by the statements of dr. Mircea Luca, arguably the single most important figure of the football team during its “exile” to Sibiu. The doctor’s memories are compelling as they refer to the period of the return to Cluj in the aftermath of the Second World War. Here is his recollection in full:

I can hardly remember anything from the day of our return home to Cluj. Almost nothing. I only know that I was as if afraid to step on the stones, not to move anything and see it change. On the very day of the return we went to the stadium. Sanyi-bácsi (Komáromi Sándor) was there as always. When he saw us, he could not say a word. He just sat there for some there minutes. He did not even blink. Then he quietly went to a wardrobe. He opened it with a key and pulled a large drawer and with the same robot moves he took out eleven white-black shirts, carefully arranged on top of each other. Only after placing them on the table and smoothing them a few times we heard his voice: <<I’ve kept them for you for almost five years. I knew you’ll come back.>> No one said a word. I’ve goggled my eyes not to cry and I searched the number 5 shirt. It was my shirt. While I was pulling it on I’ve briefly paused to kiss its inside.

On Sanyi-bácsi’s face one could see an immense joy.¹⁸⁸

To my mind, these characterizations offer a striking sense of the sort of solidarities being forged within the club at the time. They pierce and expand the understanding of the all-encompassing Romanian national ideology that the club stood for both regionally and nationally.

¹⁸⁵ 38. V. Surlașu, 1929-1935, engineer.

¹⁸⁶ 21. Lazăr Sfera, *idem*.

¹⁸⁷ 15. Aurel Boroș, 1932-1942, engineer, 57, Timișoara.

¹⁸⁸ Dr. Mircea Luca, quoted in Bodea (2004), p. 564.

Emerging out of poverty and its corollary, privation, the description of mister professor Sanyi bacsi in the recollections of former members of “Universitatea” provides a moving picture of care and support for the efforts of the young men at the club. The story of the crippled Hungarian handyman devoting his life to sustain the first and foremost Romanian student club in Transylvania is well in accord with one banal, albeit highly consequential, aspect of Romanian nationalism and of modern nationalism in general: the praise for those transgressing their nationality in their activities and the point of pride that doings so affords to the observers. Sports, and team-sports in particular, have been a fertile ground for the transgression of national boundaries, all the more so in their formative years, when their dissemination and grounding much depended on the work of outsiders. To take the first example at hand, Universitatea’s football team of the interwar has been coached for most of the period by either Hungarian or Austrian trainers due to their perceived experience and superiority.

Overall, the recollections of Universitatea’s players and officials present a picture of acute poverty marring the club throughout the interwar. It is hardly surprising that major sporting achievements in football did not come its way, pace disparate successes in some games and the high point of making it to the final of the national championship in 1933. Other sections of the club, most notably water polo and athletics, produced more resounding results. To be sure, the Universitatea football club was a major regional contender throughout the 1920s and was regularly in the top half on the standings with the introduction of the national championship in the 1930s. However, the members of the club make it clear that the historical endurance and pervasiveness of the club was rather inversely proportional to its sporting achievements. As such, the narratives and meanings associated to the club fully accord the stories of modern Romanian

national development, where the failure to improve material conditions augments and hardens the ideal of achieving it.

Conclusion

In the late 1970s the medical doctor Mihai Iubu introduced his history of the Universitatea Cluj sports club under the title “How ‘U’ Cluj Napoca was born?” with the following narrative of constitution:

Many young Romanian students have completed their university studies in the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In Prague, Budapest and especially in Vienna, renowned university centers, they founded student societies fighting and manifesting for the idea of freedom and the union of all Romanians.

The greatest scholars of our nation led by Eminescu, Blaga, Slavici have passed through these universities and it was here that the students founded a Romanian student sporting society, bearing the name ‘Petru Maior’.

When in the year 1919, the centenarian dream was realized in a great and whole Romania, they came to continue their studies in the country, founding in Cluj the ‘Universitatea’ Student Sporting Society with the white-black colors, after spirited meetings at the Prefecture, at the Arena and the ‘Avram Iancu’ student dormitory.¹⁸⁹

Unfortunately, the doctor and president of the football section of the club during the Second World War, did not live long enough to complete his work. In fact, I only came across two short versions of this introduction, of four and five typed pages respectively. His endeavor was took up by the historian Gheorghe I. Bodea, whom mobilized Iubu’s materials in a two volume history of “Universitatea” that sought to show the club’s unabated service to the

¹⁸⁹ Iubu, Mihai. *Cum a luat ființă “U” Cluj-Napoca*. Typed manuscripts.

Romanian nation in Transylvania. The title of his history of the club “Agora “U” immediately denotes two of the constitutive dimensions of modern Romanian nationalism that the club always stood for. The term ‘agora’ resonates of Greek antiquity, the supposed cradle of Western European civilization, hinting at the Romanians inclusion into the most distinguished line of descent of European nations. Relatedly, the term suggests the existence of a Romanian public space of shared understandings and aspirations fused under the letter ‘U’ – the all-time nickname of ‘Universitatea’. Universitatea’s agora connects the social and moral space created by generations of club members since 1919 to an illustrious narrative of civilization that modern Romanian nationalism sought to uphold. The histories and memories of the club’s creation and development, that for his part Bodea eulogizes, are exceptional for the ways in which they engage the story of the Romanian nation in Transylvania from the vantage point of footballer-students and football officials-educators.

The same notions were already at play in Dr. Iubu’s already mentioned introduction. By underlining the continuity between the sporting activities of Romanian students of the pre- and post-unification he had carefully embedded the history of the students sport club in Cluj into the master narrative of Central European enlightenment. The places as well as the personalities referred to operate as symbols of a modern Romanian nationalism emerging in post-imperial Transylvania. These soon became the cultural and political icons governing the past and present of the university. Vienna, Prague and Budapest, are suggestively ordered to downplay the position of the Hungarian capital, while seeking to uphold the positive connotations of the Viennese connection and the democratic credentials of Czechoslovak nationalism. Coupled with the conspicuous absence of Bucharest, the enumeration presents a shared space of high culture, major politics and thriving sport institutions that in their conjunction make Cluj – Transylvania’s

historical ‘capital’ - into the foremost place of Romanian enlightened modernity. The other triad made of Eminescu, Blaga and Slavici works to mediate the splinter in the post-unification national and regional Romanian nationalism. Two distinguished Transylvanians, the twentieth century philosopher/poet Blaga and the nineteenth century novelist Slavici are backed by the nineteenth century poet Eminescu, the leading icon of cultural Romanianness, in a fusion of temporary horizons and national/regional loyalties mobilized to underline and consecrate the unique positionality of the University in Cluj as an autonomous regional center of the nation.

The available historiography has thus set the leading tropes allowing for a narrative of exceptionality of the University in Cluj and of its sports club to emerge. These relational understandings of urban and cultural space configured the place of the university and of the city of Cluj throughout the interwar as a hotbed of Romanianness. Modern sports’ propensity to take up, remold and reproduce social and cultural meanings (Giulianotti 2007) made the Students’ Sporting Society into a major bearer and displayer of these notions. Nonetheless, my aim was so much not to deconstruct these historical narratives, but to analyze the memories that have made such historical claims possible in the first place. If some exceptionality can be granted to the whole enterprise, it is that of having sportsmen extensively recollect the trajectories of their sporting lives and unanimously doing so from the standpoint of intellectuals and elite professionals. All these sportsmen, mostly footballers, are part of the select group of men to pursue Romanian higher education in Transylvania during the interwar, a time when this was the preserve of select few. As such, they were at ease to produce coherent narratives, having the necessary abilities to reveal, to silence and to represent their time at ‘Universitatea’. In this respect, the recollections that I alluded to were as much works of history as works of memory, most of the time using personal remembrance to advance the “illustrious” history of their club.

Consequently, my strategy has been to extensively translate and quote their narratives, allowing the reader to grasp the blurring of lines between memory and history produced in these narratives.

Indeed, in their testimonies, most of the interwar members of the club stress the distinguished character of the institution emerging out of a unique fusion of youthful *élan* and the duty to lead the nation. The university mediated the transformation of the *élan* into national leadership by forging the souls and the bodies of its students, on its training fields as much as in its lecture halls. The image that best bridged the need to affirm one's participation and the exceptionality of the enterprise was that of the antique/mythical space of 'Arcadia', usually introduced through the famed expression 'et in Arcadia ego'. The use of the expression neatly parallels the notion of 'agora', with the major caveat that 'Arcadia' denotes one's active presence in the chain of narrated events, while 'agora' works to construe the birds' eye perspective of the historian. The idiom parsimoniously mingles the values that "Universitatea" Cluj stood for, that is the values of Romanian elite nationalism of the interwar: the sense of descent from times immemorial coupled with an idyllic depiction of geographical and cultural space. To be sure, having been in Arcadia meant the full membership into the most reputed European genealogical line – Greek, Roman, Christian and ultimately modern – as well as, the ascendance of traditional – rural, pastoral – ways of life over their contemporary perversions. References to the utopian Arcadia well capture the retrospective reconciliation of individual biographies with socio-historical forces and the longing for life periods – adolescence and youth – that are necessarily brief and in the trajectory of these generations coincided with the short-lived and tumultuous socio-political arrangement that was Greater Romania. That is, a double sense of loss, at once individual and social, that partly accounts for the evocative power of these testimonies.

Hence, what went on in the Arcadia of the University's sports club in Cluj? The testimonies of the players and officials are striking for their insistence on two features: the enduring material poverty of the club and the grandeur of its pedagogical mission. On the one hand, an emphasis on the lack of funds and means, on the hardships of daily life and on the other, a no less continuous presentation of the high ideals of the club. Sports and the football team in particular, appear to mediate this rift as a form of sociability and solidarity transgressing the individual for the benefit of the university, the city, the region and the nation. As such, the sporting activities at the university provide an instance of modern nationalism's development on the backdrop of relative backwardness with its positive as well as negative facets (Nairn 1997). Moreover, the memories and histories at hand add substance to the noted alliance between modern sport and nation-state formation, particularly strong in the formative years of most national sporting movements (Armstrong 2008; Giulianotti 2007; Hargreaves 1986, 2000; Walker 2013; Walton 2011). This chapter mobilized these testimonies to explore the ways in which the material and the ideal facets of Transylvanian Romanian nationalism of the interwar have reinforced each other to produce an enduring narrative of heroic national development that informed and re-presented the functioning of the "Universitatea" sports club. Mundane practices concerning food, housing, training conditions and sports equipment, their interpretation as sacrifice, duty and devotion, made possible enduring narratives of *élan*, of the transformations of souls and bodies presumably achieved at the club. This amounts to a reconstitution of the ways in which Romanian nationalism in Transylvania developed and hardened in the historical trajectory of one of its most visible and reputed sporting institutions.

Chapter 5 – Universitatea Cluj: “The Champion of Unbridled Élans”

The histories and memories of football would hardly enjoy such an immense popular appeal were it not for the stories depicting the tribulations of each and every club. Mundane or heroic, celebrating victory or explaining defeat, describing the character and skills of players, portraying the attitude of fans, picturing exceptional sequences of play, stressing the distinctiveness of styles of play, these stories constitute the legends or myths that the clubs live by. They suggest periodizations, of the good times and the bad, of golden generations and less shiny ones; they foreground and build the images of quintessential players, coaches or fans, the embodiments of the clubs’ values and ethos; they invest, fix and project these values into eternity making the history of any one club into a narrative of their manifestation and unfolding. Such stories emerge out of a blending of lived experience and expert gazing and reporting. With the establishment of the popular sports press, players and officials were regularly summoned to voice their experience of the game, throughout their careers and very often well beyond its end. On their part, journalists keenly passed their weekly and later daily observations and judgments regarding the events on the pitch. In doing so they have crystallized the web of similarities and differences that gave each club its identity, its aura. Historians, amateur or professional, took this work further neatly organizing such “materials” into the master narrative of what is usually “their” club.

In one way or another, the historical narratives of clubs strive to express its exceptional character. In the world of modern sport this is not a straightforward enterprise. Teams are universally bound to abide the same set of rules and to share into a highly similar form of sporting practice. Hence, the differences and distinctions conjuring specificity and exceptionality are likely to be found at the margins. The finest narratives of sports clubs are thus likely to

emerge whenever rules, tactics or strategies were bent, or at least when some actors came close to transgressing them. That is why popular histories of club football are often made and praise the gravity-defying pass, the formidable shot, the feats of passing and individual technique, the unmatched chorus of the crowd, the tactical brilliance of a substitution or the managerial genius behind a transfer or promotion.

The legend of “Universitatea Cluj” makes no exception. However, Universitatea’s story is made special by the political, sociological and individual encounters that went in its making and conditioned its articulation. The University of Cluj was one of the pillars of Romanianness in Transylvania ever since 1918, a position enforced and popularized by the addition of the sports club. Significantly, for seven decades (1919-1989) the vast majority of its members were students or graduates of the university. Few clubs, in Romania and beyond, could boast to field a team made of future “doctors” or “lawyers” – a feature often heralded as the defining feature of the club in comparison to others. One consequence of this is that players and officials were uniquely qualified to describe, analyze and synthesize their views, opinions and ideals, and fix them into texts. The educational background of its members goes a long way to explain why Universitatea, a club whose past and present teams have had a mediocre record of sporting performance (the Romanian Cup of 1965 is the only piece of silverware the football club secured in almost a century of existence), ended up with one of the most elaborate and cogent stories in Romanian club football. In fact, Universitatea’s story is to a large extent the creation of footballers-intellectuals - a phenomenon at odds with much of what we know about contemporary football.

In 1969, a booklet depicting the first 60 years of Universitatea's history was published, under the title "*Șepcile roșii*"¹⁹⁰ – "the Red Caps". The time of its publication, the authors, the form and content of the text and other features associated with it make "Șepcile roșii" an emblematic expression of what the club, and Transylvanian football generally, represented for so many over a considerably extended period. This chapter offers an analysis of "Șepcile roșii" as a historical narrative that came to pass as the "truth" of Universitatea's trajectory and as the written symbol of the truth is sought to consecrate. Its function as a repository of historical truth was recently enhanced with its republication in 2012, at the initiative and expense of Universitatea's fans. The republication, at a time when their beloved club was insolvent and its very survival was under threat, was meant to restate the sacrifices and the values that went into the club's making and which the club presumably safeguarded and defended.

The title puts center stage the community of Universitatea's fans identified by their most distinctive symbol - the red cap. The red caps used to be part of the code of dress of students in medicine at the University of Cluj in the interwar, soon adopted as a distinctive sign by the club's enthusiasts. Signed by Ioan Chirilă, undoubtedly the most revered figure of sports journalism in Romania, the booklet is the result of the encounter between the journalist and Mircea Luca, "the Captain" of the football team since the time of its "exile" to Sibiu during the Second World War to the 1960s. Referred to by everyone as Doctor Mircea Luca, due to his training and practice as an ENT medical doctor in Cluj, his career as a footballer and official confounded with the postwar history of the club.

As it happens, the quintessential journalist and the quintessential captain have joined forces to tell the story of Universitatea. Throughout their book, it is the voice of the

¹⁹⁰ Chirilă, Ioan. 1969. *Șepcile roșii (1919-1969)*. București: Editura Consiliului Național pentru Educație Fizică și Sport.

footballer/doctor that introduces the reader into the life of the club. However, it is the voice of the journalist that poignantly opens and closes it, rounding it off with all his authority and writing skill. Chirilă coined the memorable phrase “Universitatea is the champion of unbridled élans”. This emblematic line was to make a career in capturing the minds and imaginations of all those coming close to the club ever after. Moreover, although made out of Luca’s notes and interviews the overall organization of the book was also defined by the journalist. As such, in its form “Șepcile roșii” threads a fine line between a work of memory and one of history. Doctor Luca’s recollections of his time at the club and of his discussions with others are subtly interspersed with depictions of games, presentations of results and standings. As an intimate journal/sports history this presentational forms did much to make Luca the symbolic agent of Universitatea’s history and vividly dramatized the history of football that it intended. Having read it, discussed it and republished it, it is not surprising to learn that contemporary followers of Universitatea have mobilized to pressure the local authorities to name the newly built stadium in Cluj “Dr. Mircea Luca” and are collecting funds to see a statue of him erected in front of its main entrance.

Published in the late 1960s, Universitatea’s story was also part of the broader drive to recapture and animate a form of Romanian nationalism that could strengthen the external as well as internal legitimacy of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s socialist regime. We have seen how works of the interwar addressing the history of physical education or the making of Romanian football were altered and reissued around this time. “The Red Caps” stands out among such titles in that it strives to recapture and publicize memories of Romanian sporting effort, rather than scholarly arguments set in a nationalist key. However, in the attempt to recover and revamp Romanian nationalism these works fed into and complemented each other by pointing to the existence of a

Romanian sporting tradition while implicitly and explicitly stressing the relevance of socialism for its future development. Moreover, the so-called “nationalist turn” of the 1960s gave a renewed lease of life for experiences and memories of national sporting activity that were hidden and repressed in the previous decades. All such works attest that from the 1960s onwards a discursive space emerged in which recollections of Romanian sporting activity could again be valorized, cherished and praised. Universitatea’s brief history thus offered and publicly consecrated resources for identity formation and belonging that were denied in the preceding postwar decades. The historical trajectory and reformulation of national and ethnic categories, their contemporary interpretations and their symbolic relevance in the lives of football fans in Cluj in post-socialist times shows that the nationalizing drive of the 1960s and after had a deep impact in the world of football (see Faje 2011).

Stories of club football, very much indifferent to the time and space of their provenance, often blend the same set of themes. Universitatea’s makes no exception. First, the historical emergence of the club, often elevated to a mythical status. Second, the question of periodization, usually taking sporting performance as a leading criteria. Third and immediately related, the depiction of the heroic figures that have made sporting performance possible. Fourth, the felt need to explain away less successful periods and unfortunate events. Last, but certainly not least, the inevitable discussion of adversaries and rivalries that polishes the distinctiveness of one’s club. Anyone remotely familiar with such stories knows that each theme is further subdivided to the point that minute details like fleeting gestures, tiny details of equipment, or a single touch of the ball make their way into the master narrative. At once full of fervor for the nation, the region or the town and so finely grained that nothing appears to escape them, such narratives entice the football devotees and reassure the converts.

Nonetheless, the narrative that we are about to turn to is shot through by several conspicuous absences. These make Universitatea's story to bear the realities of the times in which it was written. Many such gaps were noted soon after its publication, by players and officials seeking to reconstitute a more comprehensive picture of the club, as seen in the previous chapter. It was only in the 1990s that these interventions were made publicly available in the work of the historian Gheorghe I. Bodea. If anything, the latter's mission in early post-socialism was patently not to counter the nationalizing intentions of the initial work, but to push them forward. As such, "the Red Caps" has remained the leading source and repository of identification for the great majority of those coming close to Universitatea football club.

The Birth

The historical emergence of football clubs is almost always wrapped into romantic stories that emphasize at least one of several key features. The notable figures and deeds of individuals or groups, securing the necessary pitch, equipment and ball, learning and applying the rules of the game, or overcoming a host of other social, economic or political problems find their ways into such tales. This is hardly surprising given that the "take-off phase" of football followed the ascendance of urbanism and nationalist movements in Europe and the triumph of the Wilsonian notion of "national self-determination" (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009). Thus, football club's have come to associate their founding with a particular urban space, usually inhabited by people of a certain nationality, class position, religion, ethnicity or race. The story of "Universitatea" Cluj is hardly any different. Its authors strive to portray its emergence in highly turbulent times, marked by the closing of the Great War and its immediate aftermath. Legend and historical fact blend in a story of authenticity and Romanian initiative in one of Transylvania's central urban arenas.

Provided that the game of football was a chiefly English modern creation, the claim to any direct contact with its representatives well worked to heighten the prestige of those involved. As such, the book that I allude to opens with a proverbial story of the game's discovery taking place on the Italian front during the First World War. In its organizational structure, "*Șepcile roșii*" is divided into two parts: "Their Memories" and "My Memories", the former collecting the remembrances of past players passed on to Doctor Mircea Luca and the latter made of those of the author himself. Among "their memories", the one of Brutus Rațiu, a founding member of the club, clearly stands out. His is a tale of wartime. It tells of the situation inaugurated by the upcoming visit to the Italian front of a Viennese prince. To honor his presence among the troops an incursion on an island held by Italian soldiers was planned to get hold of a few prisoners. As it happens, the daring enterprise was rewarded with the capturing of several Italians and of two English soldiers. In a tale of the humanity afforded by football, the Englishmen were temporarily spared of detention after a ball was found in one of their rucksacks when looking for grenades. The Romanian soldiers supposedly hid them and when luckily removed from the front line the day after, enjoyed the chance of learning the game of football from Bill and Eddy for a whole month¹⁹¹.

The learning process is suggestively marked in the original Romanian language by the terms used to depict the ball. The narrator explicitly states that "Bill and Eddy have taught us the way from *cotcă* to the ball of *foot-ball*". The round object discovered in the rucksack was initially named a "*cotcă*", a regionally used term of Hungarian provenance, only to be later recognized as a *foot-ball*, the quintessential object of the game that bears its name. This highly likely heavily fictionalized narrative is nonetheless instructive in its message. It places, in a nutshell, the game's much emphasized values and does so by reversing the power differential

¹⁹¹ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 12.

between the English – largely perceived in Central and Eastern Europe as the *par excellence* colonizers and imperialists – and their Romanian counterparts. However, the Englishmen’s mastery of the game of football and the Romanians’ eagerness to learn it partly restored the ascendancy of the former, but in a way that greatly satisfied the latter. The game’s ability to transcend wartime animosities, cultural boundaries and ultimately to save lives are all emphasized. These notions get reinforced in the depiction of Bill and Eddy’s departure. When time came to pass the prisoners to their superiors, having risked the “court martial” to learn football, the story goes that both parties could hardly hide their deep emotions and barely stopped short of crying.

Hence, through the mediation of this story Universitatea football club could claim a tiny bit of contact with the authentic agents of football, adding to its prestige an aura derived from direct learning and interaction. The genealogy of football practice thus secured, the story moves to present the official constitution of the club, complete with the effervescence usually surrounding such endeavors. One learns that more than one hundred enthusiasts took to the festive hall of the Cluj Prefecture one day in September 1919, during the same month that the University reopened as a Romanian institution. The next week, an unexpectedly high number of students took to the pitch for their first training. The fear regarding the precariousness and fraught legitimacy of the University as a Romanian institution extended over the sports club and endured for the half century separating its establishment and the formulation of its history. This is immediately obvious from Dr. Luca’s felt need to add a Romanian institutional genealogy to the one of football practice.

We should remember that the University of Cluj of the interwar claimed continuity with the former Franz Joseph University, a strategy that assured a slightly less fractious dispossession

and repossession of the former imperial establishment of higher education. However, this strategy could not entirely counter the Hungarians' claims about their right to the University, an issue that has remained controversial and much debated to this day. The nationalizing tide of the late 1960s only helped fuel the existing tensions. Dr. Luca attenuates these tensions by presenting Universitatea as the descendent of the "Petru Maior" association of Romanian students studying in various centers across the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The possibility of claiming such continuity is telling for the nationalizing direction of the Romanian regime. While it well serves the purpose of forging (an otherwise shallow) connection with prewar Romanian sporting activities, it greatly adds to the national and nationalist myth surrounding the University's sports club. The "Petru Maior" association had been a focal rallying point of Romanian nationalism before the war and became a hotbed of extreme right politics in Cluj during the interwar.

The entanglement of "Universitatea" and the "Petru Maior" association receives both concreteness and major symbolic value in that the first ever football kit shows up in this story. The locally famous "white and black" shirts of "Universitatea" were supposedly brought from Prague by one Andrei Suciu, an engineer, and handed over to the locally famous pitch administrator Szöny-baci. We do not learn whether the engineer had any connection with the "Petru Maior" student society, but the text implies that much. Fully equipped, with a distinctive dress and a distinctive narrative, the club was set on track to make a name for itself, for the University, the town, the region and the nation. Given the twists and turns of football, periods of decent performance alternated with mediocre ones, so the narrative quest was on to trace the legacy of the finest generations that have served the club.

The Golden Ages

A students' club, Universitatea was for most of its history constrained in its sporting efforts by the limits posed to its development by the limited area of recruitment (the body of its students) and the relatively short time span of the course of studies, that fell far short from a full playing career. Moreover, the balance between intellectual study and physical development for competitive sport, discussed by Hațieganu, appears to have been difficult to achieve in the life of students-players. Conjointly developing intellectual and physical capabilities and excelling in both realms was at once a source of stressing the outstanding character of the club and could also be used to justify mediocre levels of sporting performance. In line with the overarching ideology of the club, the periodization favored by Dr. Luca and Chirilă suggests that the finest levels reached by the football team were underwritten by the moments when this equilibrium was best achieved. That is, whenever the “youthful élan” of the students was moulded and directed in such a way as to create a homogeneous and harmonious approach to the game results supposedly followed. For Dr. Luca, it was schooling and education that allowed this achievement: “At U[niversitatea], if you don't connect beyond triangles and passes you won't achieve much. [...] I've seen them all and I've realized that “U” was a good or very good team only when it tied (*s-a legat*). School tied it best.”¹⁹²

Homogeneity appears to have been best served when a majority of players were, fortuitously or not, drawn from the same faculty. Dr. Luca stresses that the three great teams of “Universitatea” that he identifies can be described by looking at the scholarly background of its players. Thus, most of the players of the great “Universitatea” of the early 1930s were drawn

¹⁹² Chirilă, Ioan. p. 116-117.

from the “Commercial Academy”¹⁹³. In the first major “Universitatea” side of the postwar future medical doctors were in charge in the late 1940s and early 1950s, while the early 1960s witnessed the rise of a team where students in law made the high numbers. In itself, this is an audacious observation that well supports Luca’s claims that affinities and comradeship on and off the pitch, backed by attention to study, might have worked to secure some glory for “Universitatea”. Beyond that, the team of the “Commercial Academy” invites speculation regarding the class background and class trajectory of at least some of the interwar players at “Universitatea” and their propensity to practice a competitive sport like football. Commercial academies, with their slightly more modest and shorter programs of training relative to universities, were an attractive formative option for sons of peasants, workers, or the lower middle classes in that they could secure a quicker route of upward social mobility and one that required comparatively less financial investment. As such, it might be the case that the first major “Universitatea” football team was less the creation of a few gifted sons of the nation, embarking on their way to lead and uplift Romanian society. It might have been the product of hopes for upward mobility through a career in the market, entertained among the emerging Romanian lower middle class in Transylvania of the early interwar.

For the history of “Universitatea” the identification of these three periods of success works to emphasize that its program of reconciling mind and body was feasible and effective. Yet another way of demarcating the key moments of the club’s trajectory is based on the geographical provenance of its players. A pillar of Romanianness in Transylvania, the University of Cluj recruited students from across the country and strived to inculcate national identifications, thus undermining the local and regional identities of its students. The story of the football team suggests that this was not a straightforward process, one where the Romanian

¹⁹³ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 39.

national identity simply displaced regional affiliations. Rather, the specificity of the University and its sports club rested on the tripartite belonging to the town of Cluj, to the region of Transylvania and the Romanian nation.

Throughout the interwar, the towns of Western Transylvania and the Banat region led the way of players and club development. As we have seen, this regional ascendance dates back to imperial times and clubs elsewhere in Greater Romania sought to emulate and play catch up to defeat the teams in Timișoara, Oradea or Arad. Hence, it is not surprising to learn that the first successful generation of players at “Universitatea” was mostly made of “*bănățeni*” – young men from the Western region of Banat that came to study in Cluj. The story goes that “U” was “not only a lucky horseshoe, but a true magnet”, “that charmed all those wearing its colors” by turning them into devoted *clujeni*¹⁹⁴. The regional identification of these “charmed” students made *clujeni* will readily emerge out of their sporting deeds in the field, notably against teams from Bucharest. However, their national affiliation and affection was more troublesome. Having locally defended the honor of Romanianness against Hungarian and Jewish clubs in Cluj, and eagerly fought to defeat Bucharest-based opposition, the narrative suggests that this struggle might have undermined their recruitment chances for the national team.

The Rivals

There would hardly be much interest in football were it not for the rivalries that it brings about, sustains and refashions. An epitome of raw competition, football was prone to ignite and fuel the passions of its practitioners and followers (see Archetti 1999; Elias 1986; Giulianotti 2007). Its contribution to modern identity-making, to demarcating and reinforcing the boundaries between “our”-selves and others has long been noted (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999, 2001;

¹⁹⁴ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 34-35.

Armstrong and Testa 2010; Armstrong 1998). Depending on the circumstances of place and time, questions of class, ethnicity, race, nation, regionalism, localism, generation, politics and others have combined in myriad ways in the lives and stories of football clubs. These, at once quasi-universal and minutely particular combinations have worked to define and redefine friends and foes, notions of worth and praise as well as of aversion and disdain. Across a century of change and contradictions, its allies and enemies came into many guises in line with the club's shifting self-presentation. However, as an offspring of the university, the club always sought to locate itself above its rivals. It claimed for itself a set of virtues and a moral high-ground that other clubs could not claim to match. Nonetheless, the presumably eternal "youthful élan" animating "Universitatea" shows to have taken quite varied forms in its terrestrial manifestation. Class and nation have always been central to the club's identification, often backed by ethnicity and politics, but their specific arrangements and orientations appear to have varied quite much. The presentation of its chief rivals in different periods elucidates this point.

Consonant with the trajectory of twentieth century Romanian nation-building, "Universitatea" had first to transform itself from a local to a national contender. Any lucid assessment of interwar Greater Romania shows that this was a conundrum of localities and regions, rather than the unified nation boasted by nationalists. Indeed, union did happen in 1918, but economic, political and cultural unevenness across regions was the order of the day. The post-1918 Romanian state could hardly successfully pursue all the daunting tasks of national integration and homogenization (Case 2009; Livezeanu 1990, 1995). Consequently, the everyday realities of the interwar were often a blend of local disjunctions and a strong Romanian nationalist rhetorics and politics. The University of Cluj and its sports club were meant to fix and stabilize this blend. As such, it was bound to make enemies. During the 1920s, in the absence of

a national league, the rivals were mainly local. The upscaling of Romanian club football with the inauguration of the national championship in the early 1930s, increased Universitatea's territorial and affective reach, but that was only possible at the expense of other clubs. Its sentimental history retains that the club largely fulfilled its Romanianizing mission during the interwar, both locally and beyond. Nation is the central notion that this part of history affirms, but class and ethnicity pierce it through and through.

The postwar inaugurated a wholly new situation and set of arrangements, where Universitatea's "natural" detachment from the dictating proletariat did not work in its favor. A rhetoric of class was the order of the day, but echoes of the nation were never far away, and were to make a powerful comeback from the late 1960s onwards. In a sense, it is that very return of the nation that makes my current musings possible. This turn, associated with Ceaușescu's figure and cult, allowed and made desirable a reappraisal of Universitatea's values and history. In this context, memories and stories of the club were positively revalued; they were fixed in writing and enjoyed a nationwide circulation. This situation could not but intensify the rivalries with some old working-class rivals and restore legitimacy to perceiving others in ethnic terms.

However, from an institutional standpoint the rigidities of Romanian club football under socialism, ultimately developing into a strict hierarchy towards the regime's end, fixed Universitatea into a mid-table place. From there it was hardly possible to move upwards. Nonetheless, it was still possible to regress. Universitatea's several relegations to the second echelon stand witness to that. The midway position meant that the club developed and maintained rivalries both at the top, most notably with Steaua Bucharest, as well as local and regional ones with lowlier foes (Jiul Petroșani, Metalul Reșița, Minerul Baia Mare, CFR Cluj, or Industria Sârmei Câmpia Turzii).

Transylvanian towns of the 1920s were homes to legions of football clubs, identifying themselves across ethnic and professional lines. I have shown and discussed (in Chapter 1) the pressures and limits that the existence of “minority” clubs, locally making large majorities, posed to the establishment and affirmation of Romanian ones. In Cluj “Universitatea” was competing for local glory against clubs organized in the words of one contemporary, with the sense of irony and depreciation directed against ethnic rivals, by “medieval guilds”: the butchers’ team (Husos), the railroad workers’ (K.T.C.), the traders’ (K.K.S.), the workers (K.M.T.E.), the athletes (K.A.C.)¹⁹⁵. The abbreviated form of these clubs’ names bespeaks their Hungarian origin and background, where the letter “K” stands for Kolozsvár, the Hungarian denomination of Cluj. Rivalry there certainly was, but the rapid downfall of almost all these clubs under the increasing pressure of the Romanian state did not allow for their development. However, Universitatea’s triumphs against them were noted, taken as a point of pride, and helped give the impression that the club aided in the Romanianization of the town. The “historical” rivalry with CFR was revived in the context of the contemporary rivalry, but the records show that most of the interwar encounters took place in a tense atmosphere in front of large and enthusiastic publics¹⁹⁶. Beyond the immediately obvious, that ethnicity did matter in the ways in which these games were consummated and perceived, it is difficult to discern accurately whatever else was at play.

As it often happens, the history of “Universitatea” in the 1920s presents the other Romanian club in town as its chief rival. “Victoria” and later “România” Cluj, founded in 1920, was based in the historically Romanian neighborhood of the town and arguably enjoyed levels of performance that often matched and at times surpassed those of “Universitatea”. The rivalry

¹⁹⁵ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 17.

¹⁹⁶ See Fărcaș, Tiberiu, Stanciu, Bogdan. 2012. *Cluj contra Cluj: Istoria celui mai vechi derbi local din România – Universitatea – CFR 1907*. Cluj Napoca: Eikon. The book provides a summary of the 63 encounters between the two rivals up to that date and is co-authored by two journalists separated, but also brought together in this project by their opposing football allegiances.

appears to have been sparked by a 1926 decision of the local authorities calling for the fusion of the two Romanian clubs under the name “România”, which effectively took place for a few weeks¹⁹⁷. A more efficient polling of resources and talents might well have been at work. However, students vigorously protested against losing their “Universitatea” and were able to outturn the decision. Nonetheless, the previous “Victoria” continued to function as “România”, switched back to “Victoria” in the late 1930s and was disbanded in the late 1940s. For “Universitatea” the rivalry that ensued was a sign and warning that its version of Romanianess, based on the youth of its students and educational mobility, was not the only one available in town, nor was it exclusive. At the other hand, it is equally true that “Victoria”/“România”, defining itself as a neighborhood club, although vociferously Romanian, had much greater difficulties in transcending its local predicament.

The 1930s were a major turning point in Romanian club football. The inauguration of the national league in 1932 institutionally consecrated the national scale as the central arena of football glory. I have shown that the drive towards Romanianization was one of the decisive factors in setting up the national framework of competition. This strategy largely achieved its aim of reducing the numbers and severely compromising the opportunities of minority and lowlier clubs. Given the new structure of competition, “Universitatea” soon found itself at odds with clubs in Bucharest, Timișoara, Oradea or Reșița. “Venus” Bucharest, greatly supported by the high standing of its patron the general Gabriel Marinescu, in charge for most of the 1930s of the police force in the capital city, later minister of interior and close associate of King Carol II, emerged as a “natural” rival. Students were no fans of the police and Marinescu’s involvement in the shadowy circles surrounding the King did not help things much. One president of

¹⁹⁷ In this paragraph I rely on Gheorghe I. Bodea’s presentation (2004:149–150).

“Universitatea” was talking for many when he urged his players “to beat Gavrilă Marinescu’s mercenaries” before a game against “Venus”¹⁹⁸.

“Ripensia” Timișoara emerged as a rival mostly for sporting reasons. “Ripensia” was the team to defeat throughout the 1930s. The exponent of professionalism in Romanian club football, the Western-based club, was both despised and hailed as a model of sporting performance. The vagaries of history made it such that “Universitatea” and “Ripensia” went on to play the final of the very first properly national championship of the 1932/33 edition. “Ripensia” secured the title, but Dr. Luca could still take pride across the years in the fact that a student, that is “truly” amateur, club was able to raise to the level of the outstanding club in the country¹⁹⁹. West of Cluj, yet another club gave Universitatea’s players and followers some of their worst head-aches. C.A.O., the Athletic Club in Oradea, made it into Universitatea’s story as the punisher in chief. So much so, that a “complex” was much talked about²⁰⁰.

The rivalry that affords most of the insights regarding Universitatea’s self-image and its reflection in the eyes of others is the one with the working-class club in Reșița. Reșița was the first and the most important center of steelmaking in interwar Romania. Its football club “U.D.R.” was supposedly tough and well supported. One could hardly fail to note the underlying class tensions inscribed in the descriptions of their encounters. Dr. Luca notes their “rough play” during a particularly vicious encounter in 1934²⁰¹ and their “sturdiness” in later meetings. The clubs of miners in Petroșani and Baia Mare appear to have displayed the same determination when taking on “Universitatea” throughout the years. An away game in the mining town of Lupeni during the 1949/1950 season saw Universitatea’s players escorted to the dressing rooms

¹⁹⁸ 34. Păunescu, Ion M., Dr. Iubu Collection.

¹⁹⁹ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 47.

²⁰⁰ *Idem.*

²⁰¹ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 46.

by a bus straight from the center of the pitch, “as far away as possible from owners of bottles, with or without beer”²⁰². It appears that the elite and elitist pretensions at play at Universitatea did not enjoy great currency wherever working men made large numbers. In their turn, Universitatea’s storytellers did the best they could to distance themselves from the workers and their clubs.

Telling in relation to national aspirations is the fact that with the upscaling of the early 1930s, “Universitatea” became a rightful national representative in international encounters. In fact, the visits to Cluj of leading Hungarian clubs at the time get extensive treatment in “*Șepcile roșii*”. These were more popular than domestic fixtures and much more prone to nationalist interpretations and understandings. Dr. Luca introduces himself to the story on the backdrop of an encounter with “Hungaria” Budapest that took place in 1931. He took to the pitch as a ten-year-old junior in the opening game that preceded the great encounter. The élan of Universitatea’s student-players appears to have been at its maximum in these games. The resulting draw was celebrated at the locally famous, traditional meeting place of footballers during the interwar, the beerhouse “Ursus”. A chance for Dr. Luca to stress the solidarity of the clubs players, “all celebrating around the same table”, unlike the one’s “split into groups” of the 1960s²⁰³. “Hungaria” was followed by the likes of “Ujpest” Budapest in 1935, for yet another 1-1 draw in front of a packed stadium, attended by people travelling from other towns for the event²⁰⁴, preceded and followed by several others. Emphasizing the outstanding quality of these Hungarian teams and noting some of the highlights among Universitatea’s results, the story does a good job in constructing and accentuating its international standing.

²⁰² Chirilă, Ioan. p. 84.

²⁰³ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 31.

²⁰⁴ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 36.

Questions of national representation and right to the city were probably never as close to the skin of Universitatea players, as in June 1945, upon their return from “exile” in Sibiu. The thorny and sensitive issue of Universitatea’s move to Sibiu during the war and northern Transylvania’s reincorporating by Hungary is rapidly glossed over. Dr. Luca refers to some of the hardships and adds nothing more, a clear indication of a still untouchable subject in the late 1960s²⁰⁵. Nonetheless, he does paint a vivid picture of the encounter with the major contender that emerged to dominate the town during the war “Ferar” (Vasas). The game is depicted as a make or break one, “Universitatea” or “Ferar”, in the subtext Romanians or Hungarians will come to dominate Cluj’s football arena.

People in the stands appear to have been equally divided. That is highly likely given Cluj’s the ethnic composition at the time. Ferar’s support “noisy, rough and disconnected (*sacadat*)”, Universitatea’s dominated by the march born in Sibiu: “*Come on U! Come on U!/You’re the symbol of student youth/Come on U! Come on U!/You’re the pride of Romanian hearts!*”²⁰⁶. The students were “pale” and “could barely walk” when the moment came to enter the pitch. During play, Luca “remembers” having had the following thoughts: “*Today’s game is, indeed, a different kind of game. Here, you defender, if you don’t put you’re head in your rivals’ boot, you don’t deserve the place in the team. And you forward, if you don’t plunge head on in the opponents’ goalpost, you’re just a refined, with distilled water instead of blood*”. The “most beautiful day” in Luca’s life in football ended with a 4-0 win for Universitatea. Soon thereafter, Ferar moved and established itself in the town of Arad. The message was clear enough, Universitatea had won the town back for Romanians, consecrating on the football pitch the turning tide of history.

²⁰⁵ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 55-56.

²⁰⁶ This paragraph draws on Chirilă, Ioan. p. 58-62.

The socialist period was full of ups and downs for the students' club in Cluj. Good and efficient teams were followed by mediocre ones in an almost cyclical fashion. Universitatea moved in between mid-table in the first division to the second division with some regularity. The rise of C.C.A. (Steaua) and Dinamo was a clear sign that "U" was David facing Goliath²⁰⁷. The inconsistency of results and of recruitment mitigated and fueled the story of Universitatea's "unbridled élan". As always, the plentiful energies of youth could not be contained. For political/moral reasons, their energies could not be taken away exclusively for football. The University's students were expected to become model individuals of the nation. In the background, an existential philosophy loomed large claiming that their élan could not simply be fully repressed and disciplined. Out of this mixture a split ideology was born, at once bohemian and conformist, but nonetheless distinctive to any of its rivals. The bohemian attitude and its related stories could well work in relation to the powerhouses of the police and army, while the conformist, stressing civility, could well work against the clubs of workers. Overall, Universitatea's sentimental history coupled with its penury of results offered a fertile ground for its post-1989 presentation and representation as resolutely Romanian, untainted by the excesses of communism, holding dear and promoting values that placed it well above any accusations of corruption. At least, that is what its current die-hards like to think of themselves and their beloved "U".

The self-perception and narrative of dissent and conformism resembles Spartak Moscow's ideology, finely analyzed in the work of Edelman (2009). In the postwar structure of Romanian club football Universitatea, due to its patronage, came to occupy a position similar to that of Spartak. This was a structural position that assured a greater degree of autonomy relative to the clubs of the central state apparatus. However, Edelman convincingly shows that in actual

²⁰⁷ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 87.

practice the autonomy that the Moscow-based club enjoyed was never as extensive as its supporters claimed it to be. This seems to hold true for Universitatea. Moreover, the lead characters making and writing the history of the students' club in Cluj share some of the features of their Russian counterparts at Spartak. Noted players and officials were able to navigate and bridge the social divides between the people and the elites, to forge connections with intellectuals and politicians, albeit at a smaller scale compared to Spartak reach, due to the provincial position of the club. A social space was created where narratives of dissent could emerge to please and appease the club's followers, one that much helped Universitatea's identification and distinction. At the same time, conformism, mostly in the form of the club fulfilling its pedagogical mission, could be stressed to protect its interests whenever these were threatened.

Overall, the emphasis on the transformative potential of the University and of its football club hardens and grounds the view of its nationalizing mission. It implicitly stresses Universitatea's centrality in the making of the Romanian nation. However, the story would not have found such popular appeal without the conflation of particularly apt periods and teams with the characters of its finest players. It is in such individual biographies that historical processes, events, meanings and ideas are animated and imbued with a sense of life. Out of Dr. Luca's account, three names clearly stand out, alongside his. The epoch defining players were: Guga, Sfera, Luca and Ivansuc, with everything that "Universitatea" was and was not, could and could not do, reunited in Ivansuc's presentation²⁰⁸.

The Heroes

²⁰⁸ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 138.

Discerning the creation, role and representation of football heroes at football club level is deeply embroiled in the vagaries and contingencies of local history. Parallel to the depictions of lowly, provincial clubs, the image of their heroes is often repressed and silenced by nationally worthy figures. Such depictions are national in a double sense. For one, the stories of locally relevant figures are displaced by those of quintessential players whom successfully represented the national team, in different national contexts the likes of Maradona, Pele, Eusebio or Hagi, have become veritable icons of the nation. For another, players defending the colors of nationally important football clubs, such powerhouses like Real Madrid, Manchester United, Ajax Amsterdam or Steaua Bucharest, where the cult of significant players emerges out of the close connection between club and nation. However, a look at less shiny clubs and heroes places such disproportionate images of the nation in a critical perspective, showing the enduring salience of local football life in shaping and reinforcing forms of belonging that might equally well work to sustain or subvert hardened notions of the sporting nation.

The stars emerging out of the pages of “*Șepcile roșii*”, two of the interwar (Guga and Sfera) and two of the postwar (Luca and Ivansuc), make a particularly interesting read when projected on the image of the Romanian footballing nation. The changing fortunes of “Universitatea” during the interwar and postwar are immediately visible in the trajectory of its key players. While Guga and Sfera were nationally revered figures, often called to the national team, the first postwar hero Luca never made it to the national team and Ivansuc ended his career with a meager three caps. This was not due to declining levels of talent and work at “Universitatea”, but indicated the structural transformation of the Romanian club football scene. We have seen that the 1924 Romanian representative at the Paris Olympics was exclusively made of Transylvanians and their number of selections remained high as long as the game in the

southern and eastern parts of Romania remained underdeveloped. Bucharest-based clubs of the time ultimately contested the supremacy of Transylvanians by poaching some of their finest players. That was the case of Sfera, whom left “Universitatea” for “Venus” Bucharest to create one of the legendary defensive duos of interwar Romanian football, the much coveted “Albu-Sfera” duet.

The establishment of sports clubs in the aftermath of World War II premised on the Soviet-model, where the branches of the new state commanded over their own sporting organizations, thoroughly centralized the club football scene and paved the way for the successes of, first and foremost, C.C.A. (*Central Club of the Army*) – later Steaua (*The Star*) – and Dinamo, the club supported by the Ministry of the Interior. However, Steaua’s and Dinamo’s hegemony over the game and the national team was due not only to exponentially better financing and a wider net of political connections. In line with the international developments of the postwar, coaches came to favor the homogeneity of the group over individual talent, thus building their teams around a nucleus of players most often coming from Steaua or Dinamo depending on their momentary form and fortunes. Telling in this respect is the fact that one of Universitatea’s finest periods came in the late 1940s, right before the establishment of the dominating Bucharest clubs, with Dr. Luca captaining the team, when the students in Cluj were major contenders in the national league.

The one and only major trophy won by “Universitatea” – the 1964/1965 edition of the Romanian Cup – came out, even in the eyes of its most devoted and loyal people, of a favorable context. The major Bucharest clubs were not at their best, lucky draws in the knock-out rounds assured disposable opposition, and an established group of players in high spirits and form made the accomplishment possible. The legendary status of Ivansuc was forged out of this unique

triumph and took a distinctive shape precisely because it was not followed by any other major performance. It is his portrait that Dr. Luca and Chirilă fashion in most detail, treating his character as an individual mirror of “Universitatea”’s historical highs and lows. I will now follow the story of each player as presented in “*Șepcile roșii*”, with an emphasis on the story of the latter.

Aurel Guga (1898-1936) was a “bănățean” that made a name for himself at “Universitatea”. He is best remembered by having captained and scored in Romania’s first official international game. A 2-1 win for the Romanians in Belgrade against Yugoslavia in 1922. In Luca and Chirilă’s history of “Universitatea” his image is rather blurred. Having died young in a car accident in Timișoara he was no longer around to elaborate his story. The authors present him as a prolific forward with an almighty shot and an exquisite technique. His major contribution to the club came in the early 1920s when “Universitatea” toured Italy and France for a series of games in which he greatly impressed. However, after the completion of his studies in 1925 he left Cluj and his career in football appears to have slowly dwindled. In the overall structure of Universitatea’s story, his figure works to stress that a major player served the club right from its inception.

Lazăr Sfera (1909-1992), yet another “bănățean” that worked to uplift football in Cluj, played for “Universitatea” between 1930 and 1934, in undoubtedly the best team of the club during the interwar. An audacious defender, Sfera made an impressive career for both “Universitatea” and afterwards for “Venus” Bucharest, having been selected in the national team for ten uninterrupted years from 1931 to 1941. A student at the “Commercial Academy” he made a career as an economist. His later presentation of his intellectual and sporting trajectory, exposes the romantic twist and edge of Luca/Chirilă’s story of “Universitatea”. Having been one of those

that left the club for a Bucharest-based rival, his depiction was in need of polishing to veer off suspicions of treachery and deceit. Hence, the section dedicated to Sfera is titled “Everything was beautiful at “U”...”, where “Badea²⁰⁹ Lazăr” is “quoted” to the effect that no other club was like “Universitatea” and no other place like Cluj²¹⁰. Thus, he purportedly confessed to Mircea Luca in the following terms:

You know Mircea that I could have chosen to pursue the Commercial Academy in Bucharest, but I was drawn to Cluj by your songs and this “U” on the chest, which is a sign of youth and, if you wish, a lucky horseshoe. After I left Universitatea I played for Venus, I’ve been in the national team many times, I’ve tied a great friendship with Ghiță Albu, but the time spent in Cluj compares to nothing.

In Bucharest, at Venus, I’ve made lots of money, but I don’t even know what I’ve done with them.

At “U”, even poverty was beautiful.²¹¹

However, Luca’s presentation of Sfera’s recollection is deeply at odds with one of his later confessions where he stated that him “being a poor boy with no financial possibilities” he could not envision pursuing higher education anywhere else except of Timișoara, but was drawn to Cluj “by promises of a house and food”²¹², promises that were only partly kept. The move to Venus was prompted by the club’s offer to land him a “proper” job, although he does stress the great friendships that he left behind.

Mircea Luca (1921-2008) identifies with the wartime and postwar history of the club. Born in Zalău, not far away from Cluj, he came of age as a sportsman during the most turbulent times in “Universitatea”’s history, its “exile” to Sibiu during the Second World War. An

²⁰⁹ In Romanian the appellative “*badea*” used to refer older male kins and friends offers a strong sense of familiarity backed by major respect.

²¹⁰ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 33.

²¹¹ *Idem.*

²¹² Sfera Lazăr, Dr. Iubu Collection, No. 21.

uncompromising defender and for the most part captain of the team, Luca traces his career at “Universitatea” from the game he played in 1931 as a junior player in the opening of a major encounter with “Hungaria” Budapest. After his retirement in 1956 he remained at the club as a coach, official and its historian. In one way or another, “the moonstruck doctor”²¹³ was part of Universitatea’s history for most of its existence. His biography and life trajectory and the opening to reappraise symbols of the nation from the late 1960s onwards placed him in a unique position to craft the clubs’ history and ideology. As a player, author and successful medical doctor he embodied the story of his club and was lucky enough to also narrate it. As such, it is highly likely that his image will soon be carved in stone and placed next to the pitch where he was long adulated by his *clujeni*.

Zoltan Ivansuc (1938-1982) was a right winger, appreciated for his remarkable speed and technical virtuosity. His sporting, public and private life offered Dr. Luca enough material to turn him into a legend. As a footballer, Ivansuc is presented as the very embodiment of “Universitatea”. Chirilă called him “the pride of footballing art in Cluj”²¹⁴, Luca saw him as “the seducer of the stands” that “subjugated Cluj for ten years”²¹⁵. One contemporary journalist, noting that thirty years went past since his passing away, started his obituary by claiming that Ivansuc “was a knight without an armor, a prince without a throne” that fell prey to the magic of number 7, the number on his black and white shirt²¹⁶. As far as one can see, the Ivansuc legend built on a tumultuous life on and off the pitch. He appears to have been an interiorized, taciturn man, that disclosed himself at the stadium and at the bar. Two places in Cluj were graced by his presence: the central stadium and the restaurant of hotel “Continental” (known as “Conti” among

²¹³ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 67.

²¹⁴ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 138.

²¹⁵ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 106.

²¹⁶ <http://ziuadecj.realitatea.net/sport/misteriosul-domn-ivansuc-povara-numarului-7--84004.html>

aficionados). Ivansuc socially functioned as a bridge between the great mass of football enthusiasts and the world of poets, writers and academics. Luca writes that he was never able to connect with him²¹⁷ and so do others²¹⁸. Hence, he prefers to reproduce an interview that Ivansuc once gave and to comment on its side. The key to understand it is fused in one word: “nonetheless” (actually two in Romanian: “*și totuși*”²¹⁹).

The preamble to the interview notes Ivansuc’s “miraculous ankle” that fascinated everyone in town. So much so that “kids sign up to carry his bag, girls instinctively arrange their hair when they pass by Zoli, the old compare him to the old-time greats, while the experts see qualities superior to those of already established players.”²²⁰ *Nonetheless*, something was missing. Asked whether he was content with his achievements as a player Ivansuc answer was: “No! Three times no!”. How much he had accomplished. “I won’t hesitate. 40 percent!”. Whether this was an attempt to fuel the “Ivansuc myth”, “I never do.” Tellingly, in his view “Universitatea” accomplished equally much: 40 percent. What happened? When the reporter noted that he had well graduated Medicine, Ivansuc stressed that it cost him those sixty percent missing in football. When the journalist thought it cynical that his dream to pursue medicine came after some major achievements in football, his reply was: “Please don’t confound sincerity with cynicism”. Questioned whether he would still make the same decision, he argued that he would choose the Institute of Physical Education and Sport, hoping that people there “would understand that a true football player needs TIME”. Teased that he was only “dreaming”, Ivansuc countered: “No. I’m not. I came to think that football deserves to be an obsession, not a

²¹⁷ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 108.

²¹⁸ See Remus Câmpeanu’s statement quoted in Fornade’s article.

²¹⁹ Chirilă, Ioan. p. 108.

²²⁰ *Idem*.

creak of a violin, an hour a day, in the hands of a doctor jealous on Ștefan Ruha's²²¹ formidable tone."²²² This very split defined "Universitatea" where "an epicurean climate", "improper for great football" was supposedly the order of the day.

Adding to the mystery of the character and his football poetics, the interview ended with the note "And doctor Ivansuc remained wrapped in his own thoughts, as if he were alone." This sense of public loneliness or, rather, of a loneliness lived on public display, backed by sporting and intellectual feats covered by the silence of their author is what the adverb "*nonetheless*" hinted at and ultimately failed to disclose. One of his poet-friends well captured it in verse calling Ivansuc "the Hamlet of the green pitch", while the obituary following his untimely death by another published in the leading literary journal "Tribuna" argued that:

He was not one of those to exploit their sporting glory to old age. To the contrary, glory exploited him. A demon, someone, stalked him and put an end to his lonely life (he had so many friends, but he looked and was a lonely man. Alone he died). A life that none of the petty, paltry and mean people, used to judging others, are allowed to judge. He left once more, too early, at 44 years of age, after he had left the pitch, on a lonely and final course. Our memory and hearts will keep him, they will keep that aura, the legend.²²³

The reference to sportsmen extending their careers into "old age" might well be a thinly veiled reproach to Mircea Luca. In the end, it was the latter whom partly labored to construct the "Ivansuc legend" and simultaneously worked as his main competitor at the very top of the panoply of Universitatea's greats. At various times, the two legends surpassed each other in

²²¹ Ștefan Ruha (Ruha István) (1931-2004) was a Romanian-Hungarian noted violin player, whom was trained and made a career in Cluj.

²²² Chirilă, Ioan. p. 106-111.

²²³ The verse is taken out of the poem "In Memoriam" by Negoită Irimie. Several others were devoted to Ivansuc: "Ad Ivansucum" by the same author and "Elegy for the man Number 7" by Ion Arcaș. The obituary in "Tribuna" was authored by Nicolae Prelipeanu. The poems and the text are available as an addendum to Fornade's text.

stamping Universitatea's aura. It is probably not fortuitous that the episodic, lonely, but nonetheless meteoric Ivansuc was cherished in the 1980s and the early 1990s. His myth worked best with an ever more rigid and alienating system of Romanian club football in the background. In contrast, the narrative, consistent, resilient and enduring image of Luca worked better and better as "Universitatea" was caught in the whirlwind of corruption, bankruptcy, and deceit that plagues contemporary Romanian club football²²⁴. As I write, it is the latter's statue that is unveiled in Cluj. Nevertheless, the future might hold many surprises and Ivansuc might sooner or later return to join him.

Overall, Ivansuc and Luca's portraits, seconded by the vintage "photographs" of Guga and Sfera tell a heroic history of football at "Universitatea". This is a history at once fractured and, given its numerous doctors, surgically stitched to keep together its contradictory parts. Caught in the tensions of simultaneously developing minds and bodies among its student footballers, "Universitatea" never achieved sporting glory. Nonetheless, its devotees made sure to compensate for what failed to be achieved on the pitch, by defining a spirit that put into perspective and transcended such lowly goals. Yet another historian of the club, Gheorghe I. Bodea, succinctly reconciled the tensions in what came to be his trademark slogan: "U" is an Idea". The Idea, as its fans and true believers like to phrase is that "Universitatea is the symbol of Romanian hearts" in Cluj, in Transylvania and in Romania. As it happens, this ideology runs counter to developments in contemporary football, by now exclusively dominated by the sole aim of sporting performance. The above mentioned stories partly disclose that there is a long history to that. "Universitatea" was initially aimed to play its part in an integral national education, the practice of achieving this well suited the attempts of socialist nation-building and

²²⁴ For the distinction between episodic and narrative characters, I took inspiration from Julian Barnes' review of Lucien Freud's recent biographies. (See Barnes 2013).

emerged as a point of pride for marginalized youths over the last two decades (Faje 2011). As such, Universitatea's history offers a major repository for mounting an often nationalist critique of sporting and political developments in contemporary Cluj.

Chapter 6 – Managing “Furia Latina”: the Making of a Romanian Football System and Style of Play

Introduction

In the very early hours of the 19th of June 1994 Romanians witnessed one of the highest points of collective effervescence in their contemporary history. In the gigantic and packed “Rose Bowl” stadium in Pasadena, California the central midfielder Gheorghe Hagi picked a pass on the extreme left of the field, some thirty meters away from goal, gently controlled it, quickly positioned himself with a swift look towards the goalkeeper and, with his left foot, unleashed an astonishing shot. The ball he kicked appeared to defy gravity as it went past the goalkeeper into top-right corner of the goal²²⁵. That goal, apparently one of the finest in football history, made it two-nil for Romania against Colombia in their opening game at the 1994 FIFA World Cup™. This remarkable feat of individual talent and skill only added to the aura of one Romanian national team that came to be known domestically as the “golden generation” with Hagi as its undisputed “King”. Such displays, consistently repeated in subsequent games, took the team into the quarter-finals of the tournament, past such a football powerhouse as Argentina²²⁶ and inch-close to a dream semi-final against Brazil, were it not for a lousy penalty shoot-out against Sweden, which has left Romanian fans in the “what if?” mode ever since. The popular Romanian sentiment of the time was clear, Hagi and his crew, had conquered America and Romanians symbolically achieved what the Americans failed to do some sixty years earlier:

²²⁵ For Hagi’s goal against Colombia see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GzGOM4Ohcg>.

²²⁶ Ten year old at the time, I vividly remember this game against Columbia. Broadcast in Romania in the very early hours of morning, it occasioned one of my family’s very rare sleepovers over at some of my uncle and aunt’s place. The sense of euphoria is complete with the view of my father jumping high, when Florin Răducioiu opened the score, and subsequently heavily hugging and shaking one decidedly drunk, sleepy, but happy uncle.

to conquer Romania back from the hands of the Soviets in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The lesson in moral history was made possible by the ever-growing Romanian success in football that kicked-off in the early 1980s and reached its peak with the national team of 1994. In the early eighties minnows like Universitatea Craiova or Dinamo Bucharest were already making inroads into the late stages of European competitions. At club level, Steaua Bucharest's triumph in the European Champions Cup of 1986, followed by their presence in the final act of the 1989 edition, consecrated Romanian football on the European stage. Steaua's 1986 winning final against F.C. Barcelona, disputed on Spanish soil in Seville, produced a yet another remarkable feat. In the penalty shoot-out that followed a goalless draw, the goalkeeper Helmuth Duckadam made it straight into the record books by saving all four penalties of his opponents. Of course, at that point the moral lesson to be fashioned and learned was that this was one of the many achievements of the Romanian socialist regime. Socialist or not, sporting achievements these were, and the performances of the period attest to the fact that the quality of players, trainers, teams and clubs vastly increased, with positive repercussions for the selection and results of the national teams. The Romanian national went on to qualify for the 1990 FIFA World Cup™ hosted by Italy and decently presented itself in the tournament, with a younger Hagi already in command of the team.

Given the modest and scandal prone present condition of the game, it is easy to retrospectively reify the achievements of this generation of players and thus to embolden their work in producing strong emotions and sentiments of the nation. Nonetheless, on yet another memorable night in spring 1999 Romanians were again glued to their TV sets. One nationalist poet, a major public figure best known – by a few – for fuelling Ceaușescu's cult and – by many

– for the joyful nights full of national songs and poetry since he toured the country in the 1970s and early 1980s, was fervently persuading Hagi to make a comeback to the national team. His desperate pleas to the midfielder were occasioned by the upcoming encounter with the Romanians’ arch historical rivals: the Hungarians, whom they had never defeated. Having retired from professional activity the year before, Hagi was ultimately allured back onto the pitch in a carefully crafted media spectacle that culminated with the scene of the poet’s young son singing a dedicated song to the footballer that went nothing short of: “The flag calls for you/In the name of your mother and father”. Visibly shaken, Hagi accepted the call and went on to complete a veritable “return of the King” in June 1999. After yet another memorable sporting performance the Romanian side won their first ever official encounter against Hungary. However, in the post-millennial period it became painfully obvious for Romanian fans that another generation of footballers able to at least match the performances of the previous one was nowhere in sight.

Taking its cues from these high tides of Romanian post-socialist popular history the text engages the intellectual, cultural and political history that has led to the Romanian football successes of the last decades of the twentieth century, a history that has made football into one of the greatest rallying points of the nation. Through the filter of these sporting achievements, I look back at the football textbooks authored by the Romanian leading figure on the topic Virgil Economu (1896-1978). His two major works, published in 1935 and 1969, present a remarkable intellectual continuity as well as an outstanding sense of anticipation. In many ways, this is a case of self-fulfilling prophecy at its very best and its unpacking allows for major insights into the critical role of football for Romanian national construction and state building. On the face of it, the two historical moments that I allude to could hardly have been more different. In brief, Economu’s lifelong ambition was to forge a Romanian style of play, one distinctive enough to

allow for the consecration of a Romanian School of football on the international scene. His conception claimed that the Romanian style of play was to be born out of the interplay between the Romanians inborn qualities and an appropriate method of play adapted from the leading nations in the game. To that end, he carefully crafted legions of recommendations that spanned everything from minute details of training and practice, to institutional infrastructure and development. He was renowned for implementing and refining his notions and methods at every club he trained.

An agronomist by training, Economu completed his high-school education in Vienna and his university education in Montpellier, the latter in the early 1920s. He appears to have always combined his work with an assiduous activity in the field of sports. In France, he made himself known as a talented swimmer as well as the coach of Montpellier's university football club. Back in Romania, he rarely stopped coaching. His professional activity made him change place often during the interwar. He was among the rare football professionals to hold a firsthand account of developments in the major regions of Greater Romania. During the interwar, he took up appointments at local clubs in Buzău, Bucharest and Arad. In the postwar, he established his position by coaching C.C.A. (The Army's Central Club, later Steaua). Hence, judging by his educational and spatial mobility Economu appears to have been uniquely positioned to contribute to the making of the "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) of the Romanian sporting nation. His passion for the game of football assured the vehicle to represent the nation in a blistering form of sporting nationalism. While my attention is mostly focused on his textbooks, this hardly does justice to his labors of translating his theses into practice. Economu spent some time at every institutional level of Romanian football, from coaching junior players to the presidency of the Football Federation. Not to mention that he was often the chief artisan of many institutional

initiative and developments. Economu unabatedly pursued this goal in a variety of positions including those of coach (of the national team in 1939-1940 and 1946-1947), official (including the presidency of the Federation in 1946-1947), director of a sports journal, radio commentator, and publicist.

Economu was certainly not alone in his endeavor. In a frantic activity spanning more than half a century (from the early 1920s to the 1970s) his works were seconded and drew upon the contributions of many others whom, in their turn, were influenced and took on the legacy of his work. Suffice it to mention, in the postwar, the contributions of the coach Constantin Teașcă²²⁷ or those of the most revered figure in Romanian sports journalism Ioan Chirilă²²⁸. The prodigious activity of the latter, continued well into the 1990s, vividly instilled the saga of Romanian sport into the popular imagination. In the interwar, the publications of the former international player Petre Steinbach²²⁹ and the debates of an audacious sporting press are to be noted. Nonetheless, it is Economu that best bridged the “spirit and system” (see Boyer 2005) of Romanian football into a poignant synthesis that set the course of the game’s development and provided the key categories to follow it, read it and understand it.

His position among the pioneers of football in modern Romania accounts for many of the idiosyncrasies found in his work. Romania was a latecomer to the world of modern nations and as far as football is concerned, it hardly counted in any meaningful way on the international scene prior to the First World War. The major boost came with the creation of Greater Romania,

²²⁷ See especially: Teașcă, Constantin. 1962. *Fotbal și fotbaliști la diferite meridiane: însemnări de spectator și antrenor*. București, Editura Uniunii de Cultură Fizică și Sport; Teașcă, Constantin. 1965. *Fotbal la poalele Cordilierilor*. București, Editura Uniunii de Cultură Fizică și Sport; Teașcă, Constantin. 1967. *Din nou pe meridianele fotbalului*. București, Editura U.C.F.S.

²²⁸ See especially: Chirilă, Ioan. 1966. *Finala se joacă astăzi*. București: Editura Uniunii de Cultură Fizică și Sport; Chirilă, Ioan. 1966. *World Cup '66*. București: Editura Uniunii de Educație Fizică și Sport; Chirilă, Ioan. 1970. *Mexicul – această “Fata Morgana”...* București, Editura Consiliului Național pentru Educație Fizică și Sport.

²²⁹ See Steinbach, Petre. 1937. *Footballul nostru: probleme și îndrumări pentru footballul românesc*. București: Tipografia “Vulturul”.

most notably with the incorporation of Transylvania, where football was already well established among the urban Hungarians, Germans and Jews in late imperial times. Unsurprisingly, Economu's arguments are cast in the language of modern development setting out to overcome the gaps separating Romanians from their non-Romanian fellows and Romania from the hegemons of the game. From a Romanian nationalist vantage point, this situation obviously called for the elaboration of a Romanian tradition into the game. In my view, shaped by Nairn's (1997) discussion of modern nationalism, the force of modern sport and particularly football for nation-state building is precisely that unlike the often belated character of modern political and economic development, it allows for the completion of the catching up work to be reasonably envisaged and even practically achieved. According to the modern ethos of progress, the basic tenet of sport is that if certain requirements are met, any team can perform well enough to outpace any other irrespective of its previous achievements. This assertion has immense political implications essentially stating, and maybe even showing, that a nation cannot be confined to perpetual mediocrity. In this vain, any sporting achievement immediately translates itself into a claim of national triumph and glory, with its caveat despair and frustration.

The emphasis on the modernizing function of Virgil Economu's theorization and implementation of a Romanian style of play in football is meant to counter an otherwise severely fragmented national narrative. The historical moments that I allude to, not the mention the continuities among them, are rarely analyzed in their conjunction. The Romanian interwar and most of the postwar are usually depicted under the aegis of fascism in the case of the former and communism in the latter, with the added complication of post-socialist narratives that have tended to recapture and augment the otherwise frail democratic traditions of the interwar. However, the case at hand reties the knots of a much more complicated history of Romanian

modernization that cuts across the political regimes that are best treated as instantiations of this process. The historical development of Romanian football is but a manifestation of the effort to produce a modern nation under various forms of stateness designed to that end. This is immediately obvious in the texts that I engage. While a form of “socialist realism” is the background for the 1969 one and an unabashed nationalism bordering fascism sets the stage for the work of 1935, a common thread links them under the all time slogan of modern Romanian liberals “*Through ourselves*”, explicit in the first and thinly disguised in the later publication. However, the message that it always espoused was clear enough: modern development through national means. That said Economu’s life trajectory and individual history is all the more remarkable in the way it accommodated the ideologies of opposed political regimes with no sign of any major friction. My informed guess is that the much claimed political neutrality of modern sport coupled with a Romanian nationalism that never quite faded away was able fend off the winds of political change no matter if they came from the East or from the West, allowing for relatively consistent and unitary individual biographies.

To be sure, my aim is not to rewrite a factual history of Romanian football, but to critically inquire the notions that have made football into such a powerful vector of modern Romanian nationalism as well as a central representation of Romanian ideas of the state (Abrams 1988). The basic ideas that I take and engage from Economu’s work: the essential Latinism of the Romanian people and the notion of a modern method of play, were certainly not the exclusive province of any political regime, but rather located creations of European modernity. Following their transformation chronologically severely hampers the possibility of showing precisely that. Such a narrative would do little to help us understand the ways in which Romanians came to play “the beautiful game” and to appreciate it.

1935 – The Interwar Synthesis

In his concluding “thoughts on football” to his 1969-work one of Virgil Economu’s aphorisms reads: “To talk about “positioning” in modern football is as if projecting static photographs on a wide cinema screen instead of vibrant contemporary movies”²³⁰. One of the first illustrations to his early work of 1935 is a photograph, supposedly taken in 1909, that particularly impresses the reader. Its caption reads: “It is a football, not a rugby game as it might first look... The woodwork is fragile and the bars are not quite straight... A pupil, passionate spectator, watches unhampered from inside the pitch, next to the goal.”²³¹ The humorous description could hardly have been more apt. Indeed, one could have hardly guessed that the scene is taken out of a game of football. The woodwork does seem to be collapsing backwards. The presence of a youngster at the left hand post plunges the observer into confusion. Taken together, the photograph and the film-inspired dictum, separated by sixty years, signal the massive transformation undergone by Romanian football. Beyond its capacity to depict change, Economu’s recourse to a cinematic analogy well grasps the direction of that change. Static photographic depictions were taken over by cinema’s inherent dynamism. A “Football of the Future”²³² could already be reasonably envisaged as a game made by “electronic brains”, “surprise boxes” or “electronic Pandora’s”. Nonetheless, the shaky goalpost was still haunting the analyst when fantasizing about a future where carefully programmed electronic machines allowed for the setup of encounters cutting across time and space²³³ where one player could

²³⁰ Economu, Virgil. 1969. *Fotbalul modern: ce este și cum trebuie să-l jucăm*. București, Editura C.N.E.F.S., p. 452.

²³¹ Economu, Virgil. 1935. *Football: Studiu documentar și critic*. București: Atelierele A-B-C Lipsani.

²³² Economu, Virgil. 1969. *Fotbalul modern: ce este și cum trebuie să-l jucăm*. București, Editura C.N.E.F.S. Capitolul XV “Fotbalul Viitorului”.

²³³ My favorite example is the potential game between Sheffield of the 1880s and the Korean Democratic Republic of the late 1960s.

supposedly “take a terrible shot that hit the post, crumbling the fragile woodwork of sixty years ago...”

The force of “fantasy-sporting science”²³⁴ notwithstanding, this section takes it to the static moment in Economu’s development of a Romanian system and style of play as well as to the immutable elements of his system – Romanians’ supposedly innate Latin traits. The work of 1935 “*Football: a documentary and critical study*” marked his first attempt to forge a distinctively national type of football. In the process, he came to define the key pillars of the game in Romania. This was a textbook that covered all the major facets of the game of football. Unlike the later one, it was published outside the network of official sporting institutions, although with the backing of the Football Federation, as a privately authored book most probably sponsored through the advertisements that it included. It was well presented in the sporting press of the time, in praising reviews and small advertisements. In terms of the content proper, relative to his later work the textbook appears to be much more radical in terms of its critique, recommendations and implications and is fully aligned with the dominant right-wing politics of the time.

“Football” was introduced by Colonel Davila, vice-president of the Romanian Federation of Association Football at the time, stressing that the work was bound to become “the footballers’ catechism”²³⁵. The Colonel endorsed football, and sport in general, for developing “healthy and harmonious bodies” as well as “team spirit” by which he meant the subsuming of “personal ambition” to “collective interest”²³⁶. The military man first drew a parallel between the sportsman and the soldier, each called to learn his art of war and play. He added another comparing the sportsman and the mechanic, to the effect that just like the latter needs the

²³⁴ Economu, 1969, p. 442.

²³⁵ Economu, 1935, p. 6.

²³⁶ *Idem*.

knowledge of the engineer to reach “perfection” the sportsmen needs his trainer. In a few pages, the military officer and sport enthusiast introduced the main tropes of the Romanian, and indeed European, political culture of the late interwar. Physical and moral development achieved in a military-resembling hierarchical system under a religious blessing to the service of the nation and state.

To be sure, 1930s Romania was dominated by a growing disenchantment with the possibilities of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism to deliver social, economic and political betterment. The Romanian nationalism of the interwar, in its numerous varieties, operated to rhetorically compensate the perceived lack of progress. By the middle of the 1930s a strong nationalist movement on the extreme-right was attracting evermore followers and gaining political force, while King Carol II was agilely navigating the national and international political space to accumulate ever increasing powers. Depictions of Carol as prince and later king alongside sportsmen adorn Economu’s 1935 textbook. At the same time, international developments were pointing the way to alternative societal and political models. In sports, the Latin connection and the already hinted at political marasmus, made the Italian fascist model into an obvious point of reference, while in football proper the spectacular triumphs of the Italian national team of the 1930s showed the reliability of the fascist system in managing and affirming the nation. This was a time when the football games in domestic competitions were preceded by a “roman salute” presented by the team’s captains, followed by a “long live!” greeting, three times repeated by all the teammates²³⁷.

The football expert was well aware of the challenges posed by this intricate historical conjuncture. He introduced his work by arguing that “we are at a crossroad”, that many open

²³⁷ Economu, 1935, p. 241.

roads lie ahead, but that there is but a single one that is “straight and truthful”²³⁸. Economu went on to observe that sports and particularly football “play a decisive role in the existence of nations” and warned that if adequate measures were not taken “there’ll be a high price to pay in the near future”²³⁹. The sense of gloom and doom remained in his description of the contemporary situation where a “harmful empiricism reigns” and “routine became dogma”²⁴⁰. In order to progress it was thought necessary “to change our mentality”, “the heresies of the past should go away” and the youths should “learn and apply” what they are told by their more experienced elders²⁴¹. The model to be pursued was the Italian one. Its “unquestionable superiority” made it plain that “all our hopes should aspire towards it”²⁴². Based on this model Economu envisaged the fusion of Romanians’ innate qualities into a system of football play that he termed “the Romanian W”.

Before delving into the formulation of the model, Economu found it necessary to plea the cause of football and of his work. In 1935, the desirability of football in Romanian lands was not yet an established truth. The plea made it into a rather awkward section to be included in a football textbook that nonetheless ended up striking one of the central questions of delayed, peripheral modernization. Namely, although foreign models and principles do exist how can these be translated into domestic practice? That is, “no one ever provides the recipe regarding the ways in which to put the stated principles into practice”²⁴³. His work set out to fill this gap by devising a parsimonious set of rules to guide the basic activities of the football players, setting their development and the overall development of the game onto the right track. Economu quotes

²³⁸ Economu, 1935, p. 7.

²³⁹ *Idem.*

²⁴⁰ Economu, 1935, p. 8.

²⁴¹ Economu, 1935, p. 8-9.

²⁴² Economu, 1935, p. 9.

²⁴³ Economu, 1935, p. 13.

extensively the arguments of mostly French theoreticians of football, only to find them wanting in this respect.

Part of the same plea our author identified four defining dimensions of football. The game was at once: “a universal sport”, “a cult”, “the country’s shield”, and “a national sport”. This sequence makes a powerful case for the ways in which the adoption of “foreign” models and institutions was imagined, as a translation from the universal to the national. Suggestive for the social and political divisions of the time is the understanding of football’s “universalism”. For Economu, the universality of the game derived from its capacity to cut across the boundaries of “social class” in terms of both participation and spectatorship. The immediate corollary of this was football’s potential for social integration, leading people away from “vice” towards a healthy lifestyle and taking away their time to “preach more or less subversive ideas”. However, it was never a question that football might equally well be thought of as cutting across the boundaries of national belonging, quite to the contrary. Economu was adamant on this point. Nations proved their “vigour” on the fields of play. It was high time for the “Romanian kindred (*neam*) to be represented by its true sons in international competitions”²⁴⁴. Consequently, “it can no longer be thought of a Romanian representative, either than that formed of elements whose integral education of the soul was accomplished at the flame of a true Romanianism”²⁴⁵. To be sure, “it is not this or that player whom scored and played well, but *the nation* itself”²⁴⁶. The dimensions mediating between the universalism and nationalism of football thus understood were its resemblance to a religious cult and its contribution to the safeguarding of the nation states’ frontiers.

²⁴⁴ Economu, 1935, p. 35.

²⁴⁵ Economu, 1935, p. 36.

²⁴⁶ *Idem*.

As a cult, football presented the universality of religious ritual, which tends to be the same wherever people share the same faith, and was backed by a book made of “seventeen articles” that “applied to all nations, in any corner of the Earth”²⁴⁷. Football “preached” a host of thoroughly Christian values: “discipline, chivalry, a spirit of solidarity, generosity, love, a restrained life, respect for ones’ fellows and, especially, for ones’ adversaries.”²⁴⁸ Provided its ritual character and the set of cherished religious values, football was thus a matter of “culture and tradition”. Football’s limited development in Romania attested that Romanian culture and tradition were “rather recent”²⁴⁹. At the same time, Economu thought that its full appreciation was not far away. Football also addressed the immediate need of national security. The defeated countries of the First World War, the likes of Germany and Hungary, were “nurturing ideas of revenge” and the “formidable moral and physical training of their armies” was due to the “organization of sporting societies”²⁵⁰. Romania was heavily trailing behind, but Economu saluted King Carol II’s initiative to introduce “pre-military training” and was convinced that the nexus of sport practised in schools, universities, in the army and corporations, “will harden our youth for its true calling”²⁵¹. The game’s ability to transcend class divisions, its cvasi-religious character and the military imperatives of the time made it a duty to develop a Romanian method and style of play²⁵².

The manifest evidence that a Romanian style of play was possible and achievable was to be found in what Economu termed “*furia latina*”, that sequence of fast, direct, unstoppable play of Latin teams that expressed their shared inborn traits. I draw on this notion not only because of

²⁴⁷ Economu, 1935, p. 34.

²⁴⁸ *Idem.*

²⁴⁹ *Idem.*

²⁵⁰ Economu, 1935, p. 35.

²⁵¹ *Idem.*

²⁵² Economu, 1935, p. 112.

Economu's insistence upon it, but for the work of rendering visible and observable otherwise latent and hidden traits, that it attempts to achieve. "Latin fury" is thus a key metaphor that at once situates Romanianness in a venerable tradition, goes beyond and below the level of individual talent, suggests the need for containment and discloses a way of seeing the game of football as the expression of the nation. Our expert introduced the notion when charting the "characteristics of football at different people"²⁵³ on his way to discover the best suited tactic, method and style of play for the Romanians. He distinguished between three main branches of the game: the Anglo-Saxon, the Central European and the Latin. Their description is a feat of interwar national characterology, where immutable traits are fused with conjunctural geopolitical rivalries in a civilizational play of similarity and difference espoused on the pitch.

Three criteria organized his observations: science, split into technique and tactics, efficacy and speed. The English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh as well as their "kins": the Swedes, the Danes and the Dutch, took the scientific development of the game at its highest level²⁵⁴. The English and the Scots maintained their supremacy through a regime of "rational training" that made players reach "almost perfection". The inventors of the game were also reaping the fruits of their creation, as "the creators always preserve their obvious superiority"²⁵⁵. Nonetheless, the models of play designed by the inventors had to be seriously considered and discussed. Central European football, whose "typical" representatives were the Czechoslovaks, the Austrians and the Hungarians, were, unsurprisingly, found wanting in many respects. Overall, they were found guilty of "sacrificing their native qualities" by uncritically adopting and imposing the British system of play (mostly in its Scottish variety). The dissimilarity of their "physical and moral qualities" relative to the British could not uphold such models, but was momentarily

²⁵³ Economu, 1935, p. 113-114.

²⁵⁴ Economu, 1935, p. 115.

²⁵⁵ Economu, 1935, p. 112.

compensated through hard work and sporting education. One nation at a time, Czechoslovak football came out best in Economu's review, the Austrian was past its peak and deemed "too feminine"²⁵⁶, while the Hungarians' reluctance to adopt a distinctive method, stubbornly clinging to an "antique football" was proving its bankruptcy. Nonetheless, Economu noted the skills of some individual Hungarian football players scattered in major clubs across Europe and did not fail to stress that "some exceptional elements" came from Transylvania²⁵⁷.

Given these developments Latin football presented the only way forward. The likes of Italy, Spain and the South American nations presented a blend of "the inborn characteristics of their race" with an "initial application" of British methods²⁵⁸. On the one hand, Economu followed his earlier dictum that "each race strives to create a game of soccer that best espouses their native qualities"²⁵⁹. "Furia latina" was but an expression of "arduousness" and "impulsivity", backed by "determination". These properties were not entirely positive in their manifestation and Economu notes that "the Latin" is "more individual" and often strives for personal affirmation. Hence, the imposition of the British model would have amounted to an effacement of their personality²⁶⁰. On the other hand, such talent could only be efficiently used through the adoption of a method and style of play. At this point, Economu offered an interesting compromise. During the "initial" period of football's development foreign trainers and players (that is, British) were certainly needed to introduce and ground the basics of the game. This allowed for a momentary articulation of formal and innate characteristics. The force of the latter would necessarily produce a pressure to alter the adopted schemas opening the way for the

²⁵⁶ Probably correlated with the depictions of Jews and Jewish clubs.

²⁵⁷ Economu, 1935, p. 120.

²⁵⁸ Economu, 1935, p. 121.

²⁵⁹ Economu, 1935, p. 111.

²⁶⁰ Economu, 1935, p. 121.

constitution of a truly national system and style of play. At that moment, foreign experts would no longer be needed and might even prove detrimental for future national developments²⁶¹.

At this point Economu was obviously extrapolating based on his depiction of the historical development of Italian football. He praised the “wise policies” of Italian officials which allowed foreign players and trainers to perform in the country after the war and the setting up of a coaching school. This initial opening would be followed by a ban, once the number of trainers and the quality of players grew and improved²⁶². Consequently, a distinctive Italian style of football emerged distinguished by its “furia latina” where “the whole team bursts on the attack” and “mercilessly follows the ball and the adversaries” when defending²⁶³. However, Economu argued that the value of the Italian style was mostly due to its system of play “an attacking plan in W”, which he, of course, recommended as the blueprint for the Romanian style. Good lessons to be learned could also be derived out of Spanish and French developments, both in its own way under the spell of “Latin fury”.

The “irresistible élan” displayed by Romanian teams was a sure sign of “furia latina” shared by “all descendents of Rome”²⁶⁴. Nonetheless, Economu found the style of his contemporary Romanian football caught between “the influence of Hungarian soccer” and its inadequacy to “our Latin temperament”²⁶⁵. This supposedly translated into practice to produce a football that was either “too feminine”, like the Central European one, or “too brutal”, due to the lack of a proper sporting education²⁶⁶. To counter this he surveyed the finest methods of play

²⁶¹ Economu, 1935, p. 122-123.

²⁶² Economu, 1935, p. 124.

²⁶³ Economu, 1935, p. 125.

²⁶⁴ Economu, 1935, p. 133.

²⁶⁵ *Idem.*

²⁶⁶ *Idem.*

available at the time²⁶⁷ only to contend that a derivation of Chapman's famous W formation developed at Arsenal would best match the qualities of Romanian players (see Giulianotti 2007:130–131). Tellingly, Economu's adaptation was meant to reduce the already limited flexibility of this formula and to fix as much as possible the responsibilities associated to each position on the pitch.

I will not insist upon the details of the "Romanian W", but only focus on the arguments advanced by Economu in its support and on the points of comparison that he draws between his model and Chapman's. The leading argument was the simplicity of the formula²⁶⁸. According to the football analyst, Romanian players did not yet possess a good sense of the game and no complicated models could thus work. Instructions for each position should thus be clear and precise. The second concerned the fact that, as with Arsenal's W, the change in the "off-side rule" could be speculated by increasing the number of advanced forwards. By the use of three advanced forwards the other teammates were forced to play them often, thus facilitating direct, offensive play, a feature that Economu believed suited the Latin temperament of Romanian players. Overall, for our expert the arguments "more than proved that the use of this method combined the innate qualities of the Romanian players with the momentary technical possibilities of domestic soccer"²⁶⁹, hence opening the way for future progress and success.

As for the perceived differences between the two W's, Economu identified four points of divergence. His "Romanian W" did away with the "wandering inter"; the lateral midfielders, rather than the inters, were called to block the opposing wingers; the central midfielders would be much freed of defensive responsibilities to become the leading connectors of play; and it was

²⁶⁷ These included Arsenal's W formation consecrated by Herbert Chapman and the methods devised to counter it by Manchester City, John MacAdam, "Phönix" Karlsruhe, and Aston Villa.

²⁶⁸ Economu, 1935, p. 174.

²⁶⁹ Economu, 1935, p. 174-175.

the sole task of the defenders to stop the rival centre forward now that the central midfielder no longer followed his every move²⁷⁰. The restriction placed upon the freedom of movement of the playmaker was again due to the perceived lack of experience among Romanian footballers, but he was ready to bend that rule whenever and “exceptional player” came along²⁷¹. The discussion regarding the wingers was supposedly aligned with “the very reason of Latin play” where they played a crucial role in supporting an offensive approach to the game²⁷².

The author moved to minutely detail the requirements of each playing position, to define a complete program of training, to plea for institutional reforms and to discuss and explain the rules of the game. Throughout, Economu insisted that it was about time for Romanian players and officials to take the game seriously, to work hard and to prepare. The recommendations were interspersed with often harshly worded premonitions of the horrors laying ahead unless the road of progress is followed. Humiliating results that would “shame generations of Romanians”²⁷³, the failure to use the game “in the service of the nation” would “compromise the good name of the Romanian people”. Overall, “if we do not seriously care for progress, with all the means at our disposal, we commit a veritable crime against the vitality of our race”²⁷⁴.

Economu’s early work can be read as a powerful statement regarding football’s role in the construction of a modern nation backed by a strong assertion of the game’s hierarchical organization much resembling the ideas of the state in circulation at the time. In Economu’s work, football becomes much more than a simple team sport. Starting from the game’s pervasiveness and popular appeal he goes on to formulate a veritable procedure of modern nation building. The first move was to identify the Romanian national spirit hardened in the form of

²⁷⁰ Economu, 1935, p. 172-174.

²⁷¹ Economu, 1935, p. 172.

²⁷² Economu, 1935, p. 185.

²⁷³ Economu, 1935, p. 274.

²⁷⁴ Economu, 1935, p. 297-298.

innate Latin characteristics, very much in line with the medical and eugenic social vision in currency at the time (see Bucur 2002). The second concerned the identification of the system of play that would best suit Romanians' qualities. Provided the starting premise, the developments in Latin countries appeared to be most compelling. Out of these two elements, Economu defined a system and a style of football that in their actualization were none other than the Romanian nation at play. Economu was keenly aware that for his national and nationalist synthesis to triumph sporting training and moral education made equally critical components.

1969 – The Socialist Synthesis

In 1969 Virgil Economu came to define the “coordinator”, the footballer that we would most likely call a “playmaker”, that rare type of an extremely gifted midfielder able to connect the overall play of a team, through an analogy with the role of the “conductor” in classical music²⁷⁵. Just like a conductor, the coordinator was expected to “orchestrate” football play. In order to do so some outstanding qualities were obviously required. For Economu, the playmaker had to possess first and foremost, “an exquisite technique” and “tactical clairvoyance” properties which in their conjunction would allow one to “connect the game”²⁷⁶ of the team. In practice, such a player was expected “to conquer” the midfield, aiding the initiation of attacks and stopping the opponents’ offensive. Nonetheless, no full freedom was granted to the bearers of this upstanding role. Even this gifted footballer was supposed to function as an essential element of a “system of play” which Economu envisaged by deploying a painting inspired metaphor arguing that “the system of play is but the canvas on which the players have the freedom to purl

²⁷⁵ Economu, Virgil. 1969. *Fotbalul modern: ce este și cum trebuie să-l jucăm*. Editura Consiliului Național pentru Educație Fizică și Sport, p. 135.

²⁷⁶ *Idem*.

the loveliest arabesques”²⁷⁷. He immediately qualified this definition with the caveat that “the players have to draw the shortest road to goal, through a simple, direct and efficacious play, imposed by the realism of our days”²⁷⁸. For the connoisseurs of the “golden age” of Romanian football of the 1980s and 1990s Economu’s propositions can equally be read as an accurate description of the Romanians style of play of the time.

Long before Hagi’s rise to prominence, the par excellence model of “exquisite technique” and “tactical clairvoyance”, a plethora of playmakers was making its way in Romanian club football²⁷⁹. Moreover, the playing strategy of their teams equally resembled the aforementioned definition, balancing between “arabesques” and fast, direct play. Suffice it to mention that the 1980s Steaua Bucharest team was popularly known as “the rapids” (*viteziștii*) in recognition of the latter. Economu had sought to instill this strategy of play at the club since the late 1950s when he served as a technical director at the Army’s Central Club (C.C.A., later Steaua), where he developed the so-called “the CCA system”, later generalized into the “Romanian WM”²⁸⁰ system. His overall aim was to elaborate a distinctively Romanian style of play, one that would “put into accord the basic features of world football with the qualities of our players”²⁸¹.

The opportunity to thoroughly popularize his work in writing, beyond the practice developed at club level, presented itself in the late 1960s and early 1970s and well suited the interests of a Romanian socialist regime that was wholeheartedly embracing the “national ideology” of the interwar (Verdery 1991:100–101). In his major work “*Modern Football: what is it and how should we play it*” published in 1969²⁸² and republished in expended form in 1972,

²⁷⁷ Economu, 1969, p. 88.

²⁷⁸ *Idem.*

²⁷⁹ The likes of Nicolae Dobrin, Ilie Balaci or Ladislau Bölöni immediately come to mind.

²⁸⁰ Economu, 1969, p. 11.

²⁸¹ *Idem.*

²⁸² Republished in 1972.

Virgil Economu essentially provided an elaborate model of how to steer the “socialist realism” of the moment to national ends via the game of football. In a clear sign of the infrastructural growth of the game, similar to that in other communist regimes (See Riordan 2007), the textbook came out of the official publishing house of the National Council for Physical Education and Sport, assuring its nationwide distribution in all relevant institutions. The reference to the “modernity” of football in his title could not have been more apt. In the development of his Romanian style of play, Economu set out to reconcile some of modernity’s constitutive tensions into an all-encompassing national synthesis, best epitomized by the effort to mould the Romanians inborn characteristics into an imported and adapted method of play.

This work is particularly remarkable in the way it flanked and simultaneously responded to the political tensions of the time, while producing a coherent and convincing approach to modern football. First, the necessity to draw on foreign, mostly Western, takes on the game and in doing so to acknowledge their superiority was on a colliding course with Ceaușescu’s regimes’ overall critique of such models (see Verdery 1991:Chapter 3). However, the global appeal of the game, cutting across national boundaries and entrenched political divisions, well justified the move and showed the need to synchronize with these developments. Second, this work of adaptation reconciled the tension between the rigidity and dogmatism of previous modernizing efforts with the perceived need to allow some space for the manifestation of individual creativity and spontaneity. Economu’s insistence on the need to create “players-personality” (*jucători-personalitate*) speaks directly to this point. Third, this move allowed for a fully-fledged modern program of training and development of sporting talent to emerge, one aiming to strike an exact balance between broad societal aims and individual dispositions and

aspirations synthesized in the formula “*system-personality duality*”²⁸³. Their meeting point was to be found in the full identification with the nation in its socialist modality as well as in a centrally coordinated program of training that “would take it to the last sporting cell of the village”²⁸⁴. In this respect, achieving a Romanian style of play in football promised, and in many ways delivered, to tame and surpass some of Western modernity’s most intricate conundrums: instinct versus learning or autochthonism versus cosmopolitanism.

In order to produce “players-personality” able to uphold a distinctively Romanian style of play the textbook thoroughly mapped out the two major regions making up modern football: the characteristics of the human material at hand and the most advanced systems of play of the time. The central premise of the former was to acknowledge the Latin essence of the Romanians. Consequently, the analysis fully rested on one of the main pillars of modern Romanian nationalism: the Latinity of a people descending from Rome (see Boia 2001:Chapter 2). In the logic of national characterology developed in the interwar (Trencsényi 2012), this recognition worked to make the powerful statement that Romanians do make the credentials of European civilization and possess all the traits needed for progress and success. On the other hand, the premise made it necessary to acknowledge that Romanians shared into the “qualities” as well as the “defects” of their fellow Latin kindred. Economu elaborated a broad list of both positive and negative traits. In order to achieve sporting success Romanians could rest assured that “our youth, illustrating the fundamental qualities of the people, posses”: “a great agility”, “spontaneous and prompt reflexes”, “a great reaction speed”, “a lightning-fast intuition”,

²⁸³ Economu, 1969, p. 22.

²⁸⁴ Economu, 1969, p. 454.

“intelligence” and “élan”²⁸⁵. Each and every quality was immediately correlated with the role of a football player or with a sequence of play.

The combination of agility, “spontaneous and prompt reflexes” and reaction speed accounted for “the instantaneous starts”, “quick sprints” and “exceptional jumping” that Romanian players reputedly espoused. The same combination “conferred a stunning dexterity” to some of the past and present goalkeepers that Economu nominally enumerated. The “lightning-fast intuition”, an exclusive characteristic of the Romanian people according to our author, offers the possibility for the footballers to better anticipate play, better demarcate as well as make quick interventions for the ball. “Intelligence”, “one of our basic traits”, is held accountable for a host of tactical and practical skills: “rapid integration in play”, “a football of permanent movement”, “explosive play”, “changes in the rhythm of play” as well as for “the prompt solution finding to solve the new problems constantly emerging during the game”. Finally, the “élan”, supposedly the most distinctive Latin characteristic, can – in Economu’s words – “carry our teams on the wings of victory, if doubled by *a total commitment in play and an unflinching will to fight*”.

This list of remarkable physical and intellectual characteristics catches the eye of the reader mostly through its emphasis on one major category of modern football and modern life: “speed”. Rapid play in all its forms, from the circulation of the ball through passing to the movement of players, holds a major role in Economu’s system of play and is an essential feature of his Romanian style of play. Moreover, by identifying the key features of Romanian character and connecting them to actual or potential moments of play Economu’s exposition allows for a patterned reading of the game of football through the very categories that he defines. Immediately after his exposition, he went on to present a few games where these characteristics were manifest. Thus, the “innate vivacity”, the “élan” and the “dedication in play” were

²⁸⁵ Economu, 1969, p. 127.

supposedly at work when the Romanian national team won against the German Federal Republic in November 1967 and against Switzerland in May 1969 or when they drew against England and Greece around the same time. Nevertheless, for the trained eye of our distinguished observer the existence of these exquisite qualities was obviously not enough.

Consequently, Economu moved to investigate the insufficiencies clogging Romanian football. In a similar vein, he identified a series of “insufficiencies”, “mistakes”, “lacks” and “errors” comprising technical, tactical, and physical problems. Technically, most Romanian football players were poorly stopping the ball; their passes were often weak and misdirected; their control of the ball was inadequate; they were abusing the dribbling; their shots were lacking strength and precision; their header game was rather poor; pressing was a rare occurrence; their tacklings were aimed at their adversaries legs, rather than the ball; a rigid demarcation and equally rigid tricks²⁸⁶. Tactically, Romanian teams were noted for a recurrent series of “mistakes”: in attack, the players were not using the whole width of the field; play on the extremes was rarely used; the forwards were reducing the rhythm of play, rather than accelerating it, as they got closer to goal; the ball was not being played into contradictory directions to confuse the adversaries to create gaps and openings; again, the forwards rarely attempted to be “the first to the ball”. According to Economu, this series of tactical failures amounted to “a purely contemplative play”²⁸⁷. This style was supposedly on display in the poor performances against the likes of Hungary in October 1967 or Poland during the same year.

In spite of the noted abilities of the Romanian youths, the technician recognized a host of “physical deficiencies”. The most depressing of all was the lack of “speed endurance” that only allowed players to fully perform for half of the game or even less. Economu recommended a

²⁸⁶ Economu, 1969, p. 128-129.

²⁸⁷ Economu, 1969, p. 130.

more “austere lifestyle” to maintain “sporting form” as well as a greater preoccupation for “theoretical problems”. To all these problems, he added yet another section devoted to the “inappropriate execution of free kicks”. In here, a lack of “tactical reason” could be observed in almost every situation: the kickoff was superficially treated; at the throw-ins the players would not properly demarcate; the free-kicks systematically failed into the opposing wall; the penalty was “an undecoded mystery for many players”; while the goalkeepers showed a poor hand play. Unsurprisingly a list of recommendations immediately followed.

Economu urged players to show a “deep seriousness” in order to “*perfect their technical executions*”, to increase their “*endurance speed*”, to “*rationalize the game within a modern conception and through an own system*”, to “*consolidate their moral-volitional potential*” and to “*enrich their theoretical knowledge by incorporating the “newness” emerging among the best teams in the world*”²⁸⁸. In short, for a successful national style of play to emerge the raw qualities of players had to be subjected to an extensive and intensive program of training that Economu described as the “harmonization of basic factors into a singular and powerful armature”²⁸⁹. In line with the notional currency of the day, the envisioned training program was deemed to be a “multilateral process”. The claimed “multilateral” character of the process meant that no one region of training would be neglected or overemphasized in relation to any other. The metallic tinge of the term used to denote the desired end of the process – “armature” – might suggest an overall mechanic vision of the development and progress of Romanian football. Provided the Latin qualities (and deficiencies) of Romanian players a system of fashioning was needed to put them to good sporting use. It is important to take note of the fact that Economu’s system of play, at least in its later formulation, was by no means static or closed as its mechanic-

²⁸⁸ Economu, 1969, p. 132.

²⁸⁹ Economu, 1969, p. 133.

inspired framework might suggest. To the contrary, his vision was of a fully dynamic and relatively open mechanism, one allowing for both innovation and change.

Hence, how does Economu's system of play look like and how was it supposed to work? These questions address in turn the system proper that was to be taken up in Romanian football training and the practical indications offered to see it perform. Like any "armature", whose main attribute is connectivity between parts, the Romanian style of play had to connect a system with a set of supposedly ingrained qualities. The postulated immutability of the latter heavily influenced the selection of the former. Consequently, Economu turned to systems of play that appeared to be closer to Romanian characteristics. He moved to chart the "tendencies" in the organization of play coming out of the latest major football competitions, the 1966 World Cup, the 1968 European Football Championship and the preparations for the 1970 edition of the World Cup. This was not a simple mapping of available contemporary formula's, but a fully-fledged exposition of the historical transformations of systems of play, one expected to reveal future trends. At the outmost general level, Economu argued that the 1966 World Cup hosted by England saw a momentous shift in the overall conception of the game. The central question of the age was: *"How can the players' personality be more efficiently used to attain the final objectives in a collective setting?"*. His response was that the country that historically invented the system of play, England, "mined it in favor of *the movement of players, exclusively realized in the game's interest and indifferent to the classical playing positions*". In short, the rigidity and fixity of earlier formula's gave way to flexibility and movement on the pitch.

However, this development did not signal the end of the systems of play as such, but rather a qualitative and quantitative leap forward by the addition and the attention devoted to a new major dimension of play: dynamism. On the one hand, in order to please the purists,

Economu did identify five major formula's of play witnessed in England. On the other, he traced the implications of this development for the overall evolution of the game. His first observation addressed the fact that the “physical endurance”²⁹⁰ of players had vastly increased, allowing an “amazing elasticity” between the phases of attack and defense. Basically, the modern game blurred the differences between forwards and defenders, allowing for the contribution of most players to both moments of the game²⁹¹. In terms of tactics, this development pressured for the abandonment of fix defense structures²⁹² in favor of more mobile ones. By relying on the opinion of experts, trainers invited to a symposium in Snagov – a holiday resort in the proximity of Bucharest – in January 1968, from England, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Yugoslavia and FIFA official reports, Economu depicted two potential directions of development: either towards the “locking”²⁹³ of the defense or towards a better organization of the attack²⁹⁴.

He clearly and constantly advocated for the latter, not least for the increased spectacle offered by an offensive style of play. This stance was at least partly derived from the widespread contemporary fascination with the Brazilian style of play that was quick, technical, spectacular and often efficient. Symptomatically, Economu devoted a full-fledged analysis of the ups and downs of Brazilian football in the 1960's, observing the shift from the 4-2-4 formula towards the 4-3-3 one, which tended to strengthen the midfield and to make this compartment and its players into the make or brake point of modern systems of play.

However, this transformation posed a challenge at yet another level. As long as the systems were imagined and performed as more or less rigid structures, they allowed for a facile identification with the nations that produced or at least adapted them. Their limited variability

²⁹⁰ Economu, 1969, p. 24.

²⁹¹ Economu, 1969, p. 25.

²⁹² Economu, 1969, p. 26.

²⁹³ “Betonare” in Romanian

²⁹⁴ Economu, 1969, p. 33.

made possible their association and integration into even broader configurations, from nations to sub-continental and continental figurations to civilizations. To a certain extent, Economu's interwar exegesis already offered such an integration. As a result, the major categorization of styles of play followed the civilizational distinctions within Europe. Thus, one could ponder about an Anglo-Saxon style, a Latin style, a Scandinavian one, and later Latin-American, and so on. The transition from static to mobile patterns of the game blurred the clear-cut distinctions between compartments and threatened to also blur the differences that allowed for easy categorization. Economu well sensed that when he argued that:

As long as football on our continent is concerned, we believe that there is no longer the need to argue for the existence of deep differences between the Anglo-Saxon football and that of Latin people, between the play of the Nordics (especially Sweden) and that of countries in Central Europe. Even here, we find a colorful mosaic, between Austrian football (the Viennese waltz) and the Hungarian one, between Czechoslovak and Yugoslav play (the latter closer to the Mediterranean style). However, even for the people of Latin descent (*obîrşie*) – the Italians, the Spaniards, the French – it cannot be said that that uniformity of play exists, the one to be expected from their well-known common “vivacity”.²⁹⁵

Nonetheless, our football expert went on to argue that differences in style were clearly observable among nations, but disputed the simple conclusion that there simply are as many styles as nations. His point of integration was much more subtle. Economu claimed that the globalization of one major system – “the four defenders system” – did not erase the national specificities, but that “it takes different forms among the people adopting it”²⁹⁶. Hence, the various national styles and systems are but varieties of the dominant one, “hypostases of the

²⁹⁵ Economu, 1969, p. 79.

²⁹⁶ Economu, 1969, p. 80.

modern game, to which the football of each country brings its substantial contribution, enriching its content and diversifying its forms of manifestation, making the sport with the round ball the most widespread, most loved, but also the most controversial discipline on the globe.”²⁹⁷ Anderlecht’s “defense in line and offside play”, Helenio Herrera’s “il libero” at Inter, the Federal Republic’s defensive “lock”, Hungary’s “retreated center”, best interpreted by Hidegkuti, were all such variations. However, Economu’s theory did allow for the possibility of radical change arguing that any such variation might generate other variations and could ultimately lead to the formulation of a new system. In this conception, developing a national style of play was, indeed, a necessity. Due to the hegemony of a single major system, only national characteristics could account for its various actualizations and could bring differentiation into the system. The one major implication was that no “servile imitations”²⁹⁸ could ever work.

Developing a Romanian style of play thus called for a thorough analysis of the “organization of the modern game”²⁹⁹. Economu proceeded to present the main characteristics of modern football. The opening premise was that the modern game necessitates both “a highly developed individual technique” and “a profound knowledge of collective tactics” with the addendum that the players do not just fit into the tactic, but “*create it*”³⁰⁰. The modern game was first and foremost composed of “*speedy executions*” requiring a fully developed physical fitness. Consequently, Economu insisted that alongside the “qualities of our youth” their “physical endurance” must be developed. The development of “tactical thinking” was yet another imperative, as the flexibility of the modern systems of play called for a quick translation from offense to defense and back. Besides tactical thinking, the training process had to include ways

²⁹⁷ Economu, 1969, p. 81.

²⁹⁸ *Idem.*

²⁹⁹ See Economu, 1969, Chapter X “Despre organizarea jocului modern”.

³⁰⁰ Economu, 1969, p. 240.

to boost the morale of the players, as the “psychological factor” was growing ever more important. Accompanying this latter development, Economu notes, is the increased importance of the coach, whose “role” becomes more and more “creative” called as he is not only “to model the players technically and tactically, but also to preserve and strengthen their psycho-physical fitness”³⁰¹.

As I have already noted, the new feature of modern football was its perceived dynamism. Economu saw “dynamism” in the context of a growing “elasticity” of systems of play where players were called to swiftly shift from offensive to defensive positions and roles³⁰². Among the notable consequences of this transformation were the blurring of neatly defined roles and the emergence of the “rhythm” of play as a major tactic. He went on to explore the potential of this tactic and noted that two uses were currently dominant. Football powerhouses, such as the English, the Soviets and the West Germans, were accelerating the rhythm throughout the ninety minutes of the game “in order to suffocate their adversaries”³⁰³, while a kind of opportunistic use was deployed by the likes of Brazilians, Hungarians, Italians, Spaniards, and Bulgarians, whom only accelerated in certain moments when their opponents “were showing signs of fatigue or confusion”³⁰⁴. Our expert duly noted that both alternatives are equally good as long as they are “logically applied”.

Last, but not least, the modern game was “realist” and animated by an “offensive spirit”³⁰⁵. Economu did not understand the latter as an all-out attack, but in conjunction with the supposed realism, it meant that equal attention is devoted to both phases of the game. This called for defensive “prudence” and a varied, fast, counter-intuitive offensive. The view was in line

³⁰¹ Economu, 1969, p. 244.

³⁰² Economu, 1969, p. 245.

³⁰³ *Idem.*

³⁰⁴ *Idem.*

³⁰⁵ Economu, 1969, p. 251.

with his oft repeated credo that in the game of football the attack takes precedence over the defense, on the grounds that the offensive work is inherently constructive or positive, while the defensive one is destructive or negative. In his conception, the two moments of the game are not qualitatively equal, as much more effort goes into construction, than into destruction. It is thus the offensive that best characterizes the game. The in-play indicator of the offensive spirit was the “circulation of the ball”, which was expected to be as quick as possible. In order to accomplish this and all the other tenets of the modern game Economu moved to thoroughly present the practical implications of the overall conception, by devising “tasks” for each and every compartment of a team, for each and every player position and for the execution of various free-kicks.

I will not delve into the minute details of Economu’s recommendations, but rather select those described moves and formulations that have made it well beyond his textbook. He devotes a lengthy chapter to review and discuss each of the above-mentioned tasks complete with minute graphic illustrations of most of his pedagogical remarks. First of all, the “Romanian system” was a flexible one premised on the template of the leading model: “the system with four defenders” or its variation, the system with “il libero”. It is worth noting that the Romanian national team of the early 1990s very well executed the latter, with the reputed defender Miodrag Belodedici in the role of the “libero”. The Italian term refers to the freedom of movement of the defender called to sweep any ball falling in front, and especially behind, the line of four defenders. In line with his overall conception, Economu devoted most of his attention to the work of forwards and their interplay with the midfielders in the attack. In relation to this moment of the game and how to best play it he coined a series of terms that were to make a career in reading and understanding Romanian football: “offensive nucleus”, “magic triangle”, “turning plaque”, “magic square”.

All of these terms should be seen as an attempt to formalize moments of a game of football understood as inherently dynamic and flexible, thus defying any easy categorization. Moreover, they all engage the most spectacular part of the game when one team takes possession of the ball and moves from defensive to offensive positions and its players advance towards goal. For example, the “magic triangle” refers to the moment when an advancing player in possession is supported by teammates positioned around him so as to maximize the number of potential passes and thus to confuse the defender looking to make an interception³⁰⁶. “The magic square” refers to the combined efforts of wingers and midfielders (in a 4-2-4 system) to maintain possession while creating gaps in the opposing defense. The “magic” character of it all derives from the maximization of uncertainty that these strategies suggest, where a pass could hardly have been predicted and, if successful, should lead closer to goal.

The tasks of players according to their positions are probably even more interesting. While the defenders motto in the Romanian system was “*the defense recaptures [the ball] in order to construct*”³⁰⁷, the midfielders, especially the central ones, had to simply be “extraordinary” in both offense and defense, the best of Economu’s attention fell on the forwards. Starting from the basic observation that the number of forwards had decreased in the modern game (five in the classic W or WM systems, four or three in contemporary formulas) Economu went on to note the growing responsibilities and the functional differentiation of the center forwards. He distinguished two types of such forwards: the “scorer” and the “coordinator”. The former was required to have a “great penetrating force”, “an impetuous élan”, “a special appetite for goals” as well as “a powerful and precise shot”³⁰⁸. However, the finest descriptions and recommendations refer to the latter. The “coordinator center forward” was

³⁰⁶ Economu, 1969, p. 145.

³⁰⁷ Economu, 1969, p. 176.

³⁰⁸ Economu, 1969, p. 157.

supposed to embody and perform all of the crucial skills defined by our expert. In terms of passing, he had to find the finest openings for the scorer delivering the ball “to the meeting” or “in-between”³⁰⁹. A move that Economu terms “the Czech lane” after a goal scored against Brazil in 1962 after such a pass. Their game was required to be “explosive” with sudden change in speed, fast sprints, swift changes of direction, unexpected turns and stops, “and raids in the rival defense”³¹⁰. In order to achieve this, the coordinator’s technical skill had to be way beyond average, while “tactical clairvoyance” was a must. Their tasks did not end once possession was lost, quite to the contrary. The coordinator center forward had to immediately attempt to get it back through an assiduous pressing game. In short, the coordinator was the individual embodiment of the Romanian system of play, realizing the crucial link between inborn national talent and the modern system of play. It is the fusion between these two poles of modernity denoting at once the organic and the formal, the national and the global, the opens a way of understanding the aura around football luminaries like Pele, Maradona, Eusebio or in its Romanian incarnation Hagi – “the Carpathian Maradona”, one of his many appellatives.

To be sure, the exposition depicted Economu’s intricate molding of character and system in order to elaborate a national style of football. It presents a sophisticated attempt to ground the nation as the focal point of reference of the sport under the pressures of state socialism and the global transformations in late modernity. On the one hand, the account salvages notions of essential, deeply ingrained civilizational characteristics as the building blocks of the nation in the shift from socialist internationalism to national communism. Football becomes one way of making them manifest. On the other, all the contemporary tropes characterizing the operation of the world-system make their way into this analysis of football. The depicted transformation of

³⁰⁹ Economu, 1969, p. 160.

³¹⁰ *Idem.*

the game meant “speeding”, “acceleration”, change of “rhythm”, “flexibility”, terms habitually reserved to describe the economic and cultural transformations affecting contemporary societies in the age of globalization. This has posed a renewed challenge to the hegemony of the nation to organize the game of football and our expert suggested a way to nationalize a global system of play, quite contrary to stories of its inherent cosmopolitanism.

Discussion

The problem of football systems and styles of play has but recently received attention from sociologists. In his sociology of the “global game” Giulianotti devotes a full chapter to these problems and hopes for a debate on the topic among interested scholars (2007:129). He critically engages the major analytical problems obstructing research on these topics and discovers a challenge in bridging “aesthetic perspectives” with “functional” ones, stemming out from the tendency of the former towards closure and the tendency of the latter to invoke the “reproduction of wider social relations” by way of explanation (Giulianotti 2007:128). One way to analytically engage the question of styles and systems of play in their historical transformation is suggested by recent developments in the historical sociology and anthropology of intellectuals and social knowledge. In this field, efforts have been made to expand narrow views of intellectuals and their work as well as to inquire not only about knowledge formation, but to seriously look at its diffusion and grounding.

Hence, one way of seeing, engaging and accounting for the force of Economu’s formulation for a Romanian style of play in football is to treat them as an intervention in the formation of “dialectical social knowledge”, that Dominic Boyer astutely describes at work in modern German culture (Boyer 2005). Boyer defines “dialectical social knowledge” or “dialecticism” as “knowledges of social dynamics, relations, and forms that center on perceived

ontological tensions between the temporality of potentiality and actuality and between the spatiality of interiority and exteriority” (2005:10). He goes on to argue that beyond its rich philosophical life “dialectical social knowledge” or “dialecticism” “can also be found in the ideologies of states and political movements, especially those that speak of channeling a popular spirit “within” into a more perfect social order “without”. It belongs as well to the fantasies and terrors of popular culture” (Boyer 2005:11). He takes it to the Matrix film series in order to convey his point, but I believe that the thrills of football can equally well illustrate his theoretical message.

The case at hand presents one such illustration. We have just presented the work of the leading expert of football in twentieth Romania belaboring to channel the “innate” Latin spirit of his people into an appropriate model of tactical order in the pursuit of a Romanian style able to deliver sporting performance and international glory. In doing so, he was compelled to make extended recommendations regarding the ways in which to best learn and best practice the game. More significantly, he produced a neatly circumscribed set of categories allowing future observers to dialectically relate back to his initial premises when following or playing their favorite pastime. Boyer’s theoretical position is especially fruitful in that it allows us to treat such works as located intellectual productions (rather than oddities), making possible the analysis of the creation of a national football culture, while fully permitting the historical exploration of the force of football in the constitution and reproduction of that national culture.

In his analysis of modern and contemporary German culture through the vacillations of dialecticism, Boyer explores the complexity of its positive as well as negative manifestations in key historical conjunctures. Tellingly, his discussion of “positive dialectical knowledge” revolves around the historical trajectory of a particular section of the population – the *Gebildeten*

– characterized by their spatial and educational mobility, and their institutional creation – the mushrooming voluntary associations of the 19th century that took the form of clubs (Boyer 2005:67–68). Such clubs were a place where the distinctions of high culture were produced and reproduced infused by a positive thirst of Germanness finally “coming into being” (Boyer 2005:70). The exchange of ideas in literary clubs was neatly paralleled by the exchange of blows and balls in sports clubs fuelled by the same drive to realize the nation (Naul, Hardman, 2002). This sense of the German qualities coming into fruition will resurface time and again in the German culture of the 20th century under different political auspices and with a changed meaning. Consequently, “unlike the Nazi uses of “*Kultur*” to signify a timeless national-cultural essence or racial power, [...], the SED used “*Kultur*” to signal a praxeological understanding of human activity undergoing dialectical, historical development” (Boyer 2005:118).

Such a shift is immediately obvious in the Romanian culture of the interwar and postwar with the game of football as a prime laboratory for its formulation and application. However, the specificity of football, and of modern sport in general, energized the notions of national culture printed on it. From an East European perspective, as a modern institution, the game of football was a thoroughly foreign model. Its successful adoption and development easily turned the game into an indicator of these societies modernizing potential. That is, for the local agents of modernization success in football showed that foreign models could indeed be accommodated and made workable *in spite of* the perceived backwardness of their societies and states. For one, Nairn has long presented the intricate relations between the ideologies of development and progress and the dialecticism of modern nationalism or its Janus-faced character (Nairn 1997). Sports, and most of all football, in their historical developement have been deeply involved in the production and reproduction of popular representations of the nation in its dual form. We

have seen how easily our expert moved from war to peace, from aggression to care, or from class conflict to social harmony in his depictions of the game. In a fundamentally unequal world football's appeal promised to tame or at least misdirect the qualms of the lower classes in the never ending saga of national celebration and achievement. However, Boyer's analysis is a convincing reminder that to temporarily reconcile "spirit" and "system" a constant work of imagining the community of the nation is needed, presupposing as much ideational as physical work. The parsimony (in terms of rules) and non-exclusivity (in terms of the required physical abilities) of football, backed by its highly competitive structure emerged as an excellent institution to perform this works.

The two textbooks discussed here took the promise of football seriously and moved to domesticate it. In the first intervention, football afforded Economu a way to make the unchanging Latin national essence of Romanians manifest, while the most advanced system of play of the time, with some minor revisions, provided a ready-made set of relations to put those qualities to work. The end result was supposed be a Romanian style of play - pure and simple. The catch is that, in spite of the clumsy premises providing no real chance of logical resolution, a Romanian style of play did emerge *in the eyes* of Romanian football enthusiasts, with a long impact upon the national development of the game. At the same time, the football culture supporting the style was thoroughly nationalist, viciously racist, fully masculine, and so on, that was reproducing the dominant national culture of the period. Comparatively, the later intervention, while preserving the premises presented a new national football culture, this time committed to the development of a *Romanian* socialism that was growing evermore nationalist, but less racist and at least more muted in terms of gender relations.

However, beyond the reproduction of dominant ideas and images of the nation at various moments in time treating football culture as a region of social life where dialectical social knowledge is made and remade allows us to at least envisage the force of this process in everyday life. Football experts are but a small minority in the world of the game, their ideas being circulated and mediated by various institutions, among which sports journalism is key. One of the crucial points that Boyer makes is precisely the fact that it is this work of mediation that should capture our attention, the ongoing flow of representations inundating the everyday life of the many. Sports journalists have been crucial in debating, dismembering and reassembling systems and styles of play. Moreover, football is certainly among the most talked about subjects in the world assuring the making and remaking of such knowledge. The categories used, the hierarchies made, the described images all matter in the constitution and transformation of a style of football. We have seen that in the Romanian case, as well as in many others, the notion used have been thoroughly national, best epitomized in the successes of the Romanian football of the 1980s and 1990s and very much in play to this day.

Epilogue

The strings of success of the Romanian national football team during the 1990s could not but alter the popular stories and histories of the game. Retrospectively, the deeds of Hagi's "golden generation" were understood to have finally delivered on the promise of national glory that animated the game ever since the interwar. In many ways, the timing of the golden generation's emergence could hardly have been more ironic. The societies of post-1989 Eastern and Central Europe witnessed shocking patterns of transformation. The transformations were shocking in their profundity, pace and complexity. Analysts were quick to dub the period that followed the collapse of communist regimes in the region as "transition". In one way or another, transition referred to the passage from state-socialism to market-capitalism. Its hallmark strategy was privatization. With a vivid experience and memory of late socialism in the background any opposition to privatization soon became so morally loaded to be hardly tenable. The radical reconfiguration of social, political, economic and cultural relations in post-socialism brought about insecurity, confusion, engendered personal and collective dramas, and created a vast opportunities for financial gain and loss. In this context, the successes of the Romanian national football team were soon a major, maybe for quite some time the central, rallying points of the nation.

However, as soon as the triumphs were evermore more rare it became obvious that the system that made the emergence of the "golden generation" possible was nowhere to be found. In fact, the trajectory of the golden generation of Romanian footballers is yet another reminder of the structured nature of sporting performance as well as of the highly malleable nature of its interpretations. Throughout the dissertation most of my attention has been devoted to exploring the latter. I have traced the sources of a Romanian interpretation of the game during the interwar,

the ways in which these understandings shaped institutions and projects, the frictions that they brought about and briefly touched on their reworking in socialism. At various moments, I have argued that football was a central institution in the making of the Romanian nation in the twentieth century. It was set up and designed to offer a point of national integration, a sense of national belonging and an affective national space. Nonetheless, the exploration of one of Transylvania's leading sports club - "Universitatea" Cluj - showed that local and regional identifications endured. Their salience often posed a critical challenge to the totalizing pretensions of Romanian nationalism.

Romanian football and team-sports in general, were deeply embroiled in the dissemination and instilling of national ideologies, of their accompanying images, of moral virtues and patterns of action. Specific to its historical making was the continuously renewed expectation for the coming of those Romanian sportsmen, and later sportswomen, able to make Romanian "qualities" manifest. In one way or another, all of the already discussed authors and their works have attempted to describe, to devise and often implement strategies and procedures that would make such manifestation possible. The sturdiness and resilience of these ideas in opposed and radically different political regimes, in face of massive social transformations, across shifting cultural points of emphasis, stresses the strong alliance between sport and nationalism in modern Romania.

Emphasizing this alliance does not make a claim for its complete exceptionality. Similar expectations were at work and a key component of sporting ideologies wherever competitive sports took root. This is especially the case for the nations that lead the way of the modern sports revolution. The successes of, for example, British, German or American athletes and teams, often led to questions of how to best secure and preserve excellence and a hegemony of winning.

Traditions of sporting triumph thus generated an altogether different set of problems, issues of maintaining and reinforcing a superiority that was already manifested and had proved its worth. For a nation and a sporting tradition that was later to emerge and affirm itself, the efforts, plans and ambitions of the world leaders become models to be partly or fully emulated. The Romanian case convincingly shows that such emulation risked jeopardizing those emblematic features that gave specificity to the nation. Consequently, rising up to the template fundamentally required the characterization and postulation of a subject (athlete, team, club) and her or his particular features that would ultimately translate expectations into results. The Romanian sporting arena was thus made into a place where actual achievement would consecrate and give substance to a plethora of national traits, attributes, or virtues extending and bound to make an impact well-beyond the world of sport.

The focus on the interwar was primarily prompted by the rediscovery and attempted recapturing of this historical period after 1989. In order to emphasize Romania's democratic and capitalist credentials the Romanian post-socialist reinterpretation of history favored an often narrow and selective view of the interwar. The inter-bellum was made into an antithesis of the totalitarian post-bellum. According to this view, communism had done away with a Romanian tradition of parliamentarism, plural party politics, thriving national life or incipient small-size and middle-size capitalist firms premised on a domestic entrepreneurial spirit. From this standpoint, a relational and processual understanding of the making of the Romanian nation-state of the time and of the popular practices that worked to support or obstruct it could hardly emerge. Hence, the debates, the institutions, the popular appeal of sports and physical education during the interwar afforded an important and neglected entry point to explore Romanian nation building and state-formation. I was thus able to show how sports and physical education were

geared to accomplish territorial unification, national integration and state centralization between the two wars. In doing so, it was necessary to present the uneven, fragile and frail nature of Romania's development and to stress that rhetorics commonly far surpassed the level of actual achievements.

In spite of the meager results, the formative years of the Romanian sporting movement did create an institutional framework and a coherent enough legitimizing narrative that have secured its functioning and crystallized its overall aims. To further explore the tensions and contradictions as well as the achievements that marked the period I went on to detail the historical making and becoming of Universitatea Cluj, the student's sports club at the University of Cluj. Universitatea's history confounds with the history of Transylvania's incorporation into Romania. As such, the attention devoted to it allowed me to disentangle the web of mutually reinforcing connections between sports, physical education, nation and state in interwar Romania and after. I have traced these connections by analyzing the project that consecrated and set the club into motion, by investigating the memories that it brought about among its members and by exploring the history that established it as an icon of Romanianness in Transylvania.

The overarching aim of the medical doctor Iuliu Hațieganu, the chief artisan of the project of sport and physical education at the University of Cluj, was to create cohorts of future national leaders. Close to the eugenic visions in circulation during the interwar, Hațieganu espoused a pedagogical vision that called for an "integral education". Thoroughly national, his educational program placed the development of the physical body at its center, on the assumption that a fit body would mediate and harmoniously integrate the modern rifts between mind, soul and intellect. Consequently, the students' sports club was key to his endeavors. It was

meant to be a place to forge national character and instill the highest moral commands of the nation.

The space and time of the sports club emergence and consolidation had a major bearing on its subsequent historical trajectory. Since the territorial reconfigurations in the aftermath of the Great War, the town of Cluj in central Transylvania was a site of contention between the local Hungarian majority and the Romanian minority. The Romanianized University and its sports club were caught in the effort of promoting and ascertaining Romanianess locally, regionally and nationally. In navigating across these scales, the club soon found itself in support or at odds with the pressures and dispositions of a heavily centralizing Romanian state. Universitatea's identity emerged out of this conundrum. In short, its identity was a fragile one made of an ever renewed statement of allegiance to the Romanian national cause, one always underwritten by claims of superior civilization due to its embeddedness in Transylvanian realities. As such, Universitatea came to command popular appeal well beyond its hometown. Its football club, in spite of modest levels of performance for most of its history, attracted the loyalties of numerous Transylvanians and enjoyed a sympathetic following even in the capital city of Bucharest.

The memories of players and officials at the club paint a picture of the “youthful élan” that animated their efforts on the backdrop of lack and poverty. These testimonies are remarkable in terms of their production and content. Written by ageing former footballers/intellectuals they bear the imprint of authors with a thorough educational formation, very often followed by a successful professional trajectory. The football careers at Universitatea are placed center-stage and highly praised for its transformative effects in individual and collective trajectories. Reading them conveys a vivid picture of just how influential Hațieganu's project of the interwar

has been for several cohorts of students. Few, if any, fail to note the molding of character, the sense of duty and of national pride that got instilled on the playing fields of Universitatea. The recollections do offer a romanticized picture of Romanian public life in interwar Cluj. However, they are also highly informative in relation to the problems faced by the new Romanian administration in Transylvania and the challenges facing its efforts of national development. Moreover, tales and stories of Romanian devotion, loyalty and pride are often interspersed by narratives of social relations that cut well across ethnic and national life.

Such testimonies were surely made possible by the shift in the orientation of policy of the Romanian socialist regime under the presidency of Nicolae Ceaușescu, that came to be known as “the national turn”. This turn offered a major impetus to recapture the national traditions of the interwar and amply revalorized the ideas and experiences of the time. Hence, late in their life Universitatea’s sportsmen were confronted with an unexpected opportunity to affirm their worth and to be highly praised for doing so. It was in the late 1960s that the history of the club got its outstanding formulation. I have explored the ways in which “the Red Caps” (*Șepcile roșii*) became the ultimate narrative of Universitatea, consecrating it as “the champion of unbridled élan”. The student’s club in Cluj became the repository of Romanian values in Transylvania and the epitome of honesty and disinterested effort on the playing field. The source of this outstanding position was to be found in the élan of its students shaped by the educational programs of the University. The in-built vitalism of the postulated “élan” was a recurrent trope of Romanian interwar and postwar nationalism. The élan connected the Romanians with their Latin ancestors, distinguished them from their regional rivals, and allowed for an interpretation of modern sports as a key arena of its manifestation.

The memories and histories of Universitatea gained a renewed relevance and a brighter aura after 1989. In the early 1990s the universities in Cluj found it impossible to financially support the sports club. Universitatea entered the fray of shady privatizations, loss of property and assets, restructurings, administrations turning into an elephant in the room of local politics. The last two and a half decades of the clubs' history would in themselves make for a revealing study of social and political change in contemporary Romania. Suffice to say, that Universitatea continued to share the fortunes of its town and region, while striving to remain the icon of Romanianess that it once was. When Hagi and the Romanian national team were enchanting a global audience with their play in the United States, people all across Romania were still pouring to the Sports Hall in Cluj to claim their much increased wealth from a notorious Ponzi scheme. An equally notorious bank, the first private Romanian bank to open after 1989, was running its dubious businesses from Cluj and generously supporting the club. With this massive inflow of money, Universitatea found itself spoiled in the new pool of wealth, only to find itself in tatters as soon as the cash evaded the town. The turn of the millennium found the football team relegated to the third division.

Currently insolvent, barely hanging on in the top flight of Romanian club football, Universitatea's post-millennial history could hardly have been more dramatic and ironical. The club of "Romanian hearts", of "student's élans", of everything "pure and clean" in the muddy world of Romanian club football, found itself in the hands of a controversial businessman making his money out of waste disposal. The popular appeal of Universitatea was at a test throughout its recent history. In spite of declining levels of attendance, plaguing all of Romanian club football, the deeply rooted attachments for the club among Clujeni made the mobilizations on the club's behalf into the largest and most enduring protests to be seen in post-socialist Cluj.

Crowds of a few thousands regularly marched to push for viable solutions for the club's problems. At times the numbers of those taking to the streets surpassed the actual attendance inside the stadium.

In the process, nationalist slogans were given a new lease of life by the club's fans. From the late 2000s onwards, Universitatea's claim of representing Romanianess locally, regionally and nationally became acute with the unexpected ascension of its local rival C.F.R. The former club of railroad workers could boast a genealogy that went back to imperial times, soon consecrated in its official name C.F.R. 1907 Cluj. The fact that its patron has a minority ethnic background and that some of its loyal fans were traditionally Hungarian helped fuel and harden Universitatea's ethnic and national identity. In a few years, C.F.R.'s trophies far outnumbered Universitatea's. That sporting performances came on the left bank of the river Someș worked to resurrect Universitatea's image of a repository of virtues with lackluster sporting success. In doing so, the local nation was mobilized to defend the values that the former club of students stood for and in time-honored fashion the institutions of the state were summoned to defend it.

These recent events and reactions constitute a new episode in the history of sport, nation and state in central Transylvania that the dissertation discussed and presented. Universitatea was the *par excellence* institutional embodiment of the web of relations of modern sport, nation building and state formation in the region. I have shown that throughout the interwar and for most of the postwar, the club served and supported the nationalizing mission of the University in Cluj and was in its turn protected and sustained for its service. Its key function was to affect the integration of bodies, minds and souls under the aegis of the nation. In a nutshell, this meant shaping and molding the élan of students into national character. Sports, and most notably football, were geared to instill loyalty, devotion, comradeship, courage and ambition among the

future leaders of the Romanian nation. The club made every effort to underlie that these virtues were on display whenever its teams and athletes publicly performed. Most often than not, sportsmen, sportswomen and spectators gladly took up, shared and believed this narrative, making Universitatea into a focal point of reference for local, regional and national identity.

At the same time, sports among students in Cluj worked to harden the ideas of the Romanian state over the last century. Universitatea did so both directly and indirectly. As a public establishment of higher education, the University of Cluj locally represented the educational arm of the Romanian state system. Students were always made aware that it is the state that supports their education, and that it does so in keeping with its mission to improve the nation. However, the relative degree of autonomy enjoyed by the university coupled with the autonomy of modern sports did allow for the emergence of a gap in which the ideas of the state could be either questioned or reinforced. Faced with centralizing pressures during the interwar, leading Transylvanian figures at the University made every effort to safeguard something of a regional specificity, tradition and autonomy. Iuliu Hațieganu's project of physical education and sports for students in Cluj was born out and inspired by this tension. Simultaneously, the historical frailty of the Romanian urban middle class in Transylvania (and elsewhere) made the state into the paramount promoter and defender of national interests. Under these constraints, prosaic activities such as sports heavily relied on state support. The never-ending calls for state intervention on behalf of initiatives in the field worked to crystallize and establish a need and view of the state as the sole and ultimate protector of sports. Pace the contemporary praise of private initiative, historical record shows that it was state-backed public initiative that accounted for the development, as much as it was, of modern Romanian sport. Even the post-socialist "privatization" of sports clubs, football ones notorious in this respect, is quite remote from a

model of private enterprise. In actual practice, numerous sports clubs operate due to a transfer of public resources to private hands, purportedly better managed by the latter. No wonder then that “corruption” became the unofficial trademark of the game.

One consequence of this widely shared view of the state was the necessary emphasis on physical education. That is, on the mass, popular component of the modern system of physical development. I have shown that due to the crucial importance of the state in establishing a sporting nation, during the interwar and after, a configuration obtained in which sports were institutionally and rhetorically subsumed to the needs of physical education and later physical culture. In practice, the subsumption and incorporation meant first, that the state was left with a massive developmental task, at times perceived as a burden, to improve everything pertaining to the physical the well-being of Romanians and to also achieve sporting glory. Second, that sports and physical education rarely, if ever, enjoyed the degree of operational autonomy and political neutrality that practitioners and their backers often claimed.

In this context, future research might well investigate why it was that postwar socialist Romania achieved sporting glory in precisely those disciplines that merged the techniques of physical education with the competitiveness of sport. Feminine artistic gymnastics is one obvious case in point. Throughout the Cold War Romanian gymnasts performed to spoil the party of the traditional Olympic powerhouses: the United States and Soviet Russia. Tellingly, a tradition of international success also developed in fencing, rowing, boxing or weightlifting, all of them blends of high athleticism and competitiveness. At the same time, one could inquire about the underdevelopment of winter sports in Romania in spite of an inviting geographical endowment. Reasons of cost and of ethnic territorial distribution, with a high density of Hungarians in the inner Carpathian basin, might have been at work to neglect this area.

Overall, the story of Romanian physical education and sports during its formative interwar phase mitigates some of the points raised by some of the key scholars of nationalism and state-formation. Gellner's emphasis on modern industrialization and accompanying urbanization in the making of nation-states is reinforced by acknowledging the integrative role of sports. All the more so in a East European social formation where the opportunity to achieve territorial, political and cultural control along national lines emerged in a conjuncture where nationalism was already well established. Consequently, the sporting programs and clubs that emerged, Universitatea chief among them, always sought to advance the establishment and cause of the nation through sports. At this point, Benedict Anderson's insights on the making of the imagined community of the nation are avouched by the crucial role of certain individuals and groups in realizing and materializing the knowledge transfer and knowledge dissemination that nation-making presumes. Journalists, reporters, coaches, players, officials, students, intellectuals, university professors were all central in crafting notions of Romanian sport, in popularizing them and carefully managing their dissemination, reproduction and embodiment.

However, my exploration of some of the facets of Romanian sports and physical education best works to support and expand Nairn's assertions regarding the Janus-faced character of the nation form. Nairn perceptively argued that Western modernity's ideology of progress making its way in a world of structural inequality and highly unbalanced power relations soon turned nationalism into a developmental credo. As such, modern nation-states plunged into a catch-up race with the developmental leaders in which nationalism was simultaneously positive and potentially liberating as well as negative and potentially destructive. Nations could thus claim rights to independent, sovereign states, that would protect nationals from economic exploitation, protect their political, social and cultural freedoms protect their

physical and moral well-being. In actual practice, the affirmation of such rights almost universally came with an identification of one nation's enemies, the negation of other nationals' rights, attempts at economic subjugation, and even quenching of their political, social and cultural rights. The case at my disposal showed how sports were mobilized by the Romanian state with most of the positive reasons of national affirmation in mind, but also that negative visions were never far away and at times could even take precedence over the former.

Ever since the early interwar, Romanian clubs or national representatives played to win. Sports took up the nation's developmental credo and sought to manifest the nation's virtues in every venue from lousy arenas in small towns to shining ones in international competitions. Nonetheless, the historical record shows that national sporting performance was slow in the making. Sports were soon embroiled in operations of exclusion along the lines of ethnicity and race. Concomitantly, they also opened a space for rapprochement beyond ethnic, national or racial divisions. Sports in general and association football in particular thus present an illuminating case to unravel the Janus-faced nature of modern nationalism. Universitatea Cluj's memory and history is very much a witness to that.

What is more, is that the inability to achieve sporting glory did not only expose limits and failures, it did also trigger a process of learning to lose, a consequential series of moral lessons defining future responsibilities and obligations. Translated and reworked in physical education and sport, modern Romanian nationalism worked to attenuate national failures by fuelling the hope of better times and better days. Obviously, anything short than that would have been self-defeating. Acknowledging the impossibility of success would have meant denying the nations' conditions of existence and affirming its futility. Premised and promising universally recognized good and beautiful transformations of health, intellect, or affect, modern physical education and

sports secured the nation's unfailing character and constantly pressed for the state to intervene on its behalf. Hence, in the Romanian context of the interwar a historical configuration of sports, nation and state emerged that could at the limit do without high sporting achievements as long as it could uphold its crucial pedagogical mission in the service of the nation. Surely, Universitatea Cluj was the epitome of this process.

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