

History

ELITES, MINORITIES AND NATIONAL DISCOURSE IN MOUNTAIN BANAT IN THE 20TH CENTURY¹

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Abstract

This analysis focuses on the work of Cornel Groșorean, Freemason and founder of the Banat-Crișana Social Institute. There, with the assistance of some intellectuals from the Banat region, he laid the foundations of a current of thought based on the sociological philosophy of Dimitrie Gusti. Adopting the monographic technique from the latter, Cornel Groșorean and his colleagues began to scientifically study the issues of Banat society during the interwar period. The monographs written by the staff of the Banat-Crișana Social Institute brought to light various aspects of the Banat village that had hitherto been less known: the problem of depopulation and hygiene. The results of this research were published in Revista Institutului Social-Banat-Crișana [The Journal of the Banat-Crișana Social Institute] between 1933 and 1946. In conferences and papers, Cornel Groșorean himself also followed these ideas of public and preventive hygiene, connected with the trend of ideas that characterised Hungarian Freemasonry, especially in the first half of the 20th century.

Keywords: Elite; national minorities; Freemasonry; national discourse; Mountain Banat; Cornel Groșorean.

1. An Intellectual Pioneer from Banat²

‘Cornel Groșorean was not only a great Romanian, a great man of culture, but also a man from Banat, who today cannot be replaced by anyone else [...] It will be a long time before a man of his stature, thought and soul can be formed. [...] The high and impartial scientific level of the discussions in his institute, the disinterested and uninterrupted work, with all the hardships of the war times, and especially the perseverance and self-sacrifice of the President of the Banat-Crișana Social Institute are the most beautiful memories [one can have with him]’.³ (Albert, 2009, pp. 24-39, our translation)

These all are superlative, well-deserved honours that the famous Banat scholar received in correspondence throughout his life. Cornel Groșorean, little known and hardly mentioned in

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²Varga, A. (2019). Cornel Groșorean, loja masonică Dél din Lugoj și ideea superiorității naționale maghiare. *Trivium. Revistă de gândire simbolică*. XI/1(38), 24-39.

³ Original version of the text: „Cornel Groșorean a fost nu numai un mare român, un mare om de cultură, ci și un om din Banat, care astăzi nu poate fi înlocuit de nimeni altcineva [...] Va mai trece mult timp până când se va putea forma un om de talia, gândirea și sufletul lui. [...] Nivelul științific înalt și imparțial al discuțiilor din institutul său, munca dezinteresată și neîntreruptă, cu toate greutățile vremurilor de război, și mai ales perseverența și abnegația președintelui Institutului Social Banat-Crișana sunt cele mai frumoase amintiri [pe care le putem avea cu el]”.

the historiography and media in recent times, has established himself as one of the most remarkable personalities of the cultural and scientific life of Banat in the period before and after the World War I. His contemporaries often associated his image with the remarkable achievements of the Banat-Crișana Social Institute. Beyond this, however, he remained a renowned scholar, a Freemason, a researcher, and, above all, a Romanian patriot who, more than once, chose to use his talents and vast knowledge in the service of his nation.

The biography of such a man is both interesting and fascinating. His vocation as a Freemason and the vast knowledge he possessed only helped him in his admirable endeavour to build solid cultural and scientific bridges, thus opening up new horizons in every area of his life.

Cornel Grofșorean (Bălan, 2001, pp. 207-217)⁴ was born on 27 October 1881 in the village of Periam, Timiș county. His parents originated from Comloșul Mare and eventually achieved a good material situation. His father, John, worked as a civil servant and later became head of the cabinet of Baron Tallián Béla, vice-commander of Torontal county. Baron Tallián even offered to be Cornel's godfather and gave him the second baptismal name Béla. This caused him many unpleasant experiences later in his adult life, as his political opponents often publicly attacked him, reproaching him for his family's alleged willingness to give up their Romanian identity for the sake of public dignity. (Albert, 2009, p. 12)

He attended the primary school in Debeleanca and Covăcița, the secondary school in Panciova, Becicherecul Mare, Lugoj as well as the Saxon denominational grammar school in Sibiu. He took his baccalaureate in 1900 at the Romanian Gymnasium in Beiuș and then he continued his studies at the University of Budapest. He graduated in 1905, and the following year he entered the Academy of Law in Oradea, specialising in administrative sciences.

In 1907, he enrolled at the Kécsmárk Higher School of Commerce and Textiles, and obtained a doctorate in law from the University of Cluj in 1909. Two years later, in 1911, he met again in Teregova and Bozovici with his former professor, the renowned scholar Jászi Oszkar, Worshipful Master of the Martinovics Lodge in Budapest.⁵ During his stay in Banat for sociological field research, he advised his former student, Cornel Grofșorean, to continue his sociological studies and publish them as soon as possible. (The Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge. Martinovics Lodge, 1907/1919, p. 13)

Contrary to what he had been told by advisers, Cornel Grofșorean settled in Lugoj in 1913, where he decided to work temporarily as a lawyer and publicist. From 1910 his articles were published in the Lugoj newspaper *Drapelul* [*The Flag*]. His interest in sociology was revived in 1921, when the famous Romanian Social Institute began to operate in Bucharest. Its affiliation entailed, among other things, the extension of the eugenics movement supported by the Bucharest School of Sociology in Banat (Albert, 2009, p.18)

Later, in 1932, Grofșorean founded the Banat-Crișana Social Institute, where, with the help of some Banat intellectuals, he laid the foundations of a current of thought based on the sociological philosophy of Dimitrie Gusti. Adopting the monographic technique from the latter, Cornel Grofșorean and his colleagues began to scientifically study the social problems of Banat society during the interwar period.

The monographs compiled by those working at the Banat-Crișana Social Institute shed light on various aspects of the Banat-Crișana village that were previously less known: the problems of depopulation (Grofșorean, 1944) and hygiene (Grofșorean, 1926). The results of this research were published in the *Journal of the Banat-Crișana Social Institute* between 1933 and 1946.

⁴ Cornel Grofșorean (b. 27 october 1881, Periam, Timiș county – d. january 1949).

⁵ Budapest's Martinovici Lodge, one of the most radical in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, was founded in 1908. In its first 12 years, the Lodge had 88 members, the most famous being the poet Ady Endre and the renowned politician Jászi Oszkár, who became Worshipful Master of the Lodge in 1911.

It aimed to offer an accurate picture of all the work done by the Institute. Using social research, Grofşorean and his team also attempted to discern the direction of neighboring countries known for their revisionist and revanchist tendencies (Albert, 2009, p. 19). Particular attention was paid to the ideas of eugenics put forward by radical intellectuals in Budapest. Many of the intellectuals of the Banat-Crişana Social Institute were sympathisers and members of the Masonic Lodge *Martinovics*, to which Jászi Oszkár belonged. They also joined the already famous Sociological Society and were very present in the pages of the *Husztadik Század* magazine (Turda, 2014, p. 41).

For them, eugenics was the mechanism capable of providing a solution to the shortcomings that hindered the progress of the Hungarian state and society. The Freemason Oszkár Jászi, in his famous work of 1929, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, also referred to such shortcomings and offered an excellent sociological critique of the idea of Hungarian national superiority. He pointed out that the most important factor in its formation was that: 'In Hungary there were no crown lands that could have fostered the special consciousness of the different nations, and the result was that the political unity of the historical society remained much more compact and the leading role of the feudal classes, animated by the ideology of Hungarianisation and national unification, was less challenged.'⁶ More: 'The Hungarian aristocracy regarded its serfs as an inferior race, incapable of understanding their thoughts and feelings'⁷. (Turda, 2014, p. 70, our translation)

In other words, the identity stereotypes used to describe non-Hungarians played an important role in the construction of the idea of national superiority in Hungary. (Turda, 2016, p. 70) This created tensions, but also a substantial disparity between Hungarians and non-Hungarians, who had now reached the same level of political and cultural maturity.

Apáthy István, a biologist and renowned intellectual from Cluj, a leading member of the *Unio* Lodge in Cluj, also spoke out forcefully against the shortcomings that hindered the progress of the Hungarian state and society. (The Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge. *Unio* Lodge, 1892/1918) Worried about the issue of racial degeneration, which could significantly impact a nation, as well as about preventive hygiene plans, he emphasized the importance of public hygiene aimed at enhancing the conditions of social life. (Turda, 2014, p. 42)

In other words, the importance of eugenics in improving social and racial hygiene was particularly important: 'The improvement of public hygiene is one of the methods used by eugenics. The latter, however, has adopted methods derived from sociology on the one hand and from ethics on the other, but in the end it has adopted the method specific to biology [...] which consists in the deliberate selection of those elements that protect the race and in preventing the reproduction of individuals that could have a harmful effect on future generations'⁸. (Turda, 2014, p. 42, our translation)

Cornel Grofşorean also followed these ideas of public and preventive hygiene, connected with the trend of ideas that characterised Hungarian Freemasonry, especially in the first half of the 20th century. Born and educated during the period of Austro-Hungarian dualism, he was not indifferent to the polemics of the time, which revolved around the idea of Hungarian national superiority.

⁶ Original version of the text: "În Ungaria nu existau teritorii ale Coroanei care ar fi putut favoriza conştiinţa proprie a diferitelor naţiuni, iar rezultatul a fost acela că unitatea politică a societăţii istorice a rămas mult mai compactă, iar rolul conducător al claselor feudale, animate de ideologia maghiarizării şi a unificării naţionale, a fost mai puţin contestat."

⁷ Original version of the text: "Aristocraţia maghiară îşi privea şerbii ca pe o rasă inferioară, incapabilă să le înţeleagă gândurile şi sentimentele".

⁸ Original version of the text: "Îmbunătăţirea igienei publice este una dintre metodele folosite de eugenie. Aceasta din urmă, însă, a adoptat metode derivate din sociologie, pe de o parte, şi din etică, pe de altă parte, dar, în cele din urmă, a preluat metoda specifică biologiei [...] care constă în selectarea deliberată a acelor elemente care protejează rasa şi împiedică reproducerea indivizilor care ar putea avea un efect nociv asupra generaţiilor viitoare."

The intense policy of Hungarianisation that followed from here was strongly felt and had the effect of involving Grofşorean and the members of the Banat-Crişana Social Institute in the struggle for political and national emancipation, a phenomenon that was also observed among other intellectuals from Banat (Albert, 2009, p. 20). In this struggle, the Freemasonry of the Banat region, like that of the Hungarian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, deeply marked by the morass of nationalism, played a decisive role.

2. Freemasonry and the idea of Hungarian national superiority

On 16 April 1910, when Cornel Grofşorean was initiated into the ‘Dél’ Lodge in Lugoj (The Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge. *Dél* Lodge, 1892/1918), Hungarian Freemasonry flourished during the era of the Dual Monarchy. Under the coordination of the Great Hungarian Symbolic Lodge, there were 34 lodges in Budapest and 93 lodges in the provinces⁹, making a total of 127 lodges. They brought together an impressive number of 6000 Masonic Brethren (Gerő, 1949, p. 26). Most of them were leading figures in their fields. The construction of the new Great Temple on Podmaniczky Street in Budapest, which commenced on 2 October 1893, was finalized on 21 June 1896. This temple stood as a true symbol of a world that had successfully molded the community according to its own principles (Varga, 2017, pp. 254-265).

The Masonic Lodge ‘Dél’ in Lugoj was one of the most active in the Banat Mountains, thanks to the elite it managed to attract over time, the famous scholar Cornel Grofşorean being just one eloquent example.¹⁰ The Lodge also benefited from the special context offered by the town itself. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it had a remarkable cultural offer: reading associations and societies, various press organs, libraries, a cinema, prestigious schools and notable opera and operetta performances.

Since 1896, the Lugoj branch of ASTRA, *Asociaţiunea Transilvană pentru Literatură şi Cultura Poporului Român* [Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture], the largest pan-Romanian cultural association has been conducting intense cultural activities for the masses, utilizing the services of university extensions (particularly the one in Cluj) and promoting cultured art, folklore, ethnography, Romanian history (Luchescu, 1975, p. 23) and medicine.

Cornel Grofşorean’s interest in public and preventive hygiene can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, the director of the Lugoj ASTRA Department (Despărţământul ASTREI din Lugoj), George Popovici, a renowned scholar, settled in Lugoj in 1887 after completing his studies in Vienna. It was during this period that he began his intense political activity within the Romanian National Party, notably serving as a deputy in the Pesta Parliament. Engaged in various governmental bodies of the city and county, he endeavored to advocate for the interests of the Romanian nation. In doing so, he imparted a more dynamic character to the dissemination of science and culture, benefiting both the department and the community.

It was in this ebullient atmosphere that Grofşorean was invited to give a series of lectures on hygiene and the principles of healthy living in Lugoj and the surrounding villages. As he himself confessed: ‘Although I am not a doctor, as a man who has also studied medicine, I believe that I will be able to tell you some interesting things [...] because you, the people, are the foundation of the country’¹¹ (Grofşorean, 1926, p. 5, our translation).

⁹ In this case, we only mention those Hungarian lodges that were active in the Romanian space namely in the Transylvania and Banat: *Három fehér lilium* from Timişoara, *Fraternitas* from Arad, *László Király* from Oradea, *Tisza* from Sighetul Marmăţiei, *Három oszlop* from Braşov, *Hármonia* from Sibiu, *Irenea* from Caransebeş, *Unio* from Cluj, *Összetartás* from Arad, *Pannonia* from Braşov, *Losonczy* from Timişoara, *Bethlen Gábor* from Târgu Mureş, *Dél* from Lugoj, *Zsilvölgy* from Petroşani, *Hunyad* from Deva, *Oriens* from Caransebeş, *Bihar* from Oradea, *Kölcsey Ferenc* from Satu Mare, *Thales* from Becicherecul Mare.

¹⁰ The meetings took place in the premises of the Stock Exchange building at 8 Izabella Square, first floor.

¹¹ Original version of the text: “Deşi nu sunt medic, ca om care a studiat şi medicina, cred că voi putea să vă spun câteva lucruri interesante [...] pentru că voi, poporul, sunteţi fundamentul ţării.”

Secondly, his concern for public and preventative hygiene is also related to the fact that one year after his initiation in the Lodge of Lugoj, his former sociology teacher, Jászi Oszkár, caused an 'earthquake' within the Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge in Budapest. More precisely, on 3 February 1911, Oszkár presented a fiery speech in the Martinovics Lodge, considered to be one of the most radicals in Hungary.

The moment came immediately after his election a Worshipful Master of the lodge. It was an extremely passionate speech, which Jászi himself gave the suggestive title of *Masonic Programme*. The speech itself rests on two pillars, which Oszkár Jászi analyses in detail. The first pillar refers to the sociological conception of Freemasonry, and the second is explicitly called "Realpolitik" (Varga, 2012, p. 57).

When the famous Hungarian Freemason refers to the sociological conception of Freemasonry, he is first and foremost making a determined plea in favour of August Comte's view of sociology. That is to say, he proposes to focus attention on the social rules and mechanisms that both unite and divide individuals as members of groups and institutions. In his view, Freemasonry should serve as the cohesive force, the vanguard, which, through enlightenment and sociological insight, must understand and navigate these mechanisms. Without such understanding, the essential paths for state consolidation and national cohesion cannot be discerned (Varga, 2012, pp. 58-60).¹²

From his point of view, the adoption and exploitation of the above-mentioned mechanisms takes place in several fundamental steps: by promotion of the sociological institutions (Varga, 2012, pp. 58-60), by creation of new forms of state, with greater autonomy, offering nationalities greater opportunities for cultural, political and, above all, economic affirmation (Varga, 2012, pp. 58-60).

The second pillar of his Masonic programme focuses on "Realpolitik". With this concept, Jászi Oszkár proposes a profound reform of thought and ideas capable of ensuring a fundamental transformation of politics and mentalities in the Hungarian society. Jászi Oszkár considers this an indispensable aspect of the revival of the Hungarian nation, which had been engulfed in the turmoil of World War I, and proposes several ways of implementing this reform by:

1. Criticizing and reorganizing the old administrative system based on county nobility.
2. Promoting the elite and the middle class to effectively counteract the parasitic and reactionary aristocracy.
3. Forming an alliance between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry to establish a strong social foundation for societal development.
4. Studying the mechanisms underlying the progress and regression of culture, economy, and social structures.
5. Addressing and resolving national contradictions (Jászi, 1919, p. 26-40)

His criticism of the old administrative system is considered to be necessary against the background of his conception of the need to purify the past

'in order to be able to feel first of all the conflicting forces of society, so that without violence, without bloodshed, quickly and painlessly we can prepare the way that will bring the new to the fore (...) because progressive ideas would have a different effect in Hungary if they were also constructively related to the current problems of society and national contradictions, and not through the prisma of historical feelings and traditional exclusivist entanglements'.¹³ (Varga, 2012, pp. 58-60, our translation).

¹² Recalling the sociological concept of Freemasonry, Oszkár Jászi believes that it must be this vanguard that has the primary role in drawing up the battle plan for the reform of ideas and thinking, especially for the benefit of those who are too rich to think, too poor or too oppressed to reflect and preserve their dignity.

¹³ Original version of the text: "pentru a putea simți, în primul rând, forțele conflictuale ale societății astfel încât, fără violență, fără vărsare de sânge, rapid și fără durere, să putem pregăti calea care va aduce noul în prim-plan (...) aceasta pentru că ideile

Jászi Oszkár uses the term “traditionally exclusive entanglements” to denounce even medieval power structures that, he argues, have persisted even in the realm of mentality, such as counties of the gentry type and other clerical-political structures. One possible remedy for social tensions and imbalances, he contends, is a closer alignment between the bourgeoisie and the masses, i.e. the peasantry, who, he asserts, ‘need first of all a modern history worthy of respect, not in the service of any party, a history enlightened by the science of modern sociology, for which it is not necessary to discover new sources, but to use the existing ones, processing them with the research tools of the social sciences’¹⁴. (Varga, 2012, pp. 58-60, our translation)

In addition to the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, as a strong social foundation from which to launch the development of society, enlightened by the “new history” and under the influence of modern sociology, Jászi Oszkár considers that the elimination of national contradictions should be an equally important desideratum for any initiate who aligns with the kind of Freemasonry that genuinely contributes to the welfare of the nation and the country.

In order to eliminate these contradictions, he points out that the ultimate goal of all national groups cannot be anything other than an independent national existence, especially since - he concludes - ‘for every nationality it is vital to secure national statehood. If the national bloc is located in different areas, its homogenisation, i.e. its unification into a single national body, is self-evident, and its territory should be organised under a common statehood, if this does not disturb the majority national group’.¹⁵ (Jászi, 1919, pp. 26-40, our translation).

The reason why Oszkár Jászi argues so strongly in his speech for the establishment of new forms of nation-states with greater autonomy for nationalities is related to a certain conviction of his. According to him, as long as a nationality does not have justice and education in its own language, as long as the productive forces of the earth cannot be used constructively in common, frustration and social tension cannot help but arise from the “suffocation” caused by the powerlessness of cultural, economic and political development. (Jászi, 1919, pp. 26-40) This is especially true if, as a sociologist, the instinct of life tends not only to freedom but also to the affirmation of social forces. Therefore, the wider the social and governmental sphere, the more effectively populations and nationalities will cooperate on all fundamental questions. (Jászi, 1919, pp. 26-40)

His progressive viewpoints thus stirred a significant controversy within Hungarian Freemasonry, particularly when he advocated for the establishment of states with greater autonomy, providing nationalities with ample opportunities for cultural and political assertion.

The Great Hungarian Symbolic Lodge was divided into two rival camps: the conservatives and the liberals. The first of them believed that the ideas put forward by Oszkár Jászi and the rest of the brothers of the ‘Martinovics’ Lodge were leading Hungarian Freemasonry into ‘troubled waters’, and that the permissiveness and ease with which the granting of autonomy, national justice, national administration, national education and the proposition to use the national language for other non-Hungarian nationalities was only serving to create an ‘idol contrary to Hungarian national loyalty’¹⁶. (Varga, 2010, pp. 92-100)

progresiste ar avea un alt efect în Ungaria, dacă ar fi și ele legate, în mod constructiv, de problemele actuale ale societății și de contradicțiile naționale și nu prin prisma sentimentelor istorice și a încrengăturilor exclusiviste tradiționale.”

¹⁴ Original version of the text: “avem nevoie, în primul rând, de o istorie modernă, demnă de respect, care să nu fie în slujba vreunui partid, o istorie luminată de știința sociologiei moderne, pentru care nu este necesar să descoperim noi surse, ci să le folosim pe cele existente, prelucrându-le cu instrumentele de cercetare ale științelor sociale.”

¹⁵ Original version of the text: “pentru fiecare naționalitate este vital să se asigure statalitatea națională. În cazul în care blocul național este situat în zone diferite, omogenizarea sa, adică unificarea într-un singur corp național, este evidentă, iar teritoriul ar trebui organizat sub o statalitate comună, dacă acest lucru nu deranjează grupul național majoritar.”

¹⁶ Original version of the text: “idol contrar loialității naționale maghiare”.

The reluctance of the conservatives to accept Oszkár Jászi's ideology can be explained by the fact that many of them believed in the idea of Hungarian national superiority, and therefore granting such advantages to what they considered to be 'inferior nations' only placed the Dual Monarchy on shakier ground, thus increasing the risk of its implosion in an already extremely tense context.

From 1880, in Hungary, cultural nationalism gave way to radical nationalism, as the gradual spread of racial thinking and social Darwinism in Central Europe gave a biological justification for those cultural and historical theories that sought to explain why certain nations (such as Hungarians and Germans) were in positions of power while others (like Romanians, Czechs, Slovaks, or Serbs) were subordinate. (Turda, 2016, p. 16) In this way, members of the Hungarian and German elites constructed narratives that portrayed their nations as culturally and racially 'superior' and thus predestined to lead other national groups.

In response to this, Romanians, Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles began adopting the same racist and Darwinist rhetoric of the struggle for existence to articulate their resistance against assimilation into the German and Hungarian nations. (Turda, 2016, p. 16)

There was also strong opposition within the Great Hungarian Symbolic Lodge. The most virulent opponents of Jászi Oszkár were those of the 'Unio' lodge in Cluj, with whom other lodges in the Transylvanian region also joined forces.

As early as 1900, the brothers of the Cluj workshop were enthusiastic supporters of the famous programme *Theses and Agreements*, wherein they advocated for the perpetual enhancement of the moral and spiritual values of the nation.

Prominent names such as Teleki Lajos, Haller Károly, Deáky Albert or Apáthy István - the renowned university professor from Cluj referenced previously - were deeply troubled by the issue of racial degeneration, recognizing its potential to significantly impact a nation, as well as by preventive hygiene measures: 'It is not enough for Freemasonry to be at the service of the people if it is not at the service of the nation [...] for the powerful engine of Freemasonry's functioning must be love of country.'¹⁷ (Varga, 2017, p. 262, our translation)

The virulent attack launched by members of the *Unio* Lodge, along with other conservatives in the Hungarian lodges, against Jászi Oszkár and the *Martinovici* Lodge can be attributed to the idea of Hungarian national superiority, i.e. Hungarian nationalism, in its radical form after 1880, penetrated deeply into Hungarian Freemasonry and manifested itself even at the level of the super-elites.

Even upon the arrival of the Hungarian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference following the conclusion of the First World War, the significant tensions within the Great Hungarian Symbolic Lodge had not dissipated. It was one of the reasons why Hungarian Freemasonry was so internally divided and so isolated from the Masonic powers of the victorious countries in the First World War that it could not consistently support the Hungarian delegation at the Peace Conference and could do nothing to prevent Hungary's diplomatic disaster at Trianon on 4 June 1920.

3. "Respublica Masonica Banatica"

The "scandal of the century", which engulfed Hungarian Freemasonry against the backdrop of those supported by the venerable Jászi Oszkár, was inevitably felt in the Mountain Banat, in the 'Dél' Lodge of Lugoj. Cornel Grofşorean, a former student of the controversial Worshipful Master of Martinovics Lodge, who had brought Hungarian Freemasonry to "troubled waters", was also deeply affected by all these ideas. The hygienic concerns and health

¹⁷ Original version of the text: "Nu este suficient ca francmasoneria să fie în slujba poporului, dacă nu este în slujba naţiunii [...] căci motorul puternic al funcţionării francmasoneriei trebuie să fie iubirea de ţară."

advice he preached are also part of the Romanian elite's reaction to the idea of Hungarian national superiority.

He was also influenced by the stream of ideas emanating from his workshop in Lugoj, where the concern for the security of individuals and secular society, viewed as a sturdy foundation for the well-being of the nation, was frequently articulated.

In 1911, Vas Béla, the Worshipful Master of 'Dél' Lodge in Lugoj, presented a particularly interesting poster, in which he spoke of the importance of a Masonic workshop and its role in the life of the community. He also pointed out that:

'Freemasonry does not want to seduce people with charitable acts done out of pity, but it is a philosophical and progressive institution that must relate to the secular social system in order to eliminate the cause of unhappiness that exists here, and ultimately to impose a state social system of Masonic inspiration.'¹⁸ (The Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge. Dél Lodge, 1892/1918, LXXXVIII, our translation)

In his perspective, akin to how a Masonic lodge represents a "small country" within a vast Masonic empire, a city can function as a miniature "republic" within a larger federation of states organized in accordance with Masonic principles where fundamental freedoms, equal rights, and democratic principles are rigorously upheld. Only within such a framework could a "new man" be cultivated, liberated from the sources of his discontent. These include both external factors, such as social disparities stemming from unequal resource distribution, and internal factors like ignorance, apathy, instinct, and detrimental habits. (The Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge. Dél Lodge, 1892/1918, LXXXVIII).

Convinced that in the *Respublica Masonica Banatica*, where his workshop operated, the correction of bad habits in every layman was *sine qua non* for the health of the wishful "new man" who was to constitute a vigorous nation, Cornel Grofşorean aroused admiration with his health advice, teaching many about 'the most powerful medicines of nature that help man to remain sane, namely water and air.'¹⁹ (Grofşorean, 1926, p. 6, our translation)

He also emphasizes the significance of maintaining thorough bodily hygiene, as bacteria can enter the human body through the air, which is why 'when an ophthalmologist spits on the ground and the spit dries up, of the ophthalmologist's bacilli stick to the dust on the street and when the wind comes, they blow up, and if we walk a lot in the dust full of the ophthalmologist's bacilli, then we can expect to get sick too.'²⁰ (Grofşorean, 1926, p. 6, our translation)

It becomes evident that after 1900, the close interconnection between the individual and the racial community to which they belonged played a significant role in the development of a eugenic ontology of the nation. This led to the establishment of the human body as a symbol representing the collective body of the nation, conceptualized as an organism capable of biological evolution.

As an eminently modern response to the risk of cultural and biological extinction of the nation, eugenics created a specific scientific discourse whose legitimacy was based on the intense concern to improve the biological qualities of the population and to protect its health, or as the Freemason Cornel Grofşorean used to say, more than suggestively, during his campaigns through the villages of the Banat Mountains: 'Take care of your health and that of

¹⁸ Original version of the text: "Francmasoneria nu vrea să seducă oamenii cu acte de caritate făcute din milă, căci ea este o instituție filosofică și progresistă care trebuie să se raporteze la sistemul social laic pentru a elimina cauza nefericirii ce există aici și, în final, să impună un sistem social de stat de inspirație masonică."

¹⁹ Original version of the text: "cele mai puternice medicamente ale naturii care îl ajută pe om să rămână sănătos, și anume apa și aerul".

²⁰ Original version of the text: "când un oftalmolog scuipă pe jos, iar scuipatul se usucă, baciliile acestuia se lipsesc de praful de pe stradă și, când bate vântul, se ridică în aer, iar dacă mergem mult pe jos în praful plin de bacili atunci ne putem aștepta să ne îmbolnăvim și noi."

your children, for only a healthy and strong people can become strong and feared by all...'²¹
(Grofşorean, 1926, p. 6, our translation)

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²¹ Original version of the text: „Aveţi grijă de sănătatea voastră şi a copiilor voştri, căci numai un popor sănătos şi puternic poate deveni puternic şi temut de toţi...”

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