

everyone says that students have been able to oust professors whom they consider compromised or incompetent, in practice this has been limited to just 2 physics professors out of 600 faculty members in Cluj.

"It is hard to determine competence objectively", says Deputy Education Minister Paul Cornea. Professors do not go quietly but instead present glowing recommendations written by colleagues, he explains. Some cases may ultimately land in court, he says, but university rectors are afraid that they will lose these cases.

Research has almost disappeared at universities, says Cornea.

Philosophy students at Cluj complained that it had been years since students had been allowed to do research after completing their studies. Nearly everyone had gone directly into teaching.

Cornea confirms that this is not an isolated case.

Therefore, Cornea disagrees with the plan to reattach the institutes to the Academy. "The Academy is not necessarily the best place for the very best [researchers]", he says. "I am afraid of too much bureaucracy and centralization." But he does not have an alternative for absorbing these institutes into universities. "No one has asked me", he says.

Cluj University rector Ion Haiduc, who was elected by secret ballot on 26 January, says that these institutes could present a financial burden on the universities if they were absorbed as they are. The institutes themselves would rather be affiliated with the Academy because of "prestige", he adds.

The Education Ministry is working now on a "framework" for coordinating research and education at universities. Though there may at first be a "struggle" between the Ministry and the Academy, Cornea is confident that they will find a way to cooperate.

The universities' immediate needs mirror those of the Academy: open access to Western books and journals, travel grants for Romanian students and researchers, guest professors from outside and more modern equipment. Nearly all of these cost money, which the government does not have, says Cornea. Even the freedom to travel is not useful if there is no money for the ticket, says Haiduc. He intends to use some of the promised tuition money on travel and the rest on Western books and other supplies.

Haiduc is cheered by the many universities that have reestablished contact with Cluj since the revolution: Dijon, Rouen, Paris, Geneva and several United States universities have all expressed an interest in bilateral contacts. "Now all we need are some contacts with Great Britain", Haiduc says.

Steven Dickman

Parlez vous Hongrois?

Cluj

FOR the idealistic students who helped bring about the seemingly impossible revolution in Romania in December of 1989, solving the ancient problem of ethnic rivalry in Transylvania might have seemed like an easy encore.

But for the students in Cluj, a university town in northwest Romania in the heart of Transylvania, the news on 21 March of ethnic violence in Tirgu Mures, 75 kilometres to the east, dealt a dispiriting blow. The violent clashes, in which eight people died and three hundred were injured, rocked all of Romania, which is still in a national state of mourning for those who died in the December revolution.

Ethnic conflicts seem certain to present one of the largest problems faced by the new government when it takes office later this spring.

Nowhere have the tremors been felt more strongly than in Cluj, which lies on a straight line between Tirgu Mures and Budapest, closer to the Hungarian capital than to Bucharest.

The traveller's first impression of Cluj, sheep grazing next to the single runway at the airport, belies the city's economic and cultural importance. With 500,000 inhabitants, Cluj is Romania's second largest city. Ethnic Hungarians comprise roughly 30 per cent of the population, most of which is housed in the huge ugly blocks of flats characteristic of the Ceaucescu era.

One of the demands that triggered the violence was for the re-establishment of an autonomous Hungarian university in Cluj. The university has always been a focal point for dissension in Transylvania, which has changed hands between Romania and Hungary four times since 1867.

The old Hungarian university became a Romanian one in 1920, when Transylvania was given to the Romanians as part of the peace of Trianon. But the Romanian faculty was forced to flee to Sibiu in 1940 when the Axis powers gave the area back to Hungary. The university-in-exile returned after the war, and the Romanian and Hungarian universities existed side-by-side until 1959. Then they were merged into a predominantly Romanian entity with a small percentage of Hungarian faculty.

Because of the oppression and terror practised by Ceaucescu against the entire population, overt ethnic battles were reduced as all groups struggled just to survive. But now Ceaucescu is gone, says Cluj history student Bresan Ligor, a Romanian, "the feeling of commonality is less". The Romanian revolution, says medical school professor Mircea Cucuianu, had the effect of "taking the top off a

pressure cooker." Now all of the hurts suffered by both sides in the past hundred years are free to burst out.

Hungarians complain of enforced Romanization and the inherent loss of their culture under Ceaucescu. They claim that the Ceaucescu regime discriminated against them in job placement, which was all handled by the state. And they fear the trend towards nationalism that some political parties are cultivating. In a nation with 20 million Romanians and just 2 million Hungarians, they are afraid that too much democracy is not necessarily a good thing.

Having a university is important, says philosophy student Ciprian Tripon, because without one, their language will begin to seem "unnecessary" to Hungarians. Hungarian student leader Istvan Horvath puts it more strongly: "We've made a compromise already by speaking Romanian. But it's something else to have to *think* in Romanian." Most Romanians respond to the Hungarian demands for a separate university as does medical researcher Florin Nicolescu: "Nonsense. Ultimately," says Nicolescu, "they will want their own state. [Having their own university] is where it begins." Other Romanians, like medical student Maria Hategan, say they believe the Hungarians do not really want autonomy from Romania. "They just have not said this clearly enough," she says.

The Romanians have their own memories of oppression during the Hungarian *belle-epoque* from 1867 to 1920. Immunologist Horea Rus explains that his grandfather had to 'Hungarize' the family name, a bitter memory to this day. Some Romanians practised passive resistance, Cucuianu explains, by selecting Latin names like 'Troianus' that have no Hungarian equivalents.

But after several hours of lively discussion between Hungarian and Romanian students, a limited consensus emerges. "The problem really begins when these discussions leave the university walls," says Tripon. "When the peasants start to discuss it, other tensions enter in and soon it is transformed into a problem that creates violence." After the events in Tirgu Mures, the Hungarian students' association, led by Horvath among others, has changed its plans for a second demonstration for the rights of Hungarians. Instead, he says, "We're thinking of having a demonstration against violence."

S.D.

THANKS

Steven Dickman wishes to thank Alec Pattison and Aura Vlad at the British Council; Nicolae and Maya Simionescu; and Florin Nicolescu and Horea Rus in Cluj.