

THE FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST AMPHITHEATRE OF THE FACULTY OF PHARMACY IN CLUJ

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Motto:

„The greatest happiness is born with the germ of tragedy in it.”
(Lucian Blaga – Thoughts) [1]

Abstract

The Faculty of Pharmacy of Cluj was created in 1948. The first dean was Erwin Popper (1906-1974) – professor of analytical chemistry. At the beginning of the activity the didactic spaces in this institution were not sufficient. Consequently, Prof. Popper tried and succeeded in solving this problem. In 1955-1957, despite financial and economic difficulties, he succeeded in raising a new building for the departments of Analytical Chemistry and Physical Chemistry. The most important part of this edifice was a modern, large and elegant amphitheatre of 200 places. This was the first lecture hall of the Faculty. The historical value of this amphitheatre was completed in 1957 with bass relief carvings, representing important pharmacists and chemists, such as Carol Davila, Ștefan Minovici, Constantin I. Istrati, Nicolae Teclu, Ion Vintilescu and Gheorghe Spacu. The artistic representations of these Romanian scientists were created by Virgil Fulicia (1907-1979) – professor of the Fine Arts Academy in Cluj.

Keywords: Cluj Faculty of Pharmacy, Professor Erwin Popper, “Popper amphitheatre”.

The Faculty of Pharmacy of Cluj was created in 1948. It was part of the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy, founded at the same time. The first Dean of the Faculty was Erwin Popper (1906-1974). He was one of the most prestigious and appreciated professors of the Medical and Pharmaceutical School in Cluj. Erwin Popper was professor of analytical chemistry. One of his most distinguished pupils – Prof. Dr. Honorius Popescu – mentioned that Professor Popper was „an exceptionally gifted organizer, exigent and efficient, able to assume important tasks, seek and find solutions for making the new created Faculty viable” [2].

The aim of this paper is to point out a historical moment in the evolution of the Cluj Faculty of Pharmacy: the building of its first amphitheatre, named „Erwin Popper”, in the honor of its founder. This was one of the biggest achievements of Prof. Popper when he was dean. This paper can be considered as a prelude to the commemoration of 40 years from Erwin Popper’s passage into eternity.

It is important to mention that in the beginning the resources of the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy were scarce. The Faculty of Pharmacy did not have its own lecture hall. Therefore it was very important and urgent to build an amphitheatre for the Faculty of Pharmacy.

Prof. Popper had two possibilities. The first one was to accept to build a small lecture hall to be enlarged in time. The second solution was to build a modern, large and elegant amphitheatre, which could be an impressive edifice for the academic life of Cluj. Popper was sure that the second possibility was the best and he chose it. The problem was that at the beginning of the '50s the financial and economic conditions in Romania were poor. But Popper had enough courage, abnegation and perseverance for obtaining the recommendation from the authorities.

There were more problems to be solved. Popper obtained an old building, situated near the “Pasteur Institute”, which had to be partially demolished for creating a new building. It is necessary to mention that this small building was the location of the Bacteriological Institute, led until 1947 by Prof. Vitold Baroni (1883-1973). A great difficulty was that there were only three workers, therefore

Popper co-opted the members of his Department to help the workers. Even the students accepted to give their help in completing this task. Even the technical conditions for the workers were not at all modern.



Prof. Dr. E. Popper (in the center of this photo) appreciating the work done for the new building.

The amphitheatre was built between 1955 and 1957.

It was inaugurated on the 25th May 1957. At this ceremony took part many members of the Academic community in Cluj, representatives of the Romanian Academy, of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture and of the faculties of pharmacy in Bucharest and Târgu Mureş.



The building founded by Erwin Popper a few weeks before its inauguration. After the death of Prof. Popper – in 1990 – this amphitheatre was named “Erwin Popper” in his honor.

It is significant to mention that Prof. Popper had permanently overseen the evolution of the whole work required for fulfilling in good terms this edifice. This task was done with a lot of energy and with great responsibility

for the future of this Faculty. Indeed, it was a proof of courage not to follow the official architectural style of that period. Popper selected an elegant and functional style, which is still appreciated by the academic community.



Erwin Popper verifying the furniture in new built amphitheatre.

The labor and the stress experienced by Prof. Popper during the time of the edification of this building affected very much his health. In 1958 Popper suffered a stroke. This was the tragedy of his life. Indeed this illness came when he was so happy that the building he created was very appreciated by his colleagues, by the students etc. With great effort, with his trust in life and with the help of his family he gradually regained his health and was able to continue his teaching career.

During his career E. Popper wanted to contribute to the cultural education of the students of the Faculty of Pharmacy. He also wanted to show his gratitude for important Romanian personalities in the fields of pharmacy and chemistry. So he decided that on the wall of this amphitheatre bas-relief carvings which form “the gallery of Romanian scientists” should be exposed. The masters represented in this gallery are: Carol Davila, Dimitrie Brîndză, Ştefan Minovici, Constantin C. Hepites, Dimitrie Grecescu, Constantin I. Istrati, Nicolae Teclu, Ion Vintilescu, Constantin N. Ionescu şi Gheorghe Spacu [3].



“Edwin Popper” amphitheatre in 2011. The first bas relief carving (at the left side of the image) represents Carol Davila.

These bas relief carvings were realized by Virgil Fulicea (1907-1979). He was a sculptor, painter, and poet. Because his name is not well-known in present, it is useful to mention some landmarks of his life and career. He graduated from the Fine Arts Academy in Cluj in 1932. Two years later he graduated the Law and Economics Faculty in Cernăuți. He was professor at the Arts College in Cluj (1948-1955). Then he had an academic career at the Sculpture Section of the Cluj Fine Arts Institute, where he became professor in 1970. He was the author of the busts of important Romanian personalities, such as: Emil Racoviță (situated in the front of the Cluj Faculty of Biology), Victor Babeș, Alexandru Borza, Sigismund Toduță and Avram

Iancu. In 1971 V. Fulicea created the bas relief carving representing Iuliu Hațieganu [4].

References

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