

REVIEWS OF REVIEWS

*Participant in the Great Union** *Lucian Blaga*

Studii filosofice. Philosophical Studies. Estudios filosóficos. Les Etudes philosophiques. Philosophische Studien. Noua revistă românească de filosofie No. 2. 2017 includes several chapters of interest for the centennial anniversary of the Great Union. Its chapters are: On the Great Union of 1918 (with the notable presence of the thoughts of Lucian Blaga regarding the Great Union at December 1, 1918 and of Nicolae Iorga, related to the Coronation Sunday, October 15, 1922); Romanian Philosophy (dedicated to the yearly conference Mihai Eminescu at the Academy of Romanian Scientists); Postmodern Philosophy; The Autumn Scientific Session of the Academy of Romanian Scientists “Scientific Research as Support for Sustainable Development,” Timișoara, October 2017 (selected papers); Studies and Articles in languages of international circulation; Scientific Life; Books received at the redaction; Bibliographical Notes; Review of Reviews; The Authors.

As following, we have selected for presentation, dissemination and translation for a wider public the reaction of the Romanian poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga as a young participant in the Great Union.

The present insert presents the feelings and thoughts of the Romanian philosopher and poet, Lucian Blaga, shortly before, during and after the Romanian National Assembly that took place at December 1, 1918. The author recalls that it was unbelievable. In the field they were rising up and down, where the cities were talking to the nation especially that at that time there were no microphones, both oratories, too small for so many people to pass, to multiply the echo from one tribune to another. He describes national enthusiasm, as honest, spontaneous, irresistible, organic and massive. It was something that determined you to forget everything, even the awkwardness and total lack of exercise of the orators at the tribune and which made him minimize the importance of his own volumes of poetry praised by the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga in a special article.

On October 3/16, 1918, the Emperor Carol I of Habsburg had launched a manifesto (entitled “Towards my faithful peoples”) concerning the reorganization of Austro-Hungary into a federation of 6 “independent” states (Austrian, Hungarian, Czech, Yugoslav, Polish and Ukrainian), following that Transylvania to remain as a component of Hungary. On the same day, the “Body of Transylvanian and Bukovinian Volunteers,” responding to the manifesto, expresses the will of the Romanians to separate the Romanian territories from Austro-Hungary and to unite them with Romania. At that time, Lucian Blaga, a student at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Vienna, where he enrolled in February 1918, enduring the warfare shortcomings, suspected the dissolution of the Caesarian-Royal empire (the Hungarian-Austrian Empire or the *kaiserlich-königlich* empire) and entertained the thought of uniting Transylvania with the Motherland. “The nation’s fulfilment within its natural political boundaries, as he recalls in his work entitled *Hronicul și cântecul vîrstelor*

* Translated by Henrieta Anișoara Șerban after Lucian Blaga, “Participant la Marea Unire,” *Studii Filosofice*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2017, pp. 11-16. See also, Lucian Blaga, *Hronicul și cântecul vîrstelor*, Bucharest, Editura Tineretului Publishing House, 1963, pp. 231-234 and pp. 237-238.

[*The Chronicle and the Song of Ages*], was a promise which was made since my childhood, by the foliage of the alders, by the murmur of the waters and by the prophetic beating of the wings in the air. In the air of this promise I grew up. And when the War was heated up, a War about which, on the one hand, I was so weary and horrified, I found, from another point of view, that history was coming favourably to the fore to greet us. In other words, I was looking for a cataclysm, triggered by mischievous causes, with a significance descended from above, and a legitimation, as a prelude to a supreme fulfilment! So many times, did I despair that the little Romanian state, to which our hearts turned like a huge sunflower field, lost a crucial opportunity, which would not happen again. Sometimes it seemed to me that the 'Country' was stuck on the brink of her destiny. Two whole years were dropping their moments in the cup of impatience, and the bordering skies at the top of the mountains were not setting in motion downward us, to break free for a while, and then to close again, embracing us! Only man to man rumours and only through the customs of the cuckoo, sometimes, [hope] pierced through from the 'the other side', to blow again in the still ardent ashes of our fireplaces and to bring forth again the eye of burnt fire."

In the midst of events announcing the end of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, when the Romanians were given no hope or "no kind of being within the consciousness of the empire," Lucian Blaga decides, together with D. D. Roşca, on October 30, 1918, to return to Transylvania. After a cumbersome journey, hidden in a train carrying troops to Budapest, under the shield of the darkness, without train tickets, then, on another train going to Arad, they arrived on the 1st of November in Vinţul-de-Jos and farther, on foot, to Sebeş. "On the afternoon of the 3rd of November, the Romanian population of Sebeş-Alba, gathered around the Church near the river, started massively marching into the city centre, towards the big square, headed by a number of soldiers arrived during the course the morning from the front, along with a few local intellectuals. Discourses were held in the market, showing that the Romanians from Transylvania wanted the reunion with the Romanian kingdom."

For the great, historical national assembly in Alba-Iulia, where it was decided to bring Transylvania to the motherland, there was no need for a special preparation of the public opinion. This preparation had lasted hundreds of years. In the morning of the 1st of December, as at a signal, the Romanian world went to Alba-Iulia (to Bălgrad), as we called it, with the old name, on foot and with the carts. They gave up the train trip, for there were only 16 km to Alba-Iulia. It was a cold winter morning. Breathing was embodied in invisible crystals. On one side of the road people headed for Alba-Iulia, scraping through the trails in the snow, the Romanian wagons, bouquets of hollers and joy, forming a single string, and on the other side, the German army, retreating from Romania, cannon after cannon, like fists of silence. The German soldiers, smoking quietly from their pipes, looked amazed at our hurried carts. They took their time. No incident occurred. "Look, I'm telling Lionel, so – through frost and snow –, Napoleon was also retiring from Russia a long time ago."

In Alba-Iulia I could not make room in the meeting hall. Lionel who was in the delegation walked in. I gave up with a wrench and consoled myself with the hope that I would learn from my brother about everything. Instead, I had the advantage of being able to roam from place to place, all day, in the field where the people gathered. It was unbelievable. In the field the stands were rising up and down, where the speakers were talking to the nation. At that time there were no microphones, the speakers also, with too faint voices for so many people, were passing, in order to multiply the echo, from one tribune to another. That day I knew what national enthusiasm meant, honest, spontaneous, irresistible, organic and massive. It was something that made you forget everything, even the awkwardness and total lack of routine of the orators at the tribune.

In the evening, while we were returning with the same livelihood to Sebeş, both my brother, and myself we felt conscious that "I had set the foundations of another Time," although we only "participated," silent and insignificant, to an act accomplished by the power of destiny. This fact at the crossroads of the day, with its strength and atmosphere, conveyed a historical consciousness. When we crossed Lancrăm, our native village, the road led us to the cemetery, where, beside the Church, my Father was sleeping under the roots of poplars. The noise of the wheels, of course, came to him and his bones shuddered. "Ah, if Dad only knew what has happened," I said to my brother, who was turning his head to the cross in the cemetery. And as we kept the way through the

village, I did not utter one word, neither myself, nor Lionel. An emotion had strangled our throat like a hand, which slowly softened, after almost succeeded to suffocate us and the in the village was just darkness and silence. While exiting the village, suddenly, we hear from a yard, unexpectedly, in the night, a cry of child: “Long live *dodoloață* [rounded] Romania!” (This term “dodoloț” was in Lancrăm the current word for “round”).

The arrival of the regular Romanian troops in our lands, over the mountains, delayed more than we could guess in the early days of the revolution. I followed the stages completed by these troops in my imagination, counting their possible stops – until our position, the delay, inexplicable for our impatience, gave us the feeling that Romania was at an intolerably remote distance. Eventually, on one December evening, the long-awaited troops made their entrance into the soul of the city. The enthusiasm and the joy of the population were manifested by a huge Hora (the oro) that broke its circle, spiralling in the shape of the celestial nebulae, as if attempting to bring about a new reknitting national fabric and a new balance.

Shortly after the Romanian troops entered, a moment meant to end the uncertain transition state and to mark the actual enrolment of the people in the enlarged state of Romania, my brother, who was interested in the overseeing of the city in this uncertainty phase, gave up at the City Hall, resuming his self-employment. I myself gradually retreated, out of the fierce whirlwinds that threatened to hold me put. I was not inclined to hurry, but through the rush of time, a way was signalling and alluring me, my way. I was holding two of my volumes entitled *Poemele luminii* [*Poems of Light*] and *Pietre pentru templul meu* [*Stones for my Temple*] (aphorisms). I hesitated, though. I was wondering if I should postpone their publication. Faced with the general atmosphere of enthusiasm, which surrounded a bright aura the fulfilment of the dream of national union, I had the modesty to admit that my “poetry” and my “thoughts” brought nothing but absolutely nothing related the palpable historical realities, or in connection with the concrete accomplishments of our political destiny, to which we were nevertheless taking part with all the warmth and purity of our youth.

My poems and thoughts might therefore seem totally foreign to the aspirations inherent in our spiritual landscape. This explains my hesitation around printing my works. My doubt continued until the time when, early January 1919, an old and distinguished lady who for decades lived in Sebeș, Mrs. Roman, the widow of the illustrious academic professor and academician of the time, sent me through the maid, a newspaper. The maid knocked at the door and walked in, fluttering a good-news smile in the corner of her mouth. She held in her hand a newspaper, unfolded, so that I could read its title from a distance: *Glasul Bucovinei* [*The voice of Bukovina*]. It was a new journal, which appeared only for a few days in Cernăuți under the leadership of the Professor Sextil Pușcariu. Mrs. Roman accompanied the newspaper with good wishes: the issue in question had on the first and second page a long article, in which Sextil Pușcariu presented to the Romanian public the volume of poems *Poemele luminii* in the most praising form possible. So it was written about the volume before the volume was actually issued.

The moment brought to my mind an absolution. After reading the article, I felt like a precious stone, one that would you like to get away from the grip of a common ring. The article has given my juvenile consciousness more than it deserved and I took the decision to print the volumes as soon as I have been discovered them somewhere... The poems saw the light of print at Orăștie, and the aphorisms in Sibiu. The sheets of paper were coming out of the press so quickly that I did not have much time for corrections. At the end of the month the books were already set up in the shop windows.

A few colleagues around, among others Andrei Oțetea, who set off to Bucharest to enrol in the University, took with them a few hundred volumes of my books for the libraries in the capital. This was the least risky manner to transport the goods of the spirit given the chaotic state of the new homeland, which was in course of a new formation. I myself made sure to send the necessary copies to several personalities from the older generation: Iorga, Vlahuță, Duiliu Zamfirescu, Ibrăileanu etc. As for the younger contemporary personalities I was completely ignorant, or, if I had heard some names, they were for me equivalent to as many questions. Less than two weeks passed by and Nicolae Iorga published in *Neamul Românesc* [*Romanian People*], a dominant newspaper for the Romanian public opinion of the time, an editorial that I am reproducing here to the letter:

A few lines for a youngster

From Transylvania we receive the very beautiful poems of Mr. Lucian Blaga.

His Excellency believes to give us "Poemele luminii." It is in the tradition of the newest school to look for grand and unusual words, but after all, as these do no good when there is no power, when the power exists, they do no harm.

These are not poems and there *is not* the light what rules. These are parts of soul, honestly caught in each moment and conveyed with a superior musicality in poetry lines that broken, as they are, oscillate along with the soul's movement. This elastic shape allows to be described even the most delicate nuances of thought and the finest acts of the feeling.

It is also philosophy inside, a melancholy, but not a depressing one, a philosophy that links together as in the all the best products of poetry of all times, the exterior aspects of nature, and the aspects within, all the variations by which we are answering – and with us [answers] a part of immensity, a part of eternity, which is making us part to its incommensurability and immortality.

Here is a young man who extends his arms of energy towards the mysteries of the world. We would never catch mysteries, for there is only one manner to own them: by living them. But the righteous and noble zest of these extended arms is to be cherished as well as the distinction of the gracious [poetic] form.

We are losing daily so many forces. It is a great joy when we see how other newer forces spring out from the blessed endowment of this nation.

Within the worrisome thinned ranks of the singers of our feelings, nowadays, we welcome you, Transylvanian young man!

N. Iorga

(*Neamul Românesc*, the 1st of May 1919)

As the newspapers and the magazines in Bucharest begun to take an interest in *Poemele luminii* [*Poems of Light*] and *Pietre pentru templul meu* [*Stones for my Temple*], they were appreciated as a "gift that Transylvania offers Romania on the day of the Great Union."