

The literary Youth

Short general presentation ¹

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Abstract

Junimea literară is one of the manifestations and one of the ways through which is accomplished the vast and complex program of emancipation of the Romanians in Bukovina at the beginning of the century.

It is a program that does not cover for the moment the perspective of a political union but the cultural unity for the Romanians.

This is regarded as an empowering factor in the historical and ethnic resistance also increasing their significance in the world, as producers of cultural values.

The entire thinking of the magazine is mastered by the idea that nations and peoples have a meaning to the world through their history and culture.

Keywords: *culture; nation; publication; literary; history; Bukovina.*

For 143 years, as Bukovina was held under Habsburg and then Austro-Hungarian occupation, for its inhabitants, who were subject to both social and national exploitation, culture was the main means to preserve and assert the national identity.

According to Maria Theresia principle uttered in 1773 in “Ratio Educationes”, but mainly due to the instauration of the dualist Austro-Hungarian occupation which meant a narrowing of peoples’ freedom and the increase of the politics of de-nationalization, the Romanians concentrated their fight energy on the field of the national cultural life.

¹ This paper is supported by the European Social Fund, Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, Priority Axis 1 Education and training in support for growth and development of the knowledge society; Area of Intervention 1.5. Doctoral and post-doctoral studies in support of research, Title of the project: Transnational network of integrated post-doctoral research in the field of science communication. Institutional building (post-doctoral school) and scholarship (Comm Scie). Identification number of contract POSDRU/89/1.5/S/63663. Beneficiary Alex. I. Cuza University, Iași.

The subdued Romanian population, which was officially banned from cultural opportunities and forced by all German means to give up their own culture and traditions, gets to organize in cultural societies, gets to make libraries and Romanian schools, edit and print books and leaflets in the Romanian language, struggles and succeeds to make bindings with all the territories inhabited by Romanians, all these contributing to the awakening of the national consciousness, paving the way for the union realized in 1918.

Against this background of huge efforts made by the Romanians, together with publications issued in Bukovina in the 2nd half of the XIXth centuries and the beginning of the XXth century, mentioned in the previous chapter, a prominent place is taken by “Junimea Literară” (“The Literary Youth”).

When “Junimea” was published in 1878, when the enthusiasm born in the Romanian occupied provinces during the independence war was at its peak, “Junimea” continues to develop the national ideals “by cultivating the language, culture and national education, by stimulating and financially helping the poor and needy students, by editing Romanian manuals, books and booklets, by building schools for the Romanians, meant to stay for the legal rights of The Romanian population; thus it gets to become an assertion grandstand of the intimate unity of the Romanians spread throughout the territories.”² For “the youth” society, culture was the “strongest weapon though which a nation can reach civilization and progress in all life fields”³.

Ever since 1900 the idea of a literary booklet is looming up, but it became real only in 1904, when on January 1st it is finally published in Cernauti, on the initiative of Ion Iancu Nistor, Gerge Tofan, Vasile Morariu and Liviu Marian and was to become an important part in stimulating the fight of the Romanians in Bukovine against the Habsburg domination for the perpetuation of the language, customs, culture and national science.⁴

The publication is edited as a literary and scientific booklet under the direction of an editorial committee headed by Ion I. Nistor, then by George Tofan since 1908. It is published on a monthly basis, with small delays till 1914, resuming its activity with the Big Romania between 1923-1939.

The booklet, as George Tofan put it, was born “out a deep necessity in our poor cultural life, deprived of constant urges and principles based on the real

² Iacobescu Mihai, “The Life and Activity of the Historian Ion Nistor (1876-1862),” *Studies and Articles of History XLIX* (Bucharest, 1984), 193.

³ *The annual report of “the Junimea” society for 1889*, Cernăuți, 6.

⁴ Loghin C-tin, *The History of the Romanian Literature in Bukovine 1775-1918* (Cernăuți, 1926).

necessities of a nation who has hardly awoken on its own life and who is exposed to lots of dangerous influences”.⁵

The main article states: “The intellectual development of a nation depends on the evolution principle. It grows up gradually and can not reach perfection without having treaded the lowest steps first. Based on this principle, each age, each century and even each decade underlies the spiritual forces, increases the knowledge capital by harvesting new ideas. This is the reason why one can not pretend from the Romanian people that its cultural achievements in its early stages should be compared to those of the western nations who had long ago got to know the cultural life creations. It is enough if one can see a remarkable progress in all activity fields.”⁶

Out of the different manifestations of the human spirit, for now we take into consideration only the literary products and the scientific research. Thanks to some irrefutable talents in the Romanian literature they got to fly off so smoothly that certain literary pieces are about to become the property of the whole mankind. The linguistic and historical researches of some “pliable of educated, hard working and tenacious men” have got through the darkness of beautiful tales and legends, which are coating our past and are highly appreciated today by the men of sciences of the most advanced nations. That’s why we tend to believe that the cultural progress of the Romanians which was achieved in few decades was even bigger than the progress made by other nations in full centuries. The boom created by the Latin offsprings at the Orient’s doors should fill the heart of any Romanian with enthusiasm and trust in a bright future. A deep sorrow is getting in at the view of the indifference towards the Romanian literature setting in-especially in Bukovina. “There are good many Romanians from our country who do not feel the intimate national urge that could make them love and appreciate what belongs to them, as being part of them.”⁷

“Our biggest desire which animates us to write this booklet, is to stimulate the taste for Romanian valuable literary works, for their ideas to get into all Romanian social classes. This is the only way for us to leave behind us the foreign influences that can stifle the free development of our national particularities. Finally, after so many centuries of struggle, we got to nourish our soul with fruits of Romanian talents!”⁸

⁵ *Junimea literară* 1 (Cernăuți, 1909), 3.

⁶ Ion I. Nistor, “To the Readers,” *Junimea literară* 1 (Cernăuți, 1904), 4.

⁷ Nistor, “To the Readers,” 4.

⁸ Nistor, “To the Readers,” 4.

The aim of this booklet is to become the hub of all literary bond people of the whole country, who would like to contribute to the realization of the great work they have in mind. Its columns are open to the literary works in verse and prose, which by substance and form are good to stimulate the public's taste for the Romanian literature and at the same time to offer joy in our sweet language. By appreciating work by merit and by encouraging some young promising talents who could not manifest so far by lack of means of publication, one hopes to bring about a literary movement in the country, which by itself will get to shake the prevailing indifference.

Above all this, the purpose of this booklet is to offer its readers precise information about the latest research in literature and Romanian history. Attention will be drawn to valuable pieces of work, which deserve to be read by every Romanian family. "Combining enjoyable and educational works, we aim to create the literary taste of the public, to offer latest information in research."⁹

If in the beginning the program of the booklet didn't have a precise aspect, gradually the people involved in its production became aware of their duty. Thus, in 1905, George Tofan says that the results achieved by the booklet confer "the right to its existence" and the pledge of having made the first step and of having chosen the right way, as "we don't embody art only, the beautiful merit of embellishing the human soul and reaching the bright heights, we also embody the national identity. We strive that everybody be aware of the ideal goods of their nation, avoiding to get lost amidst the waves of the neighboring cultures, we have to have our own culture, to be animated by an endless love for everything that belongs to us, which will be like a wall in front of the multitude of foreign influences." From the literary perspective the booklet tends to follow the idea that "corresponds to our ideal of national awakening".¹⁰

By its rich content and in order to carry on the goals projected, the booklet will bring together the main intellectuals of Bukovina, out of whom many will be leading the national movements: Teodor Stefanelli, Vasile Bumbac, Dimitrie Dan, Emil Grigorovita, Leonida Bodnarascu, Teodor balan, Victor Morariu, Mihai Teliman, Simion Florea Marian, Ion Gramada, George Rotica, Constantin Berariu etc. Among its collaborators there will be many writers both from The Kingdom and from Transylvania, like Nicolae Iorga, Sextil Puscariu, settle in Cernauti as an university professor, Ion Dragoslav, Cincinat Pavelescu, Corneliu Moldovan,

⁹ Nistor, "To the Readers," 4.

¹⁰ George Tofan, "After One Year," *Junimea literară* 1 (Cernăuți, 1905): 3-4.

Andrei Muresanu, Ion Lupas, prominent personalities of the Romanian cultural life.¹¹

Initially a literary and scientific booklet, “Junimea literară” will open its doors to philosophy, economy, ethnology, but the main part will be taken by history and national literature.

Poetry is represented by George Rotica, George Popovici, Ion Cocîrlă, Vasile Bumbac, Dimitrie Marmeliuc, Stefan Octavian Iosif, Octavian Goga and a deep national feeling comes out of it.

The merit for the richness of information covering the events of all Romanian territories is mainly earned by George Tofan and Ion Iancu Nistor. If any cultural, social, political even took place, it was immediately rendered in the booklet pages. At some point the group of actors headed by Constantin Belcot and Petre Liciu got in Bukovina and this was a good starting point for the history of the Romanian theatre. In the same way, when it comes to Romanian education, George Tofan will immediately provide information about its status in Bukovina.

Celebrating 400 years since Steven the Great’s death was a good opportunity for Ion Nistor to gather together everything that was written on this event. In Bukovina’s booklets the editors were mentioning events occurred in other Romanian territories, and in these territories the booklets broached problems of the people from Bukovina. Through collaboration with newspapers from the Kingdom and Transylvania, the booklet’s tenacious aim was to find cultural unity, and the supreme expansion of a nation through its culture.

From its very beginning, the booklet strived to keep in touch with all cultural and political societies from all Romanian territories, with Romanian publications that were fighting for national unity. In this respect it is good to mention its collaboration with “Astra” from Transylvania, with “The Society of the Romanian Writers in Romania”, not to mention the writings did by the Youth’s writers in various Romanian publications: “Romanian Life”, “Luceafărul” (“The Morning Star”), “Semănătorul” (“The Seeder”), “The Romanian Nation”, “Literary Discussions”.¹² Also, there was a permanent exchange with these publications, as “re-establishing the cultural bond with the other parts of the nation” was one of the goals.

“Junimea literară” was published by some patriots with personal funds and financial issues would appear. In 1904 Ion Nistor moved the redaction from Cernauti to Suceava and then back to Cernauti, and between 1910-1914 he settled

¹¹ Netea Vasile, *To Unity of the Romanian Nation* (Științifică și Enciclopedică Publishing House: Bucharest, 1979), 385.

¹² *Junimea Literară* 6 (Cernăuți, 1913), 36-37.

it in his private house. Lots of requests for fundraising were made so that the booklet could continue its life. Despite all difficulties, as George Tofan puts it, “we would have regretted if we had stifled this last flame, poor as it was, burning on the cultural altar of all Romanians.”¹³

By its patriotic feeling, by its particular achievements, “Junimea literara” set itself as one of the most important Romanian publications, forerunner of the big union of 1918; it tenaciously asserted the principle of national unity and permanently revealed its manifestation forms. Nicolae Iorga joyfully appreciated the booklet, he collaborated with it and says that “in a proper political context the youth from Bukovina gathered around the “Junimea Literară”, a place where any sparkle is welcome and encouraged in order to shake the sleepy people and awake them, to punish the traitors.”¹⁴

It is significant to mention that after the war, the group around the booklet became a political party gathered under the flag “Bukovina’s Voice”, which on September 15 1919, was to be the Union Social Democrat Party of Bukovina.

¹³ *Junimea Literară*, no 1 (1909).

¹⁴ Ion Nistor, *Bukovina History*, 341.