

ORIGINAL PAPER

Lucian Blaga – diplomatic friendships

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Abstract:

In this paper, we aim at highlighting the relationships that Lucian Blaga — in our view, the most complex Romanian author of the last century — had, during his 11 year-journey through five European capitals, when he attended various administrative and diplomatic functions, with family members and close relatives, representatives of the diplomatic corps, politicians, etc., in order to get a better knowledge of this stage in his professional life by means of his diplomatic reports, his memories and extensive correspondence with personalities of the 19th century. We have therefore conducted an analysis of Blaga's diplomatic friendships upon thoroughly consulting several sources — correspondence, memorials, press articles, literary studies. We focused on the early stages of his diplomatic career, when he was influenced by his wife, Cornelia Brediceanu, and her brother, Caius Brediceanu. We then carry on with the friendship he maintained with Nicolae Titulescu and King Charles the IInd of Romania, his royal protector.

Through hard work and perseverance, Blaga went from press attaché to holding various grades of auxiliary positions in Romanian diplomatic legations in Europe and, later on, in diplomatic functions as Under-Secretary of State and Minister Plenipotentiary of Romania to Portugal. Due to his desire to remain apolitical, having Titulescu as his role model, Blaga wasn't looking to become a member of any party, but he had to accept the proposal of King Charles the IInd to be part of a government of intellectuals (the government under Prime Minister Goga), as Under-Secretary of State and, later on, as a representative of Romania to Portugal.

Keywords: traditional diplomacy; cultural diplomacy; diplomatic friendships; diplomatic professions; press attaché; Minister Plenipotentiary.

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1. Romanian diplomacy — post-World War I renewal

After 1914, along with peace negotiations that took place after the world's first conflict, international and Romanian diplomacy went through a radical transformation i.e. disavowaling the absolute secrecy revolving around French territory, redesigning the diplomatic functions and methods of communication. Diplomatic activity suddenly becomes an intense subject of debate for the media. Diplomats become actors who play on the international stage, true stars for a political and diplomatic thrill-hungry audience. Diplomacy becomes public with the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which led to the official conclusion of World War I after 6 months of intense and publicised negotiations.

The Romanian delegation which included Ion I.C. Brătianu, Nicolae Mişu, Constantin Coandă, Nicolae Titulescu, Ioan Cantacuzino, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, led by Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu, signed the Peace Treaty between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany on June 28, 1919, an unfavourable treaty for the Romanian people. On July 2, 1919, the president of the Romanian delegation left Paris, by publicly protesting and drawing the attention of the international press to the injustice made to the Romanian state.

The fact that the Great Union was declared on December 1, 1918 provided Romanian intellectuals, who were part of Romanian cultural diplomacy, led by Titulescu and Ion Ghe. Duca, favourable premises to serve legitimate national interests. Knowing as no other the labyrinths of diplomacy, Nicolae Titulescu saw and promoted in diplomatic functions young people who were well-informed about Romania.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the diplomatic network of the young Romanian state included 11 missions (in Athens, Berlin, Belgrade, Constantinople, London, Paris, Petersburg, Rome, Vienna, Brussels and Sofia). Until the outbreak of the First World War, the Romanian government opened other five diplomatic representations in Bern, Madrid and Dürres, as well as a diplomatic agency in Cairo. The network of diplomatic representations created by the modern Romanian state was therefore centred on Europe. The 1921 Law mentioned that Romania had 25 permanent diplomatic missions in Athens, Belgrade, Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Christiania (Oslo), Constantinople (Istanbul), Copenhagen, the Hague, Helsingfors (Helsinki), Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Sofia, Stockholm, Tokyo, Warsaw, Vatican City, Vienna and Washington. (Potra, 2006: p.185)

2. Lucian Blaga enters Romanian diplomacy persuaded by his wife and her brother, Caius Brediceanu

According to the state of service within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the diplomat Lucian Blaga spoke the following foreign languages: German, French, Hungarian, was a university professor of Philosophy of Culture and an active member of the Romanian Academy.

According to his personal file in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lucian Blaga conducted a continuous diplomatic activity from 1926 to 1939, as follows: from November 1926 to November 1927 in Warsaw; from November 1927 to April 1928 in Prague; from April 1928 to November 1932 in Bern; in November 1932 he was promoted press secretary of the Vienna Legation and then press adviser until 1937; from February 1, 1937 to December 1937 he returned to Bern. As of December 30, 1937, Blaga was part of the Goga government, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, holding the function of Under-secretary of State, where he worked until the dismissal of the

government — on February 10, 1938; from April 1, 1938 to April 1, 1939, he was appointed Extraordinary Minister Plenipotentiary to Lisbon.

The young literate wanted to enter into diplomacy soon after the end of the First World War, in the political, cultural and diplomatic climate created by the Great Union of Alba Iulia in 1918 and the creation of Great Romania, probably persuaded by Cornelia Brediceanu and upon recommendation of her elder brother, Caius Brediceanu. Advised by the latter, Blaga prepares for his diplomatic career, attending studies in the field of law at the University of Cluj. In her diary, Cornelia Blaga-Brediceanu confirms with certainty that the poet Lucian Blaga entered into diplomacy at her suggestion and under the guidance of Caius Brediceanu, diplomat, holder of a PhD in law obtained in Vienna and Paris, an active participant in the act of the Great Union, who was part of the Romanian Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, Minister Plenipotentiary of Romania to Brazil, Vatican City, Vienna and Helsinki.

To this end, in his application, a handwritten document from the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, bearing the stamp of the General Registry, no. 00863/January 5, 1922, Blaga referred to himself as follows: "I am a PhD holder in Letters and Philosophy awarded by the University of Vienna — and I have published a series of literary works well received by our critics, among others 'The Poems of Light' and 'Stones for My Temple', both awarded by the Romanian Academy. Being given this function, I think I can further develop myself and get in touch with the West."

The request — dated Bucharest, December 28, 1921 — includes a recommendation signed by Caius Brediceanu with a small motivation "I warmly recommend the appointment of Mr Blaga, especially since we don't have any Transylvanians to represent us in Paris". The philosopher's application was archived by the Minister of Foreign Affairs as there were no vacancies. However, on January 5, 1922, Lucian Blaga received a copy of Decree No. 76 issued by the Department of Personnel and Protocol within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which announced his appointment to the requested function, as of January 1, 1922. Blaga is not content with the news and, after requesting a postponement for illness, he received the news that his petition had been accepted by Decree No. 1739 on April 17, 1922.

Cornelia Blaga is responsible for his return to diplomacy, after insisting on the idea between 1923 and 1926. In 1926, Blaga applied for classification as a "press attaché" in Munich but ended up at the Romanian Legation in Warsaw. The young Romanian diplomat began his activity as press attaché in Warsaw, where a Romanian Legation was founded for only a few years, following the establishment of the Romanian-Polish diplomatic relations in June 1919.

In order to dispel any concerns related to Blaga's choice to become a press attaché, we quote the following excerpt from his memo of activity (1958): "I lived in Lugoj from 1924 to 1926, working as a publicist, dedicating my time mainly to poetic, theatrical and philosophical writings and publishing a series of volumes. At the time, I published articles in German for the great Czech newspaper *Prager Presse* related to the cultural and artistic life in Romania. This collaboration with an important foreign newspaper was one of the reasons why I was appointed, in 1926, as an official of the Foreign Ministry and sent abroad." (Popa, 2018: 18)

We would like to point out that, for his career as a press official in external services, Blaga met the following requirements: to hold a Bachelor's degree granted by a faculty in Romania or abroad; to be a professional publicist or journalist recognised by the professional organisations concerned; to have an experience of at least two years of

actual activity in a newspaper or periodical publication; to speak, in addition to French, the language of the country where he was assigned to work. (Potra, 2006: p.185)

Lucian Blaga was not really a diplomat, as according to the *Law on the amendment of several articles in the law on the organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 1920*: the following staff shall be part of the diplomatic service: 1) Ministers Plenipotentiary, Classes I and II; 2) Legation Counsellors; 3) Legation Secretaries, Classes I, II and III and 4) Attachés of Legation. (Potra, 2006: p. 59)

With the approval of the *Law on the Organisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* on July 15, 1938, a distinction is made between diplomatic, administrative and press staff, which includes: 1. Press advisors. 2. Press secretaries cl. I. 3. Press secretaries cl. II. 4. Press secretaries cl. III. (Potra, 2006: p. 209)

In his memorial book, *Lucian Blaga necunoscut*, Corneliu Blaga, a career diplomat, notes that "Lucian Blaga was never part of the diplomatic corps itself" while working as a press attaché (1926-1929), press secretary cl. I and cl. II (1929-1933) and press and cultural adviser (1933-1937) at the Romanian Legations in Warsaw, Prague, Bern, Vienna, except for the time he spent working in Lisbon (April 1, 1938-March 31, 1939) when he served as an Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Romania to Portugal. In the interview he gave to I. Oprişan, Corneliu Blaga was even more direct: "Lucian Blaga had worked as an attaché, secretary and press adviser to that time. He was never a diplomat. However, this was completely different from diplomacy. Press attachés are rather similar to press representatives of the major agencies like *Hawas*, *Reuter* and others". (Oprişan, 1995: 105)

Blaga himself expresses his opinion in regards to the profession of press attaché, in 1945, at a conference in Cluj: "In the spring of 1928 it has been decided that I shall be transferred from the Legation of Romania in Prague to the Legation in Bern. I had been a press attaché for quite a while, a rather uncertain position, at the edge of diplomacy, which gave many possibilities to the person holding it." (Blaga, 1972:182–199)

The young writer had not yet completed his mission as a press attaché to the Romanian Legation in Warsaw, which began in November 1926, when he was awarded, by high royal order, given by King Ferdinand, in June 1927, the Order of the Star of Romania in the rank of knight. Certainly, the reports sent by Blaga to Bucharest, some reaching the government or the Sovereign's office, related to the way in which the Polish press was monitoring the situation in Romania, had a significant influence on the proposal made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to give the young cultural attaché the highest order. This is how Blaga got to be the youngest press attaché to receive the highest distinction, before many colleagues of his generation.

3. The influence of Nicolae Titulescu on the diplomat Blaga

Nicolae Titulescu, permanent delegate of Romania to the League of Nations since 1924, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1927-1928 and 1932-1936) and President of the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1930 and 1931, a brilliant diplomat and orator, made Romania's voice heard internationally.

After 1918, Titulescu led the Romanian foreign policy. He had a great influence not only on Romanians but also on Europeans. The final version of the Covenant of the League of Nations (Versailles, June 28, 1919) was approved on April 28, 1919 and signed by Nicolae Titulescu and Ioan Cantacuzino on behalf of Romania.

In the autumn of 1930, the great Romanian diplomat was elected president of the League of Nations, almost unanimously, and in the following year, he was elected for the second time in this position, which is uncommon for that period.

Romanian diplomats, namely Titulescu, also carried out a remarkable activity within the League of Nations, in order to maintain peace and ensure the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Romania.

During his two mandates as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Titulescu advocated for the inclusion in the Romanian diplomatic corps of several people who recommended themselves exclusively through intellectual qualities and moral virtues, as well as their professional commitment.

Lucian Blaga asked Nicolae Titulescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time, to dispatch him from Warsaw to Prague, where he stayed only for three months, being transfered to Belgrade right after. Blaga was surprised by this decision, which enabled him to write to Nicolae Dianu, press and information director, and request his transfer to Bern. Thus, on November 1, 1927, Nicolae Titulescu appointed Lucian Blaga as a press attaché to the Romanian Legation in Prague.

Lucian Blaga's professional duty was to identify articles and other press information concerning Romania and to report on them. Considering that, during the longest period of the press adviser's activity, the position of Minister was fulfilled by Titulescu, most of the stories were related to his actions in international politics.

It was not by chance that Nicolae Titulescu appointed him adviser to the Romanian Legation in Vienna (on November 1, 1932), as a recognition of the exceptional diplomatic activity he had carried out in Switzerland.

Since the beginning of 1933, when National Socialism came to power in Germany, Austria had become — in Blaga's words — the "most sensitive point" on the continent, being "the most sensitive barometer of international cyclones and anticyclones", which is why Nicolae Titulescu insisted on being informed about "everything that was going on in Vienna". (Blaga, 1972:182–199)

Blaga's admiration for Nicolae Titulescu has grown with the work he carried out in Switzerland and Vienna, where he was directly connected to the debates in international politics at the League of Nations and where he had the opportunity to meet Nicolae Titulescu several times. In the *Foreword* to his book *Lucian Blaga*. *Din activitatea diplomatică*, Pavel Țugui holds that Titulescu was the ideal model of a diplomat for the young Blaga: "over the years, we see that he has ideologically and morally associated himself with the political principles cultivated and affirmed on the national and international arena by Nicolae Titulescu" (Ţugui, 1995:11), and George G. Potra goes on even further by stating that: "Nicolae Titulescu praized Lucian Blaga, who worshipped Nicolae Titulescu." (Potra coord., 2011:16)

The event that took place in August 1933, namely Titulescu's arrival in Bad-Gastein, Austria, for a short holiday, is utterly significant in terms of the relationship Blaga had with Titulescu. Upon receiving a few envelopes by diplomatic post at his office at the Legation, which had to be handed over to him as soon as possible, Blaga was the one to take them to the minister: "One afternoon, he invited me over his place. Titulescu engaged in some kind of speech, quite eloquent, in regards to the international situation [...] No one else realized as well as Titulescu the seriousness of the historical turning point that has been reached in international life". (Blaga, 1972:182–199)

Lucian Blaga was the one who revealed Titulescu's opinion on his play, "Avram Iancu". Blaga recalls that, whenever he passed through Switzerland in his ministerial

train wagon, Nicolae Titulescu stopped in Vienna for a few hours during which he used to present to him "some sort of brief verbal reports on the political conditions". During such a meeting, when the train was about to leave, Lucian Blaga handed over to him a freshly printed copy of his drama play – "Avram Iancu". The minister smiled at him and said: "Be sure that I'll read it". "For me, Titulescu's promise to read it was satisfactory enough, although I was confident that he would never have the time for it." (Blaga, 1972:182–199)

Titulescu often appreciated Blaga's diplomatic activity in Austria, either verbally or in writing, and used to tell him: "Thank you for your interesting Report", as well as his work as a writer, showing him high appreciation. When meeting him at the train station in Vienna, the great Romanian diplomat recited a few lyrics from the "Avram Iancu" drama play, showing him that he had read the play and how much he liked it. This is how Blaga records the story: "Titulescu recited the lyrics in which I spoke about the mythological bird in the Apuseni Mountains, which, in my play, stands guard near the heart of the nation." (Blaga, 1972:182–199)

On November 23, 1945, Lucian Blaga organized an extensive conference in Cluj, in the Academic College hall, which was dedicated to Nicolae Titulescu. After the death of the great diplomat, Blaga created a flattering portrait of Titulescu, by reenacting his last confrontation from 1928, in regards to the issue of optants, when the serious matter of Hungarian landowners' rights over their lands in Transylvania was under debate: "Then Titulescu entered the hall, standing tall, with a pale face, calm and eventempered. The crowd turned heads towards him and a frenzy of curiosity spread amonst press correspondents: Titulescu! The rumbling made me feel the immense reputation he enjoyed internationally. It was for the first time in four months when Titulescu left his hotel room. The sacred disease came to an end... This is how I knew Titulescu. For years, later, I had many opportunities to watch and admire his work on the international stage." (Blaga, 1972:188)

As a sign of great appreciation, Lucian Blaga dedicated his volume, *Cunoașterea luciferică* (1933), to the father of modern Romanian diplomacy: "To Mr. Nicolae Titulescu, a tribute to the man, a bow at the dialectician".

4. King Charles the IInd, Blaga's protector

In the decade of his reign, Charles the IInd gave generous support to Romanian intellectuals and cultural institutions. Through his initiatives, he assumed the status of main leader of national culture at a time of strong nationalist demands. Many intellectuals saw Charles the IInd as an intelligent and ambitious sovereign, able to support their cultural projects and reforms. By means of these cultural approaches, the monarchy tried to enrich its own political project.

King Charles the IInd stated that he wanted to be the new "Brâncoveanu of Romanian Culture" (an allusion to the cultural development of this Wallachian prince's reign), the one called by his contemporaries "Voivode of Culture" (the use of the term "voivode" is not random; it refers to a medieval culture and to a political language) and, as he used to speak about himself, in August 1930, in a short speech given at the University of Vălenii de Munte: "I have the same Romanian heart beating in me and, following the example of the Romanian voivodes who supported the culture of the Romanian nation, I commit to being a Voievod of the Romanian Culture" (Carol II, 1940: 32, 46). The King founded two Cultural Foundations, making a great contribution to the field of written culture in the first half of the 20th century, just like his predecessor,

Carol the Ist. His greatest cultural achievement is the creation of the Royal Foundation Charles the IInd, with the Royal Foundation for Literature and Art Publishing House and, in 1934, of Revista Fundațiilor Regale (Magazine of Royal Foundations) by means of which he supported and financed people of culture such as Emil Cioran, George Enescu, Mircea Eliade, Constantin Brâncuşi, George Emil Palade and Constantin Noica. For those concerned with the problems of contemporary thinking, "Biblioteca de Filosofie Română" (the Romanian Philosophy Library) was created, where the works of Romanian representative thinkers were published: D. D. Rosca, T. Vianu, M. Eliade, L. Blaga, P. P. Negulescu and M. Ralea.

In June 1937, when Blaga was elected member of the Academy, the solemn sitting was postponed several times until June 5, 1937, so that the king, who wanted to be present as well, can give an extremely commendable speech on Lucian Blaga's literary creation. The reception speech held at the Romanian Academy on June 5, 1937, was broadcast live on the radio.

In her Diary, Dorli Blaga recalls the times in which her father prepared his speech for the Academy reception: "Usually, the newly elected person followed in the place of a deceased academician and gave a reception speech, a eulogium to the departed one. Blaga was at that time the youngest academician, who didn't step in the place of someone else. The position was created for him. This is why the reception speech was not a eulogy to a predecessor. But to the predecessor of us all: The Romanian village, from which we all descend." (Blaga, 2012: 302)

The newly appointed academician thus gave, in front of King Charles the IInd, the reception speech at the Romanian Academy entitled "Eulogy to the Romanian village".

L. Blaga was elected only in the third round, as Nicolae Iorga vehemently opposed his election. In his speech, the sovereign, who presided over the sitting, as honorary president of the Romanian Academy, praised Blaga, the youngest academician, who was barely 41 years old: "I wanted to attend this reception because it has great significance. The Academy welcomes the first representative of a new Romanian school, the first representative of the Romanian post-war literary talents. Lucian Blaga's reception at the Romanian Academy is the official and definitive enshrining of Romanian literature". (Carol II, 1940: 32-46) So, by praising Blaga, the sovereign had the opportunity to talk about his favourite two topics: the village and the culture.

In a letter addressed to Basil Munteanu, the newly appointed academician confirms the King's highly praising attitude: "And the king's speech made an impression like no other at the Academy: he wanted to assert that he identified himself completely with the way in which I see the future evolution of Romanian culture. [...] The King congratulated me, but in his speech, he congratulated especially the Academy for choosing me." (Munteanu, 1979:172)

On February 1, 1937, after the dismissal of Nicolae Titulescu as Foreign Minister, Lucian Blaga was transferred again to Bern, where he worked only for one year, until January, 1938 when Prime Minister Octavian Goga appointed him Under-Secretary of State to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, being actually in charge, as of February 3, of all foreign relations matters of the ministry, as per Government Decision. But, a week later, on February 10, the Goga Government resigned and, naturally, Lucian Blaga could no longer preserve his position. On March 11, 1938, he was appointed Plenipotentiary Minister to Portugal by King Charles the IInd, reaching Lisbon on April 10-11.

After only one year, the Plenipotentiary Minister to Portugal asked the king to call him back into the country, although it was for the first time when he was very well

paid — knowing that Blaga always sought to have minimal financial security to deal with his true vocation, poetic and philosophical creation — to take care of his university career in Cluj. On April 1, 1939, Blaga's mission had ended and, with it, his entire diplomatic activity.

Without a doubt, Charles the IInd helped Blaga become "Under-Secretary of State to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the forty-four-day government led by Goga and Cuza" (Petreu, 2021:15), Minister Plenipotentiary of Romania to Portugal (1938-1939) and he was also the one who enabled him to become full professor at "Ferdinand I" University of Cluj.

On May 10, 1939, Charles the IInd gave Lucian Blaga a decoration, the Cross of Faithful Service in the rank of Commander, as a sign of appreciation.

Few know that Charles the IInd personally appointed Lucian Blaga Senator at the National Renaissance Front, alongside with George Enescu, Mihail Sadoveanu, Emil Racoviță, Iuliu Hatieganu, where he worked from June 1939 until the summer of 1940, when the king closed down the Front (June 22, 1940).

After Charles the IInd left the country in 1940, Blaga remained without any royal protection and was soon subjected to the attacks of the priests, culminating with the criticism launched by Dumitru Stăniloaie, by the rationalist philosophers — by means of their representative, Rădulescu Motru, and by fellow colleagues from the magazine "Gândirea", represented by Nichifor Crainic.

5. Conclusions

This paper aimed at providing an answer to the following questions: Was Lucian Blaga a public official or a diplomat? Did the functions assigned to him during the 11 years of diplomatic activity influence his poetic and philosophical activity?

Lucian Blaga took part in the Romanian diplomatic activity when Western diplomacy met an unprecedented effervescence, but in a difficult period, both from an organizational and political point of view. From an organisational perspective, some Legations were newly established, understaffed and did not have well-trained personnel; moreover, there were not many laws and regulations to establish the obligations of diplomats and press attachés, in particular. From a political perspective, by means of his diplomatic activity, Lucian Blaga participated in geostrategic events, such as the recovery and stabilization of European countries after World War I and the new areas of influence with the assertion of German National Socialism and Nazi ideology.

We would like to point out that the system of press attachés was introduced after World War I for the journalists. This decision did not achieve its goal, as it was impossible to appoint all journalists press attachés, as there were always new ones enterig the field who criticized the government or their former fellows.

It cannot be denied that Blaga was an unvaluable asset as a press attaché in diplomatic matters. By offering this distinction to Lucian Blaga, the man of culture, Romania enjoyed the advantages that came along with the role he played as an objective analyst at a time when Europe was changing. But, of course, this distinction was also beneficial for the writer and philosopher Blaga, giving him the chance to have a muchenriched perspective on the contemporary world and helping him define his cultural method in presenting philosophy. In addition to his qualities as a man of culture, Lucian Blaga demonstrated throughout the missions entrusted to him a talent appreciated in diplomacy that took the shape of a successful career in the field, ranging from press

attaché to the most respected diplomatic position — Ambassador-Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister of Romania to Portugal.

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