



Peasants

by Liviu Rebreanu

Fragments from "Praise to the Romanian Peasant"



The people

"In the life of other nations, the peasantry could play and did play a secondary, dull role, but for us, however, it is the source of Romanianism... For us, the only permanent, un-perishable reality was and still is the peasant. The word itself is of urban origin... A peasant will never refer to himself as such... Peasants will refer to peasants simply as people. In fact, a peasant has no name because there he is not a class, not a guild, not a function, but the people itself..."

Continuity

"The peasant will not leave either willingly or unwillingly. He has nowhere to move his poverty to, because, removed from his field, he would be condemned to perish... He feels

begotten by and born of this earth... Thus, the fate of the earth which gave us birth and raised us has also had to ordain the destiny of the development of our nation... The result? Today's (*our note* - pre-war) Romania and the Dacia of yore are coterminous not only in terms of their geographical outlines, but also as regards their ethnographic configuration... This sheer fact, this glaring evidence should send the interested apostles of discontinuity thinking, if not downright disarm them..."

The language

"An equally important feature of a nation, like the community of blood, is language. For us, this is also the work of peasants... It got its charm, its specific expression from its original maker, which was the peasant... Up until Eminescu, literary language had had enough hesitations. Only the genius of Eminescu was able to organically integrate the treasure of the peasant's language in the common language of all. Through Eminescu, the peasant gave the most necessary element of our literature: a clean, rich, supple, ever new language, with the eternal possibility of renewal, with an eternal dynamism... The cooperation between the most modest Romanian and the greatest poet set the general line of Romanian literary originality."

Religion

"Just like he has shaped the language, the Romanian peasant has also maintained and modelled his faith in God in his image and likeness. From ancient superstitions, from transformed and adapted remnants of olden beliefs, from Christian dogma and precepts, he has formed a specific religion, a profound amalgam of Christianity and paganism. This religion, the Romanian law is unique



for our entire nation, above all theological controversies. It encapsulates the Romanian peasant's outlook on life, his resignation and his faith in divine justice."

Beauty

"However strange and sad it may sound, adaptation to poverty, with all its consequences, was a vital necessity for the Romanian people. Otherwise, it could not have endured life and would have been crushed and melted among the other nations. Closing itself up in poverty like in indestructible shell, it singled itself out



and was able to develop its specific qualities, to acquire a particular national physiognomy. Life in poverty does not exclude inner wealth. A poor man is closer to his heart than a wealthy man and has more need of the beauty that transfigures reality, becoming a source of hope and consolation. Our folklore, in all its manifestations, is the creation of a poor people, which does not prevent it from being more valuable and richer than that of many other nations that have lived in abundance."

Addendum

The Swiss newspaper *Berner Tagblatt* wrote on 24 September 1948: "Thousands and thousands of peasants are lying today in the prisons of Romania, along with workers, intellectuals, officers and students... The regime knows that 98% of the peasants are anti-communists; therefore, it has decided to dub these peasants anti-Communist kulaks, to more easily liquidate them, as dangerous enemies."

