

**PROFESSOR IOAN SCURTU – EMBLEM OF ROMANIAN
HISTORIOGRAPHY TODAY.
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY**

Stoica LASCU

DOI <https://doi.org/10.56082/annalsarscihist.2020.2.5>

Our historiography of the last half century has travelled a path in consensus with the evolution of Romanian society itself – something easily noticeable, in my opinion, for an objective evaluator and devoid of passion or harmful and counterproductive political-resentment biases, which distorts realities, characters and attitudes. Of an evolution in which, it is true, politics has prevailed, in the given historical context, to a large extent – but not exclusively and deterministically – in outlining the directions of thematic approach of Historiography; respectively, of a scientific discipline for which depoliticization (again, to be emphasized, *nota bene*, in the given political context) and professionalization, at the beginning of the seventh decade, were trained, together with the venerable and consecrated professors, and young researchers and academics who they would become, in time, themselves consecrated representatives – and some also emblematic – of the Romanian historical science.

Among these young people who identified their lives with the service of the Clio Museum was today's octogenarian Ioan Scurtu (Born: November 27, 1940) – the well-known Professor (now retired) at the University of Bucharest (and since 2004, Professor at "Spiru Haret" University), founder and title member of the Romanian Academy of Scientists.

The professional, scientific and social-public evolution of his reign is, we could say, an expression of a destiny that, at the individual level, can represent an image of a representative human sample on the scale of our history of the last over five decades. He had the chance to attend the courses of a traditional educational institution – respectively, the first public school in Neamț County, dating from 1869 (and bearing, since 1893, the name of "Petru Rareș" – today, National College; but, in the spirit of the time, after 1948 the name of the well-known Voivode was given up), and where, in 1957, the adolescent Ioan Scurtu will support himself, at "Secondary School no. 1 from Piatra Neamț" – as it was called then –, the Maturity Exam. I do not know what determined the young Moldavian to choose a faculty that prepared scholars primarily for teaching, but it is certain that the choice proved to be splendid for his destiny and, on the whole, so fruitful for that scientific discipline. Again, I do not know the motivates that determined

him not to go, within its sub-branches, to the study of Medieval history – the symbolism and the entire Medieval history of the area could definitely mark the thematic options of a teenager attracted, no doubt, to research the past; however, for the historical future, it is clear that the shadows of the voivodes, bishops and chroniclers did not mark him so much that he did not dedicate himself to the research and writing of the history of the twentieth century. Upon graduation from the Faculty of History of the University „Constantin I. Parhon” from Bucharest (which, it is not superfluous to remind, again and again, is not called today, still, the “N. Iorga” University ...), in 1962 – being part of a series of future recognized professionals, such as the late Mircea N. Popa, Gheorghe Zbucnea, Constantin Bușe, and Olga Cicanci, respectively Anca Ghiăț, Nicolae Isar, Gheorghe Neacșu and others –, the former student is stopped, as a preparator, at the Department of Romanian History (whose management will ensure it, later – in the period 1990-2003); namely – at the Contemporary History Specialty (where the Professors Ladislau Bányai, Vasile Hurmuz, Aron Petric, Eufrosina Popescu, later Gheorghe I. Ioniță, Doina Smârcea, Vasile Budrigă were active); It will focus on research into the interwar period, particularly its political component. These are the years – at the beginning of the seventh decade, so special and decisive in the Contemporary history of the Romania, through the political options of the party and state leadership – of opening to a more applied, scientific research of the past (of the first half of the 20th Century), in particular, strongly ideologized, until then), including that of the parties, implicitly bringing to public attention some political figures from monarchist Romania on which they operate, gradually, in the sense of recovering their activities and merits at a close to historical realities as such; correspondingly, new historical sources are introduced in the scientific circuit – indexed authors and forbidden books (led by N. Iorga) but also archives, press, memoirs –, as the publication of studies and books becomes more and more easy. Professor Scurtu – like many of the series of History graduates from that beginning of a decade full of hopes (for example, to stay in 1962, in Cluj they graduated then, among others, Sever Dumitrașcu, Nicolae Edroiu, Viorel Faur, Liviu Maior, Vasile Vesa; and in Iași – Aurel Filimon, Ion Toderașcu, Dumitru Vitcu) – thus has the chance to structure the scientific personality benefiting, beyond the native endowment as such, precisely from the fertile political-ideological openings, with beneficial repercussions in the field of scientific research: “In the new context – *he showed in a 1999 interview* – you could try to you write a true story”.

And the expectations or hopes placed in him by those who saw in the meticulous student a truly professional future (including his uncle from his mother, the charming and encyclopaedist Professor of universal Modern history, also so popular writer Dumitru Almaș /1908-1995/) – were on measure of expectations. Ever since the first scientific material published (in 1965, in the

Faculty magazine), namely *Poziția P.C.R. față de partidele „istorice” în timpul primului guvern Sănătescu* [The P.C.R. Position to the “Historical” Parties During the First Sănătescu Government] (a new issue in the historiography of the time, which he had addressed in his Bachelor’s Thesis), the appearance of an uninhibited researcher could be glimpsed, with appeal to new documentary sources, with a sober style, without stylistic efflorescences but with appreciations – beyond the ideologizing formulas, specific to the formalism proper to the requirements of the political supervisors – nuanced and lacking a partisan overt, contrary to the eventual evidences as such. The innovative, hopeful breath of 1965...

For the honest historian in training, the appeal to documents – perhaps also under the influence of the meticulous teacher Vasile Maciu (1904-1981) or Constantin C. Giurescu (1901-1977), who returned to the Faculty in 1963 and a colleague – is essential in knowing as closely as possible the reality of the past; that is why his studies have a solid documentary basis – and he himself is the author (or co-author or coordinator) of indispensable collections of documents, which incorporated, at the time of their appearance, period testimonies unknown until then or circulated in small circles of initiates – such as the precious documentary corpus. They attest to the solidity of the professional training of “a historian who has long entered the pantheon of immortals of Romanian culture” – as Professor Constantin Hlihor revealed two decades ago – and emphasize Professor Scurtu’s continued priority concern as an expression of a principle methodologically essential, in placing at the base of the eventual descriptions the period document, the elaboration of the monographic works being able to gain only in this way in credibility.

With such a vision of the research of the past – which is situated in the valuable tradition of our historiography – it is natural that the independent studies and volumes of his reign are characterized by documentary rigor, by assertions subsumed to the facts documented in their development, in the context that history. And thereby increase the reader’s confidence in the scientific discipline of History, so shaken in the fifth decade. (I note, in this context, for the knowledge of newer generations of historians – some, hastened to give verdicts in ignorance – that at a time when there was no explicit talk of oral history, Professor Scurtu interviewed former politicians – such as former politician Corneliu Coposu (1914-1995), for example – and in 1990 he made trips for documentation in the most important county centers and urged to collect and hoard those published and imagistic testimonies that would witness the new framework in the evolution of Romanian society, including the emergence and affirmation of parties.

The specialized books that followed, and which constitute an impressive florilegium of our Historiography, imposed the young university student both among the colleagues in the guild of Clio’s servants – which was also structured,

more and more, by professionalism and rigor – as well as, more difficult to achieve, in the consciousness of a society that no longer tolerated historical compilations or conjectural “analyzes” and was extremely receptive to the new thematic-interpretative openings of our Historiography. From this perspective, Professor Scurtu’s early books were a spearhead in really struggling young historians to impose their own research – which had the endorsement as such of the respective scientific institutions – to authorities with decision-making responsibilities in the publishing field, but with a conduct hesitant-evasive towards bringing to the attention of the general public some periods and themes explicitly not agreed by the officials.

This is the case of his PhD Thesis – defended in 1971, under the direction of Professor Ladislau Bányai (1907-1981), with the theme *Întemeierea și activitatea Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)* [Establishment and activity of the Peasant Party (1918-1926)]. It could only be published under the auspices of an editorial institution that was not part of the state publishing system (or of the Romanian Communist Party – respectively, the Political Publishing House, metamorphosed, in 1990, into the Euro-globalist Humanitas ...); namely, at Litera Publishing House, a kind of remnant and expression of the management (*mandatari*) system and a valve for the authorities who did not take an explicit responsibility, in such an institutionally centralized state, to publish books and authors less desirable to official policy or with a high dose of veleitarism (in the field of poetic creations, for example). It is understandable that the publication of the monograph of a party – other than the one at the helm of the Romania after World War II (and whose history, as is well known, was not even published, despite the indications and requests made explicitly and repeatedly, at the time, by to Nicolae Ceaușescu) – cataloged, according to the language of the time, “bourgeois” or “historical”, could not be approved by the cultural activists (*culturnici*). And yet, the tenacity of the Moldavians successor from the time of the voivodes materialized – for a fee, out of his own pocket – in the appearance, in Socialist Romania (uni-party system), of the first monograph of a party that had activated in Monarchical Romania (multi-party system); under a title, it is right, tactical (and intelligent) cosmetic – to mitigate the apprehensions, more or less confessed, of some officials, historians / activists –, namely *Din viața politică a României. Întemeierea și activitatea Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)* [From the political life of Romania. Establishment and Activity of the Peasant Party (1918-1926)] (198 pp.).

The publication, in 1975, of a work with such a theme, even under the auspices of a semi-private publishing house – or precisely because of it – delighted many Romanians, being received by the informed public as a signal from the authorities to recover the recent past. And among the former members of the historical parties, the appearance of the book still alleviated their suffering and

they saw it as a reward – even if it was delayed – of History, the author's scientific approach being appreciated accordingly.

Also, over the years, Professor Scurtu will elaborate a sum of biographies (studies and monographs) of some representative figures for the Romanian history – from Prince Cuza (1859-1866) to the four kings (1866/1881-1947), and from the Brătianu brothers to Ceaușescu (1965-1989); respectively: about Maniu, Mihalache, A.C. Cuza, Averescu, Argetoianu, Prince Nicolae, Princess Ileana, Barbu Știrbey, Dr. Nicolae Lupu, Gheorghe I. Brătianu, Mihail Manoilescu, Patriarch Miron Cristea, Titulescu, Nae Ionescu, Antonescu, Dr. Petru Groza, Octavian Goga, Tudor Arghezi, Ion Grămadă, Dimitrie Onciul, Constantin C. Giurescu, Leonte Filipescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Emil Bodnaraș, Gheorghe Apostol; significant for the credential dimension of a Romanian historian, most studies are dedicated to N. Iorga (the great scientist and patriot was assassinated on the day and year of the birth of the future historian Ioan Scurtu, starting with the two published in 1967 – *N. Iorga și atacarea Serbiei de către Austro-Ungaria* [N. Iorga and the Attack of Serbia by Austria-Hungary], respectively *N. Iorga despre cauzele și caracterul primului război mondial* [N. Iorga on the Causes and Cof of the First World War] –, and ending with the two published in 2010, in the last two volumes /X and XI /: *N. Iorga – întemeietorul Institutului pentru Studiul Istoriei Universale* [N. Iorga – the Founder of the Institute for the Study of Universal History], respectively *N. Iorga – mai multe partide, un singur ideal* [N. Iorga – Several Political Parties, One Ideal], from the vols. of the massive collection coordinated by Constantin Bușe and doctor (graduate also in History!) Constantin Găucan (both, unfortunately, recently deceased – 2019, 2020).

The initiative of Professor Ioan Scurtu is due to the appearance of the first post-war synthesis (under his coordination) about the history of the Romanian space between the Prut and the Dniester (annexed by the Russian Empire in 1812) – *Istoria Basarabiei. De la începuturi până în 1994* [The History of Bessarabia. From the Beginning until 1994] (with editions added in 1998 and 2003, respectively, to which he will associate three well-known historians /Gheorghe Cojocaru, Nicolae Enciu, Ion Șișcanu/, from Chișinău).

In total, so far Professor Ioan Scurtu is the author of 41 volumes of a single author, of another 60 volumes coordinator (and co-author); of 445 studies and articles published in journals (such as “Analele Universității din București. Series Istorie”, “Studii”/“Revista de istorie”, „Revue roumaine d'histoire”, „Studii și articole de istorie”, „Analele Universității «Spiru Haret». Series Istorie”, „Arhivele Totalitarismului”, „Annals of the Academy of Romanian Scientists. Series on History and Archaeology” a.o.; and „Magazin istoric”, „Historia”, „Istorie și civilizație” a.o.; and specialized volumes (of which – 105 are in collective volumes, of which 29 dedicated to some personalities of our Historiography today); to these are added numerous volumes to which he has

written *Prefaces* or *Afterword*, as well as a substantial number of *reviews* or books presentations.

It's about – *Culegere de documente și materiale privind istoria României (1918-1922)*, no publisher [Centrul de Multiplicare al Universității București], București, 1973 /340 pp./; *Culegere de documente și materiale privind istoria României (1938-1940)*, no publisher [Centrul de Multiplicare al Universității București], București, 1974 /202 pp./; *Presărați pe-a lor morminte ale laurilor foi. Eroi ai luptei pentru unitatea și independența patriei (1916-1918)*, Editura Albatros, București, 1978 /174 pp./; *Din viața politică a României. Întemeierea și activitatea Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)*, Litera, București, 1975 /200 pp./; *Viața politică din România. 1918-1944. De la Marea Unire la revoluția de eliberare socială și națională din august 1944*, Albatros (Coll. *Sinteze Lyceum*), București, 1982 /334 pp./; *Din viața politică a României (1926-1947). Studiu critic privind istoria Partidului Național-Țărănesc*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1983 /552 pp./; *Contribuții privind viața politică din România. Evoluția formei de guvernământ în istoria modernă și contemporană*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, București, 1988 /666 pp./; *Alba Iulia. 1 Decembrie 1918*, Editura Sport-Turism, București, 1988 /184 pp.; ill./; *Un episod dramatic din istoria României. 30 august 1940* (Universitatea din București. Facultatea de Istorie), no publisher [Tipografia Universității din București], București, 1990 /160 pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2011]; *Monarhia în România. 1866-1947*, Editura Danubius, București, 1991 /192 pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *Ion I.C. Brătianu. Activitatea politică*, Editura Museion, București, 1992 /144 pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *Istoria Partidului Național-Țărănesc*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1994 /488 pp./ [Tipo Moldova, 2010]; *Regele Ferdinand (1914-1927). Activitatea politică*, Editura Garamond, București, 1995 /174 pp./; *Iuliu Maniu. Activitatea politică*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1995 /300 pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *Criza dinastică din România (1925-1930)*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1996 /298 pp./; [Tipo Moldova, 2010]; *Istoria României în anii 1918-1940. Evoluția regimului politic de la democrație la dictatură*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1996 /250 pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *Catedra de Istoria Românilor. 135 de ani de la înființare*, Editura Universității din București, București, 1998 /52 pp./; *România și Marile Puteri. 1918-1933. Documente*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, 1999 /196 pp./; *România și Marile Puteri. 1933-1940. Documente*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, 2000 /232 pp./; *Viața cotidiană a românilor în perioada interbelică*, Editura RAO, București, 2001 /280 pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *Istoria românilor în timpul celor patru regi. 1866-1947* [4 Volumes]: Vol. I – *Carol I*, Vol. II – *Ferdinand*, Vol. III – *Carol al II-lea*, Vol. IV – *Mihai*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2001; Second Edition – 2004; Third Edition – 2010 /256 pp. + 214 pp. + 347 pp. + 246

pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *Istoria contemporană a României (1918-2001)*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, 2002 /212 pp./; *Istoria contemporană a României (1918-2003)*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, 2003 /214 pp./; *Istoria Partidului Țărănesc (1918-1926)*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2002 /248 pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *Studii de istorie*, Editura Ars Docendi, București, 2002 /574 pp./; *Istoria contemporană a României (1918-2005)*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, 2005 /216 pp./; *Portrete politice*, Editura Prut Internațional (Coll. *Clio*), Chișinău, 2006 /296 pp./ [Tipo Moldova: 2011]; *Revoluția Română din Decembrie 1989 în context internațional*, Editura Enciclopedică și Editura Institutului Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989, București, 2006 /362 pp./; *Istoria contemporană a României (1918–2007)*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, 2007 /224 pp./; *Civilizația românească interbelică (1918-1940)*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, 2008 /200 pp./; *La Révolution Roumaine de 1989, dans le contexte international de l'époque*, Editura Institutului Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989, București, 2008 /382 pp./; *Istoria civilizației românești. Perioada interbelică (1918-1940)*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2009 /374 pp./ – Second Edition, 2012 [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *Revoluția Română din Decembrie 1989 în context internațional*, Editura Publicațiilor pentru Străinătate, București, 2009 /412 pp.+ 42 pp. ill./ [Tipo Moldova: 2010]; *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989 in international context*, Editura Institutului Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989, București, 2009 /370 pp./; *Istoria românilor de la Carol I la Nicolae Ceaușescu*, Editura Mica Valahie, București, 2010 /280 pp./; *La Revolución Rumana de 1989*, Editura Sitech, Craiova, 2010 /360 pp./; *Politică și viață cotidiană în România în secolul al XX-lea și începutul celui de-al XXI-lea*, Editura Mica Valahie, București, 2011 /490 pp./; *Tezaurul României depus la Moscova. Note și mărturii despre activitatea Comisiei Comune româno-ruse (2004-012)*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2014 /368 pp./; *Ferdinand I*, Editura Enciclopedică [Programul *Personalitățile Marii Uniri din 1918*, în colaborare cu Academia Oamenilor de Știință din România], București, 2016 /288 pp./; *Istoria românilor de la începuturi până în 1920. Drumul spre Marea Unire*, Tipo Moldova, Iași, 2019 /708 pp. + 8 maps/; *Trianon, Trianon. 4 iunie 1920 – victoria principiului naționalităților. Argumente pro și contra*, Tipo Moldova, Iași, 2020 /362 pp./.

A distinct activity of the historian and Professor Ioan Scurtu is the one of popularizing History, of rendering it on the meaning of the wide masses of readers. Publicity articles, including those defending the national values of our history (and its place in the national education system) are over two hundred. Elaborated in its own style – consistency and ideational conviction, conciseness and clarity, devoid of stylistic artifices –, this kind of material has contributed significantly, in the last half century, to the appropriation by large categories of

readers of numerous data and events of contemporary history, including through the appeal to his own life experience. Interviews (about 25) – also fall into this productive side of the activity of scientist Ioan Scurtu (as are no less noteworthy, and dozens and dozens of participations in Radio/TV shows).

The consistency of the scientific activity of Professor Ioan Scurtu – a teacher who guided hundreds and hundreds of students, masters and Doctoral students, teachers in middle and high school –, materialized therefore in dozens of specialized books (to which are added the numerous editions of History textbooks /History Romanians, for Gymnasium, respectively High School) – and hundreds of studies and articles, was validated by its co-optation in high and representative bodies of national scientific authority – General Director of the State/National Archives, director of the “Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History, Deputy General Director of the Institute of the Romanian Revolution since December 1989, founding and title member of the Romanian Academy of Scientists (and for many years president of the Department of Historical and Archaeological Sciences), president (also for many years) of the Romanian Society of Historical Sciences; but also Dean of some faculties of History, president of some specialized national and international commissions, Vice-Rector, ministerial General Inspector, Presidential counselor.

In the last two decades, *four volumes of testimonies and studies*¹ have been dedicated to this personality of contemporary Romania – by disciples, friends and colleagues –, as a sign of appreciation for his contribution to the development of Science and Education, of the recognition of his place in Romanian Historiography & Culture from our days; and on November 27, 2020, the Presidium of the Romanian Academy of Scientists sent him a warm *Message and Jubilee Diploma and Gold Medal* “as a tribute to the entire scientific and academic activity, dedicated to history on the occasion of his 80th birthday”.

Vivat, Crescat, Floreat!

¹ Horia Dumitrescu (coord. [ed.]), *Omagiu istoricului Ioan Scurtu* (Muzeul Vrancei. Colecția *O viață pentru istorie*), Editura D.M. Press, Focșani, 2000 /822 pp./; Gh. Buzatu, Marusia Cîrstea, Horia Dumitrescu, Cristina Păiușan-Nuică (coord. [eds.]), *Iluzii, teamă, trădare și terorism internațional = 1940. Omagiu Profesorului Ioan Scurtu* (Muzeul Vrancei), Vols. I-II, Casa Editorială Demiurg (Coll. *Românii în istoria universală. The Romanians in World History*, Vol. 215), Iași, 2010 /534 + 598 pp./; Corneliu-Mihail Lungu, Mihai Nicolae (eds.), *O viață în slujba istoriei. Ioan Scurtu la 75 de ani*. Volum editat de Corneliu-Mihail Lungu și Mihai Nicolae, Editura Stefadina, București, 2015 /640 pp.; ill., facs./; Corneliu-Mihail Lungu, Ioan Lăcătușu (eds.), *Ioan Scurtu în slujba istoriei*. Volum îngrijit de prof. univ. dr. Corneliu Mihail Lungu și dr. Ioan Lăcătușu (Centrul European de Studii Covasna-Harghita. Asociația Stefadina București. [Series] *Profesioniștii noștri* 28. Colecția *Centenarul Marii Uniri (1918-2020)* 65), Editura Eurocarpatica, Sfântu Gheorghe. Editura Stefadina, București, 2020 /482 pp.; ill./.