

ABSTRACT

The present habilitation thesis comes as the result of an ample research, investigation, interpretation and publishing endeavour carried out following the defence of a doctoral dissertation in the field of Economic History and, more specifically, Banking History, one that has been guided throughout by the concern for and challenge of originality, far-reaching topics of relevance, and correct, rigorous, meticulous, balanced, pertinent and, most critically, objective analyses.

This historiographic enterprise of scientific research and professional activity attested to by studies published in professional magazines or volumes in Romania, Germany, and France, by one's participation in scientific conferences and other cultural conferences in Spain and Italy, or by the publication of seven books accompanied by numerous reviews signed by historians, geopoliticians, or specialists in international relations, validated even by collaborations with renowned historians and professors from European universities, by the recognition granted by the Romanian Academy in 2021 in the form of its 'Nicolae Bălcescu' award and, of course, by one's institutional and historiographic cooperation with various Romanian personalities from the field of history, has been characterised throughout by the determination and courage to tackle complex themes of a saliently technical nature, such as banking, financial and credit history, or uncomfortable, poorly accessible and often taboo ones, such as the working methods of the Securitate, the secret police, intelligence networks, and collaborationism. On the other hand, this entire edifying, professional, scientific and academic construction has organically evolved towards the proposing of new themes or subordinate directions of historiographic analysis, such as anti-communist resistance, the role of certain cultural institutions or structures in exile and more.

Undertaking the Economic History doctoral dissertation titled *Capitalul bancar italian în structuri financiar-industriale românești în perioada 1919-1939* (Italian Bank Capital in Romanian Financial-Industrial Structures from 1919 to 1939) in the subfield of Banking History, under the supervision of Professor Istvan Csucsuj, provided the opportunity to formulate assertions as to the characteristics, particularities, contributions, and limitations of foreign capital in Romanian interwar industry, the role of Italian capital in the modernisation of Romania, the contribution of major Italian banks to the implementation and promotion of banking strategies or

coherent and necessary financial policies such as lending and investments, the relevance of insurance companies in the changing of the collective mentality with respect to urban safety. Furthermore, the dissertation did not fail to illustrate the mark left by Italian banking personalities on the configuration of the administrative boards of Italian-capital companies. Naturally, clear results and conclusions were reached by employing classic tools from the field of History, namely archival documents regarding the interwar period found in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, the Archivio della Banca Commerciale Italiana in Milan, the Archivio della Banca d'Italia in Rome, the National Archives in Bucharest and their subsidiary in Cluj, the Archives of Bucharest Municipality, and the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest, as well as data interpretation using the statistical method and the analysis of balance sheets belonging to companies and banks.

Archival research has thus led to the outlining and formulation of clear views as to the realities regarding the investments of Italian banks in Romania and in the broader context of Central-Eastern Europe, the relationship between the principles of Italian foreign policy and Italian capital, or the contribution of the Italian state to supporting the loans granted to Romania; such views were shared or appreciated by the dissertation supervisor and by professors specialising in Banking History from Romania and Italy.

The most substantial, profound and ample expositions regarding Italian banking strategies in Romania, Italian bank and non-bank capital, shareholding and investments, insurance and services were included in the book published following the defence of the doctoral dissertation, titled *Capitalul italian în economia românească între anii 1919-1939* (Italian Capital in the Romanian Economy of 1919-1939), EFES, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, and in the subsequent volume *Investiții și investitori italieni în România (1919-1952)* (Italian Investments and Investors in Romania (1919-1952)), EFES, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, which additionally tackles banking-history topics from the time of the communist regime and of the sovietisation and communisation of Romanian economy, as well as in a series of studies published in the volumes of scientific conferences or in professional magazines.

Mobility opportunities for research abroad, alongside a fruitful collaboration with Economic-History specialists from the Universities of Milan, Pisa, and Cagliari conferred an international dimension upon the recognition earned by the accomplishments of the following years, so that the creation of Erasmus partnerships provided a scientific gateway towards

significant institutional achievements, correlated throughout with one's didactic activities carried out at the Babeş-Bolyai University, where the present author has served as supervisor for bachelor's and master's theses. Among the most noteworthy enterprises are the undertaking of a course on Romanian-Italian economic relations at the University of Padova in 2007, based on a coordinative-collaboration contract, holding a course on the issues of the Italian banking system in Central-Eastern Europe at the Università degli Studi di Milano in 2016, organising an Italian-language section – 'I Balcani Occidentali e l'Unione Europea: tra storia, realtà politica, sfide etniche, scelte migrazioniste e allargamento' – together with one's main Italian collaborators at the Faculty of European Studies as part of an international conference in 2020, thematic collaborations with professional magazines.

The lines of research pursued and explored in depth after the defence of the doctoral dissertation in the field of Economic History and, more specifically, the subfield of Banking History, were naturally expanded on, as a result of professional links to Italy and the research and documentation opportunities available at the archives and libraries of Rome, Milan, Padua, and Pisa, thus leading mainly to the outlining of an interest in the field of International Economic Relations and Romanian-Italian Relations, an inclination which was stimulated and enabled by the holding of bilaterally themed courses at the Università degli Studi di Milano for undergraduate and graduate students from 2006 onwards, by the public conferences held in Milan in 2006 and 2007, and by the ability to participate in the capacity of expert in a programme coordinated by the University of Cagliari from 2006 to 2008.

Research opportunities in Strasbourg and Brussels, alongside a sustained collaboration with that same Italian academia, have enabled one's access to a new field of scientific interest, correlated with the teaching of courses, namely that of Europeanisation. In fact, this relevant dimension, partially derived from one's interest in economic history and partly born out of reinvention, innovation and the discovery of new perspectives, was substantially facilitated by the institutional research partnership initiated through the FP7 international programme 'Transnational Network on Europeanisation and Democratisation. Project for the creation of the Transnational Network for Academic Cooperation and Research on the European Neighbourhood Policy for the Former Soviet Republics', coordinated by the University of Cagliari, which the present author participated in as an expert on behalf of Romania. The research carried out as part of the programme resulted in the publication of the volume titled *Europeanizarea și democratizarea*

României. Realități și perspective (The Europeanisation and Democratisation of Romania. Realities and Perspectives), Cluj-Napoca, EFES publishing house, 2008, as well as in several thematic studies and in the opportunity to coordinate issues of professional magazines (*Studia Europaea*, Cluj-Napoca) or to participate in national and international conferences regarding, among other topics, Energy Security, Geopolitics, and Emigration.

By preserving, at least to some extent, the Italian thematic component, by resuming one's interest in communism acquired during the years of In-Depth Studies at the Faculty of History in Cluj-Napoca, and especially by exploring working tools provided by valuable archival sources, many of which were accessed, interpreted and regarded in a nuanced light for the first time, such as the sources which paved the way to the themes regarding anti-communist political, cultural or religious resistance, one was able to configure another line of research that has enjoyed a most favourable thematic and interpretive reception, namely that of Communist Regimes and Exile. One subsidiary line of interest included here was that of Collective Mentalities during communism and post-communism.

The granting of the 'Nicolae Bălcescu' award of the Romanian Academy for the book *Securitatea și exilul intelectualilor români în Italia* (The Securitate and the Exile of Romanian Intellectuals in Italy), Mega publishing house, 2018, and the promotion of that volume marked the beginning of a string of remarkable projects in collaboration with exiles from various European states and from America, alongside scientific and cultural conferences, interviews with personalities from the world of exile, the opportunity to coordinate and participate in the elaboration of magazine issues dealing with the themes of exile and emigration (*Buletinul Bibliotecii Române*, Freiburg, *Jurnalul Literar*, Bucharest, *Studia Europaea*, Cluj-Napoca), or to coordinate sections of scientific meetings, as well as the development of institutional collaborations, such as the Romanian Library of Freiburg. This line of research resulted in the publication of another book, *Exilul Greco-Catolic în arhivele Securității* (Greek-Catholic Exile in the Archives of the Securitate), Mega publishing house, 2023, and of studies and contributions to conferences, as a profound embodiment of the notion of continuation and nuancing.

These four lines of scientific research, as well as of didactic and curricular interest, should desirably be promoted and carried forward, whilst it would be equally desirable to initiate new research fields and grounds, such as emigration and migration-related phenomena, cultural exile, the anatomy of medical exile and more.

The habilitation thesis titled *Realități economice și arhitecturi identitare românești în climatul politic de după 1918* (Economic Realities and Constructions of Romanian Identity in the Post-1918 Political Climate), which arises as a commitment to professional rigour, high-performing determination, and guaranteed far-reaching themes, comprises an abstract in Romanian and English, a section that deals with the representative scientific accomplishments that reflect one's academic recognition, scientific and professional contributions, and the originality of the historiographic approach of the doctoral dissertation defence, alongside the new components of one's professional strategy for the future, followed by a third section dedicated to the development of one's academic, scientific and professional career.