
F O C U S

ANA VICTORIA SIMA **Laudatio**



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ILLUSTRISSIMO E Chiarissimo Professore Francesco Guida,
Distinguished audience,

We are here today to pay homage to an illustrious historian and a great ambassador of Southeast European history to the world at large. Historian Francesco Guida, professor at Roma Tre University, chairman of the Italian Association of Southeast European Studies and of the Romanian-Italian Center for Historical Studies, director of the Interdepartmental Center for Research on Central-Eastern Europe, Russia and Eurasia, is here, at Babeş-Bolyai University, to receive our gratitude and, through us, the appreciation of all those whose past he has been studying rigorously and most generously for almost half a century.

Professor Francesco Guida is well acquainted with our university. Even though he first visited it only after the fall of the communist regime, he had numerous encounters with the Cluj School of History for many years be-

The Focus section is devoted to Professor Francesco Guida, to whom Babeş-Bolyai University granted on 31 October 2019 the title of *doctor honoris causa*.

fore that, encounters mediated by the scholarly works of its great professors in the late twentieth century. Inspired by their studies, he came to Cluj to meet them, in the early 1990s, and engaged in long, steadfast collaborations with our university. All this has strengthened the Romanian focus of his research and impelled him to promote the history of Southeast Europe in the world.

Francesco Guida was born on 30 November 1950, in Vibo Valentia, a small town with ancient Greek roots, located in southern Italy, on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. He is the youngest of the three children of Salvatore Guida, a professor of science, and Infinita Mustari, a professor of classical languages. He started primary school in Catanzaro (Calabria), and in 1958 he moved with his family to Rome. These were the years of the so-called “economic boom” in postwar Italy, when many Italians chose to relocate from the south to the center and north of the country, in search of a better life. Having settled in Rome, he continued his studies in elementary and secondary schools and later enrolled at the Faculty of Letters of La Sapienza University, one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the world.

As a student of the Faculty of Letters, Francesco Guida chose to pursue a historical-cultural path, which he associated with the study of several classical and modern languages, including Romanian. The meeting with Professor Angelo Tamborra, the great historian of Eastern Europe, decisively influenced this choice.¹ This happened in 1970, just as Professor Tamborra had managed to transform his course on the History of Eastern Europe into a chair at La Sapienza University of Rome. This was a catalyst both for the institutionalization of the History of Eastern Europe as an academic discipline, and for the orientation and formation of Francesco Guida, a young student at that time. Encouraged by his professor, in 1971 he won a research scholarship to Romania, offered by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This enabled his first contact with the modern and contemporary history of the Romanians. His research findings materialized in a highly appreciated master’s thesis on “Tudor Vladimirescu and the Revolutionary Movement of 1821 in Recent Historiography,”² written under the supervision of Professors Angelo Tamborra and Rosa Del Conte, the great philologist and Mihai Eminescu scholar.

When he graduated from university in 1972, an academic career in Italy, as in many other parts of the world, was rather uncertain and often difficult to embark upon. However, urged by Professor Tamborra, Francesco Guida chose to pursue a career in research. He obtained a doctoral fellowship, which allowed him to continue and develop new research directions on the history of Eastern Europe. He did not deviate from this path even for a moment, even when he had to work as a high school teacher in the late 1970s, before he became a university professor and embraced research as one of his professions of faith.³

His academic career began in 1980, when he held a position as a confirmed researcher at the Institute of Modern History of the Sapienza University of Rome. It was the first step any young man had to take on his way to a full university career. Twelve years later, following a national competition, he became associate professor at the Faculty of Languages of Ca' Foscari University in Venice, teaching the course on the History of Eastern Europe. The years he spent in Venice fostered a close and fruitful collaborations with the Romanian Institute of Culture and Humanistic Research there and, through it, with Romanian academics. In 1997 he transferred to the Faculty of Political Sciences of Roma Tre University, whose ordinary (i.e. full tenure) professor he has been since 2001. In Rome, he capitalized on his rich teaching and research experience, bringing it to fruition during his 10 years in office as dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences (2008–2018) and as a member of the Academic Senate of Roma Tre University. It is emblematic that in all the three universities he served as a researcher, associate professor and full professor, he constantly assumed responsibility for the European Erasmus program, sealing numerous cooperation agreements with various universities around the world.

Throughout this period of almost half a century, working in the directions launched by his mentor, Angelo Tamborra, whose intellectual and human qualities he admired, Francesco Guida has defined his own vision on and method for researching the history of Central-Eastern Europe: a vision in which national identities must be understood within an international framework. Therefore, his studies and research are steered by two major goals: a permanent recourse to archival documentation, combined with excellent knowledge of the national historiography of each studied nation. Of course, such an approach could not be undertaken without a thorough mastery of the languages of the sources studied. This is why Professor Francesco Guida learned, from very early on, classical and modern languages, such as Latin, Greek, neo-Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, Hungarian, French, English, Spanish and Portuguese, in an effort that continues to this day. He is also the beneficiary of numerous research internships in the archives and libraries of Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Hungary but also in France, England, Portugal, Spain and Italy. Their results are reflected in a rich scientific work illustrated by the books he has authored, the volumes he has edited and the studies he has published in journals and collections from Italy and abroad. This is a remarkable oeuvre that has been built up gradually, through lasting accumulations that he has consolidated, expanded and nuanced, in a perpetual quest for new data and interpretations.

There are three major research directions he has consistently followed in his scientific career: the history of Romania, of Bulgaria, and of Greece. He has also

written studies on Hungary, Russia, Serbia and Poland or on other countries in Southeast Europe. From a chronological point of view, his research descends deep into the medieval past of these peoples and spans the whole period up to the beginning of the twenty-first century, but his main focus is on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Regarding his three main directions of research, it should be noted that they have been shaped successively, starting in the early 1980s and continuing in the decades that followed. Thus, in 1984, one of his first reference works, entitled *L'Italia e il Risorgimento balcanico: Marco Antonio Canini*,⁴ was awarded the Marraro Prize by the Italian Society of Historical Studies. The book was based on more than a decade of research carried out in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy, and paved the way for his subsequent monographs and syntheses, such as: *La nascita di uno stato balcanico: La Bulgaria di Alessandro di Battenberg nella corrispondenza diplomatica italiana (1879–1886)*; *Mezzo secolo di socialismo reale: L'Europa centro-orientale dal secondo conflitto mondiale alla caduta dei regimi comunisti*, *La Russia e l'Europa centro-orientale 1815–1914* (published in two successive editions).

Of all his research, Romanian history remains a privileged topic to this day. He first approached it as a student, but resumed and continually expanded it over his nearly five decades of scholarly activity. The results are not only studies and books about important personalities and events from the Romanian past,⁵ but also admirable syntheses of modern and contemporary Romanian history. We should mention here *La Grande Romania* (Cosenza: Edizioni di Periferia, 2002), *La Romania contemporanea: Momenti e questioni di storia* (Milan: Nagard, 2002), and *Romania* (Milan: Unicopli, 2005) (the first edition was followed by a second revised edition in 2009).

His works have been and continue to be translated into international languages (English, French, Spanish), but also into national languages (Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, Serbian, Polish), which ensures their broad reception and unanimous appreciation. For example, his most recent synthesis on Romanian history, published in Romanian under the title *România în secolul 20* (Romania in the twentieth century), was presented in Cluj as part of an event organized under the aegis of Babeş-Bolyai University and the George Bariţiu Institute of History of the Romanian Academy.

Writing about the past of some of the peoples of Southeast Europe, historian Francesco Guida reconstructs the history of an entire region. He does this with the rigor of thorough linguistic and cultural preparation, but especially with the honesty of the researcher who always starts from the documents (as primary sources that are indispensable to a historian), which he then sifts through the fil-

ter of each national historiography. He thus offers a genuine lesson in scientific methodology, a model of historical research that he has passed on to his students and disciples.

Beyond his qualities as an accomplished professor and researcher, Francesco Guida is an outstanding ambassador of Central-Eastern European history to Italy and the world. He is a specialist who has cultivated the past of this half of Europe, not only through his lectures and research, but also through his membership in various national and international bodies. We should recall, in this regard, his positions as chairman of the Italian Association of Southeast European Studies, vice-chairman of the International Association of Southeast European Studies, president of the Romanian-Italian Center for Historical Studies, and director of the Interdepartmental Center for Research on Central-Eastern Europe, Russia and Eurasia. In recognition of his scientific merits, he was awarded the title of doctor honoris causa by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 2017.

Francesco Guida is not only a Benedictine teacher and researcher but also a generous and serene man, as all his collaborators have come to know him, scholars whom he has always supported and encouraged in their research over time.

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, by honoring you today, Babeş-Bolyai University is honoring itself at a time of exceptional symbolic importance for its existence: 100 years of Romanian higher education in Cluj. In this context, please receive this high academic distinction as an expression of the gratitude of our academic community and, through us, of entire Romania, for your entire work and activity dedicated to the history of the Romanians and of Central-Eastern Europe.

Distinguished audience, by being included in the prestigious academic gallery of Alma Mater Napocensis, Professor and historian Francesco Guida hereby becomes symbolically “entrenched” in the memory of this athenaeum and receives the deepest gratitude of his adoptive homeland, Romania.

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Notes

1. Angelo Tamborra (1913–2004), Italian historian, known for his research and studies on Central-Eastern Europe in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries; founder, in 1970, of the Chair of the History of Eastern Europe at the Sapienza University of Rome. Among his representative works we should mention: *Cavour e i Balcani* (Turin: ILTE, 1958); *L'Europa centro-orientale nei secoli XIX–XX (1800–1920)*, 2 vols. (Milan: Francesco Vallardi, 1973); *Garibaldi e l'Europa: Impegno militare e prospettive*

- politiche* (Rome: Ufficio Storico Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, 1983); *Esuli russi in Italia dal 1905 al 1917: Riviera ligure, Capri, Messina* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2002). A monographic evocation of Angelo Tamborra's personality and scientific work can be found in Francesco Guida, "Angelo Tamborra (1913–2004)," *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 91, 4 (2004): 601–605.
2. Francesco Guida, "Tudor Vladimirescu e la rivoluzione del 1821 nei Principati danubiani nella storiografia romena," *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 62, 3 (1975): 291–315.
 3. His interest in the history of Eastern Europe in general and of Romania in particular was reflected in several studies and works published in the late 1970s, such as: "Romania 1917–22: Aspirazioni nazionali e conflitti sociali," in *Rivoluzione e reazione in Europa 1917–1924*, edited by F. Gaeta, vol. 2 (Rome: Edizioni dell'Avanti!, 1978), 1–105; id., "Marco Antonio Canini corrispondente dal fronte di guerra russo-turco nel 1877," *Archivio storico italiano* 337, 3 (501) (1979): 335–424.
 4. *L'Italia e il Risorgimento balcanico: Marco Antonio Canini* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1984); *Nascita di uno stato balcanico: La Bulgaria di Alessandro di Battenberg nella corrispondenza diplomatica italiana (1879–1886)* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1988) (in collaboration with A. Pitassio and R. Tolomeo); *Mezzo secolo di socialismo reale: L'Europa centro-orientale dal secondo conflitto mondiale all'era postcomunista*, 2nd edition (co-edited with A. Biagini) (Turin: Giappichelli, 1997); *La Russia e l'Europa centro-orientale 1815–1914* (Rome: Carocci, 2003) (2nd edition 2006).
 5. "Marco Antonio Canini e la Romania," in *Risorgimento: Italia e Romania 1859–1879: Esperienze a confronto*, edited by G. Lami, with an intervention of G. Spadolini and an introduction by B. Valota Cavallotti (Milan: Unicopli; Bucharest: Anima, 1992), 139–153; "Un intellettuale organico in prestito: Marco Antonio Canini," in *L'intellettuale e la rivoluzione: L'esempio rumeno*, edited by A. Tarantino and L. Valmarin, special issue of *România Orientale* 4–5 (1991–1992): 167–172; "Un libro 'italiano' sui Paesi romeni alla fine del Settecento," in *Italia e Romania: Due popoli e due storie a confronto (secc. XIV–XVIII)*, edited by S. Graciotti (Florence: Olschki, 1998), 345–365; "The Idea of Europe in Roumania and Roumania's Image in Western European Countries," in *The Balkans: National Identities in a Historical Perspective*, edited by S. Bianchini and M. Dogo (Ravenna: Longo, 1998), 75–90; "La Grande Romania in alcune testimonianze occidentali (1919–1923)," in *Nuovi Studi balcanici*, edited by A. Tarantino and L. Valmarin, special issue of *România Orientale* 12 (1999): 153–159; "Il fenomeno ceaușista: ideologia e politica," in *La crisi dell'impero sovietico e la dissoluzione del sistema del socialismo reale*, edited by S. Fedele and P. Fornaro (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2000), 79–97 (also published in *Transylvanian Review* 10, 4 (2001): 69–80; also in a Romanian version: "Fenomenul ceaușist, ideologia și politica," in *Romania e România: Lingua e cultura romena di fronte all'Occidente*, edited by T. Ferro (Udine: Forum, 2003), 279–290; "Nicolae Iorga e il compimento dell'unità nazionale romena," *Quaderni della Casa Romena di Venezia* (Bucharest) 1 (2001): 111–121; "I drammi dell'Europa romena: Il

caso della Moldavia e della Transnistria,” *Rivista della Fondazione europea Dragan* (Milan) 17 (2002): 215–229; “La Grèce, les Principautés roumaines et l’Étincelle de la révolution nationale: De Rigas Fereos à Tudor Vladimirescu,” *Quaderni della Casa Romena di Venezia* 2 (2003): 136–142; “Marco Antonio Canini et l’ethnogenèse du peuple roumain,” *Studia historica: Analele Universității ‘Dunărea de Jos’ Galați*, fasc. 19, *Istorie*, 1 (2002): 87–101; “Roumanie et Pologne vues par les Italiens dans deux moments fondamentales de leur histoire,” in *Romanian and Polish Peoples in East-Central Europe (17th–20th Centuries)*, edited by V. Ciobanu (Iași: Junimea, 2003), 131–162; “Lo Stato nazionale romeno e l’Europa occidentale: Interferenze ideali e materiali,” *România Orientale* 16 (2003): 39–62; “Un intellettuale ‘italiano’ al servizio dell’Impero asburgico nei Principati di Valacchia e Moldavia alla fine del Settecento,” *Transylvanian Review* 13, 3 (2004): 129–146 (the article was also published in Romanian in *Călători români în Occident: Secolele XVII–XX*, edited by N. Bocșan and I. Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul Cultural Român, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2004, 289–307); “I Paesi del futuro allargamento dell’Unione Europea (2007): Romania e Bulgaria,” in *L’Unione Europea tra processo di integrazione e di allargamento*, edited by G. Bosco, F. Perfetti, and G. Ravasi (Milan: Nagard, 2004), 284–300; “România contemporană în drumul spre Uniunea Europeană,” in *România și procesul de integrare europeană* (Bucharest: Europa Nova, 2005), 88–96; “La destruction des élites roumaines,” in *Le Communisme et les élites en Europe centrale: Destructions, mutations, conversions*, edited by N. Bauquet and F. Bocholier, foreword by F. Fejtő, afterword by P. Kende (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), 121–131; “La Droite radicale roumaine et l’Italie dans les années Trente,” in *La Périphérie du fascisme: Spécification d’un modèle fasciste au sein de sociétés agraires: Le cas de l’Europe centrale entre les deux guerres*, edited by C. Horel, T. Sandu, and F. Taubert (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006), 79–90; “Alcune osservazioni sulla storiografia romena degli anni sessanta e le sue relazioni con quella italiana: La *Revue roumaine d’histoire*,” in *Cultură românească în Italia: 80 de ani de la crearea primei catedre de limba română la Roma* (Bucharest: Ed. Institutului Cultural Român, 2006), 280–286; “Federal Projects in Interwar Romania: An Overvaulting Ambition?” in *Pour la paix en Europe: Institutions et société civile dans l’entre-deux-guerres/For Peace in Europe: Institutions and Civil Society between the World Wars*, eds. M. Petricioli and D. Cherubini (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2007), 229–258; “Identità nazionale e progetti federali in Romania tra le due guerre mondiali,” in *Ricerca di identità, ricerca di modernità: Il Sud-est europeo tra il XVIII e il XX secolo*, edited by E. Costantini and A. Pitassio (Perugia: Morlacchi, 2008), 185–226; “Romania e Italia dalla pace di Bucarest alla vigilia della Conferenza della pace,” *Transylvanian Review* 17, 4 (2008): 102–121 and 18, 1 (2009): 108–132; “Iuliu Maniu tra federalismo e nazionalismo nella Grande Romania,” *Quaderni della Casa Romena di Venezia* 5 (2008): 157–168; “À la recherche du fédéralisme dans la Roumanie d’entre les guerres,” *Revue AIESEE* 35–39 (2005–2009): 239–258; “Al ‘servizio’ della democrazia: Nicolae Petrescu Comnen e la Repubblica dei Consiglieri,” in *La fine della Grande Ungheria: Fra rivoluzione e reazione (1918–1920)*, edited by A. Basciani and R. Ruspanti (Trieste: Beit, 2010), 183–196; “Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, la principale vittima delle ‘purghes’ nella Romania

comunista: Una rivisitazione,” in *Intellettuali versus democrazia: I regimi autoritari nel Europa sud-orientale (1933–1953)*, edited by F. Guida (Rome: Carocci, 2010), 381–439; “Le relazioni politiche tra Romania e Italia in età contemporanea,” in *Un secol de italianistică la București*, edited by D. Condrea Derer and H. Stănculescu, vol. 2, *O catedră centenară* (Bucharest: Ed. Universității din București, 2011), 12–23; “Marco Antonio Canini et l’ethnogenèse du peuple roumain,” in *Ouest-Est: Dynamiques centre-périphérie entre les deux moitiés du continent: Des regards interdisciplinaires*, edited by P. Renaud, J. Maár, and T. Sandu (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2011), 137–150; “Affinità cronologiche e diversità socio-politiche nella formazione degli Stati nazionali romeno e italiano,” in *Unità nazionale e modernità nel Risorgimento italiano e romeno: Atti del convegno internazionale in occasione dei 150 anni dell’Unità d’Italia (Bistrița, 10–12 dicembre 2010)*, edited by I. Cârja (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2011), 65–79; “Passato e presente nei rapporti italo-romeni,” in *Orizzonti culturali italo-romeni: Prospettive ed esperienze/Orizonturi culturale italo-române: Perspective și experiențe*, edited by A. C. Cionchin (Timișoara: Brumar, 2012), 45–49; “Rapporti tra romeni e italiani nel Risorgimento,” in *Errico Amante e il figlio Bruto in rapporto al Risorgimento italiano e romeno: Atti del Convegno Nazionale di Studi: Fondi, Castello Caetani, 30 marzo 2012* (Formia: Graficart, 2012), 85–100; “L’idea di una Romania europea,” *Il Mulino* 62, 4 (2013): 650–657; “Războiul de independență română în opinia publică și în corespondențele de război italiene,” *Revista istorică* (Bucharest) 24, 3–4 (2013): 259–267; “Una grande guerra per divenire un grande Paese,” in *I romeni e la Grande Guerra 1914–2014: Mostra foto-documentaria in occasione del centenario della Grande Guerra*, edited by R. Dinu et al. (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2014), 15–24; “Războiul de independență—ecouri italiene,” *Magazin istoric* (Bucharest) 48, 5 (2014): 19–22; “Romania and Europe: Image and Reality,” *Revue AIESEE* 40–44 (2010–2014): 226–237; Foreword to R. Dinu, *L’avamposto sul Danubio della Triplice alleanza: Diplomazia e politica di sicurezza nella Romania di Carlo I (1878–1914)* (Rome: Aracne, 2015).

Abstract

Laudatio

The paper presents the content of the Laudatio honoring Professor Francesco Guida, to whom Babeș-Bolyai University granted on 31 October 2019 the title of doctor honoris causa. Professor at Roma Tre University, chairman of the Italian Association of Southeast European Studies and of the Romanian-Italian Center for Historical Studies, director of the Interdepartmental Center for Research on Central-Eastern Europe, Russia and Eurasia, in his scientific career Professor Guida consistently followed three major research directions, the history of Romania, of Bulgaria and of Greece, but he has also written studies on Hungary, Russia, Serbia and Poland or on other countries in Southeast Europe.

Keywords

Francesco Guida, Southeast Europe, Romania, Babeș-Bolyai University