
P R O F I L E

Professor Liviu Maior at 80 Years Old A Historian of Modernity and of Historical Writing Modernization in Romania

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Introduction

A DECADE AGO the Center for Transylvanian Studies of the Romanian Academy published in Professor Liviu Maior' honor, on his 70th anniversary, a comprehensive volume on his personality, featuring the consistent contributions of some Romanian and foreign historians.¹ We will summarize in the following lines a big part of that volume's foreword, because the things said then remain relevant, including here only evaluations of the books published by Liviu Maior after 2010² (the reader can find there a selected list of the Professor's entire scientific activity until 2010). The title of the volume published a decade ago fully reflects the complex personality of Professor Liviu Maior, who demonstrated, in more than half a century of activity in the service of the Muse Clio and of Romania, that he knows how to carry out not only scientific, profes-

sional, but also political and public projects, all sustainable over time. Professor Liviu Maior is today a *recognized historian* in Romania and abroad, with an impressive contribution to the field of Transylvanian and Romanian history, approached in a broad European context, *a politician* and *a diplomat*, appreciated for the professionalism and loyalty with which he served Romania and the universally valid democratic values, being at the same time a *founder* of research institutions in the field of history, educational institutions and culture. Liviu Maior is, therefore, what we call a participating historian, writing and making history at the same time.

In the general landscape of Romanian historiography, Professor Liviu Maior is one of the most appreciated specialists of the last decades. Aware of the importance and the necessity of broadening the documentary base for the adequate knowledge of Romanian history, Professor Liviu Maior edited, over more than four decades of historiographical activity, important original documentary sources, designed to open new perspectives on the 1848 Revolution in Transylvania, on the Romanian national movement, on the War of Independence, on the political correspondence of some of the most important personalities of the Romanian public life in Transylvania, on the Great War. Concerned with the modern history of Romania, he devoted particular attention to the movement for the national emancipation of the Romanians in Transylvania in the second half of the nineteenth century, publishing studies and fundamental books on the Revolution of 1848, the creation the Romanian National Party in Transylvania, its organization and ideology, the Memorandum, the Romanians' relations with the Habsburgs, etc. A reformer, but not a revolutionary of contemporary Romanian historical writing, demystifying, but not demolishing the national history, Professor Liviu Maior pieced together the history of the Transylvanian Romanians from the formation and emergence of the modern nation to the completion of the national state unity and the creation of Greater Romania, within an integrative vision on Romanian and European history.

In public life, as a politician and diplomat, he constantly promoted the national values and the interests of the country, in order to ensure a more prestigious place for Romania in the international arena, in the universal concert of nations.

Biographical Data and Professional Development

BORN ON 2 October 1940, in Beclean, Bistrița-Năsăud County, Professor Liviu Maior attended primary and secondary school in his hometown and then in Dej, and continued with higher education at Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, taking the bachelor's exam in 1964, at the Faculty of

History and Philosophy. At the same faculty and university, he received official scientific consecration within the historians' guild, obtaining, in 1974, the title of doctor in history.

He had a brilliant academic and university career, going through the entire hierarchy, from assistant lecturer (1964) and then full lecturer to associate professor and professor (1990) at the Department of Modern History of Babeş-Bolyai University. He also held the prestigious position of head of this department, before transferring, in 1996, to the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest. Since 1990, he has also been a doctoral supervisor, providing guidance to generations of undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as Ph.D. candidates, opening new horizons in the understanding of modern history and in the practice of teaching.

Along with the scientific and university careers that he illustrated with competence and professionalism, Professor Liviu Maior was also involved in the life of the city, he became a public figure and a political personality appreciated in the country and abroad. For years, he was the president of the Universitatea Cluj sports club, being directly involved in the development of Cluj sporting life. Between 1992 and 1996 he served as minister of Education, and then (after 1996) became a senator in the Romanian Parliament and the chairman of the European Integration Commission, in an period extremely important for Romania's accession to the Euro-Atlantic institutions. In the years 1991–1992 he obtained the Robert Schuman scholarship of the European Parliament, as well as a NATO scholarship, acquiring expertise in diplomacy and international relations, so that, between 2003 and 2005, he served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to Canada.

The domestic and the international institutional involvement has been a constant component of the activity of Professor Liviu Maior in recent decades: between 1992 and 1996 he served as President of the UNESCO National Commission, in 1994 he was Vice President of the UNESCO World Conference and Vice President of the European Conference of Ministers of Education in Madrid; from 1994 to 1995 he was a member of the UN-UNESCO Joint Committee on the Rights of the Child, etc. His prestige, experience and expertise also led to his membership in the Reflection Group led by former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a group that drafted the European Constitution. He is a member of the Commission on the History of International Relations of the International Committee of Historians (Milan), as well as a member of the editorial boards of several publications, and an organizer of high-profile international conferences. He was a visiting professor in the USA (1974–1975, 1977–1978, 1981–1982) and completed several documentation and specialization internships in Belgium, France, England, Italy, Germany, Austria, and Hungary.

He was the first director of the Center for Transylvanian Studies, re-established in 1991, under the honorary presidency of D. Prodan, organizing in a modern form the activity of this scientific institution. The Center for Transylvanian Studies (created in 1942 and banned in 1948), to the re-establishment of which Professor Maior made an essential contribution, remains today the only institution in the country that constantly distributes books and magazines abroad exclusively in foreign languages, which present from a multiple perspective the Romanian history and civilization and also the specificity of the ethnic groups and denominations living in Transylvania. A meritorious achievement of Professor Liviu Maior is the revitalization in 1991 of the publication of the Center for Transylvanian Studies, *Revue de Transylvanie*, a quarterly magazine known today as the *Transylvanian Review/Revue de Transylvanie*. The recognition of professional achievements did not take long to appear, as in 1995 Professor Maior was awarded the prize of the Romanian Academy for his work *Alexandru Vaida-Voevod între Belvedere și Versailles (însemnări, memorii, scrisori)* (Alexandru Vaida-Voevod between Belvedere and Versailles: Notes, memoirs, letters) (Cluj-Napoca: Sincron, 1993); in 2004 he became a Knight of the Order of the Star of Romania, and in 2007 and 2008 he was awarded the title of honorary doctor by Petru Maior University of Târgu-Mureș and Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, respectively.

Research Topics and Historiographical Profile

ANY ATTEMPT to outline Professor Maior's full intellectual portrait—with an emphasis on his historical vision—is a difficult and even risky undertaking, especially since many of his works are still to be published. However, we will do it, aware of the relativism of our attempt, in order to offer the reader only a sketch of a complex personality. Specializing in modern history, Professor Liviu Maior understood from the very beginning the fundamental role of sources for the scholarly investigation of the past. In the same spirit, he always made the necessary distinction between the history enthusiast and the specialist, claiming for the latter not so much an infinite horizon of knowledge as a working toolkit, a set of methods of the “historical profession,” which amateurs can never possess and master. Starting from such a conception and aware of the huge volume of archive sources—available but unexplored—for the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the historian began and carried out an intense work of collection, processing and restitution, materialized in volumes dedicated to the great moments of national affirmation or to exceptional personalities of our history, all inscribed in a European context: *Coreșpon-*

dența lui Ioan Rațiu cu George Barițiu (1861–1892) (Ioan Rațiu's correspondence with George Barițiu, 1861–1892), in collaboration with Keith Hitchins (Cluj: Dacia, 1970), 253 pages; *Avram Iancu: Scrisori* (Avram Iancu: Letters) (Cluj: Dacia, 1972), 125 pages; *Transilvania și războiul pentru independență (1877–1878)* (Transylvania and the War of Independence, 1877–1878)(Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1977), 203 pages. Then, he inspired and trained whole generations of young historians to do the same, convinced that historical writing outside the sources is diluted, that it becomes an essay, literature, memoirs, political or artistic discourse, or even propaganda. In addition, the message of the researcher Liviu Maior was that our modern history, although generally known, remains deficient in terms of basic information which, once introduced to specialists and the public, can radically change the general perception of the era and of special topics.

In the second part of his career, without giving up the investigation of new sources, he proceeded to develop extensive syntheses on the Revolution of 1848–1849 in Transylvania, the national emancipation movement and the establishment, organization and functioning of the Romanian National Party, the Memorandum, the life and activity of Alexandru Vaida Voevod, or the relations of the Romanians with the Habsburg power. Especially in his latest work, Professor Liviu Maior introduced and imposed an innovative vision on the mentioned time segment in the history of Romanians (1848–1920), bringing to light surprising interpretations of modernity, of the place and the role of Romanians in the Austrian and then the Dual Empire: *Le Mouvement du Mémorandum* (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1981), 64 pages; *Mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania 1900–1914* (The Romanian national movement in Transylvania, 1900–1914) (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1986), 195 pages; *Memorandumul: Filosofia politico-istorică a petiționarismului românesc* (The Memorandum: The political-historical philosophy of Romanian petitioners) (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Fundației Culturale Române, 1992), 301 pages; *The Austrian Military Border: Its Political and Cultural Impact* (edited in collaboration with Nicolae Bocșan and Ioan Bolovan)(Iași: Glasul Bucovinei, 1994), 120 pages; *1848–1849: Români și unguri în revoluție* (1848–1849: Romanians and Hungarians in the Revolution) (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 1998), 413 pages; *Romanians in the Habsburg Army: Forgotten Soldiers and Officers* (Bucharest: Military Publishing House, 2004), 207 pages; *In the Empire: Habsburgs and Romanians: From Dynastic Loyalty to National Identity* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy, Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2008), 353 pages. The historian proposes a multilayered approach, between official history and everyday life, combining different points of view on the course of society, coming from politicians and peasants, from clergy and laity, from soldiers as well as from pacifists. The most significant correction

of the old clichés comes from the presentation of the Romanians' relations with the central power, in this case with the Habsburg dynasty. The approach starts from the extreme interpretations accepted so far, in connection with the role of empires in general and of the Habsburg Empire in particular, seen either as an expression of hyper centralization, of absolute power, of strict control of the subjects of different nations and denominations, always ready for rebellion, held as in a prison, full of hatred and dissatisfied, on the one hand, or as an example of a generalized brotherhood, in which patriarchal life unfolded smoothly, in fidelity and faith, to God and Crown, in universal peace and happiness, on the other hand. The corrections proposed by Professor Liviu Maior took into account the fact that in Romanian historiography, due to the special circumstances that restructured the Austrian Empire after 1867 and especially due to the "social order" of the decades of the communist regime, the first form of analysis was exacerbated—critical, severe, accusatory towards the Habsburg Empire.

Observing that the Romanians—as well as the Croats, Serbs, Slovaks, Bosnian Muslims, Poles, etc.—were loyal to the monarchy, part of the group of dynastic loyalists, the historian seeks to discover the mechanisms of this position, generating appropriate attitudes. The research starts from the antecedents of the 19th century, from the context of the Enlightenment, from the balance that the Habsburgs brought for the Transylvanian Romanians in relation to the Estates (nations), or indeed the privileged groups. The analysis combines established or more modern historical methods with an arsenal adopted from sociology and political science, focused on the binomial center-periphery, on revealing the weakness of the center, unable to manage the periphery. The critical moment—as it appears from Professor Liviu Maior's approach—was the year 1867, with the conclusion of the dualist past, when in the case of the Romanians and of others loyalty should have been transferred from Vienna to Buda (Budapest), which did not happen. The abandonment by the eastern non-Hungarian subjects of the new center, artificially set and unpopular, was the beginning of the end. However, for the decades that followed, our historian proves that the evolutions were quite sinuous, as were the identities. The author draws attention to the concomitant solidarity that can define a person's life, from family, locality and region to nation, from profession to human race, or from those formed by free consensus to those imposed by fate.

Correcting the clichés and fallacies of Romanian historiography, marked by the great national achievement of 1918 or by the rigors of communism, the author realistically follows the fate of Romanians in the Habsburg monarchy, drawing attention on ignored aspects, intentionally overlooked or even distorted. This opens up a new universe to the reader, in which Romanians no longer appear as oppressed, discriminated against and despised but rather, to a large extent and in many ways, also integrated in the functioning mechanism of a

state, as soldiers, educators, administrators, judges, priests, etc. Starting from the explanation of these aspects of daily life in Austria and Austria-Hungary, the author approaches the situation of Romanians as integrated in the general structure of the empire, in their relation to Romania, in the international arena and in the course of the new European construction at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. Therefore, after analyzing the whole process of the national emancipation movement of Romanians—from its tumultuous and even violent forms to the organizational and institutional political ones—, Professor Liviu Maior moves on to deeper aspects, to general structures as reflected in mentalities. Thus, for the first time, the notion of “dynastic patriotism” is elaborated upon, as illustrated by the Romanian state organization projects devised by the elite, in general, and by personalities such as George Barițiu, Avram Iancu, Mihai Eminescu, Andrei Șaguna, Alexandru Vaida Voevod and others. The functioning of the Romanian dynastic loyalty is attested first of all by the army (from the border regiments to the modern forms of organization, after 1848), by the administration, justice, churches and education. At the end of these steps, in the last decades the researcher has outlined, starting from the sources, another Romanian Transylvanian world, one that actually existed but which we, the descendants, forgot or perverted. Thus, the Romanians’ path from dynastic loyalty to national identity and from fidelity to the House of Habsburg to the belief in the nation and in the Kingdom of Romania appears as a natural, normal development.

The volumes about Alexandru Vaida Voevod represent the end of an author’s historiographical cycle, devoted to exemplary personality who marked for more than half a century the history of Romania: *Alexandru Vaida-Voevod între Belvedere și Versailles (însemnări, memorii, scrisori)* (Bucharest: Sincron, 1993), 294 pages; *Alexandru Vaida Voevod: Putere și defăimare* (Alexandru Vaida Voevod: Power and defamation) (Bucharest: RAO, 2010), 187 pages; *Un părinte fondator al României Mari: Alexandru Vaida Voevod* (A founding father of Greater Romania: Alexandru Vaida Voevod) (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2018), 256 pages. Professor Maior approaches in these books a historical issue rather than a regional one, because Vaida’s public and political activity certainly crossed the provincial and national borders, in a select trajectory that included great statesmen who influenced the history of many European states before and after the Great War. The author gave adequate space to the Parisian problems of 1919–1920, noting Alexandru Vaida Voevod’s ability to negotiate and to better understand the course of history at that time. The inflexibility of Ion I. C. Brătianu, with whom he otherwise got along very well, was matched by his greater openness towards dialogue with the Allied partners and his willingness to make reasonable concessions so as not to endanger Romania’s major interests at the Peace Conference. Professor Liviu Maior remarked very well that Vaida proved to be very skilled both during Brătianu’s chairmanship of the Romanian delegation

and especially after Vaida became its leader, and his older relations with leaders of nationalities, members of the delegations of the new states, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Serbs, etc., allowed him to carry out an open dialogue and, implicitly, to find a common answer to many of the issues discussed during the Peace Conference. At the same time, his pre-war experience at the Belvedere Palace in Vienna, but especially during his stay in Paris, marked his personality and contributed to his subsequent work as prime minister, minister, and parliamentarian.

The Great War is another fruitful direction of research in the concerns of Professor Liviu Maior. Apart from the studies published over several decades, in recent years he has written two books: *Doi ani mai devreme: Ardeleni, bucovineni și basarabeni în război 1914–1916* (Two years earlier: Transylvanians, Bukovinians and Bessarabians in the war 1914–1916) (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2016), 290 pages; *De la Marele Război la România întregită* (From the Great War to Romania as a whole) (Bucharest: RAO, 2018), 301 pages. In the first book, published in celebration of the centenary of Romania's entry into the First World War for the liberation of Transylvania, the author aims to rectify an omission, as in previous decades Romanian historiography dealt almost obsessively with the Great War, researching only the period 1916–1918, respectively the time interval after the entry of the Old Kingdom into the war alongside the Entente. Of course, the insistence showed by Romanian historiography during these years and especially in the autumn of 1918 was justified, because the end of this period saw the achievement of the goal that had led to the entry of our country into the war, namely, the union of Bukovina and Transylvania with Romania. However, millions of Romanians from Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia thus came to be neglected, people who had been at war since the summer of 1914, when the empires in which they lived (Austro-Hungarian and Tsarist) triggered the conflict that would last until the autumn of 1918. Encouraged by the desire to bring balance to the research on the history of the Great War for all Romanians throughout its entire duration, responsible as a historian to cover blind spots but also because the subject itself was rather generous for researchers, with a variety of sources and with new methodological perspectives, Professor Liviu Maior offers us a synthesis on the first two years of the war, both in what concerns the Transylvanian, Bukovinian and Bessarabian Romanians, as well as those of the Old Kingdom, including the political decision makers and opinion leaders in Bucharest.

The author, familiar with the main texts of universal historiography referring to the Great War, carefully illustrates the complexity of a historical process that ended in apotheosis for most Romanians, with the formation of Greater Romania. Professor Liviu Maior, with generosity and professionalism, presents us with a thorough work, based on a solid documentation, balanced and deep, which will certainly endure over time. He did not neglect the enlightening di-

mension of the history of the Great War, giving us in the second book a more “human” perspective on the First World War. Liviu Maior’s book is not only necessary in the contemporary historiographical landscape, but also meritorious and worthy of appreciation, because the effort made to complete this work was a considerable one, involving years of documentation and reflection. The historian offers us a new work that does not deviate from the rigor and methodology required by a professional approach, but whose captivating style speaks not only to historians, but also to a wider audience, cultured, interested in deciphering how the events of 1914–1918 actually occurred and unfolded, and less in how these events could have developed. Unlike other recent historians or pseudo-historians, concerned with the spectacular, the imaginary and with shallow speculations, Professor Liviu Maior reconstructs the Great War based on testimonies—from a Romanian perspective, set in a European context—outlining a world from which emerged the lasting edifice called Greater Romania.

Conclusions

AFTER MORE than five decades of work, Professor Liviu Maior has reached not only the age of creative maturity, but also that of interpretive balance. In Romanian historiography, as in Romanian life in general, the extremes tend to assert themselves. Romanian creators have rarely been able to seek and discover the middle way. It is true that balance is a rare thing—the Romans used to say that this middle way is a golden one (*aurea mediocritas*)—meant only for the chosen ones. Professor Liviu Maior is indeed one of the chosen, one of those rare historians and intellectuals destined to enlighten in a realistic way, to transmit legible and charming messages, which can be easily received. In the past, he avoided falling into the trap of the detractors, even when the official line condemned in unison the “Austrian iron yoke,” while today he refrained from reviving the nostalgia for a Danube monarchy that provided only peace and order, prosperity and tranquility.

We believe that this interpretive clarity comes from his native intelligence, from his educational background, from a solid historical culture acquired through an assiduous, persevering and realistic work. But maybe there is something else as well, namely, the long line of Transylvanian forerunners, with whose destiny he identified from the very beginning, from whom he took his tenacity, strength, determination and tolerance, his understanding for the other, for those who are different but live alongside us. Liviu Maior offered us, his students and colleagues, an admirable life lesson—as history is, above all, a life lived intensely, and the past is, in fact, the present of the past—, a lesson that continues, which

is received, appreciated and expected to go on. This is the message of the man and the teacher, a message that we welcome with realism, sincerity and sobriety, without lamentation and sentimentality—as we know the Professor prefers—in taking forward the historical knowledge, the possible human truth.

Our homage comes not only through these words—poor by comparison to the richness of his message—but also through the continuation of the research topics initiated during his career. The satisfaction he feels when seeing that research continues along the paths opened by him is intertwined with our pride in having been his students, doctoral students and apprentices, following him along the thorny path of the historical profession. □

Notes

1. Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan, eds., *Călător prin istorie: Omagiu profesorului Liviu Maior la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2010), 644 pages.
2. *Asociaționism și naționalism cultural în secolele XIX–XX* (edited in collaboration with Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan) (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2011), 352 pages; *Doi ani mai devreme: Ardeleni, bucovineni și basarabeni în război 1914–1916* (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2016), 290 pages; *Alexandru Vaida Voevod (1872–1950): Między dwoma światami* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane; Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2017), 120 pages; *Un părinte fondator al României Mari: Alexandru Vaida Voevod* (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2018), 256 pages; *De la Marele Război la România întregită* (Bucharest: RAO, 2018), 301 pages.

Abstract

Professor Liviu Maior at 80 Years Old: A Historian of Modernity and of Historical Writing Modernization in Romania

The paper celebrates the life and work of Professor Liviu Maior, a reputed historian in Romania and abroad, with an impressive contribution to the field of Transylvanian and Romanian history, approached in a broad European context, a politician and a diplomat, appreciated for the professionalism and loyalty with which he served Romania and the universally valid democratic values, and at the same time a founder of research institutions in the field of history, educational institutions and culture. Attention is given to his latest research, dealing with the national movement of the Transylvanian Romanians, with Alexandru Vaida Voevod, and with the Great War.

Keywords

Liviu Maior, Transylvania, Alexandru Vaida Voevod, the Great War