



‘Culture Is Our Wings’

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**‘INSTANCES OF HISTORY: LET’S LEARN
FROM OUR FOREFATHERS!’**

**THE ROMANIAN INSTANCES OF HISTORY:
LET'S LEARN FROM OUR FOREFATHERS!**

The Dacian-Roman Wars

- Herodotus was the one who first wrote about the people living in the territory of the present-day Romania in book IV of his Histories (440 BC).
- Due to the geographical position, the population in this territory always had to defend themselves against those who wanted this land's richness and its relief. After the Roman emperor Domitian, the last member of the Flavian dynasty, was unable to get a clear victory against king Decebal, Trajan, his successor, took upon himself to have this task accomplished.
- There were two wars between the Roman empire and Dacia during the Emperor Trajan, who was the Roman Emperor between 98-117. The First Dacian-Roman War took place between the years 101-102. The Dacian kingdom, under the king Decebal, had become a threat to the Roman empire. Emperor Trajan decided to eliminate this threat and in 101 he set out against Dacia. In 102, Trajan moved his troops down the Danube to Oescus.
- There, the Roman armies prepared for the final assault, defeating Decebal's army in the battle of Tapae, the native troops being completely outnumbered by the Romans. After the battle, several minor confrontations took place, and then, after a year of fighting, King Decebal capitulated. Once the peace was concluded, Decebal received military reinforcements and technical support from Trajan, in order to create a strong ally area to protect possible shipments from the north and east of the already migrating peoples. However, the resources were used to strengthen Dacia for the purpose of an anti-Roman war.

- The second war, started in 105 and involved several battles that caused significant losses for both armies. The Roman army, confronted with many tribes allied with Decebal, failed to quickly obtain a clear victory.
- Many cities along the Danube that were fortified by the Roman army were besieged by the Dacians, even though Trajan himself led the Roman army. He then decided to establish the headquarters of the Roman army in Drobeta. A siege on the capital Sarmizegetusa took place in early summer of 106. The Dacians rejected the first attack, but the Romans destroyed the Dacian capital's aqueducts.
- The city was burned down and, finally, Rome triumphed over Dacia. Decebal fled, but was tracked down. He preferred suicide rather than being captured.



- In 106, Dacia was conquered and transformed into a province of imperial rank, this meant that Dacia was to be ruled in the name of the emperor by a governor.
- These wars were the first two important events that highlighted the native people's desire to protect this land in order to have a peaceful place where to live and grow.

Vlad Țepeș - Vlad the Impaler

- After the Romans took over the power, the population living Romania's present territories tried to adjust to the new rulers and they learnt their language, their habits, mixed families were formed and a new people appeared: the Romanians. Their history is one of a people whose land was at the crossroads of some powerful countries, which made this appealing for strategical reasons.
- Century after century, battles were fought and rulers changed, but the Romanians never gave up their dream of being a free people living in peace with their neighbours.
- Independent Wallachia had been near the border of the Ottoman Empire since the 14th century until the Ottomans' influence took over during the next centuries with brief episodes of independence. In the 15th century, the Romanian population, living in three different regions of the territory, Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, under different rulers, had some important leaders who resorted to their knowledge and courage to achieve a noble goal: free the population from the surrounding powers.
- One of these important leaders towards the end of the Middle Ages is Vlad Țepeș, born in Transylvania in 1431. He ruled in Wallachia in 1448, 1456–62, and 1476 and he is remembered for his fights against the Ottoman Empire and his initial success of keeping his small country free for a short time. One of his famous fights is the night attack in Târgoviște against Mehmed II on the 17th of June 1462.

- The conflict was caused by Vlad's refusal to pay a tax, so Mehmed raised a big army against him. The invader's attempt was a fail, given the fact that more than twenty thousand Turks were impaled as a result of the night attack led by Vlad.
- In the Western world, Vlad is best known for being the inspiration to the "vampire" main character in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel "Dracula". The Romanian historiography evaluates him as a ferocious but just ruler and the defender of the Wallachian independence and of the European Christianity against the Ottoman expansionism. He remains in people's mind as a symbol of justice and courage throughout centuries.



- Vlad Tepes remains in people's mind as a symbol of justice and courage throughout centuries.

Ștefan cel Mare - Stephen the Great

- Ștefan cel Mare is the voivode who ruled in Moldavia during almost the same period as Vlad Țepeș. His goals were to always preserve the territory and maintained freedom from the Ottoman Empire. He ruled between 1457-1504. When he was the voivode, the borders reached the Nistru, an important river for the people, a natural limit of the territory. He was the one who transformed Moldavia into an important, respected and rich state.
- Ștefan was a good strategist, he organised his army in groups of 1000 persons each and each group had four flags. In front of the units he named captains, appointed for their skills.
- He ruled for 47 years, the longest period in the Romanian's Medieval History. During his life he built a lot of churches, each one built to thank God for the fights he had won. Many of these churches have a unique architectural style, being listed in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.
- The most important battles that were won by Ștefan cel Mare were against the Ottoman Empire. At the end of December 1474, a Turkish army in number of 120 thousand people entered Moldavia and Ștefan cel Mare had an army of 40 thousand people. He decided to fight on known land to have an advantage in front of the enemies, so the fight took place at Vaslui. To ensure his success, he knew he had to count on other skills than the number of his men.



- Suleiman, the Turkish leader, ordered his troops to advance and, when they made enough progress, the Moldavian artillery started to fire, followed by archers from different directions, using the fog as a natural shield. Ștefan's cavalry then came in to help lure the Ottoman troops into the valley by making random rapid attacks. Frightened, the Ottoman cavalry tried to cross the wooden bridge, but the bridge couldn't take so much weight and it collapsed. It was a clear victory and to mark it, he raised the Voroneț Monastery.
- For this victory, Pope Sixtus IV nominated him as 'verus christianae fidei athleta' (a true Champion of the Christian Faith). Following his death on the 2th of July 1504, he was buried at Putna monastery and during the 16th century, Moldavia came under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire.

Mihai Viteazul -Michael the Brave

- One hundred years after Vlad Țepeș, another great leader took over the power in Wallachia. Mihai Viteazul ruled here after climbing in hierarchy. As he became “ban” of Mehedinti and of Craiova (the governor in Romanian country after 15th century)
- Internally, the situation in Muntenia was bad, all the people had to pay even more money than usual to the Ottoman Empire, leaving them with almost nothing to live on. Romanian boyars were more and more unsatisfied because Greek boyars were getting all the significant positions in the state. Some of those boyars who hated Greeks proposed their unconditional support to Mihai. As for the external politics, Mihai collaborated with Rome and some Italian states in an anti-Ottoman alliance.
- At that time, the Ottoman army was preparing to cross the Danube at Ruse and for a major attack. Michael’s reaction was to withdraw his army and to retreat. The Ottoman forces began crossing the Danube on 4 August 1595.



- As his army was outnumbered, Michael avoided engaging in the battle in open field and chose a marshy field outside the village of Călugăreni on the Neajlov river.

- Starting on the 13th of August, The Battle of Călugăreni was won by Mihai, forcing the Ottoman army led by Sinan Pasha to withdraw defeated.
- The most important event from his reign was the union from 1599-1600, also called the small union. He succeeded in unifying the three Romanian countries Wallachia, Moldovia and Transylvania in one country, and he was called “The Savior”. He paid for this union with his life: he was arrested in 1601 and after being killed, his head was cut off because the other states were afraid of the boyars’ reaction. After his death, the union dissolved and, as vassal tributary states, Moldavia and Wallachia still had an internal autonomy and some external independence, which was finally lost in the 18th century.
- He will always remain in people’s memory as the one who accomplished our dream of reuniting all those speaking the same language in one country, under the same ruler. Even though this happened at that time for a short period.



The Union of 1859 and Cuza's Reforms

- After the unsuccessful 1848 Revolution, the Great Powers rejected the Romanians' expressed desire to officially unite in a single state, forcing the Romanians to proceed alone on their struggle against the Ottoman Empire. Heavily taxed and badly administered under the Ottoman Empire, in 1859, people's representatives in both Moldavia and Wallachia elected the same ruler, Alexandru Ioan Cuza.
- In 1858, at a Conference held in France, the powers gathered there, decided to allow the Romanian people to have a joint Parliament and a partial union called 'The United Principalities of Moldovia and Wallachia', but there had to be two rulers and two capitals. While the document stated that there had to be two rulers, it did not specify that the ruler could not be the same one. So, on the 17th of January 1859, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was chosen as ruler in Iași and a week later in Bucharest.
- Internally, Cuza made a lot of changes towards a civilised society: unifying the monetary system, the telegraph, the army and the border, moving the capital to Bucharest, changing the emblem to symbolise the union between the two states, and the Central Commission started to propose the first legislative projects.



- There was a new Constitution, a new election law was adopted and the decisions were made in a bicameral committee because it was decided it would be a good idea to have a Senate. The laws were to be made by the ruler's close circle and The State Council. Then came the Rural Law which gave provincial families more land to work on and the Public Instruction Law that made the first 4 years of school obligatory and free.



- On the 11th of February 1866, after a coup was organised by the Monstrous Coalition, Cuza saw himself forced to abdicate and he left the country in exile.
- It is important to note that this event gave the people a glimpse of what the future could be for our country if the union were to be complete and permanent.

Romania's Independence War

- After Cuza was exiled, due to 1866 coup d'état, Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen replaced him and became known as Prince Carol of Romania. He was appointed the Ruling Prince of the United Principality of Romania, as Prince Carol of Romania.
- Romania's independence war took place between 1877 and 1878, but Romania's wishes for independence had been much older.
- In 1866, the government took actions that were meant to establish the country's independence, and get the country internationally recognised as a free state. Some of those actions were: making a new constitution in 1866, conventions with different countries, opening diplomatic agencies in the main European capitals and sending its own people to represent it instead of having The Ottomans speak on its behalf. All of these showed Romania's determination to become a free state.
- However, they had to keep the ratio between their own ruling and The Ottoman Empire's governing, which slowed down the Romanian economic growth. The Ottoman Empire kept on abusing and humiliating Romania's representatives and population, which resulted in low pride and loss of national dignity.

- Russia wanted to go at war with the Ottoman Empire, under the pretext that they were protecting the Orthodox Christians. This was also an opportunity to expand their influence in The Balkans, but they had to pass through Romania. In order to do this, they made a convention with the Romanians that allowed them to pass through, as long as they respected the Romanian laws and its territorial integrity. However, The Ottomans didn't like this, so they started bombarding Romania, near the Danube, forcing the Romanians to start counter-attacking, by bombing Vidin, which kickstarted the war.
- On the 9th of May 1877, Mihail Kogalniceanu proclaimed Romania's independence and the war with The Ottomans became official. The next day, Prince Carol announced the independence to the population, and the 10th of May has been a national holiday since then. In the 1878, through the Treaty of Berlin, Romania was finally officially recognised as an independent state by the Great Powers in Europe.



The First World War

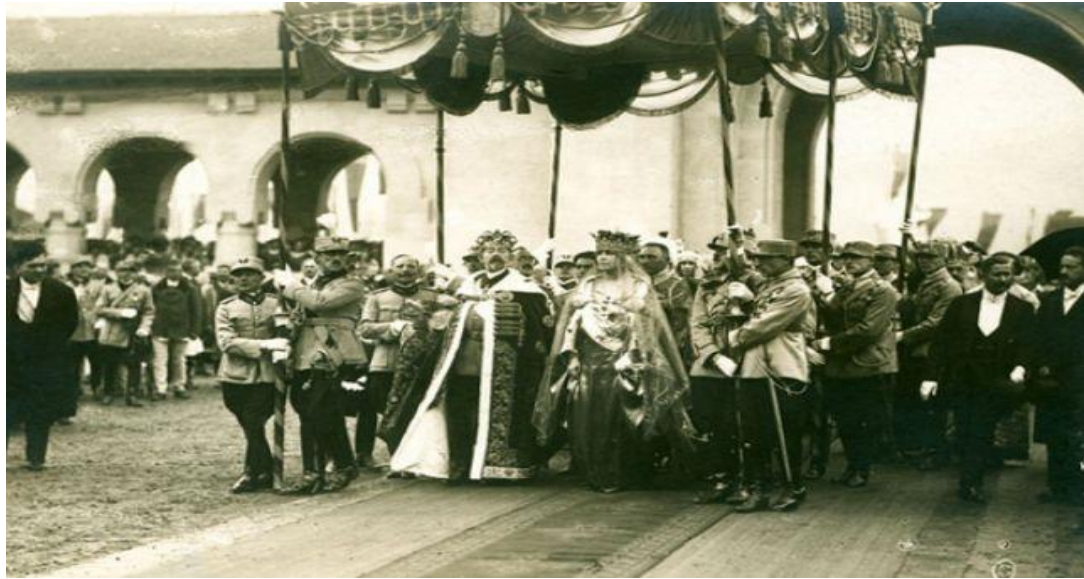
- The new state, squeezed between the great powers of the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires, looked at the West, particularly at France, for its cultural, educational, military and administrative models.
- In August 1914, when World War I broke out, Romania declared neutrality. Two years later, under the pressure of the Allies (especially France that wanted desperately to open a new front), on the 14th-27th of August 1916, Romania joined the Allies, action for which Romania was promised support for the accomplishment of national unity, including the recognition of the Romanian rights over Transylvania (which was at that time part of Austria-Hungary), so Romania declared war to Austro-Hungarian empire.
- After Bucharest fell to Austrian troops, the royal court was moved to Iași, the capital of the Moldavia region, in December 1916. The end of the Russian Revolution in early November 1917 and the victory of the Bolsheviks transformed Romania in "an island surrounded on all sides by the enemy, with no hope of assistance from the Allies". The Romanian military campaign ended in disaster for Romania as the Central Powers conquered two-thirds of the country and captured or killed the majority of its army within four months. Nevertheless, Moldavia remained under the Romanian power after the invading forces had been stopped in 1917, before entering Moldavia.

- In May 1918, Romania was in no position to continue the war, its troops were exhausted and had no longer the force to continue, but in November 1918, Romania joined the war again after the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires had disintegrated under the American intervention on the battlefield.
- The Armistice with Germany concluded on the 11th of November 1918 put an end to fighting in Europe and to the war.
- At the end of the war, at the Conference of Peace from France, Romania was given what it had been promised: Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina which were the territories that had been lost during previous conflicts.



The Great Union of 1918

- At the end of the World War I, Romania was independent and it had got back some of its territories, transforming it in a big and strong country in the south-east of Europe. Yet, it was not complete.
- The union between Basarabia, Transylvania and Bucovina with the home land happened right after World War I and it benefitted from a favorable context. At the end of the war, all the big Empires lost their power and this gave birth to separate independent states. In our case, the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Tsarist Russia gave us the chance to free ourselves from their influence. It was a process of emancipation from the previous country of influence and each of these provinces made it in order to become part of Great Romania.
- Basarabia
- After a lot of protests demanding the autonomy of Basarabia on the 25th of September 1917, the Moldovan Soldier's Congress was formed and that managed to get that autonomy and the Country's Council was founded. This situation led to the Country's Council to proclaim Basarabia as The Democratic Moldovan Republic (on the 2nd of December 1917), even though it was still a part of the Federalist Russian Republic. So, they proclaimed their independence on the 24th of January 1918 and on the 27th of March 1918 the Country's Council approved the union.



- Bukovina
- The story is similar to Basarabia: a Congress was formed (The Cernaui Congress) that voted for the unconditional union with Romania and then, on the 18th of December 1918, king Ferdinand confirmed this union.
- Transylvania
- On the 1st of December 1918, the Great National Assembly voted for the union with the homeland. It was people's will to do it and this union had a national character but also a plebiscitary one, having 100.000 people to witness what was probably one of the most important moments in Romanian history.
- This dream of all Romanians, the union, was accomplished by the affirmation of autonomy in these regions and then later in a sort of referendum of our days.

The Second World War

- The period between the two world wars was for our country a period of economic growth and development in all fields: education, trade, health and diplomacy.
- In 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, which stipulated, among other things, the Soviet "interest" in Basarabia. During the Second World War, Romania tried to remain neutral, but on the 28th of June 1940, Romania received a Soviet ultimatum with an implied threat of invasion in the event of non-compliance. Under pressure from Moscow and Berlin, the Romanian administration and the army were forced to retreat from Basarabia as well from Northern Bukovina to avoid the war.
- Following the severe territorial losses of 1940, Carol was forced to abdicate, being replaced as a king by his son Mihai, King Michael I of Romania, but the power was taken by the military dictator Ion Antonescu (initially in conjunction with the Iron Guard). This, in combination with other factors, prompted the government to join the Axis, on the 22nd of June 1941, with the hope that the other forces would help Romania to get back his lost territories. On the 16th of October, after two months of heavy fighting, the Romanian 4th Army's troops conquered Odessa.
- On the 20th of August 1944, the Soviet Red Army crossed the border of Romania, quickly reaching Chişinău. This could only mean that the Romanian soldiers were at the end of their resources. On the 23rd of August 1944, Antonescu was toppled and arrested by King Michael I of Romania, who joined the Allies and declared war on Germany.

- In a Proclamation, broadcast on the radio at 22.30 on the 23rd of August, the king announced leaving the Axis and the immediate cease of war against the United Nations. The information was also broadcast in Britain, stating that “Romania’s move will have a big impact on the course of the war”.
- On the 31st of August 1944 the Soviet Red Army entered Bucharest. Despite Romania's change of sides, its role in the defeat of Nazi Germany was not recognised by the Paris Peace Conference of 1947, being considered one of the countries that lost the war. World War II ended on the 9th of May 1945 with the victory of the United Nations. As a result of the Paris Peace Treaty at the end of World War II, Northern Transylvania returned to Romania, but Basarabia, northern Bukovina and southern Dobruja were not recovered.



The Communist Period (1947–1989)

- The Soviet occupation following World War II strengthened the position of Communists, who became dominant in the left-wing coalition government appointed in Romania in March 1945. King Michael I was forced to abdicate and went into exile. Romania was proclaimed a people's republic and remained under the military and economic control of the USSR until the late 1950s.
- After World War II, Romania was under the Soviet Union's influence, so there were a new constitution and only one political party. To make sure that everyone followed the rules, a new police force was made and old leaders were imprisoned or killed. Most activities were forcefully industrialised by a new law, even if this damaged the economy. Because of bad working and living conditions, the productivity went down, taking the economy with it.
- The leader of Romania from 1948 to his death in 1965 was Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the First Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party, the leading party at the time that had the communists' support. During the 1947–1962 period, people were detained in prisons or camps, deported, put under house arrest, and administrative detention. Between 60,000 and 80,000 political prisoners were detained. It is estimated that, in total, two million people were direct victims of Communist repression in Romania.



- When Nicolae Ceaușescu came to power in 1965, he had an open policy towards Western Europe and the USA. This period can be described as a period of liberalisation for Romania: flats were built to improve personal comfort, Soviet authors were removed from the curricula and replaced with Romanian ones, foreign literature was promoted.
- But all of this changed in 1971, after Ceaușescu was impressed by some communist countries he had visited. Once returned, he issued the July Theses, a speech which marked the beginning of a cultural revolution.
- When Ceaușescu decided to pay all of the external debt, at the end of the 1980s, the economy crisis became even bigger: forced industry growth, currency losing its value, oil crisis, food crisis, along with the starving population and lowered living standards.
- On the 15th of November 1987, the riot that took place in Brașov announced the imminent downfall of the regime. However, Ceaușescu was reelected as Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party in March 1989.



1989 Revolution

- Before the Romanian Revolution, all the other Eastern European states had peacefully passed to democracy; Romania was the only Eastern European country to go through a violent revolution which ended with the execution of the communists' leaders.
- Like in the neighbouring countries, in 1989 most of the population in Romania was not satisfied with the communist regime. Ceaușescu's economic and development policy was considered responsible for the widespread shortages in the country; along with the increase of economic difficulties, the secret police turned Romania into a police state.





- The Romanian Revolution of 1989 consisted in a series of protests, street fights and demonstrations held in Romania, between 16th and 25th December 1989, which led to the fall of dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and the end of the communist regime.
- It all began on the 16th of December, in Timișoara, where protests broke out and the participants tried to burn down the building housing the Romanian Communist Party. After failing to establish order, the army opened fire on the civilians and 100 people were killed. On the 20th of December, Ceaușescu made a speech, condemning the events in Timișoara.
- A weeklong state of unrest in Timișoara was followed by protests spreading throughout the country and the people who were forcefully gathered in Bucharest to support Ceaușescu on the 21st of December 1989, turned hostile.



- In the morning of the 22nd of December 1989 a national revolt broke out in Bucharest. The Ceaușescu couple, fleeing Bucharest by helicopter, ended up in the custody of the army.
- After being tried and convicted by a court for genocide and other crimes, they were executed on the 25th of December 1989. The Romanian Revolution resulted in more than 1,000 deaths in Timișoara and Bucharest, but the communist regime was immediately removed and Romania regained its freedom and democracy. The events of this revolution remain a matter of debate to this day, with many conflicting theories regarding some of the main players' motivation and even actions. The 1989 Revolution remains an important event in Romanian history, a symbol of people's fight for freedom and democracy.



On Christmas, we got back our freedom



A history lesson during the 1989 Revolution



- THE PEOPLE OF A COUNTRY WHO DON'T KNOW THEIR OWN HISTORY ARE LIKE A CHILD WHO DOESN'T KNOW HIS PARENTS

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