Bucharest World History Congress (August 1980). Between Ideology and Science

Programme Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
29 Aug 2026, 09:00 - 11:30	House 1 T1006
THEME	CONFERENCE
A- The Comité International des Sciences Historiques 1926-2026	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

The world scientific event organized in Bucharest in August 1980, with more than 2,700 historians from all over the world, was undoubtedly a great scientific event, like the previous congresses in San Francisco, Moscow, etc. However, there is no doubt that the Romanian leadership at the time was also interested, both ideologically and historiographically, in debating issues considered important for the communist political regime. Thus, the issue of peace in history was also instrumentalized and it was a central theme on 14 August 1980, with substantial reports being presented; to these reports co-authored reports, expert reports and especially contributions made by prestigious historians were added. During the debates, the point of view of the American historian Ladis K. D. Kristof was highlighted; he emphasized the role of moral principles in the management of peace issues in the 20th century, one of the examples being the USSR's behaviour towards Finland in 1939 and towards Romania in 1940. The Soviet historian Yuri Borisov replied on the case of Finland, but kept silent the Soviet aggression against Romania in 1940. The two approaches reflected, in historiographical terms, the existence of strongly contrasting forms of discourse and scientific explanation along the lines of the Cold War world. The Romanian historians present at the debate did not address the issues of the early years of the Second World War. It was, in fact, the line imposed by the communist leadership of Romania at that time, which was actively militating for peace and disarmament, and which wanted that the Congress would not be dominated by divergences or differences of opinion, but by common elements that would lead to the strengthening of cooperation between peoples. Nicolae Ceausescu decreed the year 1980 as the year to celebrate 2050 years since the founding of the centralized Dacian state ruled by Burebista, a king who was not defeated by the Romans, like the much better known Dacian king Decebal at the beginning of the 2nd century AD. Then a special session was dedicated to the Dacian king Burebista, in order to give him an international propaganda dimension. The panel will focus on these kinds of issues related to the use of history for political reasons. The panellists will seek to answer to questions like: 1) how Ceau ?escu regime sought to enhance the World History Congress for its own ideological and historiographical purposes? 2) was Bucharest World History Congress a successful experiment for Romania to break out of the isolation it experienced after the mid-1970s, when it distanced itself from the West ? 3) Did Ceau?escu regime succeeded to fulfil his target as related to the international propaganda dimension ?

Participants

Convenor

- Ioan-Aurel Pop (Babe?-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca / Romanian Academy Bucharest)
- Ioan Bolovan (Babe?-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca / Romanian Academy Bucharest)

Panelists

- Bogdan Murgescu (Bucharest University)
- Matei Gheboianu (Bucharest University)
- Marius Deaconu (University of Bucharest)
- Mihail Dobre (Bucharest University)
- Dumitru Preda (European Foundation “Nicolae Titulescu” Bucharest)

Papers

The University of Bucharest and the XV. International Congress of Historical Sciences (1980)

Bogdan Murgescu (Bucharest University), Matei Gheboianu (Bucharest University), Marius Deaconu (University of Bucharest)

The Ideological Limits of Approaching the Problem of Peace at the World History Congress in Bucharest (1980)

Mihail Dobre (Bucharest University)

The Army-Society Relations and the Romanian Military Historiography at the time of the XVth World Congress of Historical Sciences

Dumitru Preda (European Foundation “Nicolae Titulescu” Bucharest)

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