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

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The University of Bucharest in 1980

The University of Bucharest[4] is one of the most important higher education institutions in Romania. Founded in 1864 as part of the infrastructure of the modern state of Romania, it has capitalised on the experience of the Academy established by the Wallachian prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) and on that of the 19th century High School of St. Sava. Until World War II it dominated the higher education system of Romania, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The communist rule changed this situation. First of all, the comprehensive universities were split, by creating separate higher education institutions for medical sciences and for agronomy and veterinary medicine. In the particular case of Bucharest, this fragmentation included economic studies (for which there existed a separate higher education institution since 1913), architecture and artistic higher education, so that the University of Bucharest remained only with natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. Secondly, the communist authorities strengthened the politechnical institutes, which were considered main suppliers of qualified graduates for industrialization, and therefore were provided with bigger numbers of centrally allocated study places and resources for investment,

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[4] The data in this section are based on Ovidiu Bozgan, Bogdan Murgescu (eds.), *Universitatea din București 1864-2024*, București: Editura Universității din București / Bucharest University Press, 2024.

overcoming thus the traditional universities in all major centers of higher education, including Bucharest. Thirdly, the ideological control of the communist regime affected especially the social sciences and the humanities, determining major purges of the teaching staff and even the closure of several fields of study and/or departments.

The 1960s were a period of quantitative expansion, restoration of some scholars who had survived the vicissitudes of the late 1940s and 1950s, hiring young faculty and partial liberalisation of teaching and research. This positive trend was reversed in the 1970s, when the regime operated a major contraction in the provision of higher education in other fields than engineering. For the University of Bucharest, this contraction meant halving the total number of students from about 20,000 in 1971 to 9,000 in 1980 and to below 8,000 in 1989[5], and a decline of the number of teaching staff from 1,488 in 1971 to around 1,000 in 1980 and 721 in 1989[6]. In 1980 the University of Bucharest comprised 8 faculties (as administrative units), a reduction from 12 in the late 1960s. One of the faculties which changed structure was that of history, which was merged in 1977 with philosophy (including scientific socialism, sociology, psychology and education sciences), and was allowed to offer subsequently only history-philosophy and philosophy-history study programs. In 1980 the history section of the Faculty of History and Philosophy included only 2 chairs (departments), one of Romanian history and one of World history, and about 41 teaching staff.

At the same time, several research institutes which in 1970 had been taken over from the Romanian Academy by the newly established Academy of Social and Political Sciences (ASSP), directly subordinated to the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, were institutionally subdued to the University, while the ASSP extended its ideological guidance to the research activity of the University in the fields of social sciences and humanities[7]. In the field of history, the institutes which were formally integrated into the Faculty of History and Philosophy were the "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute, the Archaeology Institute, the Institute for

[5] Matei Gheboianu, *Studenții Universității din București în anii 1948-1989*, in Ovidiu Bozgan, Bogdan Murgescu (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 335.

[6] Bogdan Murgescu, *Cadrele didactice*, in Ovidiu Bozgan, Bogdan Murgescu (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 323.

[7] Ionuț-Mircea Marcu, *Peisajul instituțional al istoriografiei din România în anii '70-'80*, in Alexandru-Florin Platon, Bogdan Murgescu (eds.), *Istoriografia română recentă: curente, tendințe, aspecte instituționale*, București: Bucharest University Press, 2024, pp. 23-27.

South-East European Studies and the small and rather insignificant Institute for Thracology.

The organization of the XV International Congress of Historical Sciences in Romania – general aspects

The international congresses of historical sciences have a long tradition starting with preparations in the 1890s and with a first congress held in Paris in 1900[8]. In the interwar period there was established an International Committee of Historical Sciences, which was based on the participation of representatives of National Committees. International congresses were organized each 5 years, with interruptions due to the two world wars. After World War II the first international congress of historical sciences was organized in Paris (1950), but the East European countries under Soviet influence did not participate. The East Europeans, including Romania, joined the international congresses starting with Rome (1955), and in 1965 it was decided that the next international congress would be hosted by the Soviet Union in Moscow (1970).

At the Moscow congress, Miron Constantinescu – president of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences and leader of the Romanian delegation – presented Romania's offer to organize the 1980 congress. This proposal was pushed forward mainly by Mihai Berza (1907-1978), director of the Institute for South-East European Studies, who was elected 1970 as assessor member of the Bureau of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, and was re-elected in 1975 at the San Francisco congress[9]. Besides the personal qualities of Mihai Berza, who was proficient in French (the official language of the International Committee), had a vast experience in academic international relations and an old personal relationship with Michel François, the general secretary of the International Committee[10], there were also other elements which supported Romania's bid.

In the early 1970s Romania was considered to have a distinct position in international relations, which was often divergent from those expressed by the Soviet Union. At the same time, while the congress in San Francisco

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[8] Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community of Historians. The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences, 1898-2000*, Edited by Jürgen Kocka and Wolfgang Mommsen in collaboration with Agnes Blänsdorf. Translated by Alan Nothnagle, New York & Oxford: Berghaghn Books, 2005.

[9] Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

[10] Lucian Boia, *Cum am trecut prin comunism. Al doilea sfert de veac. Memorii*, București: Humanitas, 2019, p. 119.

(1975) lacked public attention and had a smaller number of participants than the previous congresses[11], the Romanians argued that in Bucharest the international congress would benefit from substantial state support. Under these circumstances, the Bureau of the International Committee of Historical Sciences decided that the XV. International Congress of Historical Sciences would be in Bucharest in 1980. On the Romanian side, the official body in charge of organizing the congress was the National Committee of Romanian Historians (NCRH), chaired by the Cluj professor Ștefan Pascu, assisted by Dan Berindei, researcher from the "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute, who was the secretary of the NCRH[12]. However, due to the importance and international level of representation, the Congress received special attention from the state authorities and the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP). Thus, a party and state commission was created to coordinate the preparations of the 15th Congress of Historical Sciences, with Nicolae Ceaușescu as honorary president, and consisting of Elena Ceaușescu, Virgil Cazacu, Paul Niculescu, Dumitru Popescu, and Leonte Răutu[13].

On the operational level, after Mihai Berza had passed away in 1978, the general coordinator of the entire organization was designated Mihnea Gheorghiu, president of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences[14]. Concrete discussions regarding the organization began in 1978-1979, when members of the International Committee of Historical Sciences came to Bucharest to observe the progress of the preparations. As recollected by Dan Berindei, the visitors rejected a proposal of the Romanian authorities to host part of the proceedings at the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Political Academy and chose the premises of the University of Bucharest, together with the big venues of the Palace of the Republic (Sala Palatului) and at the Romanian Athenaeum[15].

As the congress approached, Nicolae Ceaușescu became directly involved, holding two meetings with the historians organizing the event in May and July 1980. The party directives were very clear: Romanian historians were required to address themes with a strong ideological character, important for the Bucharest regime, such as: "the ethnic unity of the Romanian people, the issue of Dobruja in Bulgarian historiography, the

[11] Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-258.
[12] ANIC, Fond Comitetul Central al PCR, Secția Agitație și Propagandă, Dosar 11/1980, f.3.
[13] *Ibidem*, f. 3.
[14] *Ibidem*, f. 3.
[15] Narcis Dorin Ion, *Portretul unui aristocrat al spiritului. Convorbiri cu academicianul Dan Berindei*, București: Rao, 2019, p. 140.

Romanian pre-state political formations on the territory of Transylvania (9th-12th centuries), the Romanian–Bulgarian debate on agricultural ploughing, the importance of the first union of the three Romanian principalities achieved by Michael the Brave, the partition of Moldova in 1812, the national question in Austria–Hungary, the creation of the Romanian national-unitary state in 1918, and Romania's stance toward the USSR in the interwar period"[16].

This mandate was reinforced by Ștefan Pascu, who stated: "our delegation has a clear and explicit guideline in the mandate that the Political Executive Committee has given us, which includes, fundamentally and sometimes even in detail, the entire problematics of the history of the Romanian people and how this issue is understood and defended at the 15th International Congress of Historical Sciences"[17]. Likewise, the interventions of Romanian historians were meticulously prepared; it was established very clearly who would speak, the themes they were to address, and the official position of Romanian historiography[18]. Another topic Nicolae Ceaușescu insisted be addressed by Romanian historians was that of peace, referring to the party and state efforts to secure for him the Nobel Peace Prize[19]. Another major theme for the Communist Party was highlighting the celebration of 2,050 years since the centralized Dacian state, an entirely propagandistic event used to instrumentalize the historical past. In this regard, an exhibition was organized for guests at Sala Dalles[20].

At the meeting in Neptun, there had been a discussion about Nicolae Ceaușescu's physical participation at the opening, an idea announced by the Romanian organizers, who wanted this as a public statement on the political support for the congress. Nevertheless, Ceaușescu decided to decline the invitation, considering that the level of representation was below the dignity of a head of state[21]. Historian Dan Berindei recalled that Elena Ceaușescu wished to be invited to the opening, but the organizers did everything possible to avoid such an embarrassment[22]. Under these circumstances, Mihnea Gheorghiu delivered at the opening a warm message from Nicolae Ceaușescu and a selected delegation of the participants was received separately by the president.

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[16] ANIC, Fond Comitetul Central al PCR, Secția Agitație și Propagandă, Dosar 11/1980, f. 4-5.
[17] *Ibidem*, f. 4-5.
[18] Florin Constantiniu, *De la Răutu și Roller la Mușat și Ardeleanu*, București: Editura Academiei Române, 2007, p. 491.
[19] ANIC, Fond Comitetul Central al PCR, Secția Agitație și Propagandă, Dosar 28/1980, f.3.
[20] *Ibidem*, f 5.
[21] *Ibidem*, f 5.
[22] Narcis Dorin Ion, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

The Congress took place on August 10-17, 1980, in Bucharest and registered 2,715 participants from 67 countries. The largest foreign delegations came from the USA – 141, the Soviet Union – 116, Japan – 108, Bulgaria – 106, France – 100, the GDR – 98, Spain – 94, the FRG – 90, Hungary – 89, Poland – 75, Sweden – 64, Italy – 61, Yugoslavia – 59, Great Britain – 53; China was represented by 14 participants (it was its first participation after World War II), while Romania towered with over 700 participants[23]. Overall, the foreign participants appreciated the organization of the congress. CISH president Karl Dietrich Erdmann concludes:

"In contrast to San Francisco, the Bucharest Congress was perceived as a public event in the national interest. Smooth organization, generous hospitability, and the strong participation of representatives of the government, the Party, the academies, and the Church, as well as lively reporting in the press, ensured that for a week the international historical profession was present in the public life of Romania – even as newspaper reports and interviews also were aimed at inducing leading historians from all over the world to make statements *ad majorem gloriam* of Romania's exalted president and party leader Nicolae Ceaușescu"[24]

Among Romanian participants opinions were more ambiguous. Besides pride for the success of the congress, there was a pervasive feeling of censorship and control exercised by those overseeing the organization of the event[25], and the Securitate monitored the entire congress very closely[26].

The University of Bucharest at the history congress – some facts and figures

As co-host of the event, the University of Bucharest contributed to the organization of the congress in several ways.

It was one of the locations where the proceedings took place. Of course, it lacked a big hall to host the plenaries of a congress with more than 2,700 participants, and therefore the plenaries were held at the city-run big hall of the Palace of the Republic (Sala Palatului) and at the Romanian Athenaeum. Yet, most sections of the congress took place in the premises of the University of Bucharest, i.e. in the Aula of the Law Faculty and in the amphitheatres and

[23] ANIC, Fond Comitetul Central al PCR, Secția Agitație și Propagandă, Dosar 25/1980, f. 50.
[24] Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.
[25] Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *A fost un destin. Amintiri, mărturii, dezvăluiri*, București, Editura Paideea, 2003, pp. 500-501.
[26] Narcis Dorin Ion, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

seminar rooms of the Faculty of History and Philosophy and of the Faculty of Letters, both located in the University Palace in the center of Bucharest.

Secondly, the University of Bucharest provided most of the human assistance for the logistical part of the congress. Concretely, a large part of the history faculty and of the researchers of the history institutes which were integrated into the University, as well as a number of students who were considered reliable and who were living in Bucharest (the congress occurred in mid-August, during the summer holidays) were tasked to secretarial tasks for the congress and with assisting foreign participants[27]. A report of the Institute for South-East European Studies enumerates the logistical contributions of its researchers for the congress: 8 researchers have worked for about two months for the general secretariate of the congress, 5 other researchers have contributed for about a month at the organization of a history book exhibition displayed for the congress participants, and most of the staff was also involved in the proofreading of the 3 volumes including the mate. rials for the congress[28].

Members of the University of Bucharest contributed also to the publication of special volumes and special issues of academic journals which were dedicated to the congress. For example, in the *Nouvelles études d'histoire* series, which gathers significant Romanian contributions for each international history congress, in 1980 there were published 2 volumes[29]. Among the 3 editors of these volumes, besides Cluj-based Ștefan Pascu as chairperson of the NCRH the other two were Ștefan Ștefănescu (dean of the History and Philosophy Faculty of the University of Bucharest and director of the "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute) and Dan Berindei from the "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute, who was also the secretary of the NCRH. These 2 volumes included 50 papers, among which more than one third were authored by historians affiliated to the University of Bucharest.

Yet, the most important contribution was the concrete participation in the proceedings of the congress. We do not have detailed records about the concrete contribution of the about 700 Romanian citizen who were registered as congress participants. Nevertheless, we have the 3 volumes with reports and other materials prepared for the congress and published in

[27] Recollections of former students Ovidiu Bozgan and Adrian Niculescu.

[28] Arhiva Universității din București, Fond Secretariat Rectorat, Dosarul 1980-2882b, file 17.

[29] *Nouvelles Études d'Histoire. Publiées à l'occasion du XV^e Congrès International des Sciences Historiques, Bucarest, 1980*. 2 volumes, București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1980.

advance of its unfolding[30], as well as a volume in two parts of acts of the congress, which includes the interventions during the sessions and sometimes also minutes of the meetings of the affiliated committees[31]. These volumes are a partial but significant testimony of active involvement in the unfolding of the scientific encounter and therefore can be used as an indicator of concrete participation to the congress.

In these 5 volumes we have counted 45 contributions authored or co-authored by members of the University of Bucharest (including besides the faculty also the researchers of the affiliated research institutes), which make up 39.82% of the 113 Romanian contributions. If we consider that several historians had more than one contribution, we have 34 individual contributors affiliated to the University of Bucharest, which make up 35.78% of the total of 95 Romanian individual contributors; the difference testifies the higher participation intensity of the members of the University of Bucharest. Inside the University of Bucharest, the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History and the Faculty of History and Philosophy have the largest shares, with the Institute for South-East European Studies, the Institute for Archaeology, the Faculty of Foreign Languages and the Faculty of Romanian Language and Literature making up the rest.

Table 1. Number of published contributions by members of the University of Bucharest and of other Romanian higher education and research institutions.

Institution	Number of contributions
University of Bucharest	**45**
"Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History	*17*
Faculty of History and Philosophy	*16*
Institute for South-East European Studies	*5*
Institute of Archaeology	*4*
Faculty of Foreign Languages	*2*
Faculty of Romanian Language and Literature	*1*
Other Romanian higher education or research institutions	**68**
Total	**113**

[30] *Rapports: XVe Congrés International des Sciences Historiques, Bucharest, 10-17 août 1980*, 3 volumes, București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1980.

[31] *Actes du XVe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques: (Bucarest, 10-17 août 1980)*, vol. IV, part. 1-2, București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1982.

While the opening welcome message was delivered by the president of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences (Mihnea Gheorghiu, who chaired also the organizing committee) and the plenary keynote reserved for Romanian historians was delivered by the chair of the National Committee of Romanian Historians (Ștefan Pascu, from the Cluj University), Emil Condurachi from the Faculty of History and Philosophy was, together with his co-author Răzvan Theodorescu, the only Romanian participant tasked with presenting a general report in one of the main sessions of the congress. Other members of the University of Bucharest co-authored 2 co-reports for the main sessions (Aron Petric together with Eugen Stănescu and Ștefan Ștefănescu alone), 2 major papers for sessions included in the chronological section (Alexandru Duțu with Pompiliu Teodor and Damian Hurezeanu with Costin Murgescu) and a report presented for one of the affiliated institutions (Georgeta Penelea). While these figures represent only a minority of the Romanian contributions to the reports and co-reports, the share of the members of the University of Bucharest was higher in the total number of interventions to the discussions in the various sessions of the congress.

Table 2. Number of contributions by University of Bucharest and other Romanian higher education and research institutions, by type.

	Other Romanian higher education or research institutions	**University of Bucharest**
Welcome and closure address	3	0
Plenary keynote	1	0
General reports for main sessions	1	1
Co-reports for main sessions	1	3
Papers for sessions included in the chronological section	4	1
Reports for affiliated institutions	3	1
Expert reports	2	1
Interventions published in the congress acts	53	38
Total	**68**	**45**

Overall, the most active Romanian participants within the Congress came from the University of Bucharest or one of its affiliates. Zoe Petre from the Faculty of History and Philosophy stands out with 3 interventions, along with Andrei Pippidi from the Institute for South-East European

Studies, who shares the same number. Furthermore, Dan Berindei, Eliza Campus (retired), Constantin Șerban, Paul Cernovodeanu and Vasile Liveanu from the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History, along with Eugen Cizek from the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Radu Manolescu from the Faculty of History and Philosophy, had 2 contributions.

During the 1980 congress, there was a clear predominance of French as the main working language of Romanian historians, both from the University of Bucharest (35/45) and other Romanian higher education or research institutions (55/67). There was a slightly higher orientation towards the English language within the University of Bucharest (5/45), while other institutions, especially from Transylvania, preferred German (8/67) more often than the Romanian average. Russian was used twice, while Italian only once.

Table 3. Languages of contributions by University of Bucharest and other higher education or research institutions.

	Other Romanian higher education or research institutions	**University of Bucharest**
English	3	5
French	56	35
German	8	3
Italian	-	1
Russian	1	1
Total	**68**	**45**

Zoe Petre, with 2 interventions in French and 1 in English, as well as Andrei Pippidi, with 2 interventions in French and 1 in Italian, stand out among the Romanian historians. There was only one more Romanian historian who intervened in two languages (English and French), Paul Cernovodeanu from the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute.

Highlights

Among the general reports for the 8 main sessions of the congress, one was allocated to a Romanian historian: Emil Condurachi from the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest, member of the Romanian Academy and general secretary of the International Association of South-East European Studies. Yet, Condurachi (born 1912) insisted that he needed a co-author in the person of his much younger mentee Răzvan Theodorescu (born 1939, at that moment researcher at the Institute for Art History), in spite of the fact that Elena Ceaușescu had in

another instance ordered that the latter should not be let to appear in televised shows; an initial rejection from party officials was overruled by Condurachi, who imposed his will to have also Răzvan Theodorescu on board. Condurachi had the generosity to tell directly to Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu that his co-author Răzvan Theodorescu had written the larger part of the report, and on August 13, 1980, the day of the presentation in the plenary of the congress, excused himself pretending to be ill and left all the glory to his younger co-author; later, Răzvan Theodorescu recognized that his mentor "wanted to let me [present]"[32].

The general report authored by Condurachi and Theodorescu[33] is the longest in the acts of the congress: it has 79 pages, while the second longest has only 64 pages[34], and most have 20-30 pages. The authors start with a reference to the concept of civilisations outlined by Fernand Braudel, on which they base their option to reject the divide between culture and civilisation and to attempt to make a synthesis of various particular histories, such as the histories of language and literature, of sciences and technology, of arts and customs, of institutions and juridical norms, of beliefs, of doctrines and ideologies, of psychology, of sensibilities, and finally, of collective mentalities, in consequence of the manner in which specific human societies prefer to think[35]; obviously, such an ambition exceeded the limits of a congress general report, but we have to acknowledge that Condurachi and Theodorescu at least tried to live up to their promise. The major challenges they faced were the extent and historical diversity of the region they were supposed to deal with – Eastern Europe incorporates various sub-regions and is by no metric homogeneous – and the huge timespan going from the first palaeolithic humans to the 20th century.

Condurachi and Theodorescu tried to deal with the geographical diversity by incorporating in the first part of their report a discussion about the particular sub-regions of Eastern Europe[36]. They acknowledge the fact that Eastern Europe had dynamic moving frontiers, encompassing in

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[32] Narcis Dorin Ion, *Despre cultura de ieri și românii de azi. Convorbiri cu academicianul Răzvan Theodorescu*, București: RAO, 2017, pp. 76-77.

[33] Emil Condurachi, Răzvan Theodorescu, *L'Europe de l'Est, aire de convergence des civilisations, in Rapports. I. Grands Thèmes et Méthodologie*, București: Editura Academiei, 1980, pp. 9-87.

[34] Juliusz Bardach, Hubert Izdebski, *Les États fédératifs et pluralistes. L'État fédéral et le principe fédératif en histoire, in Rapports. I. Grands Thèmes et Méthodologie,* București: Editura Academiei, 1980, pp. 237-290.

[35] Emil Condurachi, Răzvan Theodorescu, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[36] *Ibidem*, pp. 10-12.

different times also parts of Central and Northern Europe, and sometimes also Asia Minor. Based on this, they state that Eastern Europe has 2 main sub-regions, South-Eastern Europe and the East of Europe, meaning the vast Russian spaces. In support to this divide, they bring to the forefront also the geographical differences between these 2 sub-regions, contrasting the mountainous landscape of South-Eastern Europe, which determined fragmentation and supported local autonomies, with the open plains of Russia. They also add some considerations on the connecting role of seas and major rivers, as well as on the theory of cultural corridors outlined previously by Răzvan Theodorescu for the Middle Ages[37].

Generally, the topic of the session meant that the authors of the general report were supposed to insist on convergences and cultural interactions; while doing so, Condurachi and Theodorescu were cautious to avoid exaggerations and outlined also the limitations of cultural interactions, for example between Greeks, Thracians and Scythians[38]. At the same time, when discussing the role of Christian missionaries in the medieval synthesis, they insisted also on the persistence of popular practices and beliefs[39]. Yet, when presenting the penetration of Western ideas and artistic currents in the 17th and 18th century, as well as the modernizing push in the century of nationalities and revolutions, except for Russian Slavophilism the authors avoided discussing in detail the resistances of large sections of East European societies and/or of the Orthodox church towards modernization[40]. This strategy of circumventing the elephant in the room is obvious also with respect of Russia's role as steward of the European counterrevolution in the mid-19th century and even more when the authors decided to stop sharply at World War I and not to discuss the role of the Soviet Union in shaping the political and cultural divides of 20th century Europe. At the same time, it seems that it was a deliberate choice to include 4 co-reports, authored by Bulgarian, Finnish, American and Soviet historians, which brought complementary perspectives to the Condurachi-Theodorescu general report[41]. Overall, the general report authored by Emil Condurachi and

[37] Răzvan Theodorescu, *Bizanț, Balcani, Occident la începuturile culturii medievale românești (secolele X-XIV)*, București: Editura Academiei Române, 1974.
[38] Emil Condurachi, Răzvan Theodorescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-38.
[39] *Ibidem*, pp. 49-55.
[40] *Ibidem*, pp. 60-84.
[41] *Rapports. I. Grands Thèmes et Méthodologie*, București: Editura Academiei, 1980, pp. 88-147.

Răzvan Theodorescu was appreciated for its balance as well as for the richness of information and analyses on specific cultural interactions[42].

A similar vein can be noticed in the paper prepared by Alexandru Duțu and Pompiliu Teodor for the division Modern History, subdivision Ideas and Societies, of the chronological section of the congress. This section had no general reports but encompassed papers of 10-30 pages accepted by the International Committee of Historical Sciences, prepared and published in advance of the actual proceedings of the congress. Alexandru Duțu (born 1928, researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies affiliated to the University of Bucharest) and Pompiliu Teodor (born 1930, professor at the "Babeș-Bolyai" University in Cluj) were tasked to deal with the Enlightenment in Central and South-Eastern Europe and its political implications. Both co-authors were experienced researchers who had published extensively on various aspects of 18th cultural history, and they managed to produce a fine synthesis on the theme entrusted to them, combining the references to recent scholarship and to the international meetings organised by the International Association of South-East European Studies, by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and by the Lüneburg Center for the study of cultural relations with the results of their own research. Duțu and Teodor pleaded to embed the history of ideas into social history, to consider the diversity of historical contexts and attitudes in this region, as well as the homogenising influence of enlightened ideas, and the fact that Enlightenment emboldened intellectuals to take the lead of movements for national emancipation[43].

The historians affiliated in the University of Bucharest presented 2 co-reports in the main sessions of the congress. One of these was co-authored by Eugen Stănescu (born 1922, who had followed late Mihai Berza as acting director of the Institute of South-East European Studies) and Aron Petric (born 1915, former dean and at that moment professor of contemporary history at the Faculty of History and Philosophy) and focused on the renewal and homogenisation of the language used in historical writings. Written probably in the largest part by Eugen Stănescu, it reviewed terminological imports from various other sciences and concluded that

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[42] Even a historian who was hostile to Răzvan Theodorescu recognized that his presentation of the general report was "brilliant" professionally (Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 502).

[43] Alexandru Duțu, Pompiliu Teodor, *Les lumières dans le Centre et le Sud-Est de l'Europe et leurs implications politiques*, in *Rapports. II. Section chronologique*, București: Editura Academiei, 1980, pp. 380-397.

historians should use a language which should be adapted to each style of communication, but also foster historical truth, the friendship between peoples and the progress of humanity[44].

Similarly pious was the co-report authored by Ștefan Ștefănescu (born 1929, at that moment dean of the Faculty of History and Philosophy and member of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party) for the main session Place and role of teaching history. Even if the title was general, the co-report focused almost exclusively on the setting of history teaching in communist Romania[45]. Obviously, the author, who was also very active in the organisation of the congress, did not bother to include anything about the teaching of history in other parts of the world and, cautiously avoided to express any reservations about the way history was taught in contemporary Romania.

Besides general reports and co-reports, the congress had also another category of contributions, the so-called expert reports. Generally briefer than the co-reports, these expert reports were nevertheless solicited by the organizers, include often reactions to the discussions in the sessions, and were published only in the acts, after the end of the congress. One of these expert reports was authored by Cornelia Bodea (born 1916, retired researcher of the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History) for the general session on federative and pluralist states. Her report manages to balance the praise for the general report presented by the Polish historians Juliusz Bardach and Hubert Izdebski with comments on the interventions of various other participants to the session and with her own reservations regarding the validity of the federal ideas[46].

The interventions in various sessions allowed also to historians who were not selected for reports, co-reports or expert reports to express their views and be part of the discussions. Many of these interventions were published in the acts of the congress, but apparently not all[47]; yet, even if the

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[44] Eugen Stănescu, Aron Petric, *Betrachtungen betreffend die Erneuerung und Vereinheitlichung des historischen Sprachgebrauchs*, in *Rapports*, vol. I, pp. 431-436.

[45] Ștefan Ștefănescu, *La place et le rôle de l'enseignement de l'histoire dans le cadre de l'enseignement secondaire, notamment pour la formation de l'homme du XXe siècle*, in *Rapports*, vol. I, pp. 488-493.

[46] Cornelia Bodea, in *Actes.* vol. IV (1), București: Editura Academiei, 1980, pp. 240-243.

[47] Dinu Giurescu, at that moment professor at the Fine Arts Institute "Nicolae Grigorescu", remembers he had 3 interventions during the congress (Dinu Giurescu, *De la Sovromconstrucții nr.6 la Academia Română. Amintiri. Mărturii,* București: Editura Meronia, 2008, p. 307), but only one of them is published in the congress acts (Dinu Giurescu, in *Actes*, vol. IV (1), București: Editura Academiei, 1980, pp. 761-762).

oral presentation of the interventions was time-limited to 3 to 5 minutes, the authors were allowed to submit larger written forms or their interventions for the subsequent publication. 27 scholars affiliated with the University of Bucharest have made 38 interventions which were included in the congress publications. Some of these interventions were more or less formal and scope-limited[48], others were more substantial. Sometimes, these interventions expressed the special interest of their authors in specific historical topics, such as for example Gheorghe Iscru from the Faculty of History and Philosophy, who used the opportunity to highlight the ideas and importance of Tudor Vladimirescu, the leader of the 1821 revolution in Wallachia[49]. In other instances, the interventions were focused on clarifying aspects of the topics presented in the reports or in the previous interventions. For example, Dan Berindei from the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History introduced some aspects of Romanian history in the more general discussion opened by the paper of the Czechoslovak historians František Hejl and Richard Pražák on the national renaissance in the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe[50]. In a similar vein, in two separate interventions professor Radu Manolescu from the Faculty of History and Philosophy brought into the discussion about early medieval Western Europe information extracted from the chronicle of Gregory of Tours[51], and added to the paper presented by the Hungarian economic historian Zsigmond P. Pach some findings from his own research in the customs records of 16th century Transylvanian towns of Brașov (Kronstadt) and Sibiu (Hermannstadt)[52].

Some of the most active Romanian participants were two historians of a younger generation, who came from academic families, mastered foreign languages and had a solid historical culture, which allowed them to participate intensively in the discussions. I refer here to Andrei Pippidi (born 1948, son of Dionisie Pippidi, at that moment director of the Institute for Archeology, and grandson of Nicolae Iorga), researcher at the Institute of

[48] For example, Ioan Scurtu from the Faculty of History and Philosophy added to the paper on agrarian reforms in Europe after World War I presented by Costin Murgescu and Damian Hurezeanu in the division modern history, subdivision societies, of the chronological section, a number of 3 tables with the categories of agrarian property at different moments of the first half of the 20th century, and drew conclusions that were in contradiction with the data presented (Ioan Scurtu, in *Actes.* vol. IV (2), București: Editura Academiei, 1980, pp. 954-955).

[49] G. D. Iscru, in *Actes.* vol. IV (1), pp. 700-702.

[50] Dan Berindei, in *Actes.* Vol. IV (1), pp. 653-654.

[51] Radu Manolescu, in *Actes,* vol. IV (1), pp. 597-598.

[52] *Ibidem,* pp. 613-614.

South-East European Studies, and to Zoe Petre (born 1940, daughter of Emil Condurachi), lecturer at the Faculty of History and Philosophy. Andrei Pippidi had three interventions, one adding information on 15th century France and 17th century Moldavia to the co-report of Philippe Contamine[53], the second discussing testimonies of early modern travellers to Russia[54] and the third praising the paper of Hungarian historian Bela Köpeczi on 17th and 18th century great powers, while at the same time highlighting the influence of Habsburg Spain in shaping French absolutism and the experience of Michael the Brave[55]. On her side, Zoe Petre praised the paper of the Soviet historians E. S. Goloubtsova and G. A. Kochelenko, but added that the Greek cities in the Black Sea area depended on wheat and labor coming from the hinterlands[56], and was more critical regarding the paper of East-German historians Joachim Herrmann and Reimar Müller, making references to Moses Finley and Jean-Paul Vernant and bringing nuances to the discussion about the extent of slavery in ancient Greece[57]. In a display of erudition combined with feminine solidarity, she shifted from French to English and praised the two years younger Danish historian Signe Isager, starting with "our learned colleague's report on *Family Patterns in Isaeus*, and continuing by discussing the age of spouses and cases of single heroes in a significant number of Greek tragedies[58].

Besides the regular sessions of the congress, 23 affiliated institutions organized their own scientific conferences and/or had their statutory meetings. Several Romanian historians participated in the proceedings of these affiliated institutions or in those of other associations and thematic work groups. Noteworthy were the contributions of Romanian historians to the proceedings of the International Numismatic Commission or to the International Association of South-East European Studies. It is worth to be noticed that in the case of the latter association, where Romanian historians traditionally wielded huge influence, a relatively young researcher from the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History was tasked to present a report[59]. Significant were also the contributions of professor Radu Manolescu from the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest to the proceedings of

[53] Andrei Pippidi, in *Actes.* vol. IV (1), pp. 135-136.
[54] *Ibidem,* p. 635.
[55] *Ibidem,* pp. 763-764.
[56] Zoe Petre, in *Actes.* vol. IV (1), p. 526.
[57] *Ibidem,* pp. 550-551.
[58] *Ibidem,* pp. 548-549.
[59] Georgeta Penelea, *La structure sociale et économique des villes roumains aux XVIII^e^ et XIX^e^ siècles*, in *Actes*. vol. IV (2), pp. 1063-1071.

the International Commission for Maritime History[60] and those of Vasile Liveanu from the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History to the debates of the work group for the application of mathematical methods in history[61].

Outcomes and legacy

One of the main components of an international congress is the General Assembly of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, which elects the Bureau and decides upon the venue of the next congress. The Romanian delegation was tasked by the party leadership to ensure that the position in the Bureau vacated through the death of Mihai Berza would be filled by another Romanian, although the statute of the International Committee of Historical Sciences does not stipulate any right of succession[62].

The potential candidates endorsed by the Romanian Communist Party were Emil Condurachi, Ștefan Pascu, and Mircea Popescu-Dâmbovița, along with Ștefan Ștefănescu as a "substitute", but with a preference for Ștefan Pascu, although he was not really versed in the management of international academic relations and thus had close to no chance to succeed; several historians argue that Emil Condurachi would have had better chances[63], but he knew better the context and avoided an uphill battle, preferring to conserve his relationships. Finally, no Romanian was elected to the Bureau, and the place allocated for Eastern Europe was won by György Ránki from Hungary[64]. In the same day, the Assembly elected Aleksander Gieysztor (Poland) as president, Gordon A. Craig (USA) as first vice president, Domenico Demarco (Italy) as vice president, Hélène Ahrweiler (France) as secretary general and Alain Dubois (Switzerland) as treasurer; Satish Chandra (India) and Kåre Tønneson (Norway) were reelected for a second and final mandate as assessor members of the Bureau, while Theodore C. Barker (UK), Ernesto de la Torre Vilar (Mexico), György Ránki (Hungary) and Sergei I. Tikhvinsky (Soviet Union) were elected for their first mandate as assessor members. Finally, former president Karl D.

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[60] *Actes,* vol. IV (2), pp. 1072-1077.

[61] Vasile Liveanu, *Stochastic and statistical dependences – a distinction essential in historical research*, in *Actes*. vol. IV (2), pp. 1305-1311.

[62] Cosmin Popa, *Intelectualii lui Ceaușescu și Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice (1970-1989)*, București: Editura Litera, p. 286.

[63] Narcis Dorin Ion, *Portretul unui aristocrat...*, pp. 139-140; Ioan Scurtu, *Povestiri adevărate. Memorii*, Iași: Junimea, 2022, p. 317.

[64] Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

Erdmann and former general secretary Michel François became honorific counsellor-members of the Bureau[65].

While they failed in keeping Berza's position in the Bureau of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, the Romanians succeeded to maintain and sometimes to expand their positions in other committees and affiliated organizations[66]. Ștefan Pascu was re-elected as President of the International Commission of Historical Demography, Valentin Georgescu became Vice-President of the International Commission for the History of Assemblies of Estates and Colonel Al. Savu Vice-President of the International Commission of Comparative Military History. Among the active members of the University of Bucharest, Dan Berindei joined the Bureau of the Commission for Slavic Studies, where Ștefan Ștefănescu was also a member, and Vasile Liveanu became a member of the bureau of the Commission for Quantitative Historical Methods.

But the most important new position was gained by Lucian Boia (born 1944), at that time lecturer at the Faculty of History and Philosophy[67]. He initiated, with the help of Mihai Berza and Ștefan Ștefănescu, the establishment of an International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography (ICHTH). Michel François, who had taught historiography at the Sorbonne, put him in contact with French historian Charles-Olivier Carbonell, and the two of them launched the official preparatives for the creation of the ICHTH. The International Committee of Historical Sciences approved this bid, and the founding meeting was held in the room 206 of the Faculty of History and Philosophy and on the hall, as the over 100 participants exceeded the capacity of the room. Charles-Olivier Carbonell was elected president, Georg Iggers from the State University of New York in Buffalo vice-president, and Lucian Boia general secretary of the new commission.

Hosting the International Congress of Historical Sciences was a professional opportunity for the Romanian historians in general, and especially for those affiliated to the University of Bucharest. After almost 4 decades, Cosmin Popa considers it as "one of the last moments of brilliance of the communist academic and research" system[68]. Somehow, most of the historians affiliated to the University of Bucharest participated in the congress, either on the organizational side, or at the scientific debates. In the

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[65] *Ibidem*, pp. 365-366.

[66] More details in Dan Berindei, *Cel de-al XV-lea Congres Internațional de Științe Istorice și participarea istoricilor români*, in *Revista de istorie*, tom 33, 1980, no. 10, pp. 1853-1854.

[67] The information is based on Lucian Boia, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-125.

[68] Cosmin Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

previous section we focused on faculty participation with papers and interventions documented in the acts of the congress; besides these, some historians affiliated in the University of Bucharest published articles in volumes or journal special issues dedicated to the congress or were active without public interventions.

Yet, even if we consider all these instances, for about one third of the historians teaching at the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest we cannot document any form of involvement in this event. For some of them, lacking the ability to communicate in any foreign language was a major handicap. Others seem to have lacked any interest, either for the scientific debates or for the opportunity to meet foreign colleagues, to network and to develop common projects. It is not random that some of the historians who have published recollections including the year 1980 do not even mention this congress[69]. In spite of such cases, overall, the historians who didn't care about the congress or avoided participating in it were a minority in the University of Bucharest.

After the congress, Dan Berindei tried to outline the benefits of the congress for Romanian historians and in general the advantages of international cooperation and opening.

"The debates of the XV. International Congress of Historical Sciences promoted, in general, the ideas of peace and friendship among peoples, those of equality of nations and of their right to free and independent existence. They occurred in an academic climate, reflecting an open and sincere exchange of opinions. The discussions revealed the interest for comparative history, for an integral history and for the history of civilizations. […]

The congress revealed also limitations and shortcomings, showing what needs to be done for a stronger future affirmation of Romanian historians in the global historiographical movement. […] Acute imperatives for the future are a more pronounced integration in the global historiographical flow, participation at scientific meetings, the specialization in different areas of history and a better mastering of international languages by an increasing number of historians so that they can be used practically and without mediation. The International Congress of Historical Sciences was an outstanding success, but it also imposes for the Romanian historians' important tasks for the future, and especially not to abandon the action to

[69] See for example Gheorghe I. Ioniță, *O viață, un destin. Istorii știute și neștiute*. Ediție îngrijită de Ileana Ioniță-Iancu, București: Editura Cartea Universitară, 2007. He doesn't even mention that he published an article in Russian in the volume dedicated to the congress (see *Nouvelles Études d'Histoire…*, vol. 2, pp. 179-190).

penetrate further the activity of world historiography, to assert the Romanian historiography, to outline the past and the present of our country, and implicitly the socialist accomplishments"[70]

Unfortunately, these recommendations were contradicted by the political trends of the 1980s, when Romania scaled down international academic cooperation and the authorities tightened ideological controls. Even if due to the success of the 1980 Congress Romanian historians were better connected in various academic bodies, many of them experienced serious difficulties in participating to international meetings abroad.

The XVI. International Congress of Historical Sciences, organized in Stuttgart in 1985, is a good example of the problems faced by Romanian would-be participants. Although the party officials claimed that they want a strong Romanian delegation, the number of Romanian participants was limited and the delegation was split, with about 10 historians travelling by plane and 14 others having to take a bus which made 3 days and a half to Stuttgart[71]. In other situations, other historians did not manage to attend the international meetings to which they were invited to participate.

Dan Berindei notes that after the Bucharest Congress there came lots of invitations and cooperation proposals, but the authorities were reluctant and "the opportunity supplied by the congress was not used"[72]. He himself considers he was fortunate to take advantage of the relations established in 1980. For example, the former International Committee president Karl Erdmann, impressed by his achievements in the organization of the Bucharest congress, recommended him to be appointed counsellor of the German organizers of the Stuttgart congress, and he participated without being member of the Romanian delegation; he also benefitted from various other invitations to other international meetings for the whole decade up to the demise of communism[73]. Very successful was also Lucian Boia, in spite of various difficulties to obtain visas for travelling abroad[74]. With the help of Charles-Olivier Carbonell he managed to participate yearly at the meetings of the ICHTH, became the founder of a specialized international journal (*Storia della Storiografia* / *Histoire de l'Historiographie* / *History of Historiography* / *Geschichte der Geschichtsschreibung*), and edited a

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[70] Dan Berindei, *Cel de-al XV-lea Congres…*, pp. 1854-1855.

[71] The whole adventure, a combination of bad planning and financial pettiness, is recollected in Dinu C. Giurescu, *De la Sovromconstrucții nr. 6 la Academia Română. Amintiri, mărturii*, București: Editura Meronia, 2008, pp. 372-379.

[72] Narcis Dorin Ion, *Portretul unui aristocrat...*, p. 147.

[73] *Ibidem*, pp. 147-148.

[74] Lucian Boia, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-155.

monumental dictionary of great historians[75]. Boia also managed to use his connections to publish several books in the West[76], at a time when the historical analysis of science-fiction imaginary was not really possible in communist Romania.

Dan Berindei and Lucian Boia were rather exceptional in communist Romania during the 1980s. Other Romanian historians managed to capitalize on the connections established during the XV. International Congress of Historical Sciences only after 1989. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that after the demise of communism, some of the most active participants at the 1980 congress gained leadership positions. For example, Zoe Petre became dean of the Faculty of History[77], Alexandru Duțu became director of the Institute for South-East European Studies, and in Cluj Pompiliu Teodor became the uncrowned mentor of the Babeș-Bolyai University; all of them promoted a significant opening towards international cooperation and pushed forward for the liberalization and modernization of historical research and teaching.

[75] Lucian Boia (ed.) *Great Historians from Antiquity to 1800: An International Dictionary*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1989; Lucian Boia (ed.) *Great Historians of the Modern Age: An International Dictionary*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991.

[76] Helga Abret, Lucian Boia, *Das Jahrhundert der Marsianer: Der Planet Mars in der Science Fiction bis zur Landung der Viking-Sonden 1976*, München: Heyne Verlag, 1984; Lucian Boia, *L'exploration imaginaire de l'espace*, Paris: La Découverte, 1987; Idem, *La fin du monde*, Paris: La Découverte, 1989.

[77] For the unfolding of the situation at the History Faculty in Bucharest, see Matei Gheboianu, Bogdan Murgescu, *Student Assessment of Professors in Revolutionary Context. Case-Study: The History Faculty of the University of Bucharest (1989-1990)*, in *International Review of Social Research*, 8, 2018, no. 1, pp. 25-34.