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Local Event – European Impact: Local History in European Context

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The Second World War in Short

- The Second World War was a generalized armed conflict in the middle of the 20th century that consumed most of the globe, being considered the largest and deadliest continuous war in human history.
- The war began on September 1, 1939, with the invasion of Poland by Germany, which drew France, England and the Commonwealth into conflict. The Soviet Union annexed the eastern part of Poland in 1939, started a separate war with Finland, and was attacked by Nazi Germany in June 1941. The United States entered the conflict in December 1941 after the Pearl Harbour attack. The war ended in 1945, when all the Axis powers were defeated.
- The parties in conflict were the Axis Powers and the Allies. The Axis represented, at first, an alliance between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, which later expanded to include Japan and Eastern European countries such as Romania and Bulgaria.

- The Allies represented, first, the alliance between England, (including the Commonwealth), France and Poland, later joined by the Soviet Union, the United States of America and China.
- 1940 was, perhaps, one of the most dramatic years in history of Romania. The Second World War interrupted the positive evolution for Romania.
- In September 1940, King Carol II abdicates in favour of his son, Mihai, aged 18 years old at the time. Under the leadership of General Antonescu, Romania joins Nazi Germany.
- AUGUST 23, 1944 - At the age of only 22, King Michael made the most important decision in his lordship. As the armies of the Soviet Union were approaching the eastern border of Romania, Mihai sided with politicians favourable to the Allies, which included the communists.
- Thus, Romania denounces the alliance with the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) and goes over to the Allies (Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States of America).
- His decision shortened by about six months the Second World War, helping to save hundreds of thousands of lives.



Interview with

historian Ionel Căndea

Biography of Ionel Cârdea

Born on 25 February 1949 at Macin.

Ionel Cârdea is a university teacher and the director of the Museum of Braila. He is one of the well known medievalists for his archaeological research and for the books he wrote.

His life and carrier are tied to the town of Brila, and the lower part of Danube and his passion for discovery and construction does not have any limits.

His strong personality, a fighter for how the obstacles are just challenges. Ionel Cârdea is a man that ties a modern conception over space of the museum.

1. We found out that in June 1998 King Mihai I visited Braila. Why Braila?

On 18th and 19th June 1998 King Mihai I, together with Queen Ana were the guests of the town of Braila, at the invitation of the prefect of Brăila, visiting Bran, the economic and cultural objectives.

On 18 June, while visiting the “Constantin Brâncoveanu” University, invited by the rector Alexandru Puiu, I was able to invite His Majesty to visit the Perpessicius Memorial House, his former teacher in the class Grand Voievod Mihai.

The thing was possible because, during a break I brought to the teacher’s room the three and a half minute film, with the visit of Carol I to Brăila, on May 1st 1914, and this is what made them accept the invitation.

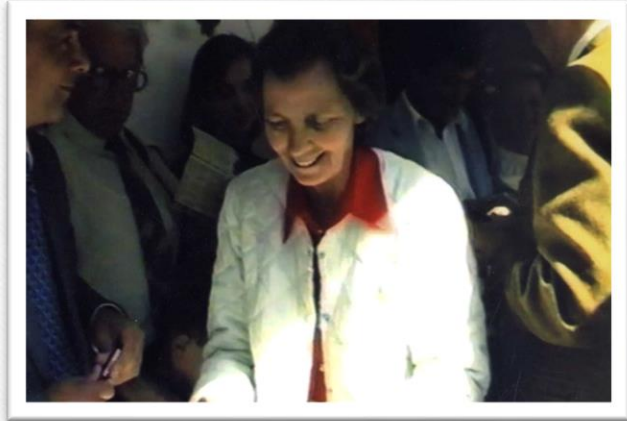
The visit can be found on the website of the Museum of Braila, “Carol I” today.



2. In a specific context, King Mihai I was asked what patriotism is. Please tell us about this moment.

In a dialogue with the students, in the large amphitheatre of the “Constantin Brâncoveanu” University, one of the assistants asked His Majesty what it means to be a patriot.

The answer came immediately and, personally, it amazed me with its simplicity and depth: “To be a patriot is to love your country as it is, but to fight hard to make it better than it is”.



3. During the Second World War, the brave act of King Mihai I, on 23rd August 1944, had remarkable consequences. How was this act appreciated by Europeans?

Obviously, those in the anti-Hitler coalition were happy and excited about Romania's exit from the Axis countries, thus shortening the war by more than 6 months.

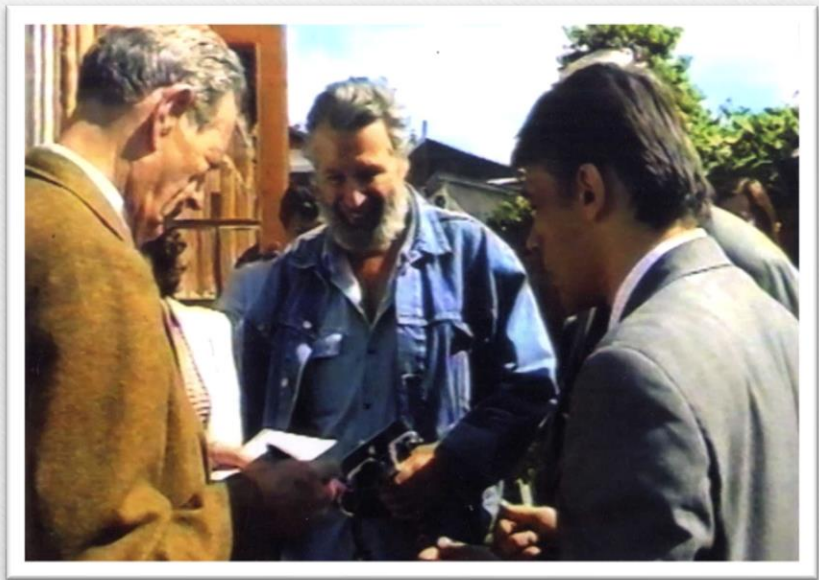
Countries such as Hungary, still fighting alongside fascist Germany considered the act on August 23 as such, but we must take into account the fact that the Soviet Union, one of the great beneficiaries of the act, only considered it from September 12, when it was signed the truce between Romania and the Soviet Union in Moscow.

4. The Romanian army fought in WWII on two fronts, east and west. Please tell us a moment that impressed you during the battles that took place in your area.

Although the town of Galați was much more endangered by the battles in the area, being bombed even after 23 August, an action was documented in Brăila to thwart the attempt to blow up a train with war ammunition , located in the station area.

For the rest, the effect signing the truce on 12 September made its effect and the town of Brăila escaped violent battles, which continued on the front in Transylvania.

It is true that right after 23 August, the entire Namoloasa - Galati - Braila fortification system on the lower Siret was blown up by the Soviets, the casemates built in the interwar years still being evidence today between the towns of Muchea and Latinu.



5. How do you explain the fact that although the Romanians made a heavy sacrifice for the defeat of Nazi Germany, after the war, the communist regime was established in Romania ?

Summarising Romania's situation in the fight on the antifascist front, that is to the west, we can say that neither did the Soviets, who wanted Bessarabia back (kidnapped in 1812 by the Tsarist Empire and recovered in 1918 by The Kingdom of Romania; again kidnapped by the Soviet Union in June 1940 and taken back between June 1941- August 23, 1944) and neither did the westerners - especially Great Britain, take our interests into account for a single moment and, alas, and with hard work we managed to recover the entire Transylvania, while Winston Churchill sold us on a ticket (actually a napkin), on which he wrote the percentage of the USSR and the western influence after the war, in the Yalta meeting with Stalin.

Thus it was possible, without the protection of the west, the establishment of communism in Romania, despite the opposition of the old parties, led by the king.

6. The horrors of the communist regime must be known by us and by those who will come after us. In your family, do you have relatives which had to endure these kind of horrors?

Yes, ever since 1970, being a student at the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest, I learnt from my uncle, my mother's brother, Glugă Constantin, that between 1949 and 1953 he was sent to the Canal for 4 years, 4 months and 4 days.

Why? As head of the Malaxa steelworks in Bucharest, he was the one who gave the technical solution for continuing the process of manufacturing some shells, after the American bombardment on April 4, 1944.

Destroyed in one of the sectors, the production could continue with the help of an industrial railway, in another place in Bucharest, a small and modest workshop, which could complete what at Malaxa could not be done any longer.

Someone remembered who gave the solution and the saving idea, although, it should be known that the Germans ordered to resume the production within 24 hours.

Thus, in 1949, he was arrested and sentenced for "making bombs against the Red Army". He returned immediately after Stalin's death in March 1953.

- <https://youtu.be/0NySZS3y8jM>
 - VIZITA MAJESTATII SALE REGELE MIHAI I SI A REGINEI ANA, LA CASA MEMORIALA PERPESSICIUS
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○ Special thanks to Ionel Căndea
and to the Museum of Brăila!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!