

A scenic landscape of a Romanian countryside. In the background, a rustic wooden barn with a steep gabled roof sits on a grassy hill. To the left of the barn is a large, leafy tree. In the middle ground, two large, conical haystacks made of golden straw stand prominently. The foreground is dominated by a calm body of water, likely a pond or a slow-moving stream, which perfectly reflects the haystacks and the barn. The water's surface is dark and still, creating a clear mirror image of the scene above. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and idyllic, capturing a traditional rural setting.

Romania Historical and Cultural Overview

Who are we?

Romania is located in the South-Eastern part of Central Europe, along the Lower Danube, in the Eastern Carpathian basin.

Population: 22 million

Language: Romanian (of Romanic origin)

Religion: Eastern Orthodox

Minorities: Hungarians, Germans, Roma, Serbians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Turks, etc.

Where do we come from?

During Ancient times, the area was inhabited by an indo-European population of Thracian origin: the Dacians (latin) or Getas (greek).

They developed a strong kingdom under the rule of famous King Decebal.

Dacia flourished under Greek and Latin influences, being considered as a threat by the expanding Roman Empire.



Wars with Rome

Emperor Domitianus failed to accomplish his dream of conquering Dacia, due to King Decebal's resistance. Later on, Roman Emperor Trajan turned Dacia into his most important goal at the Lower Danube.

During 101-102, the Romans defeated Decebal, but he managed to keep the throne and the Romans out, by accepting a humiliating peace.

Trajan returned to Dacia in 105-106, when he defeated the Dacians again and established a Roman province here.

King Decebal run after a desperate resistance at his capital city, Sarmisegetuza. Caught up by Roman soldiers, he took his life, not wanting to end up prisoner in Rome.



King Decebal



Emperor Trajan

Under Roman rule and after

From 106 to 271/73, Dacia was a Roman province. Roman colonists were brought in and many soldiers decided to remain in the province after their military duty was complete. Language, customs, cultures and religions mixed to form Daco-Roman communities, who survived even after the Roman withdrawal.

These communities fled to the mountains to escape the Barbarian invasions. They practiced agriculture and kept their language and civilization for almost a millennium.

The Middle Ages.

In the 14th century, two Romanian states were established outside the Carpathian ring: Moldova and Walachia.



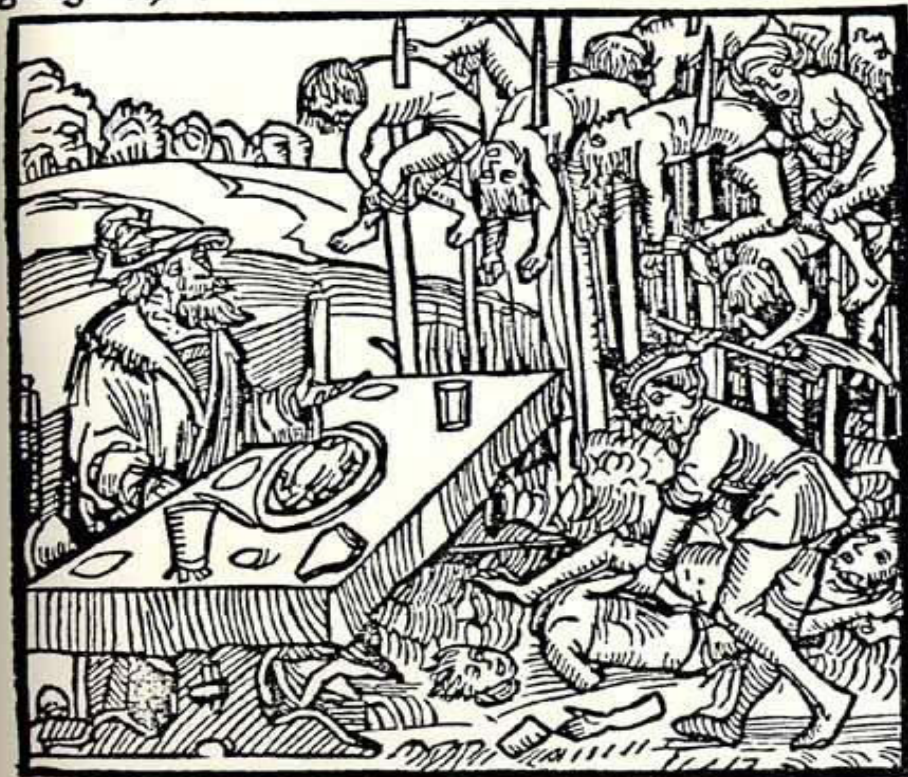
- *Romanians also represented the great majority of population inside the Carpathian ring. Nevertheless, the Hungarian Kingdom conquered this area, known as Transylvania.*
- *Still, the most important threat during the Middle Ages was the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans, aimed at the two Romanian states, as well.*
- *Many Romanian princes (voivodas) fought long battles against the Ottomans, to preserve their independence. Often, they were allied with Hungary or Poland.*

Well known figures:

Vlad Țepeș (the Impaler)

ruled Walachia from 1456 to 1462. Obsessed with justice, he punished villains by impaling them. He became famous due to the stories spread by the Germans in Transylvania, willing to disparage him. They were displeased with his decision to take away the trading privileges they enjoyed in Walachia. In the 19th century, their stories fell into Bram Stoker's hands.

Wie facht sich an gar ein graussein
liche erschrockenliche hystorien von dem wilden reütrich.
Dracole wayde. Wie er die leüt gespißt hat. vnd gepratet.
vnd mit den haüßtern yn einem kessel gesoten. vñ wie er die
leüt geschunden hat vñ zerhacken lassen als ein kraut. Jetz
er hat auch den mütern ire kind gepratē vnd sy habes müs-
sen selber essen. Vnd vil andere erschrockenliche ding die in
dissm Tractat geschriben stend. Vnd in welchem land er
geregiret hat.





Vlad defeated the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, in 1462, in a battle in Targoviste. He used soldiers disguised as turks. Vlad also frightened the sultan by impaling thousands of Turkish prisoners around the walls of the city. Mehmed II found their decomposing bodies as he approached Targoviste, which terribly scared the Ottoman armies.

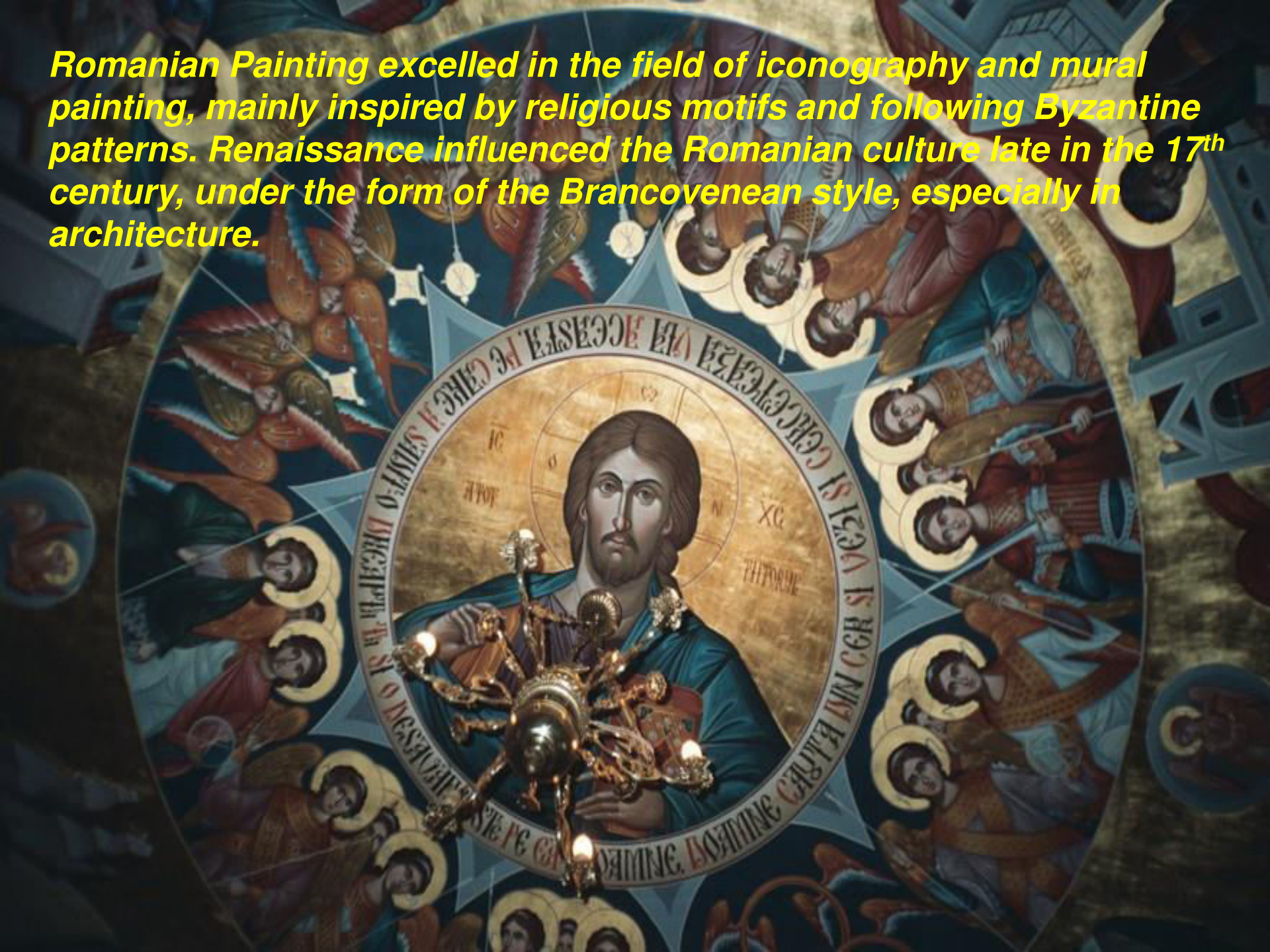
Rural culture with Byzantine influences

Romanian culture developed in a rural social environment, with strong Byzantine and Orthodox influences. Romanian princes saw themselves as followers of the Byzantine emperors and tried to imitate their Christian attitude.

In the field of architecture, churches and monasteries were the most important creation of Romanian medieval culture. Some of the most representative medieval churches can be found in northern Moldova.



Romanian Painting excelled in the field of iconography and mural painting, mainly inspired by religious motifs and following Byzantine patterns. Renaissance influenced the Romanian culture late in the 17th century, under the form of the Brancovenean style, especially in architecture.





Mogosoia Palace



Hurezi Monastery



Potlogi Palace



Traditional Way of Life

- **Romanians lived mostly in the country side, in small sized villages, practicing agriculture on individual lands or on a boyar's domain.**
- **Rural culture was closely connected to religious and family events, agricultural labors, mythology. Poems, especially ballads, or popular songs of love and sorrow ("doina") express their mental horizon, developed in a domestic environment.**
- **Arts in the countryside were represented by homemade craftsmanship: ceramics, weaving, wood carvings.**
- **Such forms of popular art used religious, floral and geometrical motifs. Both ceramics and weavings are rich in color, inspired by the Byzantine models of painting.**



Ceramica de Horezu



Gem DeDude



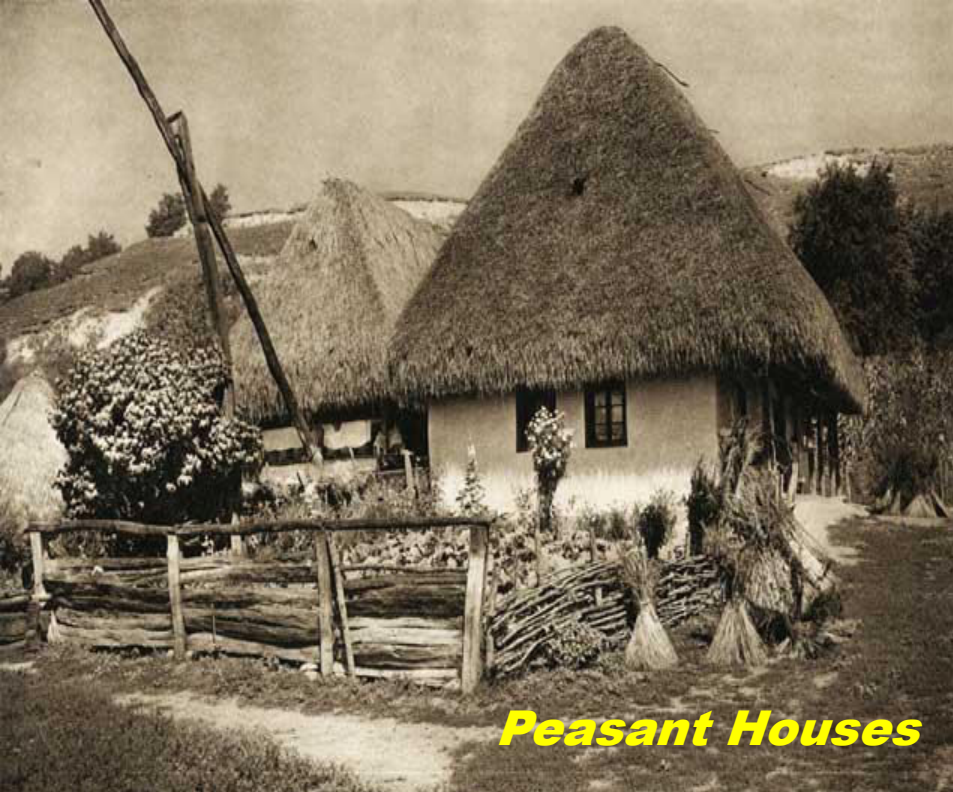
Horezu



Ceramics



Traditional Carpets



Peasant Houses



Interior



Working the Fields



Romanians in the Modern Times

Illustration of the Romanian People

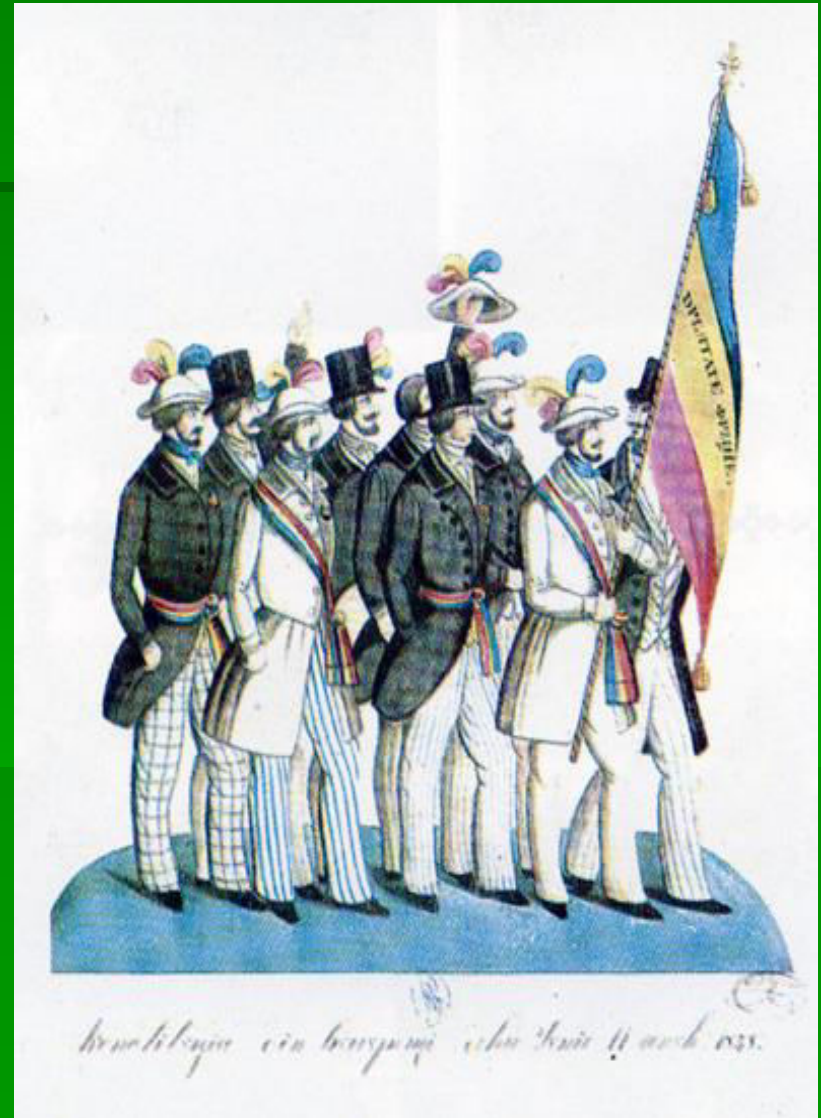
Illustration of the Romanian People

The National Movement of the 19th Century

The Romanian National Movement started in the first half of the 19th century, under the influence of the French revolution. Romanians studying in Paris brought home revolutionary ideas and founded secret revolutionary societies. Their goals were:

- Civic liberties and Constitution
- Modernization
- Unification (of Walachia and Moldova, to create a Romanian nation-state)
- Independence from Ottoman domination

These aims were publicly affirmed during the 1848 revolution, considered to be a milestone for the Romanian national movement.



After the Crimean War, the Western Powers tried to put an obstacle in front of the Russian expansion towards the Balkans and agreed to a partial unification of Moldova and Walachia, as a single country, but with two princes.

Under unionist influence, Alexander Cuza I was elected in 1859 prince of both countries.

He continued the unification program, establishing one government and one parliament, until his resignation in 1866.

Prominent politicians of the period offered the throne of the newly born Romanian state to prince Carol of Hohenzollern, from the ruling German dynasty.

He accepted the throne and lead Romania to its independence, in a war against the Ottoman Empire, in 1877-1878.



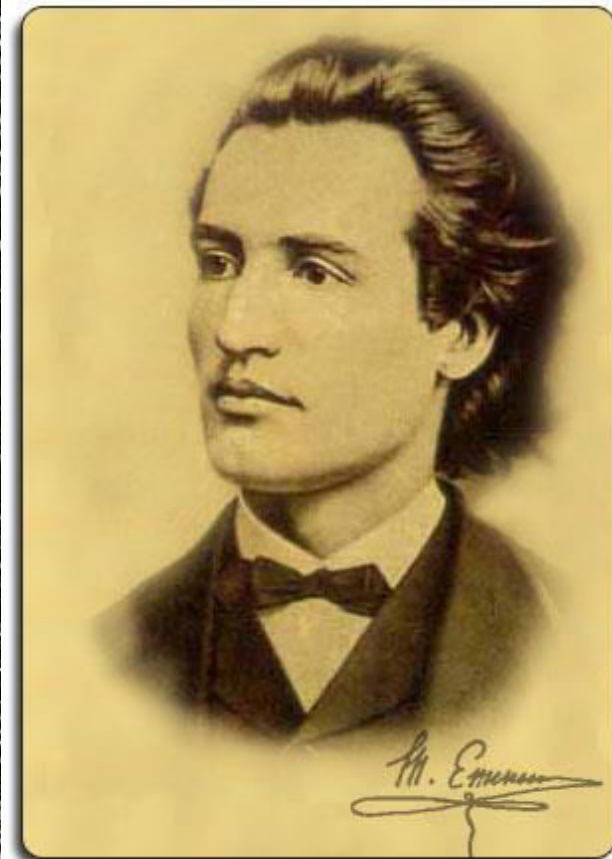
European culture, European way of life

The National movement coincided with a radical transformation in the Romanian society. The same students which initiated the 1848 revolution also brought in European cultural models, in literature, in painting, in architecture. Rapid urbanization changed the life style, as well as habits, dressing, etc.



The development of state institutions, education, police, generated a middle class, accustomed to reading newspapers, visiting parks and theatres, speaking French and dining in restaurants.

The first European expression in the Romanian culture was Romanticism. Mihai Eminescu, educated in Vienna and Berlin, was the most important Romanian poet of the time, also considered the last Romantic poet in Europe. Strongly influenced by German philosophy, Eminescu used historical themes and folk motifs in his poetry, mixing the Romanian cultural heritage with European forms in literature. Literature became the most important manifestation of the National thought.



As urban life grew, education developed as well. Prince Cuza established the first Romanian universities in Iassy (1860) and Bucharest (1864). Literature, historiography, philology and linguistics, developed fast.



In painting, Nicolae Grigorescu (1838-1907) assimilated impressionist patterns during his studies in France and combined them with traditional models of Byzantine mural painting. This way, he created original works, impressive by their sensibility, use of color and light. He is considered to be the greatest Romanian painter of the 19th century.

Romania in the 20th century

After the unification of Walachia and Moldova and the establishment of a Romanian nation-state, the priorities moved towards Transylvania. Ruled by the Hungarians in the middle Ages, the province was part of Hungary in the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The large majority of the population was Romanian, nevertheless. The National movement spread also among the Romanians in Transylvania, whom desired unification with Romania.

In order to achieve this goal, Romania joined France, England and Russia in World War I, after being promised Transylvania. After the war, Romanians in the province expressed their will to unite with Romania and the allies decided to allow that, Romania being offered the entire territory of historical Transylvania. This caused great discord with Hungary, which persisted for many decades.

INTERWAR ROMANIA



After the Bolshevik revolution, as Russia disintegrated, another province decided to unite with Romania: Bessarabia. Conquered by Russians in 1812, it remained under Tsarist rule until 1917 when Lenin offered freedom of self-determination to all nations in the Tsarist empire. Later on, Soviet authorities accused Romania of taking Bessarabia by force and made it public that Moscow intended to recover it.

This is why Romania followed a policy of alliance with France and England and was very active at the League of Nations. Bucharest tried to avoid an encirclement by Hungary and USSR, but when the League of Nations failed to meet its expectations, Romania decided to pursue an alliance with Nazi Germany.

In 1940, Romania gave in to a Soviet ultimatum and surrendered Bessarabia. Hitler also mediated an agreement between Romania and Hungary which divided Transylvania into two parts.

In 1941, Romania joined Hitler in the war against the USSR, hoping to recover at least Bessarabia.



During the interwar period, Romanian society developed much faster than before. Bucharest took its French appearance for which it will be known as "Little Paris". The middle class grew, as well as a local bourgeoisie of traders, bankers, professors, etc. Industry expanded at a fast pace, due to oil reserves on Prahova Valley. Western capitalists made large investments in banking, machinery, phones, oil exploitation.



Busy Bucharest at noon (1930). Romanians enjoyed walking, spending time in restaurants and breweries, reading newspapers and discussing politics.



High Life Hotel in the Royal Palace Square (1932)



Victoria Avenue (1930). *Capsha House* was the favorite restaurant of all poets and writers in Bucharest.

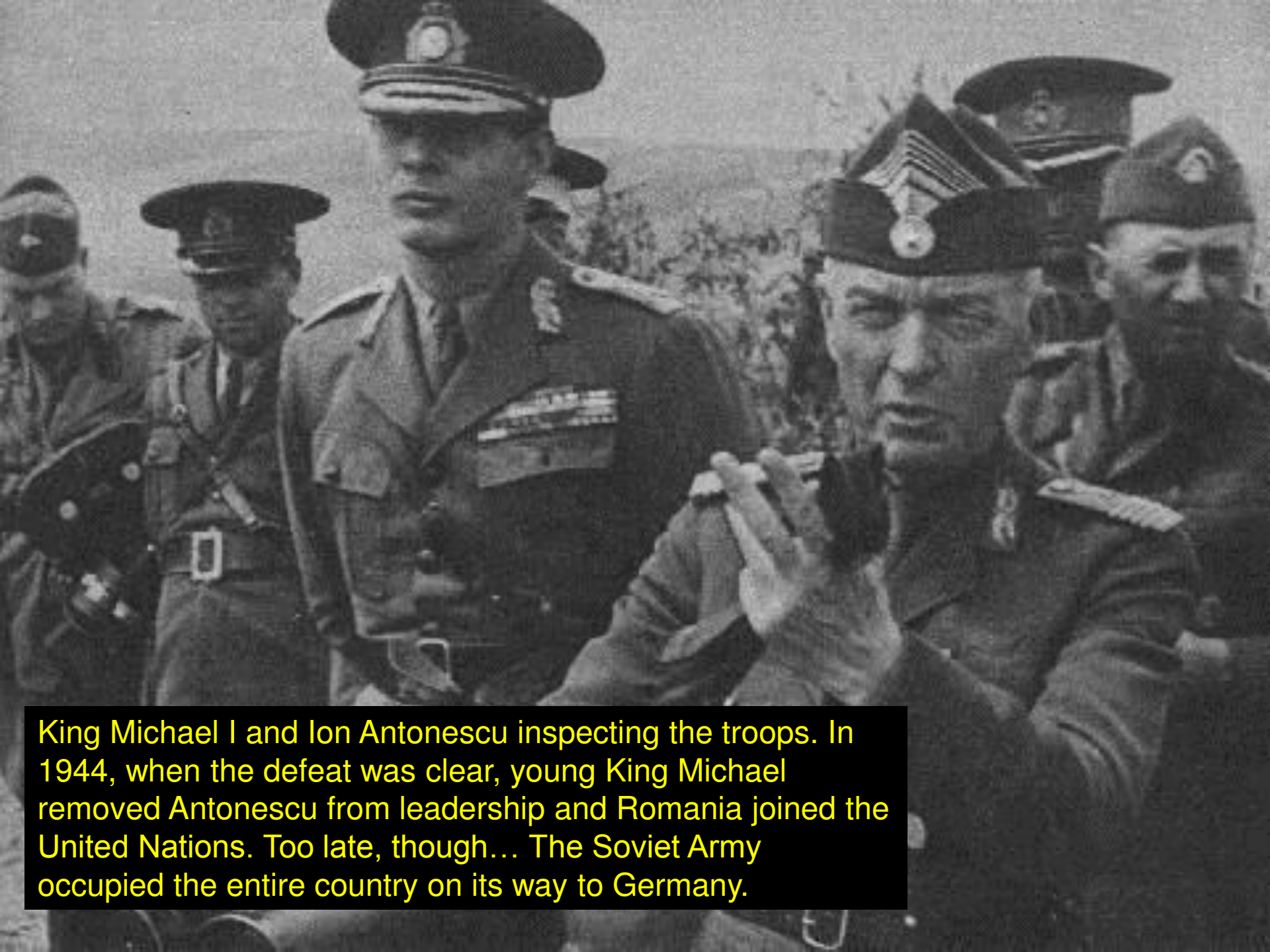




Having a beer at *Otetelesanu* (1928). Will the Liberal or the National Peasants' Party win the elections?



World War II. The Romanian Army on the Eastern front, conquering Sevastopol (1941). Under Ion Antonescu's military dictatorship, Romania still had hopes to regain its interwar borders.



King Michael I and Ion Antonescu inspecting the troops. In 1944, when the defeat was clear, young King Michael removed Antonescu from leadership and Romania joined the United Nations. Too late, though... The Soviet Army occupied the entire country on its way to Germany.



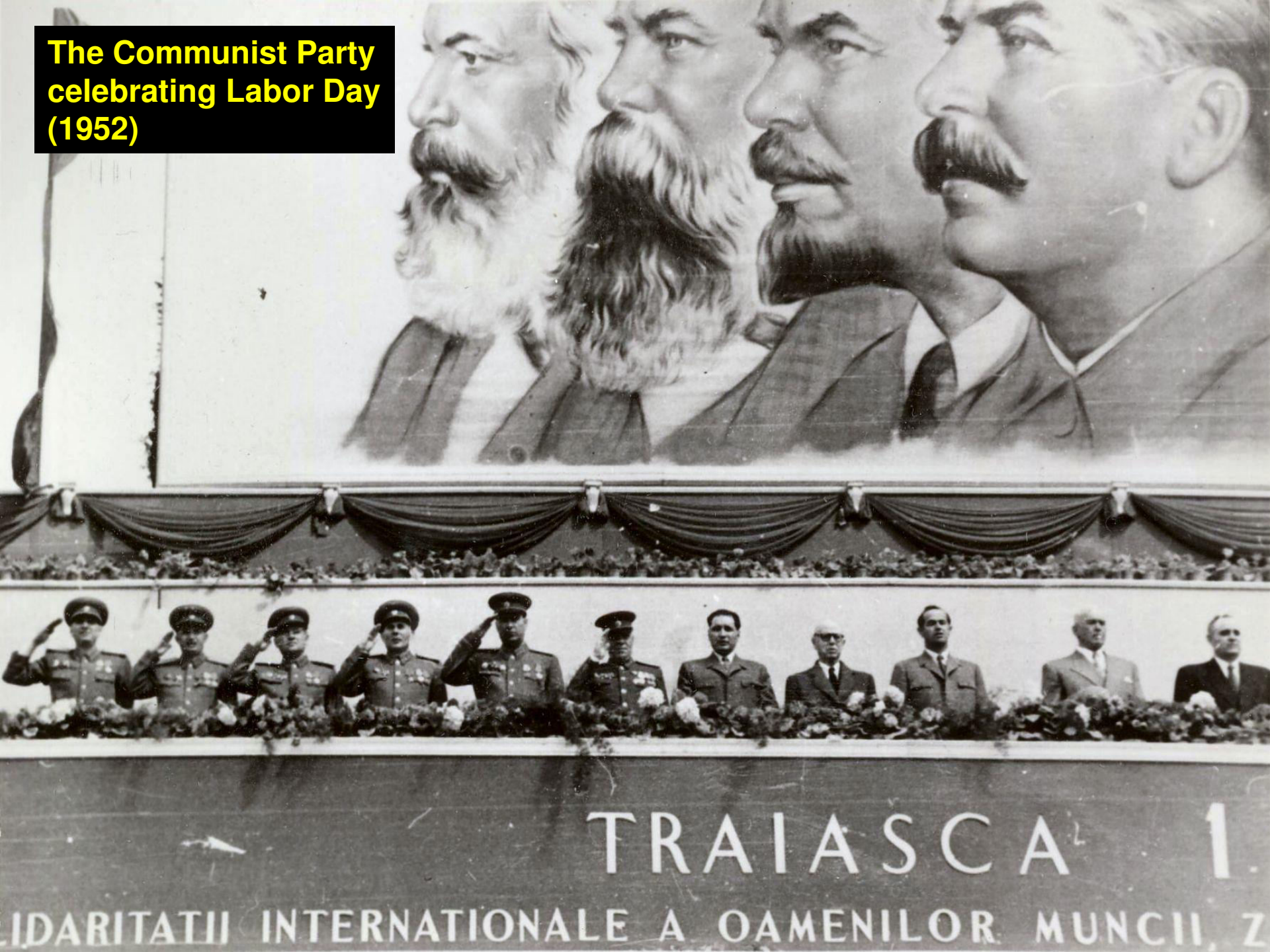
The insignificant local Communist party is welcoming the Soviet Army. King Michael's attempts to establish a democratic government failed, sabotaged by the Soviet occupant. The Western allies chose not to intervene.



By force, manipulation and blackmail, the Communist Party took over the Constitutional establishment and imprisoned all non-Communist politicians. With no help from the West, King Michael was forced to abdicate and fled the country. Romania was on its way to Stalinism.

- The Communist Party closely followed the Soviet model: collectivization of agriculture, nationalization of industry, censorship, purges, forced labor camps, rapid industrialization programs by planning.
- The study of Russian was declared compulsory. Ideology took over all aspects of culture. Poets, writers, politicians, were sent to the “Canal” (forced labor establishment in Dobrudja).
- The leadership of the party was given by Stalin to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who removed his adversaries and assumed full control. After Stalin’s death, Gheorghiu-Dej pursued a different political line, trying to gain his independence in the Communist world and escape Moscow’s control.

**The Communist Party
celebrating Labor Day
(1952)**

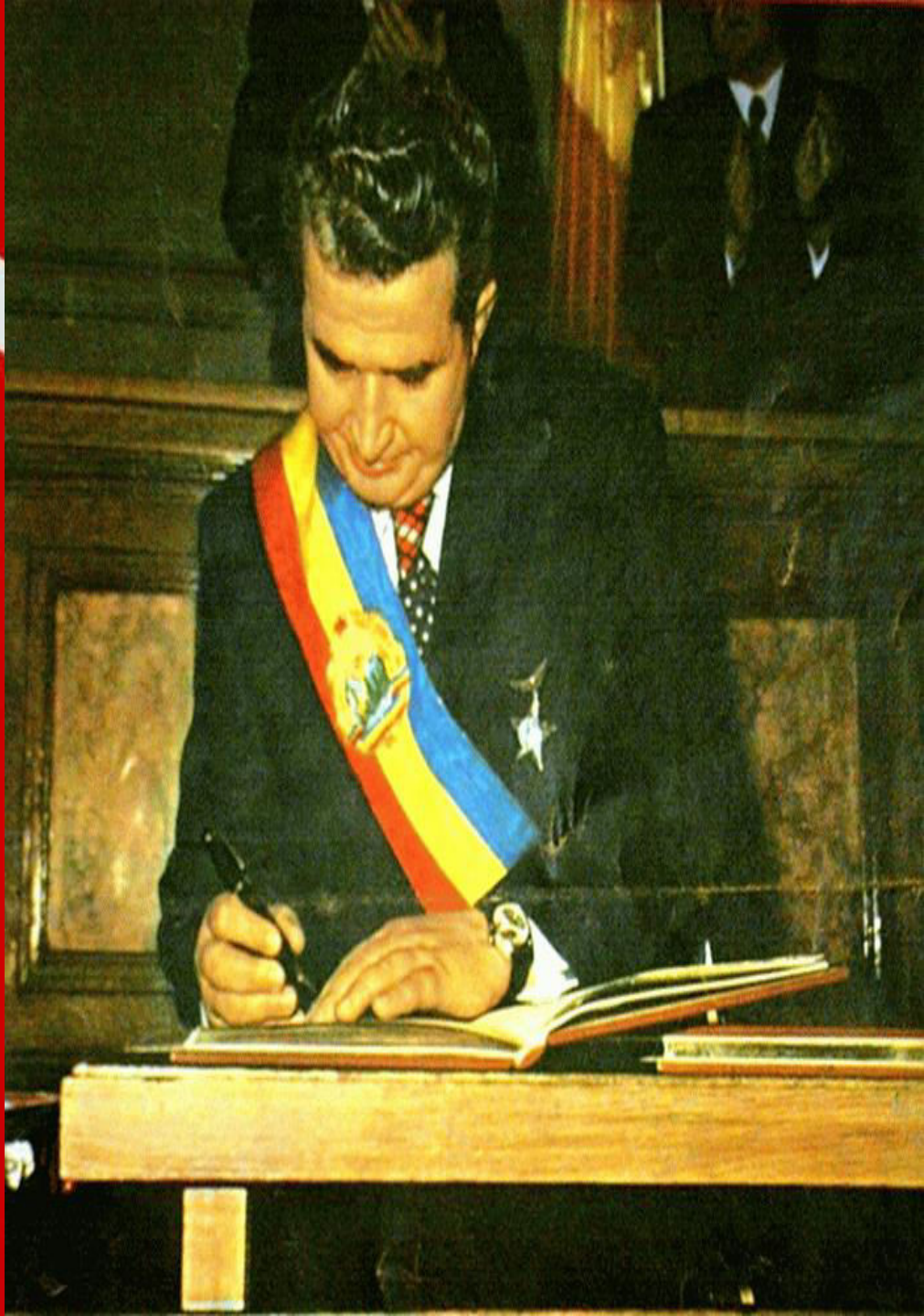
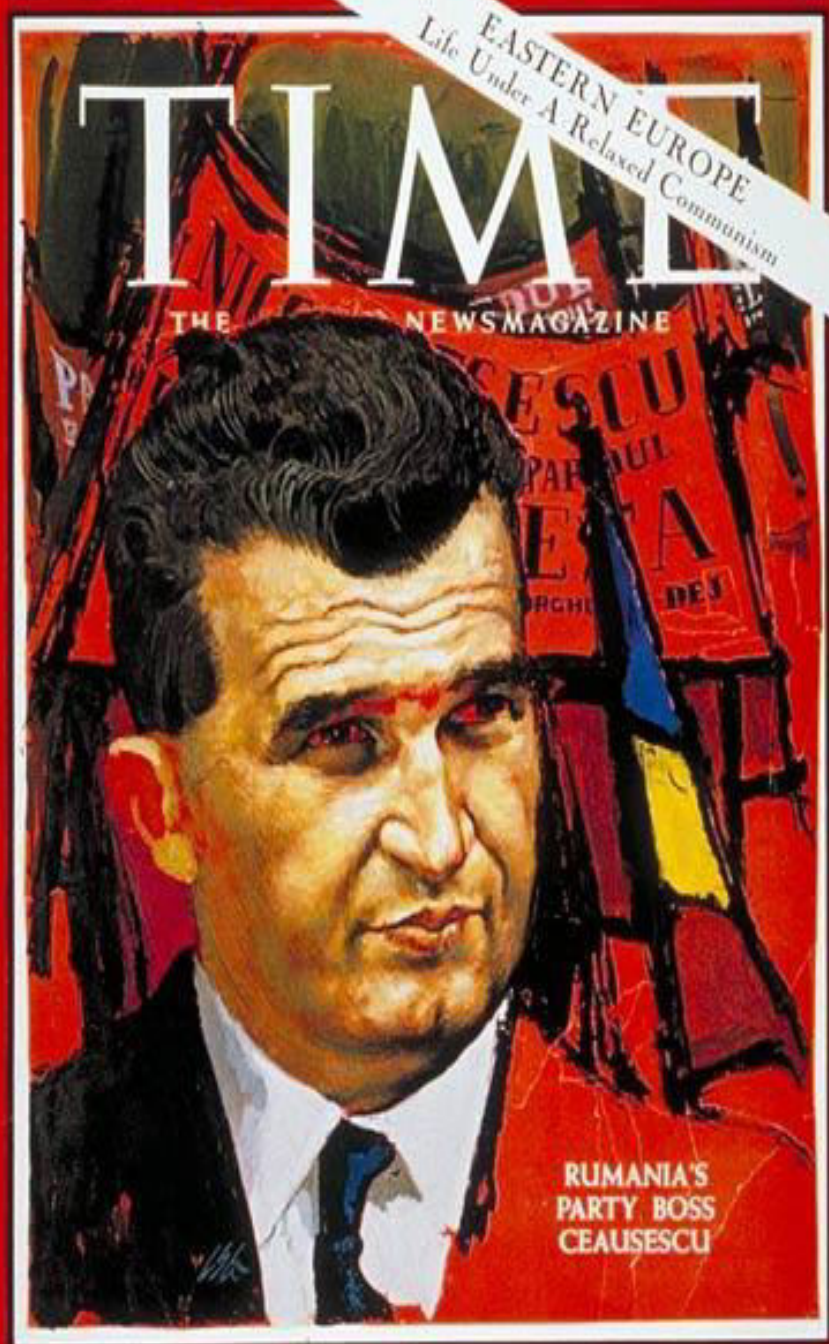




Gheorghe Dej was keen on overcoming underdevelopment by massive industrialization. Although brought to power by Moscow, he didn't enjoy Soviet control much. He set the course towards "National-Communism"



- His successor, Nicolae Ceausescu, followed the same course. The West noticed Romania's turn and encouraged it. Ceausescu enjoyed international publicity and tried to pose in a "liberal" Communist. Borrowing money from Western banks, he continued the industrial development program initiated by Gheorghiu-Dej.

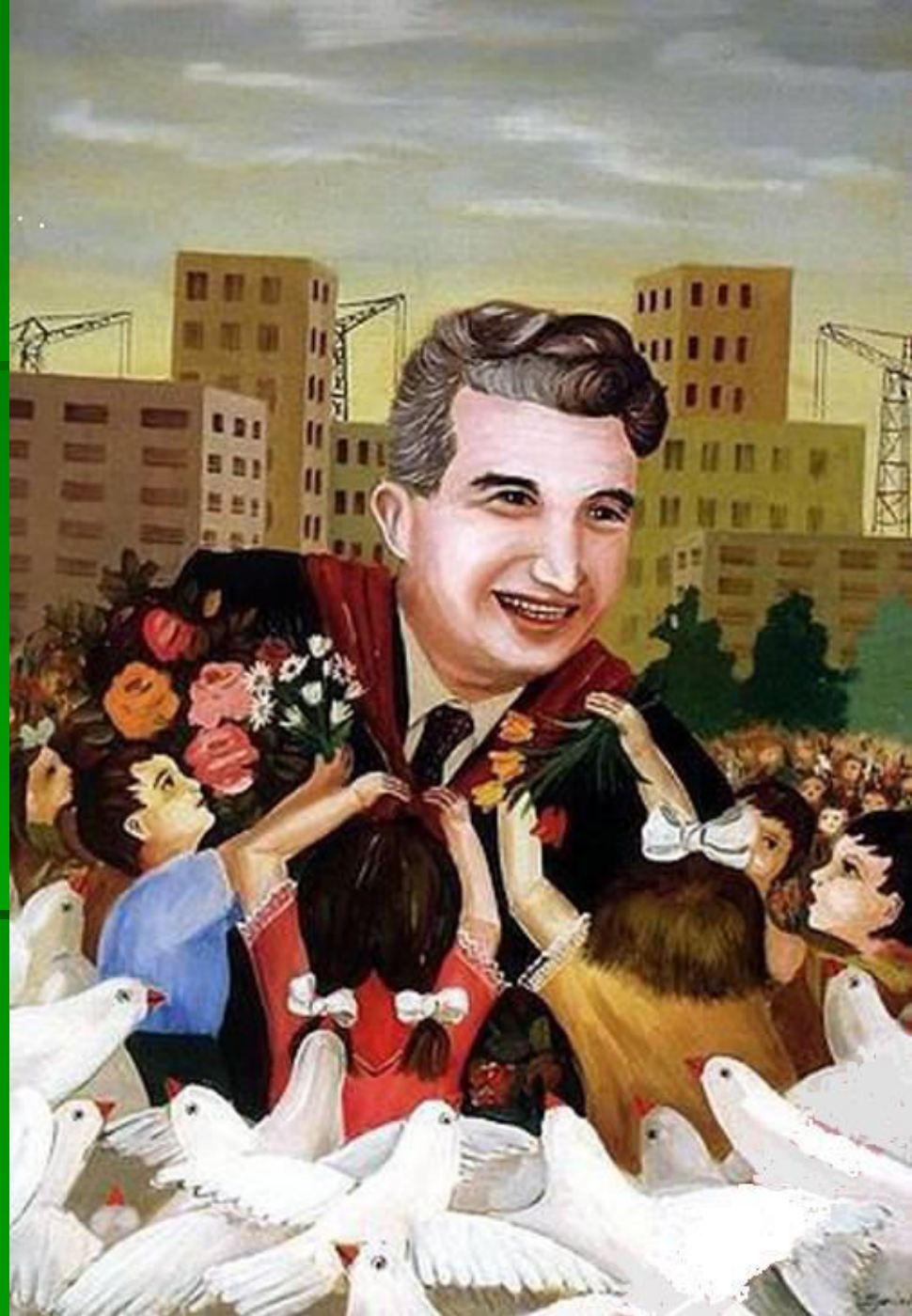


The country did have impressive results in industrial development which, along with the international publicity he had, convinced Ceausescu that he really was a providential personality.

In the 1970s, his cult of personality started to grow. Marxism-Leninism was reduced to his writings and “revolutionary” ideas. Ceausescu was depicted as a corollary of the entire Romanian history.

Domestically, his policy evolved towards nationalism and harsh repression, which generated a shift in his Western image. Criticism slowly replaced the previous praises.

This change determined Ceausescu to reconsider his relations with the West: he decided to reimburse his entire foreign debt by forcing exports.





Propaganda, celebrating the “Golden Age”



Exporting every commodity in order to pay the foreign debt, Ceausescu brought the population to the limit of starvation. "Rationalization" meant little food, little or no heating, electricity, gas, etc. His initial popularity was gone. He met public unrest with an increase of repression and police control. Many protests by intellectuals and even party members at Western radio stations remained unheard. Ceausescu continued his program unabated.



In December 1989, the story ended. People, mostly students, went out in the streets to cry out: "Down with Ceausescu". He had no other choice than to flee Bucharest in a helicopter. Hours later, Ceausescu was captured. New structures of power were being established in Bucharest, led by Ion Iliescu. Ceausescu was brought to trial by an exceptional military court and sentenced to death.



The decisive factor was the Army, which switched sides and abandoned the regime, refusing to fire at civilians. Still, the 1989 Revolution made many victims. Hundreds of people were killed by what remains, until today, known only as the “terrorists”.

Ceausescu and his wife Elena were executed immediately after the sentence was pronounced. Half century of Communism ended with their deaths.

After 1989, Romania went through a difficult process of transition to democracy and market economy. Integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures was its main foreign policy priority.

Romania is member of the following organizations:
United Nations (since 1955)
Council of Europe (since 1993)
North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (since 2004)
European Union (since 2007)



What do we have to offer?



...a splendid natural diversity



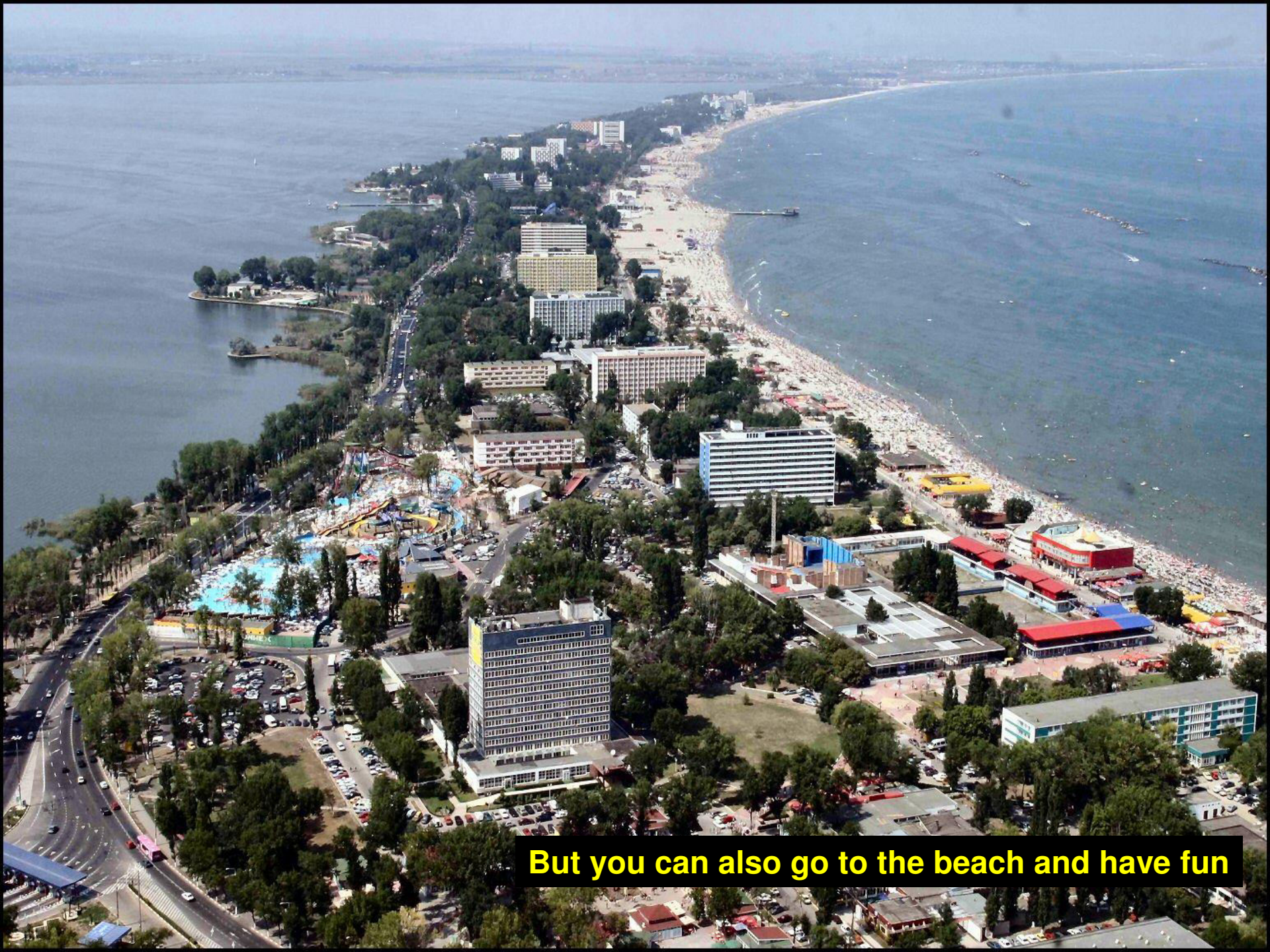
Represented by the Carpathian mountains, with magnificent resorts that offer possibilities for practicing any winter sport

...and the Black Sea, with a rich aquatic fauna and ruins of ancient Greek cities





like Histria, established in the 7th century B.C.



But you can also go to the beach and have fun



**Romania also offers great cultural diversity.
See above: German town Brasov**



...or cosmopolitan Timisoara, with its rich German, Hungarian and Serbian traditions



Cluj is the cultural capital of Hungarians in Romania



Bucharest has turned into a financial and political center...



...but still manages to maintain its Parisian charm



As for the countryside...



...it preserved its peace and serenity



...as well as its traditions.