

The Palace of the Parliament: The Legacy of Nicolae Ceausescu

The Palace of the Parliament (Romanian: Palatul Parlamentului) in Bucharest, Romania is a multi-purpose building containing both chambers of the Romanian Parliament. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the Palace is the world's largest civilian administrative building (The Pentagon is the largest overall), most expensive administrative building, and heaviest building.

The Palace was designed and nearly completed by the Ceausescu regime as the seat of political and administrative power. The Communist Party leader Nicolae Ceausescu wanted to build in Bucharest the "Victory of Socialism Centre" (the Unirea Boulevard is the former Victory of Socialism Boulevard). Ceausescu named it also the House of the Republic (Casa Republicii), or the People's House (Casa Poporului).

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When construction started in 1984, the dictator intended it to be the headquarters of his government. Today it serves as the seat of the Romanian Parliament and as an international conference centre. The Palace also contains a massive array of miscellaneous conference halls, salons, etc. used for a wide variety of other purposes. The National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) opened in 2004 inside the west wing of the Palace of the Parliament, and the Museum and Park of Totalitarianism and Socialist Realism, also opened in 2004. There is also the headquarters of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), an organization focused on regional cooperation among governments against cross-border crime.

At the time of Nicolae Ceausescu's 1989 overthrow and execution, the building structure and design were complete. Subsequently, many of the furnishings were never installed, and the last three basement levels and a large clock tower (that would have displayed the official Romanian time) were never finished (most evident by the frequent large spaces throughout the palace).

During the regime change, the new leaders of Romania referred to the building as the House of Ceausescu, to highlight the excessive luxury in which Ceausescu would have lived, in stark contrast to the squalor and poverty endured by many people living in the surrounding neighborhoods. Parts of the building have yet to be completed.

The Palace measures 270 m by 240 m, 86 m high, and 92 m underground. It has 1,100 rooms, 2 underground parking garages and 12 storeys, with four additional underground levels currently available and in use, with another four in different stages of completion.



Built and furnished exclusively with Romanian materials, the building reflects the work of the country's best artisans. A guided tour takes visitors through a small section of dazzling rooms, huge halls and quarters used by the Senate (when not in session). The interior is a luxurious display of crystal chandeliers, mosaics, oak paneling, marble, gold leaf, stained-glass windows and floors covered in rich carpets.

Though many find the Palace to be aesthetically unappealing, the exquisite craftsmanship of the decorations cannot be denied.



Photos: Wikipedia, TR archive

<http://surprising-romania.blogspot.com>

Date: 2010-05-31

Article link:

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