

MUZEUL ȚĂRII CRIȘURILOR

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# EDUCATION, OFFICIAL PROPAGANDA AND THE CULT OF NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU'S PERSONALITY. CASE STUDY: HISTORY MUSEUMS

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## ABSTRACT

In the last two decades of the communist regime, museum institutions were involved in a series of propaganda activities with precise themes designed primarily to consolidate the personality cult of the Romanian president.

The institutionalized system of museums was attached to the official propaganda. Unfortunately, for the two decades in question, the phenomenon of promoting Nicolae Ceaușescu's personality cult was ubiquitous, suffocating all activities in museums.

**Keywords:** history museums, propaganda, Nicolae Ceaușescu, personality cult

To provide a more firm legitimacy, the Romanian communists resorted to the most diverse means of propaganda. Unfortunately, museums were also included in this script whose consequences are visible even today both in several curators' mentality but also in historical exhibitions.

The Romanian historiography was brutally used for propaganda purposes in the '60s-'80s of the last century. Under these circumstances, museum institutions survived in an extremely narrow and closely supervised cultural horizon. Curators were engaged into the regime's specific propaganda actions. Few unsupervised manoeuvre elements were available to curators. In a totalitarian regime such as the Romanian political regime, museums could survive only in the terms that were dictated by the regime.

In the last two decades of the communist regime, museum institutions were involved in a series of propaganda activities with precise themes designed primarily to consolidate the personality cult of the Romanian president. The institutionalized system of museums was attached to the official propaganda. Unfortunately, for the two decades in question, the phenomenon of promoting Nicolae Ceaușescu's personality cult was ubiquitous, suffocating all activities in museums.

For a more complete ideological training from this point of view, curators were included beginning with the late '60s in centralized ideological training programmes focused on the well-defined five-year goals, as shown by official documents. Thus, the educational cycle 1971-1975 had to include the spreading of *the positive experience of the revolutionary achievements* in the field following the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution so that for the five-year period of 1976-1980 the main objective should be "*to ensure higher stages of homogeneous theorization for employees in museums*"<sup>1</sup>. Finally, the main goal of 1981-1985 was assigned to *an exclusively political-ideological high training*.

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1 I. Grigorescu, *Perfecționarea pregătirii profesionale a muzeografilor în etapa 1981-1985 (Perfecting the Professional Training of Museographers in the Period 1981-1985)*, in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor (The Journal of the Museums and Monuments)*, 1981, no. 5, p. 12

These ideological directives were often real performances of the absurd which nobody believed in, but which had to be played just like a bad performance with no spectators. Ceaușescu's attitude related to the cult of personality evolved rapidly and unexpectedly after the first encouraging signs. Thus, in a speech from 1968 he rejected the idea of creating idols because, he said, "*Marxism-Leninism rejects and has rejected such concepts, as foreign to the ideology of the working class*"<sup>2</sup>. Hence the way to accept the idea of his being "*our secular god, heart of the party and of the nation*"<sup>3</sup> was short. As in a Procrustean bed, museums in Romania were forced to establish spaces for manoeuvre on this road.

### The Beginnings

Activities and ideological standpoints were held by the hundreds in this period, especially beginning with 1972-1973 after the outbreak of the so-called Cultural Revolution in Romania. They were actually promoting the personality cult. This was not something new. But they were incomparably lower in intensity beginning with the second half of the '60s<sup>4</sup>.

The museum as it looked in communist Romania had an important role in the *socialist education of the masses*. This structural component of the role of museums was stated for the first time much earlier than 1972-1973. It was in 1966 when *Revista muzeelor (The Journal of the Museums)* first discussed the role of these institutions as a factor of arousing the socialist consciousness<sup>5</sup>, thus bringing it directly to the attention of the Romanian curators. We should mention, however, that although the material was the work of a local representative in charge with propaganda, Ioana Stancoveanu from Dolj County, she did not mention anything about Nicolae Ceaușescu as a source of inspiration for the ideas listed there, although Nicolae Ceaușescu had already been elected Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party. This was a few years before the beginning of the personality cult. According to the author, the way museums could generate a strong socialist consciousness arose from impulses much closer to the essential purposes of the museums, namely a more accurate and richer in exhibits presentation of our national history.

In any case, the germs of what the Ceaușescu cult would be can be detected as early as then even in the Romanian museography. The same number of *Revista muzeelor (The Journal of the Museums)* made the apology of the discoveries from the Valley of Dârjov that consisted of bone and stone materials belonging to a previously unknown culture called after then *the Pebble culture*. This was to be made known to museums that had to capture the new prehistoric culture in history exhibitions. It has never been my intention to make here scientific appreciations regarding this archaeological discovery, and anyway I could not do such a thing, but it is impossible not to notice that the discovery was used for propaganda purposes and even to underline the personality cult in the whirl of a sick protochronism.

The discovery was made in 1958 without being too discussed by the specialized literature. Maybe just a few notes made by archaeologist C.S. Nicolăescu Ploșor, who made the discovery, or by the well-known specialist in the field, Ion Nestor. The two were not really taken into consideration, perhaps because the two famous archaeologists had a record of serious problems as they both were accused of having been members of the Iron Guard<sup>6</sup>.

At the beginning of 1966 the discovery was reinterpreted on *sound scientific bases* that could be connected to the political situation in Bucharest, namely to Nicolae Ceaușescu's coming into

2 *Scînteia (The Spark)*, 27 April, 1968

3 *Săptămâna (The Week)*, no. 477, 25 January, 1980

4 F. Georgescu, Panait. I. Panait, *Studiu privind activitatea cultural-educativă muzeală (Study on the Cultural-Educational Activity in Museums)*, in *Revista Muzeelor (The Journal of the Museums)*, 1970, no. 6, p. 485-491

5 Ioana Stancoveanu, *Muzeul, factor de formare a conștiinței socialiste (The Museum as Factor of Forming the Socialist Consciousness)*, in *Revista Muzeelor (The Journal of the Museums)*, 1966, no. 1, p. 25-27

6 I. Opreș, *Istoricii și Securitatea (The Historians and Securitatea)*, Printing House Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2004, p. 21-151, 229-289

power. Thus, the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest hosted a roundtable attended by several experts from the country, but also from Hungary, the U.S.S.R., Switzerland and South Africa.

They unanimously came to the clear conclusion that the materials discovered there were undeniably the oldest in Europe and the remains covered an unknown link in human evolution. South-African researcher Raymond Dart established this with certainty in a live interview broadcast by the Romanian television for the Romanians to learn about this fact directly and not from information found in specialized journals that were read by only a few. We do not dispute on the quality of the assessments made, but on how and when they were made.

The explanation is very simple. The Valley of Dârjov is near Scornicești, Nicolae Ceaușescu's birthplace and it sounded nice to come from the same village, or from the neighbouring one, with the oldest man in Europe. The conclusion was part of a long term project meant to turn Ceaușescu into the most important man on the planet, seriously distorting the historical discourse.

This interesting conclusion was also adopted by the regime's officials who praised the discovery as one with special significance for Nicolae Ceaușescu since it demonstrated that Ceaușescu was the neighbour of Europe's oldest inhabitant<sup>7</sup>. Certainly those who assumed and passed on this new version of the archaeological discoveries from the Valley of Dârjov had nothing to do with archaeology. For instance Mihnea Gheorghiu, without being an archaeologist, was among the most prominent supporters of this new version.

Since he, along with many others, was in the choir of the regime's official historians had all the freedom to put forward axioms valid on any historical era. We shall find the same interpretations at Iosif Constantin Drăgan, Nicolae Ceaușescu's great *Italian* friend, who printed in 1976 a book entitled *Noi Tracii. O istorie nouă a poporului român*<sup>8</sup> (*Us, the Thracians. A New History of the Romanian People*). Serious, however, was the fact that new connotations of the discovery were presented directly to the children in their history textbooks. The youth were informed that the president's birthplace was exactly in the anthropogenesis area<sup>9</sup>. Children discovered that the objects found in the Valley of Dârjov were the fist stone tools carved by man, even if outside the ideological circle specialists still had serious doubts. A child of 14, pupil in the eighth grade, who came into contact with this great discovery through the history textbook, could have easily imprinted this information in his mind permanently. In fact, this was the regime's intention. Few of those coming to the faculties of history were able to refine their position on this information.

Real field specialists got involved in this discussion only on purely scientific terms. Whether it was I. Nestor, who uttered only as a hypothesis the possibility that the discovery could lead to the conclusion that Romania was inhabited by the earliest humans<sup>10</sup>, C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor who went farther saying that the objects were the result of a conscious activity performed by human beings<sup>11</sup>, or Al. Păunescu who rediscussed the problem after 1989 claiming that the discovery from Bugiulești on the Valley of Dârjov had to be re-debated because one could not say with certainty whether or not the objects were the conscious work of man<sup>12</sup>, remaining within a circle of discussion with strictly scientific application.

Unfortunately, museums entered this game of duplication, largely illustrating the new way of interpreting the discovery from the Valley of Dârjov. Virtually all Romanian history museums

7 M. Gheorghiu, *Introducere (Introduction)*, in *Thraco-Dacica*, Bucharest, 1976, p. 7-9

8 apud V.Georgescu, *Politică și istorie. Cazul comuniștilor români (Politics and History. The case of the Romanian Communists)*, Humanitas Printing House, Bucharest, 1991, p. 100

9 *Istoria antică și medie a României (Romanian's Ancient and Middle Age History)*. Textbook for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Didactică și Pedagogică printing House, Bucharest, 1989, p.14

10 I. Nestor, *Principalele realizări ale arheologiei în anii regimului democrat-popular (Main Achievements of Archaeology in the Years of the Democratic-Popular Regime)*, in *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (Studies and Research on Ancient History)*, 1960, no. 1, p. 9

11 C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, *Nouvelles données la possibilité de l'existence de protohominiens dans le villafranchien de Roumanie*, in *Dacia*, 1966, VIII, p. 52

12 Al. Păunescu, *Paleoliticul și mezoliticul din spațiul cuprins între Carpați și Dunăre (Palaeolithic and Mesolithic in the Carpatho-Danubian Space)*, AGIR Printing House, 2000, p. 57-58

ostensibly displayed this unique aspect in the history of the Romanians as having European and universal value. Unfortunately, this reality has been presented by some museums in their exhibition space even after 1989.

This is just one of the hundreds of examples that demonstrate museums' active involvement in Ceaușescu's deification. Unfortunately, too many topics on the personality cult made their way into museums over the years. The '80s can be considered from this point of view as the most prolific ones.

### Museums in the Whirl of the Fight for Peace

One of these much ventilated themes, especially after 1986, was the fight for peace. Nicolae Ceaușescu aspired to the title of world champion in this field. Museums made a significant contribution to this new redefining of the head of state. For this, their heritage underwent unexpected chores. Antecedents could be noticed even before 1986. In 1981 Ioan Grigorescu insisted that museums could conduct a comprehensive and convincing education for peace<sup>13</sup>. Thus, he said, depending on their profile, museums could organize a variety of protests against arming and for the consolidation of peace: exhibitions on museums' premises and itinerant exhibitions, museum evening events, special days or weeks, public meetings with great personalities, conferences, symposia, scientific sessions etc. Moreover, there was also the possibility of exhibition exchanges between Romanian and foreign museums on the same protesting theme. According to Ion Grigorescu, besides museums, *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of Museums and Monuments*) also played a major role in this respect as to promote "our Party and State's policy for peace"<sup>14</sup> by presenting in its pages "activities that expose and condemn arming and war as a means of settling down disputes between states as well as actions that promote the peaceful settlement of disputes"<sup>15</sup>.

After 1982 pacifist activities in museums increased considerably. A major exhibition entitled *Pacea - condiție a dezvoltării patrimoniului muzeal. Noi valori de artă populară* (*Peace – A Condition for the Development of Museum Heritage. New Values of folk Art*) was organized by the Village Museum in Bucharest, thus meeting the *Call for Disarmament and Peace* made by the *Front of Socialist Democracy and Unity*, as enthusiastically signalled by Georgeta Roșu<sup>16</sup>. In her opinion, the new orientation emphasized the extensive "work of museums for their strong and effective commitment in achieving the tasks set by the party documents"<sup>17</sup> for the defence of world peace. In the same year 1982, the Museum of History of the SR of Romania inaugurated the exhibition *Președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu și pacea lumii* (*President Nicolae Ceaușescu and World Peace*). As said by Iordana Lungu and Doina Leahu, the two authors of the material published by *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of Museums and Monuments*), the exhibition promptly marked "the extensive Romanian programme for peace, the vigorous, constructive actions of Socialist Romania and of its President to remove the nuclear danger, to ensure peace and security on our continent and in the world, to build a Europe without weapons and wars"<sup>18</sup>, while also being "a tribute to the president of the country"<sup>19</sup>. At the same time, the exhibition was seen as "a new and prestigious achievement of our team, a contribution of the museographic front

13 I. Grigorescu, *Muzeele - expresie a aspirației de pace a popoarelor!* (*Museums – Expression of Peoples' Expectations for Peace*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1981, no. 9, p. 3-6

14 *Ibidem*, p. 6

15 *Ibidem*

16 Georgeta Roșu, *Pacea - condiție a dezvoltării patrimoniului muzeal. Noi valori de artă muzeală* (*Peace – Condition for the Development of Museums' Heritage. New Values of Art*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1982, no. 1, p. 5

17 *Ibidem*

18 Iordana Lungu, Doina Leahu, *Expoziția "Președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu și pacea lumii"* (*The Exhibition "President Nicolae Ceaușescu and World Peace"*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1982, no. 3, p. 5

19 Iordana Lungu, Doina Leahu, *Expoziția "Președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu și pacea lumii"* (*The Exhibition "President Nicolae Ceaușescu and World Peace"*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1982, no. 3, p. 5

so visitors from home and abroad be informed on the consistent policy of peace and disarmament led by Socialist Romania and president Nicolae Ceaușescu who has been working tirelessly to build a world of peace and justice, to defend the fundamental human right - the right to life"<sup>20</sup>. The following years marked an increasing number of museum experiences of this kind in the entire country.

The United Nations declared the year of 1986 as the *International Year of Peace*. Nicolae Ceaușescu and his friends never missed an opportunity to point out that this happened mainly thanks to his international actions. Since this had to be learnt by his countrymen as well, museums in Romania had to play a well-defined role in popularizing the event. Consequently, in Romania the definition for museum underwent profound changes. Museums became cultural institutions actively campaigning for peace<sup>21</sup>, being involved in this activity by specific means. Following the established ideological commandment, museums complied, in most cases without much enthusiasm, by using a specific wooden language. Museums had to strongly present "the aspiration for peace of the Romanian people", but mainly "the tireless work of the secretary general of the RCP, president of the SR of Romania, comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, to consolidate international solidarity and cooperation of all those for who life is dear, to suppress the dangerous course of arming ..."<sup>22</sup>. It was obvious that highlighting the personality cult was the only thing that counted.

To respond to this initiative, museums in Romania carried out an extensive exhibition program, conferences, scientific sessions and symposia dedicated to this important moment "initiated" by Nicolae Ceaușescu. Public participation in these events was well below expectations. It could not have been otherwise. Under these circumstances, many museums moved the exhibition space among *the working people*, so that nobody was taken by surprise when these exhibitions were inaugurated in factories and plants, agricultural state farms, agricultural production co-operatives, schools, houses of culture etc. The basic idea was to highlight Socialist Romania's numerous initiatives for peace and cooperation, underlining the efforts of the Secretary General of the Romanian communists.

1986 was full of such "cultural" events throughout the country. Thus, The Museum of the History of the SR of Romania organized the exhibition 1986 – *Anul Internațional al Păcii. Contribuția României socialiste, a președintelui Nicolae Ceaușescu la apărarea și consolidarea păcii în lume* (1986 - *International Year of Peace. The Contribution of Socialist Romania and of President Nicolae Ceaușescu in Defending and Consolidating World Peace*). On this occasion, a set of photos was published on the subject with the purpose of being used later as teaching material in different occasions. County museums also did their best.

The County Museum of Argeș organized in the county houses of culture the exhibition *România, președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu, în avangarda luptei pentru pace* (Romania, President Nicolae Ceaușescu in the Van of the Fight for Peace). The County Museum of Caraș-Severin inaugurated the exhibition "Romania-Ceaușescu - Peace" and the Museum in Galați the exhibition entitled 1986 – *Anul Internațional al Păcii. România și președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu în apărarea păcii* (1986 - *International Year of Peace. Romanian and President Nicolae Ceaușescu in the Defence of Peace*).

In its turn, the Museum Complex of Iași organized not one but two exhibitions, one by the history department and the other one by the art department. The first was entitled *Pacea – bunul cel mai de preț al omenirii. Contribuția României, a președintelui Nicolae Ceaușescu la eliminarea războaielor din viața planetei* (Peace – The Most Precious Asset of Humanity. Romania and President Nicolae Ceaușescu's Contribution to the Elimination of World Wars from our Planet) and the second *Pacea pentru toți copiii lumii* (Peace to all the Children of the World). Oltenia also praised the performance of the most important of its inhabitants in defending peace. Thus, the Museum from Slatina inaugurated the exhibition *Președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu – eminent militant pentru pace și înțelegere*

20 *Ibidem*

21 A. Pavel, *Acțiuni ale muzeelor cu publicul dedicate anului internațional al păcii* (Museum Activities with the Public Dedicated to the International Year of Peace), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (The Journal of the Museums and Monuments), 1986, no. 7, p. 33-36

22 *Ibidem*, p. 34

între popoare (*President Nicolae Ceaușescu - Eminent Campaigner for Peace and Understanding among Peoples*) and the museum from Craiova the exhibition *Politica de pace a României socialiste (Socialist Romania's Policy for Peace)* that was presented in several houses of culture in the county. Curators from Constanța organized an exhibition entitled *Unitate, independență, pace – coordonatele perene ale istoriei românești (Unity, Freedom, Peace - Perennial Coordinates of the Romanian History)* and those from Alexandria inaugurated at the House of Culture in Alexandria the exhibition *Contribuția României, a președintelui Nicolae Ceaușescu pentru pace, pentru o lume mai bună și mai dreaptă (Romania and President Nicolae Ceaușescu's Contribution for Peace, for a Better and more just/more righteous World)*.

Transylvanian museums could not avoid such events, except that here organizers managed to keep some decency at least in the speech, beginning with the titles of the manifestations. Thus, the County Museum of Arad organized, with the support of the schools in the town, the exhibition *Pacea văzută de micii artiști (Peace as seen by small Artists)*. The County Museum Complex of Oradea held at the City Art Gallery the exhibition *Dorința de pace exprimată în Ex-librisul contemporan românesc (The Desire for Peace expressed in the Romanian Contemporary Ex-Libris)*. We can mention here the art exhibition organized by the County Museum of Satu Mare entitled *Copii și pacea (Children and Peace)* that travelled through the county towns such as Carei, Tășnad and Negrești-Oaș.

The International Year of Peace could only be praised through exhibitions. Museums hosted numerous conferences, debates and roundtables to mark these events. Throughout 1986, events were also organized by: the Museum of the History of the SR of Romania, the Museum of the History of the Communist Party, of the Revolutionary and Democratic Movement in Romania, the Museum of History and Art of Bucharest, the Museum of Union of Alba Iulia, the County Museum of Brașov, the Museum of History of Cluj-Napoca, the County Museum of Gorj, the County Museum of Hunedoara - Deva, the County Museum of Maramureș - Baia Mare, the Museum of the Region of Porțile de Fier – Drobeta Turnu Severin, the County Museum Complex of Mureș, the Museum Complex of Prahova - Ploiești, the Museum Complex of Timiș – Timișoara, the Museum Complex of Vrancea – Focșani.

These events debated only the issue of the great celebration of the year. Nicolae Ceaușescu's grandiose international peace initiatives were first and foremost. They were presented as if they had a tremendous international response. The round table discussions debated upon moments considered of high impact on the universal consciousness such as the *Declarația-Apel (Call Statement)* of Presidents Nicolae Ceaușescu and Todor Zhivkov, adopted at Bucharest, that referred to the creation of a zone free of chemical weapons or *Declarația Apel (Call Statement)* of the Front of Democratic and Socialist Unity addressed to all democratic parties and organizations, governments, peoples of all European countries, of the USA and of Canada, of other continents. *The Hero of Peace*, as the president was called, was honoured as the most important figure in the fight for world peace. Of course the truth was quite different, and the much proclaimed *international echo* rarely exceeded the Romanian borders.

It was only in the mind of the limited sleeping partner who considered himself as a prominent figure of his time, and the Romanians had to be informed of this. Much time and many financial resources were wasted on this without taking into consideration the fact that the Romanians were totally uninterested in the event for reasons related to everyday life.

### **The Museums and the "Global Dimension" of Ceaușescu's Personality**

Museums played an important role in shaping the idea that Nicolae Ceaușescu was one of the most important global personalities of his time. After the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, especially after being investing President of the Republic, Nicolae Ceaușescu started to consider himself an important part of the international relations, wanting to be promoted as such, especially as leader of the third world and of what he would call the non-aligned states. Thus, in the second half of the '70s, the Romanian leader began to be more and more promoted in this respect. Museums were actively engaged in these actions by the regime's propaganda machine. The *masses of working people* could view in exhibitions, according to the official directive, the Secretary General's great

achievements in foreign policy in addition to those that could be learnt from the news or from the press. Museums could prove very effective from this point of view. In its turn, *Revista muzeelor și monumentelor* (*The Journal of Museums and Monuments*) allotted generous spaces to this topic to inform professionals in museums on this aspect of Romania's foreign policy.

Even if such events had occurred before, this type of museum activities began in the late '70s, specifically in January, 1978 when Ceaușescu turned 60<sup>23</sup>. On 23 January, 1978, the National Museum of the History of the Socialist Republic of Romania inaugurated the exhibition *Dovezi ale dragostei, înaltei stime și profundeii prețuiri de care se bucură președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu și tovarășa Elena Ceaușescu, ale amplelor relații de prietenie și colaborare dintre poporul român și popoarele altor țări* (*Proofs of Love, High Esteem and Profound Consideration for President Nicolae Ceaușescu and Comrade Elena Ceaușescu, of extensive Relations of Friendship and Cooperation between the Romanian People and Peoples from other Countries*). As we learn from *Revista muzeelor și monumentelor* (*The Journal of Museums and Monuments*), the event was attended by party leaders such as: Ion Dincă, who welcomed Ceaușescu at the entrance of the museum and hosted the event together with Miu Dobrescu, Manea Mănescu, Emil Bobu, Cornel Burtică, Gheorghe Cioară, Lina Ciobanu, Emil Drăgănescu, Janos Fazekas, Ion Ioniță, Petre Lupu, Paul Niculescu, Gheorghe Oprea, Gheorghe Pană, Ion Pășan, Dumitru Popescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Leonte Răutu, Iosif Uglar, Virgil Trofin, Ilie Verdeț, Ștefan Voitec, Ștefan Andrei, Iosif banc, Ion Coman, Teodor Coman, Mihai Dalea, Mihai Gere, Nicolae Giosan, Vasile Patilineț, Ion Ursu, Constantin Dăscălescu, Aurel Duma, Ion Stănescu, Mihai Marinescu and Angelo Miculescu<sup>24</sup>, Nicolae Ceaușescu's most loyal people at that time.

An important section of the exhibition was dedicated to outline the international dimension of the president as "a prominent personality of the contemporary world, brilliant messenger of peace and cooperation among peoples, tireless campaigner for building a new economic world order"<sup>25</sup>. Among others, the exhibition also presented several distinctions awarded to Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu as a result of their international recognition. An entire hall entitled *Însemne ale înaltei prețuiri* (*Signs of High Consideration*) presented the most important "signs of the unanimous and unprecedented prestige enjoyed by the Socialist Republic of Romania thanks to its president"<sup>26</sup>. We shall present now the source of this unanimous recognition seen through the presented museographic arguments. From Europe, the exhibition presented only a few distinctions from Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Yugoslavia, Portugal, Luxembourg or San Marino. Most of the distinctions came from non-European countries such as the Ivory Coast, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, the Congo, Liberia, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Upper Volta, Zaire, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Nigeria, Zambia, Central African Empire, Madagascar, Tanzania, Gabon, Tunisia, North Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Mexico or Venezuela. All these point out the importance of the politician Nicolae Ceaușescu in context of the international relations. No state, really important in the world, awarded him a special distinction or at least this exhibition did not emphasize this fact.

This exhibition also presented the special and international recognition of the intellectual Nicolae Ceaușescu. Thus, the event highlighted the titles of Doctor Honoris Causa conferred to him for the originality of his contribution in identifying "the appropriate means of solving major international problems, of developing political and economic sciences"<sup>27</sup> by universities such as those

23 Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *Cultul lui Ceaușescu (Ceaușescu's Cult)*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2003, p. 19-23

24 \*\*\*, Exhibition "Dovezi ale dragostei, înaltei stime și profundeii prețuiri de care se bucură președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu și tovarășa Elena Ceaușescu, ale amplelor relații de prietenie și colaborare dintre poporul român și popoarele altor țări" (*Proofs of Love, High Esteem and Profound Consideration for President Nicolae Ceaușescu and Comrade Elena Ceaușescu, of extensive Relations of Friendship and Cooperation between the Romanian People and Peoples from other Countries*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1978, no. 2, p. 3

25 Idem, in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1978, no. 3, p. 14

26 *Ibidem*

27 *Ibidem*, p. 16



in Manila, Beirut, Nice, Buenos Aires, Bahia Blanca, Quito, Lima, Tehran. Even more important were the titles of Doctor Honoris Causa awarded to Elena Ceaușescu that were also displayed in the exhibition. This title was conferred by the University of Yucatan, Ghana, Tehran or Lima. No mentions about the fact that these honours were purchased by the Romanian officials with important amounts of money.

The event caused a general mobilization of *the working people*. A whole play was well staged for this event. In the first act, the leading role had to be played by the *working people*. In the second act, falcons of the homeland and the pioneers entered the stage. The working people participated (to be read were brought by force) with thousands to enjoy with the state and party leaders the important moment of the inauguration of the exhibition. They were aligned in front of the museum firstly to pay tribute to “*the most beloved son of our nation, towards whom, now more than ever, the thoughts of all the people are being addressed*”<sup>28</sup> and secondly to visit the exhibition. When Nicolae Ceaușescu exited the museum, and the pioneers entered the stage “*forming a colourful corridor, animated by cheers and greeted in a single thought, in a single sentiment, the beloved leader with red carnations*”<sup>29</sup> being aware of “*the justice and realism of socialist Romania’s policy, of its party, of President Nicolae Ceaușescu - leading figure of the contemporary world*”<sup>30</sup>.

Finally, the exhibition presented various aspects of the great international prestige enjoyed by Ceaușescu worldwide at a time when he was going rather downhill after a period when the West seemed to have considered him a possible breaker of the unity of the Communist Bloc<sup>31</sup>. Of the ten rooms dedicated to the exhibition, six were dedicated to Nicolae Ceaușescu’s international personality. According to the organizers of the exhibition<sup>32</sup>, the manifestation represented a first step towards the true knowledge of the president’s international dimension as well as an irrefutable proof “*of his high consideration and prestige all over the world*”<sup>33</sup>.

The ninth decade of the last century, the last decade with Nicolae Ceaușescu as state leader, was also marked by numerous events of *vibrant revolutionary sensibility*. Museums were forced to publicly present the international scale of the Romanian President. To support this, the cultural heritage was often forced to present messages that were completely inappropriate for its content. In 1981 the National Museum of the History of the SR of Romania held a new exhibition dedicated to the same event, basically a reiteration of the exhibits that had been presented three years earlier. Of course, the exhibition also included the international awards recently received by Ceaușescu from a number of major countries that gave the president’s real dimension such as Burundi, Gabon, Jordan, Senegal, Zambia and Ecuador<sup>34</sup>. Nicolae Petrescu, one of the authors of the exhibition, said that the exhibition was very suggestive in this regard and Romania owed its international success exclusively to Nicolae Ceaușescu<sup>35</sup>. The National Museum of the History of the SR of Romania organized in 1982 a new exhibition dedicated to Nicolae Ceaușescu’s international dimension as the world’s greatest fighter for peace. The exhibition was extensively presented in *Revista muzeelor și*

28 *Ibidem*, 1978, no. 2, p. 4

29 *Ibidem*, p. 6

30 *Ibidem*

31 T. Kunze, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. O biografie (Nicolae Ceaușescu. A Biography)*, Vreema printing House, Bucharest, 2002, p. 216-238

32 Florian Georgescu, Gavrilă Sarafolean, Doina Leahu, Dana Burda, Elena Istrățescu, Nicolae Petrescu, Tatiana Bădescu, Cătălina Opaschi, Iordana Lungu, Ion Ilincioiu

33 \*\*\*, Exhibition “*Dovezi ale dragostei, înaltei stime și profundeii prețuiri de care se bucură președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu și tovarăsa Elena Ceaușescu, ale amplelor relații de prietenie și colaborare dintre poporul român și popoarele altor țări*” (*Proofs of Love, High Esteem and Profound Consideration for President Nicolae Ceaușescu and Comrade Elena Ceaușescu, of extensive Relations of Friendship and Cooperation between the Romanian People and Peoples from other Countries*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor (The Journal of the Museums and Monuments)*, 1978, no.3, p. 28

34 Nicolae Petrescu, *Însemne ale înaltei prețuiri de care se bucură președintele României socialiste pe plan internațional (Signs of High Appreciations for Romania’s President at an International Level)*, in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor (The Journal of the Museums and Monuments)*, 1981, no. 1, p. 8

35 *Ibidem*, p. 6

*monumentelor* (*The Journal of Museums and Monuments*) by two of its organizers: Iordana Lungu and Doina Leahu<sup>36</sup>. The two were already specialists since they had been participating at the organization of this exhibition since 1978. In January, 1985 a new exhibition of this kind was organized by Cătălina Opaschi, one of the curators, together with Iordana Lungu, Nicolae Petrescu, Doina Leahu, Florian Georgescu, Gavrilă Sarafolean, Dana Burda, Elena Istrățescu, Tatiana Bădescu and Ion Ilincioiu who were also among those responsible for this type of exhibitions. In the presentation of these great museographic achievements, Cătălina Opaschi mentioned the Romanian president's international dimension through the received awards, medals, titles and gifts. All thanks to, according to Cătălina Opaschi, "the responsible and impressive activities of the President of Romania (who n.n.) enjoys appreciation and admiration on all continents"<sup>37</sup>. We learn from Cătălina Opaschi that Nicolae Ceaușescu's international dimension reached impressive levels in 1985. Thus, even the Yoruba tribes in Nigeria or the Iguh – eremwon tribes and their leaders Ine Nigun, Igbesamwan, Eholo and Okbelaka were aware of the Romanian president's grandiose international initiatives. This fact had to be presented in the exhibition as a new proof of Nicolae Ceaușescu's international prestige. New states such as Benin, Nigeria, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica were added to the wide range of worldwide countries that owed much to the Romanian president's political genius. They offered medals as a sign of appreciation. Ceaușescu was appreciated as a great personality, and he also benefited from worldwide appreciations coming from prestigious names such as Enzo Betizza, Menelaos Ludemis, Atico Vilas Boas da Mota and a certain A. Naga from Mauritius who portrayed Ceaușescu as "one of the most prominent politicians, thinkers and tireless fighters for peace of our time"<sup>38</sup>.

As time passed, such judgments became common in Romania. Unfortunately, museums joined the chorus of praises which manifested into numerous exhibitions, round tables, conferences, museum evening events where curators presented the subject that belonged to their job description to groups of working people, falcons of the homeland, pioneers and members of the Romanian Young Communist League. These were sad times for the Romanian museography where the Romanian cultural heritage was fully used as a propaganda tool.

36 Iordana lungu, Doina Leahu, *Expoziția "Președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu și pacea lumii"* (*The Exhibition "President Nicolae Ceaușescu and World Peace"*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1982, no. 3, p. 5-16

37 Cătălina Opaschi, *Simboluri ale înaltului prestigiu internațional de care se bucură președintele Nicolae Ceaușescu, expuse în Muzeul de Istorie al Republicii Socialiste România* (*Signs of International High Esteem for President Nicolae Ceaușescu, presented at the Museum of the History of the Socialist Republic of Romania*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1985, no. 1, p.9

38 Gh. I. Ioniță, *Omagiu tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu, ctitorul strălucit al noii României* (*Homage to Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, Brilliant Creator of the New Romania*), in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor* (*The Journal of the Museums and Monuments*), 1987, no. 1, p. 12