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The new Bucharest civic centre built in the 1980s has often been interpreted as the result of the visceral hate that President Nicolae Ceaușescu had against history, memory, old houses, quiet neighbourhoods and other elements of the 1990s preservationist discourse.¹ This paper aims to further the understanding of the socialist project beyond the point of view of this post-socialist preservationist discourse, and shifts the perspective towards presenting the history of the transformations from the inside, as they were perceived in the period by agents of change involved in the story. The argument moves away from the common *post-factum* analysis to rescue the history behind the screen. It presents urban transformations as a process, with its hesitations, changes, intricacies and different perspectives.

Several subsections move beyond the common understanding of the socialist project as the result of Ceaușescu's arbitrary will. First, the story of the interplay between two interest groups, the architects and the political leadership, is told, especially for the initial stages of the planning (1977-1980). Thus, many other individual voices are rescued and the idea of the new centre as well as its construction appears as the result of a negotiation between many agents, as well as of a generation struggle, beyond the will of the president. Second, the paper shows different interest groups coalescing around one or the other end of the "radical versus preservationist" debate. Socialist propaganda advocated change, but defended the project of the new centre against accusations of radicalism and neglect toward the past. The Romanian exiles, opposing the late regime of Ceaușescu and the international mass media, resented the changes that they presented as a relapse into barbarity and the death of the city.²

The intricacies of the actual planning process, construction process and the responses to the changes going on in the city show a multiplicity of perspectives that move beyond the preferred reading of the new civic centre as the result of the diabolic mind of a totalitarian president.³ The story of the new civic centre is part of a larger story of Romanian professionals under socialism, of Bucharest's development and the perceived problems of the growing city, of the political struggles surrounding the project and going beyond it, of the clash between official propaganda inside Romania and anti-communist propaganda abroad, of Romanian planning as part of both socialist and European planning in the 20th century.

¹ This discourse incriminating Ceaușescu as the author of the project is presented at length in the next chapter.

² For an overview of these metaphors in Western print media denouncing Romania's systematisation project see Dan Ionescu, "A Chronology of Western Protests against Romania's Rural Resettlement Plan, March-September 1988," RFE Research Papers, RAD Background Report 212, 20 Oct. 1988, OSA.

³ The need to shift away the focus from presenting the urban transformations as the result of a single agent, the state, or the leader, to acknowledging the plurality of groups involved is increasingly felt in present-day literature on socialist cities. See Olga Sezneva, "The Socialist City and Limits of Theory," in "Living in the Russian Present with a German Past: The Problems of Identity in the City of Kaliningrad," in Crowley and Read, *Socialist Spaces*, 48-49.

1. Voices and Actors: Architects and Political Leadership

a. The Origins of the Project

It has been widely noted that it was the 4 March 1977 earthquake that triggered the radical urban transformation of the 1980s.⁴ The conventional wisdom holds that the earthquake that shattered Bucharest revealed to Ceaușescu the fragile and transitory nature of the inherited built environment, and thus, functioned as an invitation to further destruction. As a result of this insight, Ceaușescu presumably grasped the idea that one can pull down entire neighbourhoods and rebuild.⁵

This interpretation seems logical when the tight timetable for the new project is considered. According to Constantin Jugurică, the Director of the *Proiect-București* state-owned mega-construction firm, just a few days after the earthquake, Nicolae Ceaușescu invited three specialists for a closed-doors meeting at the formal royal palace: Octav Doicescu, Cezar Lăzărescu and Constantin Jugurică.⁶ As presented below, the architects reacted quickly. The fact that the architects seemed motivated for such an endeavour and the quick evolution of the projects proves that the origins of the project have to be searched for beyond 4 March 1977. The triggering factor from an evenimental point of view, the earthquake does not provide a strong enough explanation from an intellectual history point of view.

As Constantin Jugurică recalled, at this early meeting the new favourite architect Cezar Lăzărescu produced an architectural sketch prepared beforehand⁷ that offered a plan of a civic centre located in *Piața Eroilor*, the western most central square that had been subject of previous audacious plans, including plans for a new centre of Bucharest.⁸ The next meeting was scheduled for 22th of March. This time, 50 of the brightest names in the architectural and planning profession gathered. For this second meeting, Ceaușescu proposed that the new civic centre would be built on top of Spirea Hill, again a place with a long history in visionary planning.⁹

⁴ Most texts touching upon the construction of the Bucharest civic centre identify the earthquake as the triggering event. See Ștefan Lungu, “O chestiune de morală?” 4; Constantin Petcu, “Totalitarian city, Bucharest 1980-1989, semio-clinical files,” in *Architecture and Revolution: 177-187*. Documents of the Radio Free Europe archive show that this interpretation existed from the beginning. See for example, Gelu Ionescu, “Selecțiuni din documentarul privind distrugerea unei a cincea părți din București în 1984 și 1985,” Radio Free Europe, 15 Aug 1985, page 3, OSA, Box 147 (812 Culture/Patrimonium, 1985). Proponents and opponents of the project alike identify 1977 as the starting point. See from exile Dinu C. Giurescu, *The Razing of Romania's Past: International Preservation Report* (New York: World Monuments Fund, 1989), 38-39; but also from inside the country Alexandru Budișteanu, “Probleme ale dezvoltării prezente și de perspectivă,” 14.

⁵ Ștefan Lungu, “O chestiune de morală?” 4.

⁶ The choice of people is relevant: and old-guard, highly-respected architect – Doicescu; a new favourite architect and the new rector of the Architecture Institute – Lăzărescu; and a representative of the new type of technocratic elite, a director in an important function and a trustworthy person for the regime, also architect – Constantin Jugurică. See interview with Constantin Jugurică, AIOCIMS, tape 1587 I-II.

⁷ According to Jugurică, neither himself nor Octav Doicescu knew what the meeting was about, unlike Lăzărescu who seemed better informed. Interview with Constantin Jugurică, AIOCIMS, tapes 1587 I-II.

⁸ The site for the *Cetatea Universitară*, as it appeared in the interwar plans, also the site where Argetoianu proposed that the Parliament be built, also the site where Doicescu built the Opera in 1953 and where the Municipal Hospital was added in the early 1970s. In 1948-1949, architect Duiliu Marcu took up the interwar proposals for a University City and proposed that a new centre of Bucharest be built in this area. See Duiliu Marcu, “Centrul Universitar al capitalei” in *Arhitectură: 50 de lucrări*, 515. See also in the previous chapter, III.C.2.d, “Opera House and Eroilor Square.”

⁹ According to the interview with Constantin Jugurică, AIOCIMS, tapes 1587 I-II. This second meeting is confirmed by other architects. See Anca Petrescu, “How I Became the Designer of Ceaușescu?” interviewed by Ivan Andras Bojar, *Octogon: Architecture and Design* 1 (2002): 63.

Even if the connection was not openly made, there are clues that many architects were aware that this was the exact location of the political centre as it appeared on the 1935 masterplan and many other plans in the previous one-half century. (Illustration II.23. a, b and c.) A series of oral history interviews taken in 2002 suggests that architects, especially older ones, knew in great detail about the interwar plans for Spirea Hill.¹⁰ According to Constantin Jugurică, it was not only the specialists that had connections with pre-war educated architects who were aware of this, but also the technocrats of the socialist regime.¹¹ Out of conviction or for fear of open criticism, most of the architects present at this meeting agreed with the suggested location of the civic centre. An exception was the former rector of the Architecture Institute, Ascanio Damian, an architect known for his independent views and daring open criticism of the official architectural choices. He suggested *Piața Victoriei* as a better location for a new centre.¹²

Some commentators considered the final product, the civic centre as it exists today, to be the work of Ceaușescu alone.¹³ Nevertheless, others considered that the initial idea originated inside the circles of the architectural profession: “I do not have any doubt that it was also an architect who originated this project. I find it difficult now [1996] to make investigations and name that person, it was

¹⁰ Among the interviewees for this project, Șerban Popescu-Criveanu, Alexandu Beldiman, Ștefan Lungu, Aurelian Trișcu made the connection. Șerban Popescu-Criveanu sketched in the interview an entire history of plans for the Spirea Hill area and its development since medieval times. AIOCIMS, tapes 1557 (Popescu-Criveanu), 1500 I-III (Beldiman), 1527 I-III (Trișcu), 1528 I-II (Lungu).

¹¹ Constantin Jugurică narrated how in the 1970s he found in the attic of his in-laws’s house an old newspaper with the 1935 detailed plan for the centre of Bucharest. (Illustration I.16.b, I.21.b, I.30) He talked about it with enthusiasm in some occasions and the chief-mayor of Bucharest at that time proved to be extremely receptive to his “discovery.” Interview with Constantin Jugurică, AIOCIMS, tapes 1587 I-II. Augustin Ioan also told this story, but differently and without mentioning the source. According to Ioan, Jugurică was informed by Ceaușescu that a new civic centre will be built and as a result, found the 1935 plan in the archives and showed it personally to Ceaușescu. See Ioan, *Power, Play and National Identity*, 258.

¹² His suggestion proved more in agreement with an open market environment, since after the end of the socialist period, *Piața Victoriei* was very much sought after as a prestigious location and evolved into a new financial centre of Bucharest. Nevertheless, for the socialist planning logic, Victoriei Square was not an obvious choice, since the idea behind the new centre was to revive an area which was perceived as backward and not to concentrate even more resources in an already fairly developed area.

¹³ Mariana Celac, “O analiză comparată a limbajului totalitar în arhitectură,” 285-306. A similar debate evolved in the urban history literature around the question whether Baron Haussmann or rather Napoleon III is the true author of Paris as it emerged from the 1850-1870 transformations. (For example David van Zanten mentioned the story according to which at the beginning of Hausmann’s office in 1953 Napoleon III produced a map of Paris on which he had already drawn in coloured pencil the new boulevards that he planned to cut, a story that suggests that Napoleon III was the decisive power from the shadow, imposing the course of action upon Haussmann). Other recent approaches in urban history tend to see the question as irrelevant and focus on the plurality of economic, social and political factors, moving away from the presupposition that there are “providential” individuals who bring change in the built environment. For example, classical historians of urbanism, like Pierre Lavedan, present Haussmann and Napoleon as omnipotent and knowledgeable, manipulating the events to suit their interests: “Napoleon III and Haussmann wished to raise the value of the building ground that was as yet only partially urbanised and create broad ways planted with trees and arrange symmetrically radiating crossroads.” See Lavedan (1952), *Histoire de l’urbanisme*, quoted in Olsen, *The City as an Work of Art*, 142. Other historians of Paris, like Jeanne Gaillard, blamed Haussmann for creating in Paris two different cities, separated and juxtaposed, much as Romanian public intellectuals after 1989 accused Ceaușescu of cutting Bucharest in two halves. See Jeanne Gaillard (1977), *Paris, la ville*, quoted in Olsen, 142. On the contrary, authors like David Harvey present Haussmann as a historic agent subordinated to the economic and social tendencies of his time, in no way providential or omnipotent, being overpowered in the end by the very forces he unleashed, and whose complex implications could not have possibly entirely foreseen. See Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience*.

someone from among the people in power at the time.”¹⁴ More than 20 years after, people involved in the late 1970s events are still secretive about who originally suggested to Ceaușescu the idea of a new civic centre of Bucharest.¹⁵ During the 1980s, Radio Free Europe used the name of the chief-architect of Bucharest in the period after the earthquake, Alexandru Budisteanu, as the supposed originator of the idea of the new civic centre.¹⁶ Regardless of the possible individuals who had a direct impact on the project, the concept of a “civic centre.”

During the first stages of planning (1977-1979), the civic centre plan consisted of a concentration of administrative buildings on Spirea Hill, with a boulevard connecting the hill with the city centre. At this stage, the planned boulevard closely followed the trajectory of the 1935 plan, leading to Senate Square, on the shores of Dâmbovița. This initial plan, usually ignored in the literature, is of crucial importance for establishing the correct relationship of the project with the past and future. At this early stage, the entire plan looked much like the fulfilment of an old dream. Instead of “negating” the history of the city, as it has often been argued, on the contrary, the entire idea was perceived by the political leadership and part of the planning profession as a socialist response to pre-war dreams of a different Bucharest.

The name of the project helps illuminate this issue. The boulevard, as planned at this stage, led to Senate Square, where the traditional axis of the city, the symbol of Bucharest, *Calea Victoriei*, also ended. Thus, the traditional boulevard was to meet the socialist “magestrale” in a gesture of symbolic planning. Moreover, the name of the new axis is in itself a response to old Bucharest. Constantin Jugurică explained that while the traditional axis was called *Calea Victoriei*, the new axis would be called *Calea Victoriei Socialismului*,¹⁷ thus situating the socialist project in a line of national “victories,” the socialist period being seen as the last and most accomplished manifestation of this historic line.¹⁸ (Illustration II.23.a.)

Additionally, a story circulated in the 1990s suggested that Ceaușescu chose two interwar buildings on the Senate Square as prototypes for the new style of the socialist boulevard.¹⁹ These

¹⁴ Ștefan Lungu, “O chestiune de morală?” *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996): 4.

¹⁵ Constantin Jugurică professes that he knows who the mysterious person would be, but he was reluctant to talk about it. The same with Ștefan Lungu, who professed in the interview that he had some “suspicions” but was not willing to share them. Interview with Ștefan Lungu, tape 1528 I, face A, page 10 in the transcript; interview with Constantin Jugurică, AIOCIMS, tapes 1587 I-II.

¹⁶ Radio Free Europe, text read by Virgil Ierunca and Alain Paruit, “Demolările de la București în presa franceză: Studiul despre demolările din București apărut în *L’alternative*,” radio show “Povestea vorbii” no. 489, 6 March 1985, page 6, OSA, Box 147 (812 Culture/Patrimonium, 1985).

¹⁷ The name was kept until the early 1980s. Sometimes between 1982 and 1984 the name is changed from “*Calea*” to “*Bulevardul Victoriei Socialismului*.” The word “*calea*” is the old, traditional name for the radial access roads to Bucharest (*Calea Victoriei*, *Calea Călărășilor*, etc.). A geography manual from the interwar period defines “*cale*” as a street that goes out of the city. Quoted in Stahl, *Bucureștii ce se duc*, 75. The shift from “*calea*” to the more modern word “boulevard” indicates also a shift of emphasis from the past to the future. See “Vizita de lucru a tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu,” *Scântea*, 8 Aug 1982, p.2 and “Tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu a inaugurat ieri lucrările de construcție,” *România liberă*, 26 June 1984, p. 3, OSA, box 3 (Administration: National Committees). Nevertheless, the initial “*Calea Victoriei Socialismului*” creeps back in the official texts from time to time.

¹⁸ For many people this early logic was obscured by the later developments. Later, the name of the new boulevard will be mocked in the local parlance as “the Victory of Socialism Over the City.”

¹⁹ Architect Gheorghe Leahu was the first to launch the idea. Gheorghe Leahu, a participant in the reconstruction plans of the 1980s turned into one of the most ardent advocates of “old” Bucharest and of the disappeared streets

buildings, by the famous advocate of neo-Romanian architecture, Petre Antonescu, indeed share with the new centre a sense of decorated classic monumentality.

b. The Art of Deceiving - A Failed Negotiation

The large support that the plan initially received from professional circles suggests that the idea of a new civic centre for Bucharest did not run contrary to established planning credo. In the period 1977-1979, the biggest names of Romanian architecture became involved in a competition initiated by the president for the planning of a new civic centre. Initially, up to seven teams of architects led by professors from the Institute of Architecture plus an extra team of the *Proiect-București* construction company participated in the competition.²⁰

Nevertheless, if the planning profession and the political leadership agreed on the need for a new civic centre with a boulevard cutting through the southern central area of the city, this does not mean that they had similar views as to how the entire project should look. On the contrary, many of the architects initially involved in the project realised that the views and tastes of the president in architectural matters could only vitiate the plans of the professionals. Nevertheless, they secretly hoped that negotiations would ensue, from which the arguments of the specialist would prevail. Many later confessed to have seen Ceaușescu merely as the motor of the project, someone that would finally provide the much-awaited opportunity of “doing something for the city.” The political dimension was perceived as mainly the socialist wrapping, the façade behind which the architects would move freely.

In the first phases of the project, we [the architects] honestly believed that the place [Spirea Hill] can be shaped so that its value would be emphasised. Sometimes we were commenting among ourselves, with a humour that today sounds like black humour, that only a madman would be able to unleash the energies required by the dimensions of the project.²¹

Inside Romanian intellectual circles, the architectural and planning profession was characterised from the beginning of the socialist period by its willingness to co-operate with the new regime. This openness is partly explained by the fact that the two spoke the same language as far as planning was concerned: a project of modernity that would bring prosperity to all through centralised planning. From the beginning until the end of the socialist period, many architects clung to the conviction that, provided that the arguments were sound and the specialist convincing, party officials would listen. For example, architect Aurelian Trișcu, held that even in the 1950s, a period when political matters prevailed, the Soviet experts sent to indoctrinate the local architects would give in to the wisdom of a reasonable argument.²² Alexandru Beldiman professed the same belief about the 1980s. Even if the projects were

and districts after 1989. See Leahu, *Bucureștiul dispărut* (Bucharest: Arta Grafică, 1995). Augustin Ioan also mentions this story. See Ioan, *Power, Play and National Identity*, 258.

²⁰ Among the professors, Octav Doicescu and Cezar Lăzărescu organised their own teams. Important names from outside Bucharest, like Nicolae Porumbescu, also participated. Other known architects were Constantin Iotzu, Romeo Belea. However, there were architects who refused to participate from the beginning. According to the later remembrances of architect Șerban Popescu-Criveanu, he humourously stated from the beginning: “I am not going to make this guy {Ceaușescu} a palace.” (“*Io lu’ ăsta nu-i fac palat.*”) Pre-interview discussion with Șerban Popescu-Criveanu, 2 July 2002, not taped.

²¹ Ștefan Lungu, “O chestiune de morală?” *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996): 4.

²² Interview with Aurelian Trișcu, AIOCIMS, tape 1527 III, face A, page 41 in the transcript.

censored on multiple levels, if one was resilient and persistent enough, Beldiman suggested, one could get a more innovative project through.

The important thing is that there existed . . . such positions, one could do at least this, to stubbornly defend an idea up to the end, and they would eventually get tired, especially if one had a more tenacious nature, they would say, ‘let this crazy guy go through [with his project], we ask some of our people to do a couple of more versions, we present all of them, and if his project happens to be preferred, fine.’ So . . . they were just interested in protecting their positions, little did they care what was happening with the project.

-So, who would be ‘they.’ Who were they?

-Well, . . . the leadership of the construction company [*Proiect București.*] ²³

Nevertheless, in time, negotiating the terms of the project for the new civic centre became more difficult and architects’ resistance took the form of an attempt to cunningly manipulate the party leaders and especially Ceaușescu.²⁴ Since using reasonable arguments proved mostly ineffective, muddling through was the next step. Alexandru Beldiman’s opinions recorded for this study illustrate this oscillation of the professionals between the sometimes naïve belief in the power of a good argument and an understanding that there are more strategic ways of prevailing, including deceit. Beldiman’s argument moved from the suggestion that determination alone sometimes worked, to a more metaphysical understanding that sometimes, against all odds, valuable work would find a loophole in the system through which to slip into the mainstream. He described how one of his designs for two buildings bordering the new boulevard was accepted and finally built:

There were some things that went through. There was an entire conjecture that a Westerner would probably find impossible to understand. Only if you lived it. . . . Someone who lived in a normal world, would practically be at a loss to understand. . . . All these things that actually were possible. On one hand, the terrible restrictions that the system would impose, and on the other hand, the fact that there were ways. . . due to the fact that they [officials] were clumsy, unprofessional . . . and you could always find an opening, through which you

²³ Interview with Alexandru Beldiman, AIOCIMS, tape 1500 II, face A, page 24 in the transcript.

²⁴ Mariana Celac recalled how architects used to deceive Ceaușescu by using different scales in their projects. The buildings would be represented in a larger scale than the surroundings, so that in real terms the city would gain more open space. See interview with Mariana Celac, AIOCIMS, tape 1501 II, face A, pages 18-19 transcript. (The dominating party vision during the 1970s and 1980s was that cities should be prevented from spreading too much, in order to protect the agricultural land from urban encroaching. As a result, higher building densities were encouraged)

could do . . . something different than what they wanted. I told you about the two blocks that I built. I don't know, history of architecture will judge if they were . . . if Ceaușescu chose the right project [for those blocks]. Anyway, I made those blocks against everyone's will, with the exception of Ceaușescu. [...] Trying to extrapolate, there probably were many things that happened in this way. A book would come out, a movie, things that passed through, God knows how.²⁵

The second view seemed to become stronger during the 1980s struggle for the civic centre. Architects began to work on the new project with the conviction that they could handle Ceaușescu and the party leadership. In the words of Ștefan Lungu, "One way or another, we were saying back then, if things remain under the control of the profession, in the hands of professionals, there is a chance that the city would develop as a result of this intervention."²⁶ Today, there is a sense among the architects that this was a wild bet.

Cezar Lăzărescu was one of the self-appointed actors of this campaign of deceit. The rector of the Architecture Institute since 1977, the president of the Union of Architects since 1978 and well regarded by the political elite,²⁷ Lăzărescu was expected to lead the campaign for the new centre. He was prepared to ride with the wave and balance all the interest groups involved. When it became apparent that the "old guard" of architects was no longer supported by the political leaders, Lăzărescu dismissed the older and more respected architects, like Octav Doicescu, without much ado.²⁸ His project was chosen by Ceaușescu in the initial stage of the competition for the new civic centre, and for a while, it looked like he would provide an equilibrium factor between the political and the architectural spheres. Nevertheless, Cezar Lăzărescu would soon fail to fulfil the mission of keeping the project under the control of the "professionals."

An important change in the project happened at the end of the decade. Ceaușescu was in the habit of making extended visits to the construction site and he is reported to have enjoyed the perspective of the city from the top of Spirea Hill. Soon, a new directive was issued asking for a substantial change in the trajectory of the future "*Calea Victoriei Socialismului*." Instead of closely following the line of the Dâmbovița and ending in *Piața Senatului* as in the 1935 plan, the boulevard was moved some three hundred meters to the south, ending in *Piața Unirii*.²⁹ It was a significant change, because it meant that the extent of the demolitions was expended much beyond the initial plan.³⁰ It was the first sign that the

²⁵ Interview with Alexandru Beldiman, AIOCIMS, tape 1500 I, face B, pages 30-31 in the transcript. The two blocks built by him by the *Victoria Socialismului* Boulevard (today Unirii Boulevard) have been many times since celebrated as the best examples of Post-Modernist design of the entire new civic centre complex. See Leahu, *Bucureștiul dispărut*, 99-100.

²⁶ Ștefan Lungu, "O chestiune de morală?" *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996): 4.

²⁷ He did the prestigious summer resorts of the 1960s and 1970s, the first experiments with industrialised mass construction.

²⁸ Architect and theoretician Ana Maria Zahariade witnessed in 1978 the rector asking Doicescu and another respected architect, Iotzu, to pull out from the contest organised for the future civic centre. She recalls the event as "saddening and shameful." Ana Maria Zahariade, "De ce avem nevoie de Octav Doicescu?" *Arhitext Design* 3 (2000): 6-8.

²⁹ Ștefan Lungu calls this moment "the first deviation." Interview with Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS, tape 1528 I, face B, page 12; also tape 1528 II, face A, page 14 in the transcript.

³⁰ Both Ștefan Lungu and Constantin Jugurică noted in their interviews that since 1935, a tradition was established for the area around Spirea Hill of not allowing anything being built until the project for an East-West

established architects were no longer in control. Lăzărescu was said to have commented angrily, “That guy [Ceaușescu] moved the axis.”³¹

A major blow to the pride of Lăzărescu as the architect-of-the-day came around the same time with the rise to stardom of a previously obscure young architect, Anca Petrescu. Apparently, elite architectural circles fought to keep other exogenous architects out of the competition for the new centre.³² Anca Petrescu, nevertheless, due to boldness,³³ persistence,³⁴ high-connections³⁵ or mere conjecture,³⁶ managed to break through the protective wall that the big names of the architectural profession built around the competition for the civic centre.³⁷ Although more established architects, like Lăzărescu, did whatever was in their power to stop Petrescu from participating in the competition, she prevailed.³⁸ Having done so, she won over the presidential couple with her project and was soon put on an equal footing with Lăzărescu.

The scheming employed by Lăzărescu to keep Anca Petrescu out of the contest did not prove effective. Beldiman recalled that on the way to the seaside for a meeting with Ceaușescu, someone

axis would be finally completed. It was a *non aedificandi* area. The decision to move the axis to a southern position meant that the boulevard was supposed to run over an area that was much densely built than the area of the initial proposed trajectory. Because of this chosen trajectory of the new boulevard, the losses of the inherited structure were finally much higher than the architects thought at the beginning. Interviews with Ștefan Lungu and Cosntantin Jugurică, AIOCIMS, tapes 1528 I-II and 1587 I-II.

³¹ In Romanian: “*Ala a mutat axul.*” During the last decade of the presidency of Ceaușescu, many people got into the habit of avoiding the name of the president, referring to him impersonally, in a mixture of despise and horror. See Franz Echeriu, “Modestia nu era la ordinea zilei,” *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996): 59.

³² Exogenous, meaning outside of the established architectural elite that was organised around the Institute of Architecture. Also exogenous were architects that were not based in Bucharest. Only few architects from the “province,” like the already famous Nicolae Porumbescu, took part in the competition of projects for the new centre of Buharest. See Interview with Alexandru Beldiman, AIOCIMS, tape 1500 I, face A, page 7-8 in the transcript. Also interview with Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS, tape 1528 II, face A, page 15.

³³ She raised in a public meeting and asked why young architects were left out of the competition and what were the conditions for participating in the contest. Ștefan Lungu, *ibid.*

³⁴ Beldiman recalled that although the skimming of Lăzărescu managed to keep Anca Petrescu away from the contest for a while, at a meeting in Neptun, at the seaside, she showed up unexpectedly having carried the huge and heavy model of her project on a trailer all the way from Bucharest. The example was used by Beldiman as a proof of her strong determination to get in. AIOCIMS, tape 1500 I, face A, page 8 in the transcript. In an interview, Anca Petrescu also referred to this meeting, which she dated back as 23 July 1981. Anca Petrescu, “How I became the designer of Ceaușescu?” interviewed by Ivan Andras Bojar, *Octogon: Architecture and Design* 1 (2002): 64.

³⁵ It has been argued that, being young, she was the protégé of Nicu Ceaușescu (the son of the president) who was the Minister of Youth at the time. Thus, she is said to have taken advantage of the “new generation” ideology of the political regime. Interview with Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS, tape 1528 II, face A, pages 16-17 in the transcript.

³⁶ She has the maiden name of Elena Ceaușescu (Petrescu). It has been said that she was mistaken for a relative of the wife of the president and as a result managed to get through. Interview with Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS, tape 1528 II, face A, page 16 in the transcript.

³⁷ This is a case of backfired over-confidence from the part of the elite circles of architects. Ștefan Lungu told in the interview the ironical story of how Anca Petrescu entered the contest. She went to professor Doicescu and asked to be part of his team, on the basis that her diploma work dealt with the same topic (an imposing building on top of Spirea Hill), as used to be the fashion for a while among architecture students (see earlier in this chapter, section C.2, “The 1960s,” references 295-297). Octav Doicescu, who was choosing his collaborators on a very strict basis, could not get rid of the insistent appeals of Petrescu. Exasperated, he suggested her to organise her own team and also helped her to obtain the required documents for enrolling in the contest. He never suspected that anyone would have ever paid any attention to this inexperienced and supposedly not particularly gifted young architect. See interview with Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS, tape 1528 II, face A, page 15 in transcript.

³⁸ Lionel Duroy, “Ubu architecte a Bucarest,” *Architecture d’aujourd’hui*, February 1989, 13.

unexpectedly announced to Lăzărescu that Anca Petrescu would present her proposal as well. His negative reaction was strong.³⁹ Soon, Anca Petrescu replaced Cezar Lăzărescu, as much as Lăzărescu had displaced the older and more prestigious generation of architects.⁴⁰ (Illustrations II.24 a and b.)

The fact that the architectural elite slowly lost ground in the negotiations around the civic centre has been customarily seen as the result of Ceaușescu's authoritarian rule, his lack of taste in architectural matters and whimsical, unstable character. Nevertheless, a contributing factor was an important generational struggle that is mostly overlooked. While the older generation, educated in the modernist cult of streamlined forms, was reluctant to accept the lavish decorations encouraged by Ceaușescu, the younger generation was more willing to try their hand at the drawing-board with volutes, consoles, and columns.⁴¹

Several factors explain the different attitude of the younger generation. First, in the real world outside the Le Corbusian temple of the Institute of Architecture,⁴² there were few commissions that required any creative use of form and space. Most of the graduates of the Institute ended up building the same typified endless rows of blocks in peripheral housing estates. A place in one of the professor-led teams or construction companies that were engaged with designing the new centre was the best career start any young architect could have dreamt. Second, the architects that graduated in the 1960s and 1970s were increasingly attracted by the new post-modern fashion that was slowly infiltrating from the outside world. Many architects confessed that the monumental and heavily decorated housing ensembles built by the post-modern architect Bofill in France were admired and followed. (Illustrations II.25. a and b.)

The muddling through continued once the building process actually began. Architect Constantin Hariton provides a suggestive example. Apparently, Ceaușescu rejected hidden technical spaces in a building, supposedly in fear of explosions or attacks. Architects, on the other hand, could not conceive of designing an amphitheatre for hundreds of people without providing a proper ventilation system. Constantin Hariton was one of the architects in charge of the House of Science and Technology, which was secondary in importance to the House of the Republic, but still a huge building-site. (Illustration II.26.b, the building marked 2) During one visit, Ceaușescu noticed a two meters deep empty space under the main hall of the House which was designated by the architects to the ventilation system. Taking a huge risk, architect Hariton came up with the wild story that they had to wait until the unstable terrain underneath settles before the hole could be filled with concrete. The ventilation system survived.⁴³

Thus, although many architects see today the events of the 1980s as a failure of the professionals in their negotiation with the political leadership, in many small and never before documented cases, the professionals did succeed to turn the situation in favour of the city. While Alexandru Beldiman sees

³⁹ Interview with Alexandru Beldiman, AIOCIMS, tape 1500 I, face A, page 8 in the transcript.

⁴⁰ Interesting to note that Lăzărescu is born in the same year (1924) as the main propagandist of the civic centre, the writer Eugen Barbu. They are relevant for a certain generation that was inbetween two worlds, they had pre-war memories, but they started their careers inside the socialist system.

⁴¹ Aurelian Trișcu described well the urge of the young generation toward different forms than what they have been taught in school. He named their attraction toward the civic centre project "the devil's temptation." Interview with Aurelian Trișcu, AIOCIMS, tape 1527 II, face A, page 20 in transcript.

⁴² Alexandru Beldiman joked that his generation as well as the generation of his professors "were only swearing on Le Corbusier." AIOCIMS, tape 1500 II, face A, page 33.

⁴³ Interview with Constantin Hariton, AIOCIMS. Tape 1529 II, face A, page 20 in the transcript.

today the entire project as yet another “lost opportunity,”⁴⁴ the project was never totally controlled by a single group of interests. Even if the influence of Ceaușescu was more visible, other groups successfully negotiated (or deceived) in the process of the design and building of the new civic centre.⁴⁵

2. The Intellectual Context of the 1980s Demolitions

During the 1980s, important demolitions of vernacular architecture and historic monuments indeed took place in Bucharest. Several eventful histories of the demolitions have been previously attempted.⁴⁶ While the loss inflicted on Bucharest has been acknowledged and regretted many times, few attempts have been made at providing the intellectual context of these demolitions,⁴⁷ beyond blaming them on a subconscious destruction drive of Nicolae Ceaușescu.⁴⁸

In the two decades between 1960 and 1980, most of the European countries experienced a change of attitude regarding the inherited urban environment.⁴⁹ While during the 1950s and 1960s cities and towns affected by war were reconstructed along new lines that mostly ignored inherited patterns and historical buildings,⁵⁰ two decades later, the importance of continuity and preservation became much stronger in planning theory.⁵¹ In Romania, many intellectuals were aware of this shift of attitudes.⁵²

⁴⁴ “In this case [the civic centre] I have this feeling that it was a lost opportunity. An enormous opportunity lost.” Interview with Alexandru Beldiman, AIOCIMS, tape 1500 III, face A, page 43 in the transcript.

⁴⁵ Architects’ sabotage of official schemes were felt in other places as well. The rural systematisation is said to have been slowed by architects who took advantage of the bureaucratic complications to postpone restructuring. See Adrian Barrick, “Village destruction was slowed by architects,” *Building Design*, 12 Jan 1990: 32.

⁴⁶ Lidia Anania et al, *Bisericile osandite de Ceaușescu: București 1977-1989* (Bucharest: Anastasia, 1995). Gheorghe Leahu, *Bucureștiul dispărut* (Bucharest: Arta grafică, 1995).

⁴⁷ Dinu Giurescu’s book provided, though, a sketch of some of the trends of the Romanian architectural practices that can explain the systematisation policies of the 1970s and 1980s.

⁴⁸ Especially Radio Free Europe and outside criticism during the 1980s advanced this approach that was later taken up by Romanian intellectuals commenting on the events in the 1990s. One article published in France in 1985 is entitled “A Destroyer is Showing his Claws” a pun on a contemporary Peugeot car advertisement. OSA, box 147 (812 Culture/Patrimonium, 1985). See Dan Grigorescu, 17 April 1985, RFE document commenting on an article in *Le Matin*. See also George Schopflin, “Ceaușescu: The Great Destroyer,” *Soviet Analyst: A fortnightly commentary*, 9 July 1986, vol. 15, no. 14. In OSA, box 2 (101 Administration: National Committees: Civic Centre). After 1989, a good literary version of the ‘Ceaușescu - the mad destroyer’ theme features in the novel of Ion Manolescu, *Alexandru* (Bucharest: Universul, 1998), excerpt quoted in *Secolul XX 5-7* (1997): 224-225.

⁴⁹ According to Françoise Choay, up to 1980 the practice of monument protection extended worldwide on three accounts: “Typological, chronological, geographical.” See Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument* (Cambridge University Press: 2001), 4. First edition: *Allegorie du patrimoine*, Editions du Seuil, 1992.

⁵⁰ For a list of historic monuments destroyed in Britain in the post-war period up to the 1960’s see John Betjeman, “A Preservationist’s Progress” in *The Future of the Past: Attitudes to Conservation 1174-1974*, edited by Jane Fawcett (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 55-63, esp. 62. He names these instances of careless renewal “major post-war crimes.”

⁵¹ The shift of attitude was considered quite dramatic by certain commentators. Christensen wrote in 1979: “In the 1960’s, change was considered a good thing because it improved the city, provided new facilities, open space, new housing, all the kinds of things people wanted and then profits could be made to pay for these things. Almost overnight this became a bad thing. From insensitive development to don’t touch a thing . . . the whole thing went lunatic.” Quoted in Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 266. According to Françoise Choay: “Until the 1960’s the conservation of historic monuments continued to be limited essentially to the great religious and civic buildings of the past (excluding those of the 19th century).” See Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, 115.

⁵² As presented above, in the 1970’s the review *Arhitectura* started to present alternatives to the usual clean slate approach, in articles inspired by Kevin Lynch on the psychological impact of the built environment, on the

Nevertheless, the predominant planning ideology continued to make use of the interwar CIAM concept of the *tabula rasa*.⁵³ Only the 1990s established in Romania a strong preservationist mentality for the inherited urban structure as a whole, as opposed to protecting selected monuments and scattered buildings.⁵⁴ Thus, the hesitating preservationist mentality of the 1980s in Romanian is shown here as relevant for an understanding of the demolitions of the inherited urban fabric of Bucharest.

To the modernist *tabula rasa* type of planning taught at the Institute of Architecture, a specific local trend that disregarded the “Balkan” inheritance has to be added. Most of the buildings demolished in the 1980s transformations were part of the 19th century urban vernacular architecture. This architecture was considered of little importance in the history of Romanian architecture. In 1984, the year when the works for the House of the Republic began, the senior leader of the preservationist architects, Constantin Joja, stated in an interview:

In the university, we were told that there was no urban architecture in our country before the 19th century and that peasant architecture would simply be picturesque, folkloric, and impossible to revive in the modern architecture. It was believed, then, that only the churches were Romanian values. . . Exactly this notion made the specialists believe that [urban vernacular] is an architecture of Turkish origin. As a result, urbanists targeted it preponderantly for demolition, without realising that this was the purest Romanian architecture.⁵⁵

This statement was aimed at the 18th century "Balkan" vernacular, but is even more valid for the 19th century vernacular demolished in the civic centre area. The newer the building, the less likely it was to survive.⁵⁶ The pro-restructuring propaganda made use of these ambiguities of what was worth preserving, arguing that monuments of the early 20th century were not real monuments.⁵⁷

As for the more acknowledged monuments that were destroyed, such as churches and monasteries, there is a specific context revealed at closer scrutiny. While a Commission for Historical Monuments protected these religious buildings since 1892,⁵⁸ certain ambiguities made them vulnerable

importance of the familiar, on the need for continuity and recognisance of urban patterns. See especially the entire issue *Arhitectura* 4 (1973). See previous section, IV.C.3, “The 1970s.”

⁵³ Alexandru Beldiman explained in the oral history interview how in the 1970’s, at the moment when the civic centre was being devised, the rest of Europe only started to shatter the prevailing “*tabula rasa*” ideology. Beldiman argues that the isolation of Romanian architects from outside trends determined a delay in reconsidering the modernist approach to planning inherited from the 1930’s document called *Charte d’Athènes*. AIOCIMS, tape 1500 II, face A, page 22.

⁵⁴ According to the interview with art historian Corina Popa, it was only after 1990 that the Romanian list of protected buildings included other categories except very old structures (mainly religious architecture): civil architecture, buildings housing public institutions, ambiental areas, industrial architecture, entire groupings of buildings, entire street fronts. Interview, AIOCIMS, tapes 1590 I-II.

⁵⁵ “Arhitectul este exponent al spiritualității neamului sau și apoi al lirismului personal,” interview with Constantin Joja, *Flacăra*, 7 Sept. 1984, p. 19. OSA, box 546.

⁵⁶ Same happened in Britain up to the 1960’s, when Georgian architecture was carefully listed for preservation while newer Victorian buildings were carelessly demolished. See Nikolaus Boulting, “The Law’s Delays: Conservation Legislation in the British Isles” in Fawcett (ed.), *The Future of the Past*, 26-27.

⁵⁷ Corneliu Vadim Tudor argued that the demolished Brancovenesc hospital, dating mostly from 1905, was not even listed among the protected monuments. The same about the Sinod building, that was finally preserved. See Tudor, Minciuna are picioare scurte, *Săptămâna*, 10 Jan. 1986, p. 6-7.

⁵⁸ Cezara Mucenic, “Legislația privind monumentele istorice din România 1892-1992: studiu comparativ” in *BMI* 2 (1992), published only in 1998: 14-19.

to the radical renewal concepts of the 1980s. The lack of public knowledge about the local monuments, their improper use over the centuries and a certain reluctance of specialists to speak in favour of these buildings helped ease the way for their demolition. I will use three case studies to illustrate this argument: Văcărești Monastery, the Church of the Cotroceni Monastery and Mihai Voda Monastery.

Văcărești Monastery, demolished in 1984-1985, had been a prison for more than a century. In the 1970s, a decision was taken to move the monastery from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior to the care of the Ministry of Culture and transform it into a museum. After its partial restoration and plans for a medieval art museum devised, Ceaușescu nevertheless decided to build a new Tribunal in its place. Despite some protests from historians, architects and art historians, the monastery and its church were finally demolished. The building was not known by the public, and not even by specialists, as a result of its more than one century of seclusion as a restricted prison area. Although specialised studies mention it as one of the most important 18th century monastic ensembles in Southeast Europe, its lack of presence in the public memory as a symbol of Bucharest definitely eased the way of its demolition.⁵⁹ Even among the handful of preservationists who knew of its existence and value, there were specialists who never set eyes on the precious monastic complex.⁶⁰

Another demolished monument was the Church of the Cotroceni Monastery, inside the old royal summer residence. This church had also been secluded from the public during the period when it was the royal residence from the 1880s to the end of the Second World War. With the change of regime in 1947, the palace came under attack. Some architects lobbied for its demolition, perceiving it as a “ruin.” However, the first communist prime minister, Petru Groza, assigned the palace to the Union of Proletarian Youth. In 1950, it was open to the public as the Pioneers Palace. Nevertheless, the church was kept closed due to the anti-religious propaganda of the socialist regime.⁶¹ In the late 1970s Ceaușescu decided to transform the palace into his private residence and added a wing to the existing structure. During the 1980s, the church in the middle of the ensemble was secretly demolished. Architect Cristian Moisescu, who was in charge of the demolition, argued that Ceaușescu had been badly informed by his advisors that the church was not an authentic monument.⁶² While this can be partially a self-exonerating argument, it could contain a grain of truth. It is apparent that the specialists surrounding Ceaușescu did not on many occasions dare to speak out for a threatened monument. Another witness, less likely than Moisescu to look for self-absolving routes, provided a similar story concerning the Mihai Voda Monastery.

⁵⁹ Radio Free Europe acknowledged that the monument was not known, but does not consider this as a possible explanation for the little resistance that the demolition encountered. The only comment was that even having the political prison inside the monastic complex was better than demolition. See Dan Ionescu, “Monumente dăruite la București,” chapter XXI: “Mănăstirea Văcărești,” *Domestic bloc* 12 Feb. 1985, RFE document, OSA, box 147. It is important to note that the demolition of another church, Sf. Vineri, less valuable as a historical monument, but well known and much loved by the inhabitants of the city, was much more resisted and symbolically mourned by the population.

⁶⁰ Cezara Mucenic, an art historian working just across the street from the monastery, in the municipal archives, never had a chance of seeing this important monument, although she was aware of its existence next door. Interview with Cezara Mucenic, AIOCIMS, tapes 1585 I-II.

⁶¹ Nicoleta Ionescu-Gura, “Palatul Cotroceni de la reședință regală la palat al Pionierilor,” *MIM* 4 (2000), 205-218.

⁶² Interview with Cristian Moisescu, today expert on monuments at the Ministry of Culture. He stated that the director of the Bucharest History Museum told that to Ceaușescu. See interview with Cristian Moisescu, AIOCIMS, tapes 1530, 1527 III, face B, 1590 II, face B.

Virgiliu Z. Teodorescu, curator of the National Archives Museum, recalled a visit by Ceaușescu at the National Archives (around 1985), located at that time in the old Mihai Voda Monastery on top of the homonymous hill. For a long time, the Mihai Voda Monastery was planned to coexist with the nearby House of the Republic. (Illustration II.24.b.) Some architects involved with the reconstruction of the area, visiting the monument, ensured Teodorescu that the monastery was out of danger. Soon after, Ceaușescu paid a visit to the ensemble and asked questions about its value and significance. Teodorescu confessed that he resents today the fact that no one was able at the time to answer the inquiry of Ceaușescu as to what exactly stood there.⁶³ Apparently, there is a pattern of thinking among Romanian preservationists that the fate of historic monuments relies upon the good will of a political leader charmed by an isolated, providential specialist. A different outcome of a similar inquiry was described by Nicolae Iorga in his *memoirs*.⁶⁴

The perspective proposed here might appear to reinforce the popular understanding of the events of the 1980s as the result of a single historical agent, President Ceaușescu. Yet, providing these examples, I argue against the common understanding that Ceaușescu took despotic decisions despite protests from specialists. I also shift the perspective from the commonly stressed point that political repression silenced professionals and specialists. Ceaușescu acted in a relative void of opinions not only because his repressive system silenced any protest. The void was partially the result of a certain indifference toward these monuments combined with a long tradition of Romanian paternalist submissiveness to the decisions of the political leadership. The revision proposed by these examples suggests that Ceaușescu had room of manoeuvre not in spite the society, but because of it. The lack of cohesion among groups of specialists, the lack of specialists itself, and a certain confusion regarding professional ethics and the value of the Romanian heritage contributed to the demolitions.

The Mihai Voda Church was moved in 1985 some 227 metres behind a curtain of buildings in front of the House of the Republic. (Illustrations II.35.a and II.36.a.) The entire monastery precinct was demolished. The buildings that made up the precinct belonged to different styles and different epochs, from the 16th to 20th century. According to the art historian Corina Popa, buildings that were stratified in this way took a long time to be acknowledged as worth preserving in the evolution of Romanian architectural thinking. Returning to Cristian Moisesescu's interpretation of the Cotroceni Church demolition, it was possible that someone described the monument to Ceaușescu as the result of many

⁶³ Teodorescu could have given the explanations, but he did not, probably out of fear or modesty. Ceaușescu came accompanied by important people, Teodorescu might have felt that he was just a curator. Interview with Virgiliu Z. Teodorescu, AIOCIMS, tape 1531 I-V.

⁶⁴ A story with a similar significance can be found in Nicolae Iorga's autobiography about an event from 1910. The royal family was in Iași, the capital of Moldova, for an official celebration. Princess Mary, the future queen, asked details about a church that no one in the official circle was able to answer. Iorga dared to talk from a far away corner, above the heads of the people, and the princess listen to him with attention and settled an appointment for more explanations next day. From both cases, it is apparent that there is a Romanian pattern of entrusting the well-being of the architectural heritage to the benevolence of the political leaders. No networks, structures or state institutions seem to have ever been established long enough to make a difference. The fate of Romanian monuments seems to have many times depended on the presence of providential individuals, isolated specialist, who could boldly speak up for the protection of what they cherished. Moreover, a long tradition of ignorance regarding the most important monuments of the country is thus revealed. See Iorga, *O viață de om*, 432.

interventions and alterations of the initial structure, which may have led the self-educated president to think it was not a valuable monument.

An example of what happened when many specialists came together for the preservation of a monument is provided by the case study of the Sapientei Church. In 1984, the Mihai Voda Church was planned to be moved exactly on the spot where the small Sapientei chapel stood. (Illustration II.36.b.) When the parish priest was informed about the imminent demolition of the church, he used all his connections to find help. The retired architect office clerk Elena Budisteanu came to the rescue. Her late husband, architect Ion Budisteanu, had worked for decades at the *Proiect București* construction company. Elena Budisteanu personally knew people in key position who worked and socialised with her and her late husband. In a *tour-de-force* of determination, the priest and Elena Budisteanu gathered thirteen signatures from important people in favour of preserving the church.⁶⁵ Backed and encouraged by this support, the chief-architect apparently contacted Ceaușescu with the suggestion to reconsider and the church survived.⁶⁶

Although this event is telling for the context of the 1980s, a word of caution is necessary. The Sapientei Church is small and hidden among other buildings. Its survival might have depended on convincing Ceaușescu that it was not visible from the grand environment of the new centre, as it has been claimed in the literature.⁶⁷ (Illustration II.35.b.) Yet, this case suggests that a strong network of specialists appealing for the preservation of a certain monument through official channels of did work better than the few number of letters of protest written individually, or by a handful of people, and sent directly to Nicolae Ceaușescu or high-ranking officials.⁶⁸

To conclude, the lack of cohesion among the specialists, the lack of public knowledge of important monuments as well as the ambiguous preservation practices provided a general context that eased the way for the demolition of many important monuments. In addition, art historians like Cezara Mucenic argued that history of architecture had been a neglected subject in Romanian academia, an ancillary subject both at the Institute of Architecture and the Art Academy, with the exception of medieval religious monuments that were better known and studied.⁶⁹ Such a diminished academic

⁶⁵ Interview with Elena Budișteanu, AIOCIMS, tapes 1586 I-II. Among the people contacted were: Grigore Ionescu, Dinu Hariton, Paul Focsa, Cristian Moiescu, Panait I Panait. Budișteanu is an old Wallachian *boyar* family. Among those contacted as well, there were members of the old elite, like Dinu Hariton. This case-study shows how the pre-war elite networks survived and actually functioned inside the socialist system.

⁶⁶ Ioana Iancovescu, *Părintele Voicescu: Un duhovnic al cetății* (Bucharest: Ed. Bizantina, 2002), 174-180.

⁶⁷ In a book discussing the context of the survival of the church, it was hinted at the fact that Elena Budișteanu inserted photos in the file presented to the chief-architect, showing the church photographed from above, so that it looked small and insignificant behind the row of blocks of the new centre. See Iancovescu, *Părintele Voicescu*, 177.

⁶⁸ Protests have been written by a number of specialists for the preservation of Văcărești and Mihai Vodă. The term “protest” is not always appropriate. In many cases, the letters sent to Ceaușescu were not protesting directly, but just “bringing to the attention” of the president or other bodies that certain historic monument was threatened by some state institution. They were written from a specialist point of view, rather “suggesting” than criticising. This opinion is shared by Corina Popa, art historian, and former wife of late archaeologist Radu Popa, one of the specialists who signed a letter of protest. See interview with Corina Popa, AIOCIMS, tapes 1590 I-II. One exception can be considered: the letter of Andrei Pippidi criticising the demolition of Nicolae Iorga’s house on Bucharest’s ringroad boulevard. His protest letter, though, was not accepted by a major magazine, “Flacăra” and was broadcast in Romania only through Radio Free Europe in September 1986. See Pippidi, “Despre o casă din București” in *Rezerva de speranță*, 5-7.

⁶⁹ Interview with Cezara Mucenic. AIOCIMS, tape 1585 I-II.

interest further weaken the cohesion of the voices of the few specialists scattered among several disciplines.