

0.1 Picture of building/site

depicted item: Scânteia House, The House of the Free Press

source: Photograph - Aurelian Stroe

date: 2011



1. Identity of building/group of buildings/urban scheme/landscape/garden

1.1 current name of building

Scânteia House/House of the Free Press

1.2 variant or former name

Scânteia House, I.V. Stalin Polygraphic Complex

1.3 number & name of street

no. 1, Piata Presei Libere

1.4 town

Bucharest

1.5 province/state

Bucharest, Sector 1

1.6 zip code

013701

1.7 country

Romania

1.8 national grid reference

Lat: 44°28'49.91"N

Long: 26° 4'17.38"E

1.9 classification/typology

REC – Building for culture, headquarters for publishing houses, typography, offices

1.10 protection status & date

currently being listed, A group, at national level, 2012

2 History of building

2.1 original brief/purpose

The initiative of the construction was taken on 25 July 1949, by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RWP (Romanian Workers' Party). A giant construction was necessary for the headquarters of the "Scântea" newspaper and for all other publications and publishing houses in Romania (subsequently, of the State Committee for Art and Culture). The size of the building had to demonstrate the belonging of the Romanian society to the "socialist realism" in the field of culture and state policy, devoted to the Soviet Union.

2.2 dates: commission/completion

1949-1956

2.3 architectural and other designers

The team of the designing architects was led by architect Horia Maicu (arch. Horia Maicu, Niculaie Bădescu, Marcel Locar, Mircea Alifanti, etc.).

The team of designing engineers was led by engineer Panaite Mazilu (a team made of: eng. Panaite Mazilu, Ștefan Bălan, Gheorghe Călin and Alois Fierlinger, and, in their turn, they coordinated some other four team of engineers led by Alexandru Cișmigiu, Mircea Neicu, Mircea Mihăilescu and Olivia Rusu.

2.4 others associated with building

2.5 significant alterations with dates

By initializing the listing procedure, the arbitrary modifications to the interior and

exterior of the building will be stopped and the carpentry change as well.

2.6 current use

The building has generally kept its function.

2.7 current condition

The general state of preservation is good. The renovations which have been made are reversible.

3 Description

3.1 general description

The building belongs to the architecture of the “socialist realism” of Moscow skyscrapers, achieved under the influence of the American Art Deco style.

The location of *Scânteia House* was conceived to be adjacent to Herăstrău Park, achieved during 1935 – 1937, on one of the artificial lakes of the Colentina river, with a water surface which had already been regulated in the thirties of the 20th century, having a development potential for recreation, culture and sport.

3.2 construction

Initially the Stalinist building was called “*I.V. Stalin Polygraphic Complex*”, then *Scânteia House* and after 1989, it became *The House of the Free Press*. The ground surface of *Scânteia House* is of 25,000 square meters.

The complex of buildings is spread amongst 136,000 square meters and it is configured as a 13-storey central body, having a height of 85 meters, with 4 lateral bodies, of a smaller height.

The central building is 91.6 meters high, without taking the TV antenna into consideration, which is 12.4 meters high. The *Scânteia House* was the tallest building in Bucharest during 1956 – 2007. The building was raised within 5 years (1952 – 1957), being used for the publication of the state press, especially for the “*Scânteia*” newspaper, which was a “*body*” of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party. For a while, starting with 1956, this building antenna supported the emitter of the Romanian Television.

3.3 context

The socialist countries which became satellites of the Soviet Union and which were dominated by the Soviet power were obliged to build buildings of “Stalinist” type in their big cities. Together with the communism, the realist-socialistic style and its specific programs were exported: ziggurat-buildings, collective monumental dwellings, sportive bases with annexed green spaces.

Edifices of the “Seven Sisters” typology were built not only on the whole territory of the former USSR, for example in Ukraine and Latvia, but in almost all the

socialist countries - Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, etc, the most well-known being the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. The inhabitants call this building, which is acknowledged to be the highest in Poland and the eighth as height in Europe, "Pekin" (Beijing in Polish, from the abbreviation Palac Kultury I Nauki – PkiN), "Pajac" ("Clown" in Polish, due to the phonetic resemblance with "Palac)", "Stalin's syringe" or "Wedding Cake of Russia". Other buildings of sky-scraper type are Latvia Academy of Science in Riga, Ukraine Hotel and Peking Hotel in Kiev (the last one being finalized in 1955).

4 Evaluation

4.1 technical

The whole assembly was a real experiment for the team of engineers and architects because at that time it was meant to be the highest building in Bucharest. The bodies of *The Administration* and of *The Production* were made of reinforced concrete, while the superstructure was made of reinforced concrete and metallic frame embedded in concrete.

Hundreds of designs were drawn up in a very short time period, whereas the calculi of the structures followed the Soviet norms. The ground of the construction was generally weak being generally composed of mellow sands.

The central body, due to the important height of the building and to the permanently great structural charges, had to undertake special reinforcement measures. For the typography's rotary press, brought from the Soviet Union, which was the most powerful vibrating source, a special foundation was designed, which was isolated from the rest of the structural skeleton.

The evaluation calculus of the foundations was done taking into account the nature of the ground where the building was located. The ground had level variations, up to 5 meters and it is situated in the vicinity of a lake. The main system of foundations – in the areas where the ground, although loose, was however smooth, was achieved on the basis of a girders network.

The nature of a ground of about 500 square meters did not permit to achieve the foundation according to the design altitude and in order to avoid their construction at around 3 – 4 meters under water, a procedure for ground consolidation was used.

For the main body of the building, which was the highest, many solutions have been studied in the preliminary design phase, among which the solution of the general foundation plate and the system of box beds foundations, following the model used for the tall buildings in Moscow.

4.2 social

The symbolic value of the building is linked to the Stalinist period, a hard and painful moment for the Romanians. At the same time, it has been achieved by

Romanian specialists and with financial efforts of the population, by the selling of special coupons.

4.3 cultural & aesthetic

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4.4 historical

Construcția fost ridicată în 5 ani (1952-1957), fiind destinată publicării presei de stat și în special a ziarului *Scântea*, “organ” al Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român, iar în prezent are aceeași funcțiune, adăpostind sedii centrale ale diferitelor publicații. Antena de pe clădire a susținut pentru o vreme, începând din 1956, emițătorul Televiziunii Române.

4.5 general assessment

The construction was raised within 5 years (1952 – 1957), and it was raised for the headquarters of the state press, especially the “Scântea” newspaper, a “body” of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, however currently having the same function, hereby accommodating central headquarters of different publications. For a while, starting with 1956, the antenna on the building supported the emitter of the Romanian Television.

5 Documentation

5.1 principal references

Articles

- Horia Maicu, “*Despre unele construcții social-culturale realizate în București în anul 1953*” (report of the Department for Theory and Criticism of the Architects’ Union in People’s Republic of Romania, presented in the plenary meeting of the Architects’ Union on 28 – 29 January 1954), in *Arhitectura R.P.R., no. 3/1954*
- **Reviews:** *Arhitectura R.P.R., 1959 – 1960, Arhitectură și Urbanism, 1952*
- Horia Maicu, “*Despre proiectarea Casei Scântei*”, in “*Arhitectura*” Review, no. 1, Technical Publishing House, 1951.

Books

- Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria Bucureștilor*, Sport-Tourism Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979;
- Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România – perioada anilor 1944 - 1969*, Publishing House of the Academy of Socialist Republic of Romania, Bucharest, 1969

- Gheorghe Parusi, *Cronologia Bucureștilor (20 septembrie 1459- 31 decembrie 1989: zilele, faptele, oamenii Capitalei de-a lungul a 530 de ani*, Compania Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007.

5.2 visual material attached

1. Layout, overview, guide maps 1960
2. Drawings, images of epoch from “*Arhitectura în R.P.R.*” Review
3. Epoch photographs, photographs after scale model

Recent photographs and survey drawings:

4. Perspective photographs, 2011, authors Aurelian Stroe/Ruxandra Nemțeanu
5. Detail photographs, 2011, authors Aurelian Stroe/Ruxandra Nemțeanu
6. Interior photographs, 2011, authors Aurelian Stroe/Ruxandra Nemțeanu

5.3 rapporteur/date

Nemțeanu Ruxandra
2012.

6 Fiche report examination by ISC/R

name of examining ISC member:

date of examination:

approval:

working party/ref. n°:

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comments:

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