

A “FIXED” APPOINTMENT ON THE AGENDA OF FOREIGN GUESTS: THE HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE ROMANIAN SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

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Abstract. *This work shows how the History Museum of the Romanian Socialist Republic has been involved in developing cultural relations between Romania and other countries. For two decades, the museum was visited by numerous foreign delegations led by ministers, heads of state and government.*

Keywords: *History Museum of the Romanian Socialist Republic, tourist, foreign delegations.*

The History Museum of the Romanian Socialist Republic (nowadays the National History Museum of Romania) was inaugurated in 1972, in the former building of the Postal Service Palace, presenting the public with the most representative testimonies of Romanian national history. These testimonies were destined not only for Romanians but also for foreigners. Moreover, these foreigners were not only tourists, whose visits were quite frequent in the museum, but also official guests, from all fields of activity (and hierarchies). Particularly in the 70-80s, the History Museum of the Romanian Socialist Republic had become a “necessity” for all foreign delegations (to use a generic denomination).

By studying the registries of foreigners that have visited the institution (only official delegations and organized groups of tourists, brought here through ONT and BTT) we get a clear idea of their number and the formalities of these visits.

A visit to the museum, in the case of foreigner delegations, had to be announced a day before. Depending on the rank of the guests, the security service inspected the premises either a day before or on the same day of the visit. There was a strict procedure regarding the cleaning and going about in the building. There have been extreme situations where the museum’s staff was forbidden to leave their offices during the visit. Each of these delegations had a leader, and also an organizing institution, a protocol institution and representative, and an official on behalf of the Romanian side. Once the visit was over, a full account of the visit was written: the rooms visited, the number of people in the delegation, whether they paid the entrance fee or not, the presents offered and the refunding (presents were paid by the organizing institution).

By studying these files and the Protocol book (where only heads of state and government and their wives were asked to sign) one gets an accurate picture of those visiting the museum: government delegations, military delegations, cultural delegations, scientific delegations (authors, students, historians, doctors etc), diplomatic delegations, journalists, delegations of behalf of communist and socialist parties, workers union delegations etc. Apart from these, there were numerous groups of tourists brought by ONT and BTT.

Among the institutions organizing these frequent visits we emphasize: the Central Committee of the RCP, the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the RSR Academy, the Council for Socialist Culture and Education, the Great National Assembly, the Union of Communist Youth, the State Council, the Socialist Union Front, the Journalists Union, the University of Bucharest, ONT Carpati, the National Bank, the General Union of Workers, embassies, the Youth Travel Organization, AGERPRES, the Politica Publishing House, Scânteia Daily, the „Ștefan Gheorghiu” Academy, the National Defense Ministry etc.

The usual attractions were the Thesaurus and Emperor Trajan’s Column. The visits of historians however, could have had a precise purpose (a particular section - modern, ancient, numismatics, medieval etc.). After the opening of the *In homage* exhibition, it became a landmark of the museums’ tour, few delegations missing out on the ten rooms exhibiting presents given, at home and abroad, to the Ceausescu family.

As for the members of delegations, they varied from 2 members to dozens of people (even 60-70). Although they were officials and came under the high protection of party and state officials, many of these delegations paid the entrance fee. By analyzing the registries we come to the conclusion that only high cultural delegations were allowed in for free.

As for the presents given, they were mostly albums, guides, pictures or slides.

Here are some examples of these visits:

July 16th 1975 - the British govern delegation led by Mary Wilson (wife of Prime Minister Harold Wilson), made up of 11 people; the visit was organized by the Council of Ministries), the delegation was accompanied by Florea Dumitrescu’s wife; they visited the prehistory, ancient history, thesaurus and the column rooms; gifts: an album and an English guide of the museum. (A.M.N.I.R. 1975-1979, p. 1-2).

September 21 1975 - the British delegation led by Selwyn Loyd, the Communes’ speaker (9 members), organized by the Great National Assembly, accompanied by Nicolae Gîoșan, the president of M.A.N, they visited the prehistory, thesaurus and column sections, gifts: 3 albums, 3 guides, 3 slides, one pot, 4 postcards (A.M.N.I.R. 1975-1979, p. 3-4).

October 15th 1975 – delegation led by the prime minister of the Cabo Verde Islands, Pedro de Verona Rodrigues Pires (6 people), organized by the Council of Ministers, accompanied by Octavian Groza, visited the

prehistory section, the thesaurus and the column, gifts: an album in French, a French guide of the museum. (A.M.N.I.R. 1975-1979, p. 11-12).

December 4 1975 - the FRG delegation lead by the wife of the Foreign Affairs Ministry Hans Dietrich Genscher (12 people), organized by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, visited the prehistory, thesaurus, column sections; gifts: an album in German. (A.M.N.I.R. 1975-1979, p. 15-16).

February 3rd 1976 – the official Danish delegation led by the Foreign Affairs minister K.B. Andersen (12 people), organized by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, accompanied by Mircea Andrei, the director of the Protocol section; visited the prehistory, ancient, thesaurus, column sections; gifts: 1 album in English. (A.M.N.I.R. 1975-1979, p. 15-16).

February 5th 1976 - the Greek delegation led by Andreas Papandreu (13 people) organized by the Relations Section of the CC of RCP, accompanied by com. Ghise and com. Mărgineanu, visited the entire museum; gifts: one album, one museum guide in Romanian, 2 statues (the Thinker and the Sitting Woman, 8 guides in English). (A.M.N.I.R. 1975-1979, p. 15-16).

As for other heads of state and government that have visited the museum and that are not mentioned by the registries, but have put down their names in the protocol book, we should mention: Santiago Carillo (general secretary of the Spanish .C.P - May 11th 1972, Lon Nol (the president of Cambodia , June 21st 1972), Sangoulé Lamizana (the president of the Republic of Upper Volta, today Burkina Faso) - June 14th 1973, Marien N' Gouabi (president of the Congo Republic, July 11th 1973), William R. Tolbert Jr., president of Liberia - September 13th 1974, Henrik (the Crown prince of Denmark), October 8th 1974, Eric Williams (prime minister of Trinidad & Tobago) July 8th 1975, Bernadette Chirac (wife of the French prime minister Jacques Chirac) - July 28th 1975; Léopold Sédar Senghor, the president of Senegal, August 10 1975; Queen Fabiola, (the wife of King Boudion of Belgium), princess Josephine Charlotte (wife of Grand Duke Jean of Luxemburg) - October 26th 1976; Giulio Andreotti, former and future prime minister of Italy - March 15th 1980; Elisabeth Waldheim (wife of UN secretary Kurt Waldheim) - July 29th 1980, Kenan Evren, president of Turkey - June 29th 1986; U san Yu, president of Burma, October 25th 1987, Mama Bobi Ladawa (wife of the president of Zair, Mobutu Sese Seko, April 5th 1988; Mario Fernandes da Graça Machungo (prime minister of Mozambique) November 6th 1988 (A.M.N.I.R. 1972-1989, passim).

There are also high ranked officials that were not mentioned in these registries of the Protocol Books, but have been captured on film or remembered by curators working here: Indira Gandhi (prime minister of India), François Mitterand (as president of the French Socialist Party), Moshe Daian (Israeli foreign affairs minister), Karl Carstens (the Federal Republic of Germany president), Yumjaagiin Tedenbal (the Mongolian leader), Alfonso López Michelsen, the president of Columbia, Edward Richard Schreyer (the Governor General of Canada).

If we were to use a euphemism, the whole world visited the History Museum of the RSR. In 1976, delegations came from: Algeria, Angola, England, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Myanmar, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Czechoslovakia, Chile, China, Cyprus, Colombia, Congo, North Korea, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Switzerland, Finland, France, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Italy, Norway, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, The Federal Republic of Germany, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Syria, Spain, the United States, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, the USSR, Hungary, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia (A.M.N.I.R. 1975-1979, passim).

To give a clear account of the fields that were represented by these delegations, here are two examples from 1987: the diplomatic delegation of the USSR, the CC of CP in Cuba, the Polish Youth Union delegation, the Brazilian journalists delegation, the parliamentary delegation Mexico, the RFG ambassador, the military delegation Hungary, the parliamentary delegation Congo, the cultural delegation Senegal, the TV delegation England, the French C. P. delegation, diplomatic delegation Switzerland, the RFG Chamber of Commerce delegation, women's delegation GDR (A.M.N.I.R. 1979-1989, p. 60-62).

We have tried to give a clear account of the important part played by the History museum in the high protocol policy for foreign guests. This matter, regardless of other political and ideological considerations and implications, promoted Romanian history and culture abroad*.

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