
THE REVOLUTIONARY MUSEUM: CURATING THE MUSEUM OF COMMUNIST PARTY HISTORY IN ROMANIA (1948-1958)

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Abstract: The late 1940s and early 1950s are paradoxically flourishing years in Romanian museology, at least in the number of museums established, inaugurated and reorganized. This article is concerned with the most important ideological museum established in Romania in 1948, the History Museum of the Romanian Communist Party. Informally called the Party Museum it underwent numerous changes of names, discourse and leadership, all the while remaining the blueprint for creating exhibitions of recent history in Romanian museum all through the Socialist period. This article sheds light on the first decade of its existence analyzing the context of its inauguration and its museographical discourse as it could be revealed from archival and published sources.

Keywords: Propaganda museum; Communist museography; Representation of communism, History museum; Visitor studies.

The late 1940s and early 1950s are paradoxically flourishing years in Romanian museology, at least in the number of museums established, inaugurated and reorganized. As the Communist regime was establishing itself politically, it also established itself culturally and historically. For a population that was in important proportions illiterate (more than 40%) museums seemed to be a more successful way of imposing a new narrative, one that endorsed the new political power by appealing to past decades of struggle and suffering. This article is concerned with the most important ideological museum established in Romania in 1948, the History Museum of the Romanian Communist Party. Informally called the Party Museum it underwent numerous changes of names, discourse and leadership, all the while remaining the blueprint for creating exhibitions of recent history in Romanian museum all through the Socialist period. Due to the lack of historical research on this museum, this article only sheds light on the first decade of its existence analyzing the context of its inauguration and its museographical discourse as it could be revealed from archival and published sources¹.

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¹ This article is part of my PhD dissertation at Central European University, Department of history, submitted in 2013.